

Jesus Warns People to Repent Luke 13:1-9

by David Servant

Jesus warns people to repent, emphasizing that everyone deserves to die before God, and that God's mercy is shown to those who don't deserve it.

Scripture: Psalm 103:8, Mark 10:18, Luke 13:1, Luke 13:6, Romans 6:23

Topics: "Repentance And Mercy", "Gods Judgment"

Description

David Servant preaches on Jesus' perspective regarding tragedies and the misconception that those who suffer are more wicked. Jesus clarifies that everyone is deserving of judgment and warns that unless people repent, they will perish. Using the illustration of the unfruitful fig tree, Jesus emphasizes God's mercy in giving more time for repentance. The tragedies serve as warnings for the living to turn from sin and seek God's mercy, as no one is truly deserving of life. The question should not be why bad things happen to good people, but rather why anything good happens to sinful humanity, highlighting God's incredible mercy.

Transcript

We are sometimes tempted to think that people who suffer some tragedy are more wicked than most people, and that God is punishing them for their sins. Surely, it is with those people that God is angry. In today's reading, however, we gain Jesus' perspective of such things, and because Jesus is God, we can be sure His perspective is correct.

Two tragic things had recently occurred in Jerusalem. The first was Herod's murder of some people from Galilee as they were sacrificing in the Temple. We don't know any details of what happened, but can be sure it was the talk of all Judea and Galilee for some time. The second was the accidental death of eighteen men who were killed when a big stone tower toppled over onto them. In both cases, many Jews of Jesus' day had assumed that God was punishing them because of their wickedness. They also assumed that because they were alive, they themselves must not be deserving of such a fate, and they, unlike those who died, had God's approval.

Jesus said, however, that the people who died were not greater sinners than anyone else, and warned the living that unless they repented, they would also perish. In other words, from God's perspective, the survivors were just as deserving of a tragic death as those who perished. The survivors, however, had simply received more time to repent. So, the question people should have been asking was not, "Why did those people die?" Rather, they should have been asking, "Why are any of us still alive?"

Jesus answered that question using an illustration of the unfruitful fig tree. The man who planted the fig tree was tired of waiting for the tree to produce figs and decided that the tree should be cut down because it was wasting space in his garden. His gardener, however, persuaded him to give the tree one more year, promising to give it more fertilizer and special attention. Then, if it didn't produce any figs after that year, he would cut it down.

Those who survived the contemporary tragedies of that time were like the fruitless fig tree that deserved to be cut down. God, however, had mercifully decided to give them more time to repent and produce the fruit of obedience in their lives. The people who died couldn't complain over their fate, because they'd received only what they deserved. In fact, they, too, had doubtlessly deserved to perish long before they did, but also received undeserved mercy.

Although God didn't cause the Tower of Siloam to fall on eighteen men and kill them, and although God didn't inspire Herod to murder the Galileans, no one can intelligently say that God didn't permit both tragedies to occur. Jesus said that both served as warnings to the living that they needed to repent. Those warnings, too, were indications of God's mercy to the survivors, who really didn't even deserve to be warned!

Q. If everyone died on his or her eightieth birthday, and no one died before then, how do you think that would affect the way people live their lives?

A. Most people would lead very sinful lives and then, as the time of their eightieth birthday drew near, would become very holy! But, because everyone knows that death can occur at any time, and because we are constantly reminded of that fact by the tragic, unexpected deaths of so many people, smart folks are motivated to repent immediately. That way they're ready to stand before God's judgment seat at any time.

Q. Was it fair that God allowed some people to die in those two tragedies and allowed others who were equally deserving of death to live?

A. It was not really a matter of fairness from God's standpoint since everyone deserved to die before he did. For example, suppose there were two murderers in prison who had both killed many people and who were sentenced to die. One is scheduled to be executed on Monday and the other on Tuesday. What would the prison warden say to the Monday murderer if he complained of unfair treatment? He would say, "You have no right to complain of unfair treatment, because you deserved to die a long time ago. Fairness for you is not something that is an issue at this point. And did you treat the people you murdered with fairness?"

Application: People have been asking for ages, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Their question reveals their ignorance about God's holiness and humanity's sinfulness. Jesus said that no one is good except God alone (see Mark 10:18), so that disqualifies every person from being classified as "good." In light of our sinfulness and God's holiness, the question people should be asking is, "Why does anything good ever happen to such bad people?" The answer to that question would be, "Because God is so merciful."

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