

# Christ's Answer to Human Tragedy

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Luke 13:1-5

In this message we will consider another question Jesus asks. This question deals with tragedy and suffering. I've preached on suffering many times. I heard of a lady who approached her pastor after he preached a sermon on suffering. She said, "Preacher, I never knew what suffering was until I heard your sermon. Now I know." I guess some sermons are like suffering—People suffer through it.

Once a long-winded pastor had been preaching for about an hour and finally said, "There's more I want to say, but Jesus just told me to stop." He called the song leader to lead in closing hymn. The song leader said, "Let's stand and sing, *'What A Friend We Have in Jesus.'*"

This question sheds light on the recent tragic shooting at an Orlando nightclub on June 12.

I heard of one person who was critical of God for allowing those 49 people to be murdered. He concluded that God must not exist or He would have stopped it. His conclusion shows he really doesn't know the true God of the Bible.

As people struggle to understand why tragic events like these happen, we must turn to the Bible to see what God says about disasters and cataclysmic events.

## I. The EXAMINATION of Human Suffering.

- ➡CONTEXT: Jesus had just spoke of discerning the signs of the times (Luke 12:56). Now a group of people come to inform Jesus of a tragic and cruel act, similar to what we see happening today. Pilate ordered a "terrorist attack" on a Jewish worship service and massacred some innocent and unarmed Jews from Galilee while they were offering their sacrifices to God. They were killed while worshipping God! A horrific scene!
- ➡Why did this happen to these Jews, God's people? Why didn't God protect them from Pilate?
- ➡Humanly, life looks unfair at times.

- A. The truth is— We live in a world cursed by sin.
- Tragedies and suffering, like the terrorist attack on 9/11... tsunamis in Indonesia and Japan... earthquakes in Haiti... victims of drive-by shootings... suicide bombers... starving persons in Cambodia... or the atrocity in Orlando—are the result of living in a broken and fallen world.
- B. The sin of Adam in the Garden opened a “Pandora’s Box” of trouble and suffering upon the world (Rom. 5:12). Here are a few effects of Adam’s sin:
1. Death (Gen. 2:17)
  2. Fear (Gen. 3:10)
  3. Pain and sorrow (Gen. 3:16)
  4. Cursed ground—Thorns, thistles (Gen. 3:16-17).
  5. Sweat (Gen. 3:19).
  6. Shedding of blood (Gen. 3:21; 4:8)
  7. False worship of God (4:3-7).
  8. Jealousy (Gen 4:5).
  9. Anger (Gen. 4:5)
  10. Murder (Gen. 4:8).
- These things cannot be blamed on God. God did not bring sin into the world. Don’t blame God for the acts of wicked people, like Pilate (or ISIS, or Omar Mateen).

## II. The EVIDENCE of Heaven's Sympathy.

- Does God care about human suffering? Of course He does.
- A. Notice Christ **already was familiar** with this tragedy (v. 4).
- You can be assured God knows about our trials and suffering.
- B. We know Christ Himself cared for the sufferings of those with whom He came in contact.
- He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15).
  - On four separate occasions the Bible says Christ was “*moved with compassion.*”
  - We are invited to cast our cares upon Him for HE CARES FOR US!

### III. The ERROR of Human Supposition.

- “*Suppose ye that... think ye that...*” When some calamity befalls us, there is something in our depraved conscience that asks: “**Why** did this happen? **What** did I do to cause this trouble?” “**Did** this happen to me because I have unconfessed sin in my life?”
  - The people who came to Jesus supposed God was somehow obligated to the Galilaeans because they were Jews. They thought the Galileans must have been guilty of some serious sin, otherwise God wouldn’t have allowed them to be murdered.
- A. The ASSUMPTION of man. Their assumption was the same as Job’s three friends regarding Job’s suffering (Job 8:4—“*If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression.*”).
1. Christ’s disciples false assumption regarding the man born blind—“*Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*” (John 9:2). Jesus answered sin was not the issue in this case.
  2. The Bible does NOT teach that every time there is a tragedy, it is because someone is being punished for their sin. While tragic events, in general, are the result of sin, not every particular tragedy is due to some individual's guilt of sin.
    - ILLUS: If you and I are in an automobile accident and you are killed and I survive, that does not necessarily mean you were more sinful than I am. What about drunk drivers who cause fatal accidents, but they escape unharmed?
    - What about wives who love God, but suffer at the hands of abusive drunken husbands. They suffer simply because they live in a sinful environment.

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Charles I, king of England, was beheaded in a judgment issued by the Puritans in 1649. Later, his son, Charles II visited the old Puritan John Milton who was going blind. He told Milton, “Your blindness is God’s judgment for the part you had against my father.” Milton replied, “If I’ve lost my sight

because of God's judgment, what can you say of your father who lost his head?"

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- It is estimated 300 million people drown in Noah's flood. Do you suppose everyone was so wicked in thought and deed that they all deserved to be drowned? What about the babies and toddlers who drowned?
  - When God rained fire and brimstone on Sodom, do you think everyone in Sodom was a homosexual? Probably *most* of them were, but not everyone (cf. Gen. 19:14). What about the innocent babies and children?
  - VERSE 4—The eighteen who were killed when the tower fell on them were just doing their job, yet they died from no fault of their own. Likewise, when the twin towers in New York fell on September 11, 2001 and killed about 3,000 people, do you suppose everyone killed were ALL wicked sinners? Don't you think there may have been some respectable Christians also killed in this tragedy?
3. **God sends His goodness on the just and the unjust** (Mt. 5:45). He also allows trouble to come on people indiscriminately as well.
  4. Living righteously does not exempt anyone from trouble or tragedy. Consider the prophets and apostles who suffered.
    - We should do right whether it pays off or not. When tragedy hits you along with everyone else (as in hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, cancer, etc.), just remember God has a purpose behind the tragedy. He knows what He is doing.
- B. The ANSWER of Christ.
1. These tragedies did **not** happen because these people were more sinful than others. Though their death was tragic and horrible, Jesus makes a startling conclusion—"*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent...*"
  2. The **real issue** in these two tragedies is **NOT**: "Who is the worst sinner?" OR "Why did this happened?" The real issue is,

“Have you and I personally repented of our own sin and are we ready to meet God?”

- Tragedies are not opportunities to judge sin in others, but a spiritual “wake-up” call to repent.

**SUMMATION:** Sudden tragic events like these should remind us of three things:

1. Remind us of the **universality** of sin. Our world is broken by sin. Until Christ comes and lifts the curse of sin from this world, tragedy... suffering... pain... human inequities... and death will prevail over the earth.
2. Remind us of the **uncertainty** of life (James 4:13-14). None of those people who died in these events expected they would die that day! Sudden death can come to any of us. That fact alone should remind us to be ready to meet God today.
3. Remind us of the **urgency** to repent. Each victim in our text and each person who died in the Orlando mass shooting went out to meet God—ready or not! It is a WARNING— **It is time to repent!**

Next time you hear of some senseless death or calamity to befall some unfortunate person and you wonder if they were involved in some sinful behavior, remember the words of the Lord Jesus—“**Do you think they were sinners above others—*Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish!***”