

Title: The Arkansas Flood (The Lesson in Sudden Death)
Text: Luke 13: 1-5
Date: June 13, 2010
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

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This week a tragedy occurred in my home state of Arkansas. West of Little Rock, west of Hot Springs, at a popular campground--Albert Pike--the rains came down in such a short space of time between the hours of 3 am and 5 am that the Little Missouri River rose from 3 ft to over 23 ft in just 3 hours.

In the black of night, campers--men and women, young and old--were swept away by the flood of waters. The last I saw there were 16 dead and many more unaccounted for. I know of one family who was camping that night, who have 9 family members yet accounted for.

What struck me in the report was that the rains fell in excess in that one particular area. One of the reports showed that the greatest amount of rain literally fell from one ridge to the other ridge, the campground lying in the middle.

What should we learn from such a tragic event as this flood? Title: The Lesson in Sudden Death. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us plainly. Our text is Luke 13: 1-5.

Luke 13: 1: There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2: And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? 3: I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 4: Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5: I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

These were current events. They were as meaningful and tragic to the people in that day as the current events in our day. May God give us grace this day to hear what he says through such events.

I. A WORD CONCERNING FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

Luke 13: 2: And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?...4: Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

The Lord knew the hearts of those who spoke of these events. They had a superior, self-righteous spirit about them as though those who perished deserved to do so because of their great sin.

A. We must never assume that those who suffer in tragedy do so because they are sinners above all others.

1. The Lord says of both examples: "I tell you, Nay" Our God does judge men and whole nations for sin. Yet, scripture declares that many saints have suffered and died tragic deaths.

Hebrews 11: 35:...were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38: (Of whom the world was not worthy:)

2. God often brings death to his people suddenly as an act of great mercy and grace.

Isaiah 57:1: The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth *it* to heart: and merciful men *are* taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*. 2: He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one* walking *in* his uprightness.

B. Think not that those who died in that flood this week were greater sinners than you and I right here in this place! Everyone here is a sinner in need of God to save you.

1. By Adam's one transgression, death entered in--death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The wages of sin is death--"the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Eze 18: 4.)

2. In Noah's day when God destroyed the whole earth with a flood, it was just as it is in our day:

Genesis 6: 5: And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, male or female, young or old:

Romans 3: 23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Application: child abuser--no worse child abuse than not having our children under the sound of the gospel. Adulterers--no worse adultery than playing the harlot by running after this world. The oppressive man flies in with his harsh, condemnation as if he was less of a sinner. Let us not think for a moment that those who die suddenly are sinners above all else. Such assumption is self-righteous pride.

II. A LESSON TO HEED FROM SUCH TRAGEDIES

Every time you hear of these tragic events where so many die so suddenly: floods, storms, the evil slaying by cruel men. In every case let this be the first, preeminent thought, this one word for our Lord Jesus Christ:

Luke 13: 3:...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

A. What is repentance? Repentance is the gift of triune God

1. Of God the Father--

Eze 36: 24: For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. 25: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26: A new

heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27: And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

2. Of Christ Jesus, the Son of God--

Acts 5: 31: Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

3. Through the Holy Spirit--you must be born again. The Spirit convicts:

John 16:8-11 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

B. Where God has worked this work of repentance there will be in you...

1. A change of mind!

- You thought others were sinners above you, now you will say with Paul, "I am the chief of sinners."
- You despised and rejected Christ but now...

Zech 12: 10: And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

2. A change of masters!

- Paul went from serving himself to saying, "Lord what will thou have me to do!"
- You will no longer be under the dominion of the prince of the power of air, serving the lust of your flesh, but you will be led by the Spirit of the Lord...Isaiah 30: 21: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

3. A change of manners!

Isaiah 30: 22: Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

Your new desire will be to walk in a manner that adorns the doctrine of the Lord you serve:

Titus 2: 7: In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8: Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. 9: Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10: Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

4. A change of motives!

Ps 115:1: Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

Philippians 3: 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Note: Repentance does not bring us into a savable state, but is the evidence you have been brought by God.

Question: You might ask, "Why then does God call on us to repent if we can not repent unless God give it?" It is through this gospel that declares our absolute inability that God works this work of grace in our hearts. **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

C. Everyone hear stands on the brink of eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;

Illustration: We know not the hour--Ronnie Springfield! Those folks expected a week of peace and relaxation and the end came in an instance.

D. The time you have been given on this earth is the time for repentance.

1. In our day, as it was in Noah's day, the Spirit of the Lord strove with man.

1 Peter 3: 20:...the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

The Spirit's striving with men is the longsuffering of God, calling sinners to repentance by the preaching of the gospel and granting them space for repentance.

2. But heed this word of warning:

Genesis 6: 3: And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

3. The gospel is God's call to repentance. But he will not always call. The day is coming when God will shut the door of mercy.

Illustration: Noah preached the gospel to his generation as I do to you. Those 8 souls entered the ark before the first drop of rain fell. But when the rain of judgment came, those who did not redeem their time of mercy, found the door of the Ark closed shut. (Luke 13: 23-28; Pro 1: 23-33.)

Listen to the sure word of the Lord Jesus: **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**

Conclusion: Truth is, the manner in which we die is of little significance. What matters is in WHOM we die!

Revelation 14:13: And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

1. Those who die IN THE LORD are those who have turned from all else, believing on Christ Jesus.

- Justified from all our sin by God our Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.
- Washed in the precious blood of the Lamb
- Forgiven
- Accepted of God in the beloved Christ Jesus

Heb 10:17: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

1 John 4:17: Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

2. Those who repent and believe on the Lord long for that eternal day where we will have uninterrupted, pure communion with our Lord (2 Cor 5: 1-9; I Cor 15: 55-58)

Amen!