

## ***DIVINE LESSONS IN TIMES OF TRAGEDIES***

*(Luke 13:1-9)*

The recent news about rampant tragedies and calamities around the world make us wonder how God views such events. Our Lord Jesus calls these devastating events as the beginning of sorrows and tribulations (Matthew 24:6-8). In times of tragedies, we need to have the mind of Christ and learn the divine lessons our Lord is teaching us concerning these catastrophes prior to His glorious return.

***1. Instead of being critical, consider your own need for \_\_\_\_\_.***

In times of tragedies, we should never blame God nor accuse Him of being impotent or unloving. Our Lord Jesus Himself affirms both the sovereign power and the unfading love of God in the midst of tragedies (John 16:33). We should constantly be reminded that it was the sin of man that brought the curse upon God's creation (Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 8:20-22). Our Lord Jesus also rebukes the act of passing judgment upon those who suffer calamities. He firmly rejects the notion that those who are devastated by tragedies are especially marked out by God as more deserving of judgment than those who do not. Calamities are not God's way of singling out exceptionally sinful people (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-2; Job 4:7-8, 22:4).

In times of calamities, our Lord Jesus instructs us to exercise self-examination and spiritual evaluation. Tragedies should drive us to consider our own need for genuine repentance (Luke 13:3,5). In the sight of God, we are as equally sinful and guilty as everyone else in this world (Rom.3:23). In the depth of our soul, we are constantly struggling with hating sin and renouncing unrighteousness (Rom. 7:18-20). Hence, we all need to repent, lest we perish and suffer the ultimate tragedy which is God's final judgment upon unrepentant sinners in eternal hell (John 3:16, 10:28; Matt. 25:46; 10:28). Repentance gives us the grace to destroy our appetite for sin and increase our love for Christ and His righteousness.

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***2. Instead of being desperate, cling to the hope of the \_\_\_\_\_.***

Tragedies have the capacity to drive people's hearts into utter hopelessness. But praise God that the Lord provides hope for every grieving heart which is wrestling with despair. Our Lord Jesus illustrates the hope that the gospel offers through a parable (Luke 13:6-9). This parable teaches us the gospel truth that our hope during times of tragedies is ultimately anchored upon the patience and mercy of God extended to those who trust wholehearted in the Lord Jesus and His mediatorial and redemptive work on the Cross (I Tim. 2:5-6; Exo. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:33-34).

Those of us who fully and exclusively believe and trust in our Lord Jesus as our only Mediator, Redeemer and Deliverer should constantly praise God that nothing in all creation could ever separate us from love of God in Christ Jesus: not tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, neither death nor life! In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us! (Rom. 8:35-39).

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Our response to tragedies indicate the kind of faith we have in God. If sufferings draw us away from God, then perhaps our faith is not true. Believers see suffering from God's point of view. Instead of blaming God, and blaming others, they begin to pray and look beyond their personal needs and hurts and start ministering to others, to those more needy than themselves.