



[Luke 13:1-5](#)

(1) Now at the same time, there were present some who were telling Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (2) And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans, because they suffered such things? (3) No, I tell you; but if you do not repent, you shall all likewise perish. (4) Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, do you suppose that these were debtors above all men who dwelt in Jerusalem? (5) No, I tell you; but if you do not repent, you shall all likewise perish."

A Faithful Version

In [Luke 13:1-5](#), [Jesus](#) took advantage of two local tragedies to make the point that, in a major way, all sins and all sinners are equal. The incident of the collapsed tower was in all likelihood a time-and-chance accident. However, Jesus alluded to those who died as being sinners, and He implied that those in His audience were also sinners who deserved to die—and would, unless they repented.

What is interesting is a possible reason why Jesus responded as He did to their report of Pilate's action. He seems to have detected in their attitude that they thought that those killed by Pilate deserved to die! The victims were sinners who "got what was coming to them," implying that they themselves were righteous. Jesus' replies that they were just as guilty as those who died! Someone's sudden and violent death is not proof that he is particularly more wicked than others.

Jesus' point is that, while it is not our responsibility to judge the degree of sinfulness of those who die suddenly and violently, it presents us with a golden opportunity to meditate on the state of our character and standing before [God](#). We may be in just as much danger as those we regard as being very wicked!

We live in a world that is given to extremes of judgment. One extreme is to call victims of a random tragedy "innocent," when the Bible shows no such human being exists.

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They are only innocent of causing the calamity that brought about the sudden end of their life. The other extreme is that human nature has a propensity to judge that those killed in such a circumstance were in reality great and wicked sinners who got what they deserved. This suggests that those making this determination are in good standing with God.

Ours is a topsy-turvy world. We desire with all our being for things to go "right." We want good to be rewarded and evil to be punished. But we find in places like Psalms 37 and 73 that evil men often prosper, live in [peace](#) in lovely homes, wear fine clothing, are surrounded by their families, receive acclaim and honors within the community, and die at a good old age. Conversely, the righteous suffer afflictions, are unappreciated, [persecuted](#), demeaned, dishonored, reviled, scattered, and perhaps even cut off in the prime of life!

Some things involving life, judgment, and the out-working of God's purpose are simply beyond our knowing. We also have a very difficult time correctly judging the intent of another person's heart. Thus, God cautions us to be careful.

But He expects us to be able to judge the intent of *our own* heart correctly. We should know what is going on inside. So often, though, even in this we allow ourselves to deny the evil of our own motivations. We proudly justify ourselves by thinking, "God won't mind. It's just a 'little' [sin](#) that won't hurt anybody. And, besides, I need to do this." Is there really innocence in this kind of thinking?

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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