THE EXHORTER

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start #327

<u>Luke 13:4-</u>"Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

I write this morning with a heavy heart. Massive tornados have devastated large portions of Alabama and Georgia. Hundreds were killed. The destruction is unbelievable. There are many Christians who live in those areas. I have visited and preached in some of those places. This passage came to my mind today.

In Luke 13, a report came to Jesus of bad news. Fellow Galileans were killed by Pilate. Jesus said, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Then Jesus tells of the eighteen who were killed by the tower.

Jesus uses these two "news reports" to teach some valuable lessons. First, those who were killed were not being punished for their sins. That's not how God operates. There are a few exceptions, dealing with rebellion when God would strike someone down and use it as a lesson. But those are few in the total history of the Bible. God wants people to come to him. Peter tells us that God doesn't want any to perish but all to come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9) The fact that some were killed and others survived is not an indication of God's justice being invoked. It's easy to think that. It's easy to start judging. Jesus twice in the news reports said "No."

The loss of life happens. Life is precious and very fragile. We watch these reality shows where people scale mountains, leap great distances over objects and we tend to forget that it doesn't take much to end life. There were towers that fell in the days of Jesus. There were towers that fell last night in Alabama and Georgia. The survivors struggle first with moving on, and then with the emotional and mental concerns of "why". All it takes for some is death by a tower and that's enough for them to walk away from God. In their thinking a good and gracious God would never allow towers to fall, anywhere, any time. Because they do, must mean either that God doesn't care, or else, even worse, maybe he isn't real. We have it in our thinking that every day ought to be sunny and that each day ought to bring smiles to our faces and God ought to make my life nice and easy. Where have we gotten this theology? Not from the Bible. It doesn't

teach that. Remember at the end of the sermon on the mount, Jesus ended with the parable of the wise man and the foolish man. Both men, not just the foolish man, but both men had rain, winds and floods. Both men. The wise and the fool. The wicked and the righteous. God never said this world is Heaven. Ever since Adam chose to disobey God, man has been excluded from paradise. This world is not paradise. Towers will fall. Cars will crash. Storms will rage through the nights. Flood waters will rise. Some will die. Even some righteous will die. Our thoughts are, "doesn't seem right. Doesn't seem fair." And it's not. This world is broken. This world is engaged in a great spiritual fight. Satan and Christ. If you want a land that is without nights, storms, and death, that place is called Heaven. Could it be that is why Jesus twice said in our verse today, "unless you repent you will likewise perish."

I think the Lord is using a play on words here. The eighteen men in the tower perished. They were killed. Jesus is not implying, if you repent you will not perish. No, Heb. 9:27 reminds us that we have an appointment with death. The perish Jesus has in mind is spiritual. That's why the call for us to repent. By repenting and turning towards God, we will not perish, spiritually. That was the message of John the Baptist—repent. That is the message of Jesus. Stop what you are doing. Turn toward God and follow him. If you don't, you won't make it. You'll perish. In the Lord's way of thinking, perishing spiritually is far worse than perishing by a falling tower.

These news reports that were brought to Jesus about disasters and death allowed him to remind the disciples that they too, we too, have a coming appointment with death. The men who died in the tower died suddenly. It was not expected. The tower fell. We don't know the details. Were they a construction crew that was building a tower, and something terribly wrong happened and it fell? Were they a group of tourists who were visiting the tower? Was it a windy day and the thing blew over? We don't know. They died. Someday we will die. We need to be ready. This is why Jesus brought up turning toward God.

What can we do when towers fall or tornados kill? First, pray. Pray for the families affected. Thank the Lord for your safety through the night. As the sun rises on a new day, make it a new day, a better day. Realize that today is a gift. Not everyone got that gift. Whether they were killed in a storm, died in a cancer unit or were killed serving our country, each day is a gift. Use it like a gift. Stop demanding as if someone, especially God, owes us anything. He doesn't. quit being selfish. Learn to connect, to serve, to help others. Glorify God by following him.

Our days are not so different from the days we read about in our Bibles.

Roger Shouse

Some additional thoughts:

Moday- Matt. 5:44,45
Tuesday- Acts 24:14,15
Wednesday- James 4:14
Thursday- Prov. 27:1
Friday- Ecc. 9:12
Saturday- Amos 4:12