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The Main Thing Devotional

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Not at All!

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The Main Thing Devotional: Not at All!

“About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. ‘Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?’ Jesus asked. ‘Is that why they suffered? Not at all!...’” - Luke 13:1–3 (a)

Your suffering may not be due to your mistakes. If you have seen the classic film, *The Sound of Music*, you may remember the song, Something Good. In that song we get a contemporary theological glimpse into the crowd’s thinking as recorded by the physician Luke, here a few lines from the song:

Nothing comes from nothing
Nothing ever could
So somewhere in my youth or childhood
I must have done something good

When the song says, “nothing comes from nothing,” the implication is when good things happen in our lives it cannot be grace. However, once the human heart takes credit for the good that happens, what happens when things go bad? Julie Andrews would respond, “I must have done something bad!”

Christ sees circumstances far more differently than our limited understanding. Like Job’s friends who accused him of doing evil, we can succumb to the same temptation of equating adversity with God’s disapproval of us (Job 4:7-8). While Jesus was journeying to Jerusalem, the crowd wanted to inform Him of some tragic news. Galileans who were at the temple to worship God were violently killed by soldiers while in the act of giving a sacrifice. Pilate’s use of violence during that time was not uncommon, he often met protestors with overwhelming force. According to one theologian, the crowd believed that violent deaths were a judgment from God to reveal the hypocrisy of an individual. ^[1] Based on their set notions of God’s judgment, they arrived at the following conclusion; these men must have been dreadful sinners and were suffering the consequences of their actions.

Jesus knew the heart of the crowd, and above all He knew that their image of God was distorted. For the crowd, their relationship with God was one that was transactional; when you deposit good deeds you are entitled to withdraw a life free of problems or pain. The reverse would also be true, adversity is a punishment for those who mess up. Jesus turns this exacting economy upside-down by asking the crowd, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans?” For Jesus, that kind of economy leads to a false sense of security because it is rooted in humanity’s righteousness rather than God’s grace.

Jesus is seeking to remind the crowd that adversity is not necessarily an indication of an individual’s relationship with God. During times in our lives when we are facing seemingly insurmountable challenges, the forces of the enemy tempt us to doubt God’s love. When we expect good things to happen to us based on our performance, we begin to feel deserving and the element of joyous surprise is lost; but God’s grace is always a surprise, because it comes when we least expect it.

If you are feeling discouraged, dare to believe God's promises over your circumstances. Every challenge we face is a reminder of our need of God's grace. Could it be that God is asking you, "Do you think the pain you're experiencing means you are worse than everyone else? Is that why you think you are suffering?" Do not be surprised when God says, "Not at all!"

Reflection

Can you remember the last time you were blamed for something that was not your fault? How did it make you feel? On the other hand, have you ever fallen into the same judgment trap that the crowd did in Luke 13? If so, is it possible that you can be withholding grace from someone else because you believe they deserve the punishment they are getting? Read the words of Jesus again by placing the name of that person there, "Do you think _____ is a worse sinner than all the other people from Collegedale? Is that why _____ has suffered? Wait to hear Jesus' still small voice and do not be too surprised if the answer is, "Not at all!"

Prayer

God, thank You for looking beyond my current circumstances and seeing my spiritual need. My perception is limited but Your perspective is everlasting. As I seek to embrace Your perspective in my life, help me to trust Your decisions rather than my desires. Give me the strength to receive Your grace that surprises me every time I feel like I have failed You. Remind me that every challenge I face is an opportunity to witness Your power at work in my life!

NEWS AND RESOURCES

- This week President's Cabinet approved the creation of a taskforce that will set the guidelines for approving Student Mission trips this coming Fall. Currently, there are over 30 students who seek to serve Adventist organizations around the world by volunteering as student missionaries. The task force had their first meeting this week and consists of the Vice President for Spiritual Life & Chaplain, Biology Department Chair, Dean of the School of Nursing, University Medical Director, Director of Records & Advisement, uQuest Missions Director, and Student Missions Director. The task force will look at all available data relating to travel restrictions, evacuation possibilities, location-specific health risks, and location-specific healthcare capacities, and then seek to make final decisions before the end of July. The taskforce will continue monitoring individual locations as required, and make any decisions regarding whether a student should home return from the mission field before their scheduled return date. Please keep our student missionaries and the taskforce in your prayers as they courageously but cautiously seek to support Adventist missions around the world.
- Share your prayer requests or praises with us via text message using your mobile phone. **Text-to-Pray: 423-281-8996.**
- While we cannot meet in person because of physical distancing restrictions, we encourage you to make an appointment to **talk online** with Chaplain [Anna Bennett](#) or [Joseph Khabbaz](#) if you need someone to pray with or are desiring to grow spiritually.

Every blessing.