

*At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."*

*6Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' 8He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"*

Some things in life I just react to. My hand touches a hot burner and it is off that burner before I have a conscious thought.

A bright light shines in my eyes and I shut my eyes before I have a conscious thought.

I see a police car when I am driving and my foot comes off the gas before I have a conscious thought.

As soon as I say that you know a lot about me, my habit of driving too fast, how I think of the police as a threat.

You know my habit, my attitude is wrong. And I know it is wrong. Yet I persist in my wrongdoing. Only a ticket, or an accident will slow me down.

I think of how many times someone has joked about changing their language when I am around - like I am the spiritual policeman. He knows what he says is wrong - not pleasing to God - but it becomes like my slipping 5 or 8 miles above the speed limit - a habit that he has made peace with.

What would it take to change me? News of a crackdown by the police would change me or witnessing a serious accident. Maybe even reading about an accident in the morning paper would get through to my heart.

This morning Paul and Jesus are not talking about speeding a little nor about being careless with your language but about your heart, and God.

Is pleasing God important to you? Or is God like a patrol car sitting beside the road?

Are you trying to get by with God? Making the minimum payment with God? Paul writing to the Corinthians warns them against taking God's grace for granted. We have Christ - we're safe they might have boasted.

I'm baptized, I'm confirmed, I go to church every Sunday. I sing in the choir, I usher, I preach the sermon, I take communion.

Paul says, "Remember Israel." When they went through the sea it was baptism. When they ate manna and water flowed out of a rock it was communion. Why that rock was Christ himself. Yet when they complained, or worshipped idols or were involved in sexual immorality God struck them down. Pay attention. The same will happen to you.

Jesus took the evening paper and said the same. "Did you see those tragedies on the front page - Galileans who were slaughtered by Pilate? The people who were killed when a tower fell? It could be you. Turn to God now.

Bear fruit.

Just because God hasn't cut you down yet may only mean God is giving you a little more time.

Bear fruit.

When your neighbor gets cancer what will you do? Say a prayer, "Thank you God it wasn't me?" Or will it be a wakeup call? Will you turn to God with all your heart, praying, reading the Holy Scriptures, preparing for the day the tower falls on you?

How is your heart with God? Jesus suggested that if you want to know, look at how you treat your neighbors.

Love - not just words and nice thoughts - not even just prayers.

Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick.

There are teenagers here that you haven't learned their names. And you don't speak to. And it doesn't bother you.

There are families that are battling sickness, and bills are mounting up, and you walk right by them on your way to the latest soap opera, or an Indians game or a Bible study. And that doesn't bother you anymore.

You sing a hymn, and your mind is more on how your voice is sounding and the pace we are singing than upon the Lord. We pray and your mind is filled with thought about, "I wish they would hurry up." Or why don't those people take that kid out so I can hear better. Or maybe as a parent you are paying so much attention to your child that you are not praying at all. And when the service is over the fact that you have not worshipped God today, no longer bothers you.

Bear fruit. The year of patience with you may be over soon.

But in the middle of Jesus warning is a hint of what is to come. Jesus will be the Galilean whose blood Pilate will take next.

The very one who speaks the warning will be himself, the fig tree chopped down, the one crushed in Jerusalem.

There is no way I could overstate that God forgives you for Jesus' sake - all your sins, every sin forgiven.

There is no way I could declare too much: Beware of hardness of heart in you, and complacency - taking God for granted. God will not be mocked.

Look at your own heart. Are you hoping to get by with God? Beware, no one will.

Look at your own heart. Are you afraid of God's judgement? Fear not - God's love in Jesus knows no bounds.

Will the fig tree bear fruit? Will the tower fall? Will Pilate slaughter a Galilean?

Amen.