

LUKE I Now is the Time to Repent

Luke 13:1-9

Sin, Suffering and Repentance

- 1. Why do good things happen to bad people & bad things happen to good people?**
 - a. People ask why did God create a world in which bad things happen...
 - b. Well He could've created a world in which nothing bad could happen,
 - c. but we would have to be machines > robots rather than free-will beings.
 - 2. Without free-will there is no love because love requires a choice...**
 - a. God took the Risk for YOU... You are created in the Image of God as a Free-will being
 - b. and as a moral being... —>That Makes Us Complicated & LIFE Complicated!
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I. THE NEED FOR PERSONAL REPENTANCE (v.1-5)

A. TRAGEDY OF THE GALILEANS

- 1. Pilate was a Ruthless Leader – who ruled with an iron fist**
 - a) He didn't care about the religious convictions of the Jews
 - b) And he prided himself on crushing any rumor of rebellion
- 2. He once brought official Roman military flags & Imperial Insignias into Jerusalem which infuriated the Jews**
 - a) who resented having Pagan Symbols and Caesar's image in the Holy City.
 - b) Pilate threatened to kill the protestors — and they were willing to die!
 - c) So he relented and moved it to Caesarea—But the Animosity remained
- 3. Later When Pilate Took Money From the Temple Treasury to Pay for a Roman Aqueduct, there was a Jewish protest in Jerusalem...**
 - a) Pilate had Roman soldiers disguise themselves in civilian cloths...
Wearing cloaks over their battle uniforms
 - b) They infiltrated the crowd and on signal they pulled out their weapons and killed hundreds of innocent and unarmed Jews.
- 4. Galilee in particular was known as a hotbed of Political Dissent,**
 - a) full of zealots and Jewish Nationalists who hated Rome...
 - b) Pilate had these men killed while they were sacrificing in the Temple.
 - c) A shocking attack on worshippers at the temple in Jerusalem
 - d) It would be like a shooter massacring Christians during worship services on live tv
- 5. We don't know the men or motives of those bringing this up to Jesus...**
 - a) Do they want Jesus to Take Sides with the Political Zealots against Rome?
 - b) Do they want to trap Jesus in His words to bring charges against Him?
 - c) Do they want Jesus to condemn Pilate's sins and not their own?
 - d) Or ask why God allowed such bad things to happen to good people?
- 6. But Jesus raises the issue to a whole other level...**

and asks them: were these worse sinners than everyone else?

B. TRAGEDY OF THE TOWER

1. Then He brings up another tragedy of a different type—

- a) Not of Political Violence—but A Tragic Accident...
- b) A Tower in Jerusalem, the Tower of Siloam, fell and 18 people were killed.

2. Was that Pilate's fault? / Rome's Fault? / God's Fault? / Their own fault?

Why Do Tyrants Get Away with Murder? Why Do Towers Fall on People?

3. WE LIVE IN A WORLD BROKEN BY SIN, SUFFERING AND DEATH

- a) We Experience Suffering from the ACTIONS of OTHERS (EX: a Drunk Driver)
- b) We Experience Suffering from OUR OWN ACTIONS (Ex: Alcoholism)
- c) We Experience Suffering from TIME AND CHANCE (Ex: Random Accidents)
 - I remember just 2 years ago a young married couple was visiting the Redwoods, and a Redwood tree fell on their car and killed them both...

C. WERE THEY WORSE SINNERS?

1. The Jews believed sin and suffering were directly connected.

- a) While Job was suffering with physical pain and mental anguish, his friend Eliphaz declared, '*who ever perished being innocent?*' (Job 4:7).
- b) When the Disciples saw the Blind man in John 9 they asked Jesus: *Who Sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind?*
- c) When you realize how strong this belief system was—
 - It explains why the rich man steps over Lazarus at his gate everyday...
 - Or Why the Priest & Levite walk by the man beaten half-dead in the road

2. It Creates a Self-Confirming Bias of MORAL SUPERIORITY...

- a) **FIRST:** it Helps People Feel Morally Superior that God must love them more
- b) **SECOND:** This Moral Superiority allows people to justify themselves and their sins
- c) **THIRD:** it's an easy way to condemn anyone who suffers painful tragedy or loss Which only increases their own pain, sorrow and suffering.
- d) **FOURTH:** It makes God a respecter of persons to Strike some people Dead for doing the same things others do with abandon.

- **"When the blind English poet John Milton was old and obscure he was visited one day by Charles II, son of the king that the Puritans had beheaded. "Your blindness is a judgment from God for the part you took against my father," said the king. Milton replied, "If I have lost my *sight* through God's judgment, what can you say of your father who lost his *head*?"¹**

D. WERE THEY WORSE SINNERS? —NO

- 1. Jesus did not take the bait to a debate—He uses it as a teachable moment**
- 2. There is a more immediate issue than "them" and "their sin" ...**
- 3. There is something much more important than the timing or cause of death**

Which is: "only repentance can change death from a tragic end into a bridge to a new kind of life." (Darrell Bock)²

¹ Warren Wiersbe, Bible Exposition Commentary

² Darrell Bock, Luke, IVP NT Commentary

II. THE NEED FOR PERSONAL GROWTH (v.6-9)

A. A PARABLE ABOUT A BARREN TREE

1. **The Owner of the Vineyard Kept Checking if the Tree would produce fruit**
 - a) A Fig Tree produces fruit twice a year—In Earlier Summer and in Early Fall
2. **But this Tree is Barren and Has Not Produced Any Fruit in three years...**
 - a) Levitical law declared that fruit from newly planted trees was NOT to be eaten for the first 3 years, then 4th year was dedicated to the Lord,
 - b) the 5th year was the 1st year allowed to be Harvested! (**Lev. 19:23–25**)
 - c) And This Tree Has Not Produced Fruit in ANY of the Years since!
3. **This would explain why the owner would say to cut it down...**
 - a) The Tree is using up space in the Vineyard that could be used for a healthy tree
 - b) It's also using up the nutrients of the ground which could go to a healthy living tree
 - c) He Basically has a dead tree year after year in the middle of his vineyard
4. **We Can See in the Parable—A prophetic picture of Israel...**
 - a) Israel was symbolically referred to as the Lord's Vineyard (**Isaiah 5:1–7**)
 - b) God planted His people in a promised land—He blessed and Cared for Israel
 - c) But Israel Was Rebellious and Beat and Killed the prophets sent by God...
 - d) And They Are Seeking to Kill the Son of God in the most inhuman way possible...
5. **John the Prophet warned Israel they needed fruits of repentance (Lk 3:7–9)**
 - a) "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Lk 3:9)

B. A PARABLE ABOUT THE PATIENCE & GRACE OF GOD

1. **The Fig Tree had not produced fruit for years—it was barren...**
—Why Let it take up the ground? Cut it Down!
2. **But the Keeper of the Vineyard asks for more time...**
—one more year to work w/ it and try and get it going again
3. **God is patient and merciful and willing to help you make it! (2 Peter 3:9).**

C. A PARABLE ABOUT THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

1. **God's patience is merciful and His Grace is incredible...**
 - a) But God Does Not Force People To to Repent Against Their Will
 - b) He Knocks—But You Have to Open the Door
 - c) He is patient but repentance is still necessary
2. **When Jesus was escorted by soldiers through Jerusalem to Golgotha,**
 - a) a crowd was following and the women were along side Him weeping...
 - b) Jesus said, "do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.
 - c) The time will come when you will ask for the rocks and mountains to fall on you
 - d) If they would murder Jesus when the tree is green, then what will they do when the tree is dead? (Lk 23:28ff)

3. When Jesus asked: Were these Galileans worse sinners than anyone else?

- a) He said No, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish...
- b) Jesus knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed by Rome if it refused to repent
- c) And just as Jesus prophesied—many perished at the swords of Roman Soldiers and many perished being crushed by the rocks and stones

4. Even Today We'd rather debate who is the worse sinner...

- a) and how they Died and why they deserved it...
- b) But unless we repent—all our Moralizing & Finger Wagging means Nothing!

D. A PARABLE LEFT UNFINISHED...

1. Do you notice how this parable is left open-ended and unfinished?

- a) Was the Tree Spared or was it cut down? Did the Tree Finally Produce Fruit?
- b) Did the Tree Respond to the Special Care of the Master?

2. The Parable is Left Unfinished—because the ending is decided by you.

- a) We could compartmentalize it and say it this doesn't apply to us...
It only applies to Jerusalem and not to me...
- b) Or We could say: I'm not like these other people worse than myself...

3. This is not just about Jerusalem—it is about the FINAL JUDGEMENT

- a) As John said: *"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."* (Lk 3:9)

4. We Are Called to Bear Fruit...

- a) ***The Fruit of Repentance***
- b) ***The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–25)***

5. God sent His Son to Die so You Can Live!

6. Why did God create a universe in which bad things can happen?

- a) Couldn't God have done that? YES
- b) but you would have to be a machine robot or animals with no free-will
- c) No free-will means no ability to love or be loved

7. God did something better... He created You.

- a) Imperfect, but able to change, and love and be perfectly loved for eternity
- b) This is Why He Created You in His Image
- c) This is Why HE Gave You Moral Free-Will
- d) This is Why He Sent Jesus to Die For Your Sins

CONCLUSION:

- 1. The ending of the parable is left open for a reason!**
- 2. This parable is left undecided to be decided by you (Galatians 6:7–8)**
- 3. God waits for you—He is waiting and watching for your return**
- 4. and now we wait and watch for His return...**
- 5. to be with Him for eternity**