

Commentary on Luke chapter 13, by Chuck Smith 8.28.22

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August memory verse: Romans 6:14-17 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

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Now there were present at that season ([Luk 13:1](#))

And, of course, now Luke may have gone on in a period of time. We don't know how much time elapsed between verse 59 of chapter 12, and 13:1. It could be that this synagogue is somewhere down near Jericho.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices ([Luk 13:1](#)).

Now the Galileans were often hotheaded. They were always chaffing under the Roman rule, and most of the revolts against the Roman government came in the area of Galilee. So they are relating to Jesus how that there were some Galileans who were probably involved in a ruckus against Rome, and Herod sent his soldiers, and when the soldiers came, they were in the act of offering sacrifices to God. And the soldiers killed them right there, and their blood was mingled with the blood of the sacrifices. And, of course, to the Jew that was a very heinous thing.

And so they had just informed Jesus about this.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were sinners greater than all of the rest of the Galileans ([Luk 13:2](#)),

Do you suppose that they are the worst sinners in Galilee?

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because they suffered such things? ([Luk 13:2](#))

Do you think that this is an act of God's judgment because they were worse sinners than all the rest?

Now it is so often that we make that mistake of when something happens to a person that is a very sad or tragic event, so many times people look on it as judgement. "Oh, ho, they are getting what they deserve, aren't they. I wonder what they did to deserve that terrible thing." And Jesus is putting down this concept. "Hey, do you think because this happened to them, they were worst sinners than the rest of the people in Galilee?" He said,

I tell you, No way: and, unless you repent, you are also going to perish. Now the eighteen people, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and killed them, do you think that that happened because they were sinners who were living there in Jerusalem? ([Luk 13:3-4](#))

Now the pool of Siloam is down in a area that you have to go down many steps to get down to the pool of Siloam. And there are buildings around the pool of Siloam now, walls and all, and they were probably building a tower. And the people used to go to the pool of Siloam. It was a crowded place because that was the main water supply for Jerusalem. And the women would do their washing there in the pool. And it's no doubt always crowded with people. And this tower that they were building there at the pool of Siloam fell, and eighteen people were crushed to death.

And so Jesus calls attentions to this tragedy. He said, "Do you think that that happened because they were the worst sinners in Jerusalem?"

No, I tell you: unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And then He spoke a parable to them; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit from it, and he found none. And he said to the dresser of his vineyard, Three years I've been waiting for this tree to produce fruit, and I have found none: cut it down; [why should it take energy or nutrients out of the soil?] Why cumbereth it the ground? But the gardener answered and said, Lord, let it go for one more year, and I'll dig about it, and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, good: and if not, after that we'll cut it down ([Luk 13:5-9](#)).

The fig tree is used in a symbolic sense of the nation Israel. The Lord desiring to receive fruit, and not receiving it. Coming for fruit, and not finding it. And the one more opportunity that is given to them to bare fruit. If they don't, then it will be cut down. Tragically they did not, and the nation was cut off.

And as he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. There was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could not lift herself up ([Luk 13:10-11](#)).

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Now I have seen people over there in the Middle East, who are bent over from their waist, the upper torso goes down, and they usually hold their head out, but they are bent double from their stomach. The upper torso down, and their head is sort of by their feet, looking up, just bent over. And it's a very grotesque sight to see. Here was a woman who had this grotesque appearance, being bent double. She was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day when Jesus was there. According to the account, her condition was caused as the result of demonic activity, a spirit of infirmity.

And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and he said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God ([Luk 13:12-13](#)).

Imagine what that must have done in the synagogue that day. With this woman, who after eighteen years in this bent over condition, was able to stand up straight, and started praising God, and glorifying God.

Now the ruler of the synagogue responded with indignation, because Jesus had healed her on the sabbath day ([Luk 13:14](#)),

And not to Jesus, he didn't have that much courage, but to the people.

he said, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, but not on the sabbath day ([Luk 13:14](#)).

So sort of rebuking the people, saying, "Look, you've got six days to be healed, don't come on the Sabbath day."

And the Lord answered him, and said, Hypocrite, do you not on the sabbath day loose your ox or your donkey from the stall, and lead him away to watering trough? ([Luk 13:15](#))

One thing about the Jews was they were always very humane. A high value upon life, human and animal. This humane aspect to the date is one of the great qualities of the Jewish people. Some of the greatest hospitals, open to everybody, their value that they place upon life. And so because of that, their law would allow them to untie the donkeys, or their ox, and lead it to water, even though it was the Sabbath day, and that was work. Because of the humanness of it or the kindness of it to animals, they were allowed to do that in the law. And so Jesus said, "Which of you, if you have an ox or a donkey, don't you loose it, don't you untie it on the Sabbath day to give it water?"

And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, who Satan has bound, for lo, these eighteen years, be loosed on the sabbath day? ([Luk 13:16](#))

All I have done is untie a woman that Satan had bound up for eighteen years. So what if it is the Sabbath day? You loose your donkey to give him water.

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And when he said these things, all of his adversaries were ashamed [rightfully so]: and all of the people rejoiced in the glorious things that were done by him. And he said, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? ([Luk 13:17-18](#))

Now here He has just had this run-in with the religious leaders. The religious systems of man, who had taken the revelation of God, the law the ordinances, the statutes, and they had made such a system out of it that it was hard for a simple man to come to God with this complex system that men had made. And so really, as Jesus said, "You won't enter the kingdom yourself, and you actually hinder those who would like to come into the kingdom."

It's tragic when religion becomes a hindrance to man's coming to God. Rather than an assistance to man's coming to God. But that's the capacity of man. He is able to take a simple thing and make it extremely complex by setting up his own hierarchy in it, and his systems of authority and power.

And Jesus said just come up against the authority who would hold back the work of God on these people because of some tradition that they had developed, a concept of man that had become popular among them. And thus, they would hold back the people from God's work in their lives.

And so Jesus said, "What shall I liken the kingdom of God to?"

what can I give to resemble it? It's like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed into a great tree ([Luk 13:18-19](#));

Wait a minute, something is wrong. A mustard seed is a herb. It belonged in the herb gardens. A mustard seed never became a great tree. There is something abnormal about this. There is an abnormal growth here.

and it grew, and waxed into a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it ([Luk 13:19](#)).

In college I had a professor who told us not to try to preach from the parables until we had been pastoring for at least thirty years. He said, "It will take you that long to understand the parables."

What do college professors know? I started preaching from the parables immediately. I wish I could retract many of these sermons that I have preached from the parables. It's amazing how they have changed in the last thirty years.

This parable, and the following parable of the leaven hid in three measures of meal until it leavens the whole lump, have had two widely divergent interpretations. There are some, mainly liberal theologians, who use these parables to show how the kingdom of God will start very small like a mustard seed, which is so very small. Yet, it grew into a

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great tree and the fowls of the air came and lodged in its branches. And so they teach that, though the kingdom of God will start with a very small beginning, the twelve disciples, yet it will grow, and grow, and expand, until it encumbers the whole world. And all kinds of nations and people will be able to lodge in its branches. And they say it really doesn't matter what a person believes, they all find shelter and lodging in this great tree. It's able to accommodate a wide variety of beliefs and systems. And again, the same idea with a little bit of leaven hid in three measures of meal, until the whole of it is leavened.

Is again a symbol of how just the Gospel will begin in just a little part of the world, but will gradually expand until the whole world has been brought to Christ.

These theologians back in 1935 and '36 were proclaiming every day, and in every way, the world is getting better, and better, and better. That was before Hitler began his movement into Austria. After Hitler's rise, somehow you didn't hear that phrase anymore. Because we saw that horrible holocaust of World War II. But unfortunately, things haven't improved much since World War II. The world is perhaps in the worst shape it has ever been in. And far from the church being a healthy influence, bringing the kingdom of God. And, of course, that's what was going to happen according to this philosopher. The church is going to bring the kingdom of God to the world. And one of these days the church will take over the governments of the world, and we'll have a theocratic government, and will be able to rule, and we'll bring the glorious kingdom age. And we'll bring peace, and the men will beat their swords in the plowshares. And the church is going to bring to pass, the glorious kingdom age.

Now there are still groups that do believe this. The Mormon church, for instance, has set itself up to take over the government as soon as it collapses. And they believe that the collapse must come, and they will then step in in the shambles. And they will establish a righteous government. And we will all become Mormons. And we will have peace upon the earth.

But unfortunately, the Jehovah witnesses are planning much the same. So it looks like when the system falls into shambles that we are going to have a first class war as to who will be setting up the theocratic government. Whether it be the Mormons or the Jehovah witnesses. I am of the opinion that it will not be the accomplishment of men or of the church, but will, and can only be, accomplished by the return of Jesus Christ Himself. And I don't think that it is going to happen prior to His return. In fact, I think everyday, and in every way, the world is getting worse, and worse, and worse. And that's pretty much in keeping with what Jesus said would happen. "For evil days," He said, "shall wax worse, and worse."

Thus, the second interpretation to these parables. Guess which one I believe? Number two, the mustard seed growing into a tree is abnormal growth. It isn't natural growth; it's abnormal growth. Now there is what is known as expository constancy, and that is, you use a figure of speech in a parabolic form, and that figure of speech remains the

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same in all parables. So in all of your parables the fowls or the birds are never used in a good sense, but in an evil sense. When the seed fell by the wayside, the birds of the air came and devoured it, that it could not take root. And what did Jesus say the birds of the air were? Satan comes in and snatches it away. So what Jesus is saying, is that, though the church may experience an abnormal growth, it will become the lodging place of many evil systems. And as I look at church history, that is what I see is indeed the fact.

When Constantine, for political reasons, gave the edict of toleration and supposedly embraced Christianity and joined a church to the state, that was the darkest hour in the history of the church. For in joining the church to the state, he introduced into the church a multitude of pagan practices, of which the church has never been able to fully free itself.

To the church of Sardis, the protestant reformation, Jesus said, "I have somewhat against you, I have not found your works complete before God."

The Protestant reformation came as a protest against the evil practices that had arisen within the Catholic church, especially the selling of indulgences. For the pope was desirous to build a great cathedral in Rome, St. Peters. And the money wasn't coming in fast enough to build this glorious monument that he was desiring to put up as a symbol for Christianity. And so someone in the council came up with a bright idea. "Everybody likes to sin, why don't we sell them forgiveness for sins." And they can buy an indulgence before they ever indulged. So as they're indulging, the thing is covered, because they've already bought their forgiveness. "So you want a little escapade on the side. You want to go out and get drunk? Fine, go down and buy your drunk indulgence. You want to have an affair? Go down and get an adultery indulgence." And they started selling the indulgences to the people. And this so incensed Martin Luther that he took his ninety-five thesis, his objections to the practices that had developed within the church, and he tacked them on the door, and he protested. And thus, the name Protestant. Beginning of the Protestant reformation.

A dark black history, birds in the branches, fowls. Leaven, as we mentioned earlier, when Jesus said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," creates a fermenting process, rottenness. The three measures of meal, going back into the Old Testament when the angel of the Lord visited Abraham, he ordered Sarah to prepare something for him, and she took three measures of meal, and made some bread for them. And at that point they became symbolic of fellowship with God. So that under the law, when they had made the burned offering sacrifice, which was the sacrifice of consecration of a person's life to God, they followed it with the meal offering, which was made of three measures of meal, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, the three measures of meal. And they would offer this as a sacrifice, which symbolized the offering of my works to God, bringing me into fellowship with Him.

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Now in the offering of the sacrifices, they were never to use any leaven. So that the leaven inserted into the three measures of meal is an evil thing. But yet, that evil will permeate until it has an effect upon the whole lump. And unfortunately, this has been again the experience of the church. And as we look at the condition of the church today, we see that it is far from what Jesus said it should be. There is leaven and it has affected the whole church, and the witness of the church is sadly hindered by the leaven within it.

Now Jesus went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying towards Jerusalem ([Luk 13:22](#)).

So He is now on His way back toward Jerusalem.

Then one said to him, Lord, are there only a few that are going to be saved? And he said unto them, Strive [the word in Greek is agoniso, strive] to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able to. When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door, and you begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he will answer and say unto, I don't not know you from whence you are: Then shall ye begin to say, Oh, but we have eaten and drunk in thy presence [we've taken communion], you have taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I don't know from whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. And there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, You better get out of here; because Herod is going to kill you. And Jesus said to them, You go tell that fox, Behold, I'm casting out devils, and I'm curing today and tomorrow, and the third day I will be perfected ([Luk 13:23-32](#)).

This is the only person of which Jesus really spake in such a derogatory manner. Herod had gone over the limit. Jesus had absolutely nothing to say to him, except the message he sent, "You go tell that fox I'm going to do my work,".

When Jesus appeared before Pilate, Pilate sent Him to Herod, and Herod was glad because he had heard about Jesus and he was curious. He wanted to see Jesus work some miracle. And when Jesus came to Herod, Herod asked him a lot of questions and Jesus didn't say a word. He had no answers. He didn't say a word to Herod. It is sad when a man's condition is so bad that the Lord has no word for him at all. Jesus refused to speak to him, had no word for him, that is how far he had gone down. What a sad condition to be in. "You tell him that the third day I shall be perfected." "Herod is going to kill." He says, "I'm going to be there."

Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following ([Luk 13:33](#)):

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Now remember he was journeying towards Jerusalem. He said,

it isn't proper that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem ([Luk 13:33](#)).

And then He cried,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and you stoned them that were sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, You will not see me, until the time come when you shall say, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord ([Luk 13:34-35](#)).

Now they did not see Him publicly until His triumphant entry, and what were they crying at His triumphant entry? "Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." You see, He had just been warned about, "Herod is about to kill you. You better be careful. Herod is about to kill you." "So, you go tell him I've got my work to do. I'll be there. I've got journey today and tomorrow, third day I'll arrive. It's not proper that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." But then His lament, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stoned them that have been sent to you; how often I would have gathered you together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not!"

Now when He made His triumphant entry, as we will get in the nineteenth chapter here of Luke's gospel, again, as He is looking at Jerusalem, He again laments and cries over Jerusalem, "If you had only known, at least in this thy day, the things which belonged to your peace! But they are hid from your eyes" ([Luke 19:42](#)). They're crying, "Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

So I feel that Jesus is perhaps referring to the fact that He will not be seen in Jerusalem until the day of His triumphant entry. It is possible that He is referring to His second coming. But it is true that at the triumphant entry they were crying, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." But it is also true that things are going to get so bad in Jerusalem prior to the return of Jesus Christ, when the antichrist comes to the rebuilt temple and declares that he is god and demands to be worshipped as god and begins to persecute the Jews with a greater persecution than they have ever known before, then they will be crying, "O, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." They'll be praying for the Messiah, and Jesus will come.

So which of two, or perhaps it refers to both, but Jesus is making reference here, "And they will not see Him until they pray, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'"