

Luke 13

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Title: Salvation and dealing with the those who don't get it!

A common thing I hear from some Christians is there are people I struggle with at my church. Luke 13 is about salvation, but the focus is on religious people and secular leaders. That leads to my alternative title, "I'm God, I make the rules and your salvation is only based on faith that I (Jesus) paid for all your sins, and it doesn't matter what you think about it!" Many people falsely think their way is "the way" to happiness. I also realize many of our struggles with fellow Christians are personal issues. This section of Luke deals with those who falsely think they're good enough as they are. The point is about keeping our egos in check and reminding ourselves we only do good works to be a witness for Jesus, and not to earn points with God!

With that said, I'll use the rest of this lesson to summarize the stories in this chapter: Chapter 13 begins with a lecture Jesus started in the last chapter on salvation. He was describing two "news stories" then. One was about Jewish men killed by Pilate's soldiers while offering sacrifices at the temple. The other's a story about a tower that fell in Jerusalem and killed a bunch of people. Jesus didn't discuss the horror of each story but said in effect, "When we die we all face judgment and how we die is irrelevant to that judgment." As most of us know, each of us are accountable to God! Accepting His complete payment for our sins is the only way we get "in the door"! God holds each of us accountable, for what we know or should know about Him and His sin payment!

Then comes a story about Jesus condemning a fig tree for taking up space. Realize the fig tree was just as much a symbol of Israel as say the bald eagle is of the United States. The Israelite leaders knew this, and it's why Jesus used it as an illustration. It's got nothing to do with figs. Jesus spent roughly 3 years traveling around Israel explaining by illustrations and miracles here is what God expects of us, (trust in His full sin payment) and not trying to impress God with our works. Jesus said in effect after the cross, the Nation of Israel will never again be a witness for Him as an entity. In 70AD, the Romans destroyed that nation, killed millions and it didn't become a nation again till 1946. Even the modern state of Israel corporately rejects Jesus. This means Jesus understood that corporate rejection will occur in Israel until His Second Coming. Keep in mind the hope of the religious Jewish people was for the Messiah to rule then and there. Jesus is condemning their lack of faith in God's redemptive plan. Obviously, Jesus will rule there despite their collective rejecting of Him due to God's unconditional promise to that nation!

Next is a story about a woman who demons damaged so she could not stand up straight. She didn't ask Jesus for help. He just cured her as a demonstration of His power. I always say with physical problems try medical things and consider demonic issues when we pray for guidance. The reason for this story is the synagogue leader there criticized Jesus for working on the Sabbath. There is no Old Testament law forbidding helping her (Jesus just did), but it violated their interpretation of Sabbath rules then. I'll just say Jesus then got on their case about helping those in need versus their interpretations.

That leads to a lecture about corruption in church life (applies to synagogues too since churches did not exist yet). Jesus describes the church as being the smallest type of seed (planted in Israel then). When it grows into a big bush, birds nest there. He's not being literal. In the Old Testament a bird (or birds) are symbolic for demonic spirits. God's not anti-bird, this is symbolic. Jesus then drives the point home by describing yeast mixed with bread. Yeast is a biblical symbol for sin as it corrupts by puffing up. Jesus

is not anti-church, He's just saying church leaders can be corrupt. Remember He stated this after being criticized for curing the woman who was hunched over.

This leads to a story about salvation itself. Jesus says only a few are saved, and we must strive to enter there. This story was told here as many religious Jewish people then thought only Jewish people can be saved. The parable beginning in Verse 23 is about striving to enter heaven. It began with someone who asked Jesus are there many saved? He answered that we should strive to enter heaven. We must admit that sounds contradictory being saved by faith alone. Let me explain: When Jesus mentioned striving it is not about working hard to get saved. The idea is striving to not be fooled by religious works to enter heaven or thinking we can ignore Jesus till it's too late. Remember the goal of demons is for people not to be saved or if we're saved, to become ineffective witnesses for Jesus. Striving includes a willingness to fight whatever keeps people from being saved. I realize my readers are already saved! We must keep in mind that leading others to Jesus is a spiritual battle. That's why we always need to pray for people's hearts to be open to the truth of the Gospel message.

Verse 24 says many will seek to enter but not be able. This refers to those who thought living a godly (moral) life is good enough to be saved. Verse 25 describes a too late. Obviously, it refers to death. I would also argue some people's hearts can go so cold, or they could be so fixed by false religion, that's also a sign of being too late. Only God knows who is saved, so I pray for people's hearts to be open. I have no idea who will be saved, so in that sense I don't give up on people! The application to believers is not about losing one's salvation, but to strive to not let our egos think we are something special or let our lives wander away from using our lives for His glory.

Jesus then talks about people who say heard sermons on Jesus but never committed their lives to being a follower of Him. As I stated earlier there is a "too late" being death or in many cases, people's hearts have grown so cold, they won't commit and suffer eternally for it. For what it's worth, I've heard many a death bed confession, many of which were very sincere, as they realized how much they wasted their lives on things that didn't matter. To those who think, "I'll do that one day", remember we could die as the people Jesus mentioned at the beginning of the chapter who will never have a chance to make a big "death bed" confession! Yes, we can be saved one day, but then one wastes the most precious thing He gives us, time that can be used for His glory!

Then Jesus makes a statement that people from all over the world will be saved. It contradicts the view of some Jewish leaders that only Jewish people can be saved. I realize that's only a minority view as of today, but it was prevalent when Jesus made that statement. He said some (not all) are last (order of the people who die) will be first and vice versa. It is another hint there are rewards in heaven, and it means God calls us to use the time He gives us for His glory!

In Verse 31 some Pharisees warn Jesus that Herod, (not the one who killed the babies, a son of his who was ruling in parts of Israel) wanted to kill Him. This is the same king who had John the Baptist killed. The short version is the Herod dynasty worked with the Romans. They let that family rule there! Jesus said to those Pharisees that this Herod is a fox, meaning not very powerful but still cunning. The point being Jesus was getting at was whatever the political or religious rulers do or say, Jesus knew what His mission was and it was His destiny to die for our sins. One of my favorite comments on the question of who killed Jesus: My answer is He gave up His life freely for my sins, so that settles that!

The chapter ends with a statement that it always was God's desire for the Israelites to gather together to worship God. Let's be honest it was Jewish people who killed each of the prophets. That's why we get

a chapter ending that says in effect Israel corporately has lost their opportunity to be a witness for Him. Israel won't corporately see Jesus again until they corporately ask for His return!

Bottom line, this lesson is mostly about Jesus confronting leaders and explaining who's really in charge and the fact God wants us to use our lives for His glory no matter what!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on the link for the detailed study. It's still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for everyone who reads this.