

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 12- Luke 12:54-59

244- Analyzing the Present Time

June 29, 2014

Luke 12:54-59

54 And He was also saying to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out.

55 And when *you see* a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out *that way*.

56 You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

57 "And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?

58 For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on *your way there* make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

59 I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."

To the Glory of God

Thomas Aquinas was one of the smartest men who ever lived. Aquinas was born in Italy in 1225, and he died at the age of only 49 in 1274. And during his less than 50 year life span- Aquinas influenced the Christian Church like nobody else before or since- with the exception of Augustine.

But as smart as this man was and as influential as he was- Aquinas did great damage to the Cause of Jesus Christ because his teachings developed a real bad concept called "Natural Theology", which is the false idea that lost people can come to Salvation in Jesus Christ

through the *“process of human reasoning”* in conjunction with the *“ordinary experience of nature”*.¹

Now in Alabama English that means that lost people can look at God's Creation and by and through the power of their own human reasoning- they can eventually come to the conclusion that they are lost and they can come to the conclusion that God is real and they can then conjure up enough human will power to “decide” to repent and trust in Jesus Christ for the Salvation of their souls.

And as Aquinas brought forth his false theology back in the 13th Century- the leadership of the visible Church at that time bought into it hook, line and sinker. But in order to accept what Aquinas taught- they had to also reject what Augustine had taught some 900 years earlier- because what Augustine taught about both God's Sovereignty and Salvation was diametrically the opposite of what Aquinas taught.

You see, back in the 4th Century- Augustine taught that lost people are fatally crippled with what he termed “Moral Inability”, which is the concept that lost people *cannot* come to Salvation on their own absent a Sovereign Move of God the Holy Spirit and they *cannot* do this because they *will not*. Augustine taught that the Holy Bible proclaims the very unpopular Truth that lost people are *unable* to repent and trust in Jesus in and by their own power precisely because they do not *want* to- and so people *cannot* choose in any meaningful and lasting way contrary to their desires. And for proof of his teaching- Augustine offered two verses from sacred Scripture- the first one being **1 Corinthians 2:14** that says:

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Notice here that God's Word says that the “**natural man**”, or the lost and unsaved man, “**does not**” accept the “**things of the Spirit of God**”. And Paul teaches here that the lost person “**does not**” do this because he “**cannot**” do it. And the “**does not**” part has to do with human will and the “cannot” part has to do with human ability- both of which were radically ruined by The Fall. Secondly, Augustine pointed to **Genesis 37:3&4** that says:

¹ Summa Theologica

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Here the brothers of Joseph were *unable* to love him because of their natural hatred of Joseph would not *allow* them to even speak favorably to him.

So from this and several other verses- Augustine developed cornerstone Doctrines of both the Sovereignty of God and Salvation by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone. And in the Augustinian view- Salvation was *absent* the inclusion of what is termed today "human free will"- which Aquinas and others championed.

So Augustine argued that the Scriptures clearly and repeatedly teach that the Fall of Adam as so radical and so devastating that it destroyed not only Man's relationship with God- but also his "will" and his "ability to choose" so that fallen and unsaved people *cannot*- they do not have the power or the ability to choose contrary to their will.

And eleven Centuries later- Luther took this cornerstone of Christian thought and developed it in his masterpiece called "*The Bondage of the Will*", and 200 years later- Edwards took it and developed it even further in his writing called "*The Freedom of the Will*".

You see as human beings- we choose- absolutely- and we choose all day long. But our "choices" and our "will" are not "free" in that our "choices" and our "wills" are not "autonomous", but our "wills" and our "choices" are inseparably linked and are in bondage to our fallen natures- so that as lost and unsaved people- we *will not* and we *do not* choose anything that is contrary to our sinful "desires" and our fallen "loves" and our depraved "wants". As lost people- we love sin and self, but we do not normally or naturally love God or the things of God.

So in order to alter a person's *choices*- so that a person will joyfully love and serve God and accept the things of the Spirit of God- God must first *transform* our "loves" and our "desires" and our "wants" and in order to do that- God must sovereignly transform our fallen *natures* from being "depraved" to being "Divine"- as the Apostle Peter taught in **2Peter 1:4** when he said:.

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

So "Moral Inability" says that the predicament of fallen Humanity is so awful that unless and until God sovereignly *overrides* Man's propensity to run away and hide from God, and unless and until God sovereignly *overrides* Man's propensity to try to fix his own sinful problem by what he does for himself- nobody would ever voluntarily repent and nobody would ever willfully be saved.

So if anyone is going to be saved at all- God must sovereignly *insert* Himself into the lost person's life, He must sovereignly *interrupt* the lost person's plans life, and God must forcefully *violate* a person's will and change that person's nature before he can have either the will and the power to repent and trust in Jesus. And that sovereign insertion, that sovereign interruption, that sovereign and violent violation is called "Grace"- the Power of God to give to unworthy sinners the "Merit" that they need to have God's Favor.

But Aquinas ignored all that and taught that lost people can eventually come to God- on their own- through the power of human reasoning in conjunction with the normal operation of Nature- *without* God sovereignly intervening on Man's behalf. In other words- Aquinas taught that Man could be saved by something other than God's Amazing Grace- which is the classic definition of heresy.

And in spite of the Scriptures being crystal clear about this- amazingly- the leaders of the visible Church at that point almost unanimously accepted Aquinas' heresy, and to add insult to injury- in order to embrace the false "theology" of Aquinas- they had to reject and throw away the Theology of Augustine that they had embraced for almost 900 years.

And that shift away from Augustine and toward Aquinas was huge and brought about most of all the great perversions that we see today in what we call the Roman "church".

So we need to know that the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century- did not create a single new Doctrine- they didn't invent a single new Teaching. No, the Reformers who lodged their "protest" against the false teaching of Rome were simply used by God to call the Church to repentance and to reformation and to return to what the

Church had one time taught- primarily through Augustine.

So it is important to understand that John Calvin and John Knox and the Puritans did not teach a single thing about Sovereignty and Salvation that Martin Luther didn't teach before them. And Martin Luther did not teach a single thing about Sovereignty and Salvation that Augustine didn't teach before him, and Augustine did not teach a single thing about Sovereignty and Salvation that the Apostles didn't teach before him, and the Apostles didn't teach a single thing about Sovereignty and Salvation that Jesus didn't teach before them, and Jesus didn't teach a single thing about Sovereignty and Salvation that Moses didn't teach before Him.

So what the Reformers did 500 years ago was to simply bring the Church back into alignment with inspired and inerrant and infallible Biblical Truth about both Sovereignty and Salvation through their two fundamental Truths that are:

1. Sola Fide
2. Sola Scriptura

... which were both the "formal" and the "material" Causes of the Protestant Reformation. But in order to uphold these two Truths- we need to categorically reject the false teaching of Thomas Aquinas called "Natural Theology".

Now I said all that to say this- nothing illustrates the Truth about "Moral Inability" more than these Jews standing around Jesus in this Passage in **Luke 12**. There is no greater illustration of the Biblical Truth that unless and until God sovereignly intervenes on behalf of lost humanity- nobody would ever be convicted of their sins, nobody would ever repent, and nobody would ever be saved than this Passage right here.

The Jews rejection of Jesus defies explanation. Because how do you look fully into the glorious and precious Face of Jesus Christ and not love Him? How do you watch Jesus raise the dead and cast out demons and heal the sick and command Creation itself and forgive sins and not bow before Him? How do you listen to perfect Teaching and perfect Truth that comes from the lips of a perfect Man and not agree with it? How does anybody possess the ability to reject Jesus? How do

these Jews- who lived their entire lives waiting for the Messiah call him satan? How does that happen?

And so after everything is said and done- the rejection of Jesus Christ by these Jews goes way beyond simple human will power and it cannot be explained in terms of human choice and it absolutely destroys Aquinas' false teaching about human reasoning. This darkness, this depravity this blindness is profound, it is all encompassing, it is all consuming. The rejection of Jesus by these Jews defies all logic and is one of the greatest sins and one of the greatest manifestations of evil that the world has ever seen- where the creature- who himself is a wicked sinner- rejects His Creator and Savior- Who is almighty God incarnate. And Moral Inability is the only thing that explains it.

All through these six verses here in **Luke 12**- the 23 verses of **Romans 9:11-33** screams out at us- please go there with me- **Romans 9:11-33**:

11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

12 it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

13 Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

16 So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

23 And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

24 *even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

25 As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

26 "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;

28 FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."

29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law.

32 Why? Because *they did not pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

33 just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

And if you have not immersed yourself in the startling Biblical reality of God's radical God-Centeredness, and His unquenchable

Passion for the fame of His Name, and if you have not been taught that God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time, and if you have not understood that the Fall of Adam was radical in that it negatively ruined every aspect of the human race- including his will and his choices, and if you have not been schooled in the profound reality that the only truly “free” Being in the Universe is God, and if you have not come to grips with the spectacular Majesty of God’s Grace and God’s infinite Mercy- then Passages like this in **Romans 9** will offend you, they will insult your intelligence, and by the power of your “human reasoning” that Aquinas championed 800 years ago- you will read these verses and your mind will begin to see the Truth of them and then you will categorically reject them and if you are not careful- you will denounce the inspired and infallible and inerrant Word of the living God. It happens every single day. As Dr. Richard Olson- the professor of theology at George Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University says:

“Whatever Romans 9 means- it cannot mean that.”²

And so God has set up all of Redemption in such a way where when people reject Jesus- it is all on them- and they are completely responsible for their own willful rejection, and thus God can and will judge them for rejecting Jesus, and yet at the same time- if anybody is going to be saved- it will only be *by* God’s Amazing Grace and only *through* the gift of Saving Faith. So we have all the guilt for our rejection of Jesus and God has all the Glory for saving unworthy sinners.

But the thing that is so startling and the thing that should quiet us and humble us is that between you and these Jews- these Jews should have believed and you should not have. Between you and these Jews- these Jews should have bowed and you should not have. Between you and these Jews- they should have trusted in Christ and you and I should have laughed Him to scorn. Because in the natural- absent God’s Sovereign Election this makes no sense because the Jews had every reason to embrace Jesus and you and I have no reason at all.

And so the fact that these Jews did reject Jesus and the fact that you and I did trust in Him, the fact that these Jews called Jesus

² Olson; *Against Calvinism*; Zondervan; 2011; Introduction

"Beelzebul" and the fact that we call Him "Lord" and "Master" and "Savior", the fact that these Jews refused to bow and the fact that we bow so easily and so often- these facts should humble us and these facts should frighten us, and these facts should cause us to be so grateful and so thankful that God did not leave us to Aquinas' "human reasoning"- and we should all rejoice that God violated the stew out of our wills and it should make us happy that God violently and forcefully changed our nature- contrary to everything we wanted and everything we were trying to do, and it should be the joy of our lives that God overrode our desires and He overrode our will and God interrupted our plans and God the Father called us to Himself before He made the worlds and before we were born and before we did anything good or bad, and God the Holy Spirit drew us to Jesus, and God the Son died to secure our Salvation forever, and all three Persons of the one single Godhead are busy at work right now to keep us saved until we receive a new body in Glory!

When you stop and think about how we were saved- it ought to put us on our knees. When we ponder just what we were doing five minutes before Jesus washed our sins away- it ought to close our mouths. When we think about the fact that God didn't need us and He wasn't lonely as so many teach today- but that the Owner and the Creator of the Universe *wanted* us- and He freely chose to set His Love upon us before He ever made the worlds- it ought to make us willing to do what He wants us to do and to say what He wants us to say and to go where He wants us to go- without any complaint and without any murmuring and without any bellyaching.

The concept that the Perfectly Righteous God of the Universe has forgiven all our sins and saved unworthy sinners like us should be all that we need to do whatever God may ask of us.

And the Accounts of the four Gospel Records is the only period of time in all of human history when God Almighty walked on the earth, and the three and a half years of Jesus' Ministry was the demarcation line between those whom God has called and those whom He has not.

So let's look at this amazing dialogue starting with two illustrations in **Luke 12:54&55** and **Luke 12:58&59**. Read with me:

54 And He was also saying to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out.

55 And when *you see* a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out *that way*.

58 For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on *your way there* make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

59 I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."

Now these two illustrations are intended to illustrate a very important spiritual Truth. And they were common illustrations that Jesus used fairly often.

And these are words of warning- which becomes the tone of Jesus' Ministry from now on until His death on the Cross. And in these two illustrations- the Lord says, "You have failed to discern two things- the correct time and the certainty of the danger." Jesus told these Jews- *"You have no idea Who I am and you have no idea how serious it is to reject Me."*

Now what is amazing is that the Jews of the 1st Century prided themselves on their discernment. They took great pride on their spiritual insight- yet they failed with damning deadly and eternal results to discern either the time they were living in and the danger of rejecting Jesus.

Now as I told you two weeks ago- this Passage is a part of a long discourse that goes from **Luke 12:1** and goes all the way down to **Luke 13:9**.

And by the time we get to verse 54- these Jews have already made up their mind about Jesus, and so the Words of the Lord become a Divine Indictment. They become a Damnation directed at them in their unbelief and from here on to the end of this discourse in Chapter 13:9- everything that Jesus says has the same tone of a Divine Indictment and Judgment that is coming to these people.

Now up until now- Jesus is preaching and these people have the opportunity to repent and believe- and yet they don't. And the reason that they don't is because God has not intervened on their behalf to change them and give them eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe, and God has chosen to leave them in the state of unbelief that they were born in.

But we must also know that God did not *force* these Jews to reject Jesus- but God simply *allowed* these people to do what they wanted to do anyway and did not intervene to stop them. God simply allowed these people to remain in the unregenerate state that they were in when they were conceived in their mother's womb, and God left them to themselves – to do what they voluntarily wanted to do- to freely and willingly and repeatedly sin against God and reject Jesus Christ.

You see, God doesn't violate everybody's will- He only violates the will of those He has chosen for Salvation. The rest of humanity will be allowed by God to do what is in their hearts to do- sin with impunity and refuse to repent and trust in Jesus. And this is done so that when the unredeemed stand before God- they will be judged for voluntarily sinning and for freely being utterly unwilling to trust in the Savior. But when the redeemed stand before God- they will praise God for His Amazing Grace in sovereignly interfering with their plans and for violating their will and by granting them the gift of repentance and saving faith so they could be saved.

So let's look at Illustration No. 1 which shows that these Jews failed to discern the time. Verse 54:

When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say a shower is coming and so it turns out.

... which is just a simple and unsophisticated way to forecast the weather. You look out at the Mediterranean Sea and you see a cloud and you say it's going to rain because we all know how rain works. Water evaporates off the sea and it collects in a cloud and it comes over the land and then it drops back to the earth- that's how it rains.

So you make a simple deduction that as you see the rain cloud coming off the sea- you know it's going to bring the rain. And the point that Jesus is making here is *"With just minimal evidence- a single simple fact- you make confident conclusions."*

And these Jews did this all the time. They didn't need a whole lot of additional information, they didn't need a TV weather guy, they didn't need a Doppler radar or satellites. You just look over there and you see a dark cloud coming off the sea and you say it's going to rain and you know what? You're right. Because that's how it works. It turns out that way.

In other words, with only a minimal amount of evidence- and using human reasoning as Aquinas taught- you can draw a firm conclusion about the weather that is very accurate.

And then in verse 55 Jesus said,

"When you see a south wind"

... which would be blowing from the south and east coming from the desert and not the Sea... when you see a south or feel a south wind blowing, you will say,

It'll be a hot day.

So this is just basic human reasoning. You feel a hot wind coming from the east- and it's going to be a scorcher. You see a cloud coming off the sea- it's going to rain. And so Aquinas' teaching about "human reasoning" is great- when you doing things like analyzing the weather, and yet none of these Jews was brought to a place of conviction or repentance from their use of human reasoning because Aquinas was wrong, and *nobody* comes to Salvation by and through human reasoning absent a sovereign Move of God to change their nature. And then Jesus turns the tables on them in in verse 56 when He said:

You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

Now the amazing thing here is that this phrase was the Lord's most frequently used term to describe the people of Israel. Jesus called the Jews "hypocrites" more than He called them anything else. And Jesus not only called the leaders of Israel "hypocrites" but the people as well.

Now to be a hypocrite means to lie about who and what you really are. It means to attempt to deceive somebody else about the truth about yourself, and these people were hypocrites for sure- because their religion and service of God was phony. Their spirituality was false. Their allegiance to God was a sham. Their holiness was superficial. Their religion was external and their hearts were wicked and evil. Their whole religion was an hypocrisy. It was all phony- there was nothing

about the religion of the Jews in the 1st Century that was genuine, and there was not anything in their religion that would ever lead a single person to true Salvation. And there is nothing in modern Judaism that would lead a single person to Salvation either.

So what was their hypocrisy? Their hypocrisy was simply this: *"You see a cloud and you conclude rain. You feel a wind and you conclude heat. You have minimal evidence and you draw a confident and accurate conclusion, and yet with all the massive evidence that I have shown you that I am God the Redeemer, the Messiah, the Savior, you reject Me. So you are not sincere, you are not God's people, you are not saved- you are just hypocrites. You have more than enough evidence to believe and repent and bow before Me and yet you call Me satan!"*

So their hypocrisy was in pretending not to have enough evidence, and so they could say to Jesus, *"Show us another sign and we would believe"* as though just a little more information or a little more supernatural manifestation would push them over to God's side. It won't, and that is why the Pentecostals of today are just wrong about showing signs and wonders before the unbelievers so they will believe. They won't because nobody ever has been or will be saved through the manifestation of signs and wonders and miracles. People are saved because God sovereignly invaded their lives to grant them ears to hear the Gospel that must be preached to them, and because God has given them both the will and the power to repent and trust in Jesus- *not* because they exercised human reasoning or human free will.

And so Jesus finally told these Jews- *"I'm not giving you any more signs except the sign of Jonah- because that isn't your problem- you're all just hypocrites."*

Jesus knew that these Jews knew how to draw conclusions from evidence- they did it every day. They knew how to look at something and say this is going to lead to that. And so they know what Jesus revealed to them is true and undeniable and supernatural. So why don't they analyze? Why don't these people simply think through and test and discern all the evidence? Because they did not want to. They could not because they would not and that is on them.

Yet the evidence is unmistakable. From the Enunciation to Zacharias and Elizabeth through the very Works and Words of Jesus- the evidence is massive from one end of Israel to the other wherever

He's gone. And there's no way to escape it. So, He tells them- *"How in the world can you make conclusions with minimal evidence that are accurate and not make the conclusion that is inescapable about this? Why will you not sit down and analyze it? Why will you not discern it?"*

And they didn't because they couldn't and they couldn't because they did not want to. Moral Inability- not Human Reasoning- Augustine- not Aquinas.

Their guilt was because they didn't want to know Who Jesus was. Their refusal to repent was predicted on the fact that they had no desire whatsoever to love and serve Jesus Christ. In fact- not only did they not love Jesus – they hated Him because He attacked their religious system. He stomped on their self-righteousness. It wasn't that they didn't want a kingdom- sure they wanted a kingdom. It wasn't that they didn't want salvation- sure they wanted salvation. It wasn't that they didn't want forgiveness and eternal life- they want all that. It wasn't the cure they hated; it was the diagnosis of their condition that they resented.

So God loved Jesus more than God loved all the religious hypocrites, and God gave Jesus His Own Glory, and the natural brothers of Jesus saw this and they hated Jesus for it and their hatred of Jesus was manifested in that they could not speak favorably to Him- just like Joseph and his brothers.

So we better discern the time because there is a time. And there is a season. God says in **Genesis 6:3**,

"My Spirit shall not strive with man forever"

So there is a time when the Spirit strives. And there is a time when God visits a people- so don't be like these Jews and waste your time of visitation!

Now this doesn't mean there weren't some Jews who believed and were converted- there were. As the Gospel was preached starting in **The Book of the Acts**- there were 3,000 on the day of Pentecost. And in chapter 4, there were 5,000 more, and as you keep adding- you've probably got 20,000 people that could come to Christ in those early years of the Church- but the nation of Israel as a whole were judged because of their wasted opportunity.

Grace was right there in front of them and they responded by killing the Prince of Life. And they thought when they killed Jesus that they had stopped the Movement, but it kept going, and then they had to start killing the preachers and so they killed James and then they killed Stephen and they kept killing and exiling the Apostles but the Gospel was still moving and growing.

And it moved away from Jerusalem- it moved into the Gentile world and it's moving even today, and here you are this morning with the very same Gospel and the very same opportunity- so this is your time. This is the time of your visitation to know the truth and it's still open to anyone who believes. Judgment hasn't yet come to you or to this world or to this society.

It came to Israel in 70 A.D. with horrific death sweeping across that place. Judgment hasn't fallen on us yet. Maybe it will in some cataclysm; I don't know. But you have right now and that's all you have. There's no guarantee about how long God is going to strive with you. So receive this sense of urgency and repent today and trust in Jesus.

Now, secondly, Jesus tells a little illustration or analogy to show they failed to discern the danger. And I don't know if you've ever been hauled into court by somebody who had a charge against you but it's pretty frightening.

So Jesus tells a story about a man who had done something wrong and was going to be hauled into court for it. And He says in verse 57,

Why do you not even on your own initiative judge what's right?

In other words- why don't you for your own sake forget the era you're living in, forget the big opportunity? Why don't you look at your own life and analyze the aspect of righteousness? Another way to say that was, *"Why don't you look at yourself and your own sin?"* I mean He could easily have said, *"Why don't you on your own initiative judge what's wrong with you?"* So Jesus is telling these Jews that they better get down to the issue of Righteousness. And what He is saying is,

"You're in eternal danger!"

You know- it's astonishing how many people live on the edge of hell because of their sin and they never deal with it and are never

bothered by it- which just shatters Aquinas' false teaching of "Natural Theology". Lost people never deal with the reality of their sin until God moves upon them- and that is Sovereign Election- not natural Theology.

Verse 58:

"For while you're going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate..."

Now this is something that would happen in life just like it happens today. Somebody defrauds somebody and somebody harms somebody and somebody commits an offense or a crime against somebody and the person offended wants to get it settled and make it right, and so he arranges to appear before the magistrate.

Now the magistrate is the ruler or the person of power, and this is sort of a preliminary hearing which would occur. You'd go and the guy would lay out his case and the magistrate would then remand the thing to the judge and put him to court. So, He says, *"While you're going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on the way to the initial hearing,"* He says, *"make an effort to settle with him in order that he may not drag you before the judge and the judge turn you over to the constable and the constable throw you into prison."*

Now the terms here are very interesting because they're very accurate in terms of how things were in the case of the court and its function. The magistrate, as I said, was the ruler who gave an initial hearing. The judge is just that- the judge. And the officer is the constable and he was the person who had the responsibility to exact the punishment. He is called "an exacter of penalties". So a proctor or officer here is one who enforced the payment of debt by imprisonment.

So He says, *"You don't ever want to get to the judge because if you get to the judge, your guilt is going to be exposed at the level of the court, and then they're going to assign you to the proctor or the constable who's going to put you in prison."* And then verse 59 says,

"I say to you you're not going to get out of there until you've paid the very last cent."

And, you know, in a debtor's prison, it was almost impossible to pay. How are you going to pay what you owe? How are you going to

work to pay off your debt when you're in prison? And so people just died there.

So there's only one point to make here. This is not some very complicated allegory. Jesus is saying, "*If you've got any sense- you will settle your issues of guilt before you arrive at the Supreme Judge.*"

So you better discern the time and you better discern the danger. You don't want to arrive at The Great White Throne Judgment. You don't ever want to get there and say, "*I want to speak in my defense.*" Because you won't be able to speak. The record of your life and your thoughts will speak for itself, and once your guilt is revealed- you're going to be sent to an eternal punishment and you will pay down to a lepton- which was one-eighth of a penny- a mite- the smallest coin. Your punishment will be down to the last cent, you're going to pay it in full. You're going to get the full Wrath of the Heavenly Court on your crimes.

So you don't want to get there. So settle your account before you arrive. Why can't you discern the time? And why can't you discern the threat? You cannot because you will not- and so you bear your own guilt before God.

Now **2 Corinthians 5** talks about the fact that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. And He's provided reconciliation for us. God wants us to settle with Him- out of court- and the way we settle is to make peace with Him through His Son- through faith in Jesus Christ- Whom God made sin for us that we might be made the righteous of God in Him.

It pleased the Lord to crush Jesus- the Just for the unjust- that we might be brought to God. So Grace is available. Forgiveness is available. Freedom from sin is available. Freedom from Divine and Eternal Punishment- the hope of eternal life- and an escape from Divine Wrath.

You can settle with God out of court. But if you don't and you go to court to plead your cause- you will pay in full down to the last cent. So don't go there. Settle your account now. Put your trust in Christ now. Beg God today to give you the desire and the ability to "Seek the Lord while He may be found and Call on Him while He is near." Now is the acceptable time. Today is the day of Salvation." Don't miss it.

Amen. Let's pray.