

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

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 13- Luke 13:1- 5**

245- Unless You Repent, You Will All Likewise Perish, Part 1

July 6, 2014

Luke 13:1-5

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*?"

3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?"

5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

To the Glory of God

Now if this text were taking place today, we would come to Jesus and say, "*Did you hear about the six thousand people who died in Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines last November that brought a 13 foot storm surge and displaced 3.6 million?*"

And Jesus would look deeply into our eyes like nobody has ever looked before, and He would say, "*Do you think this happened to these Philippine people because they were worse sinners than you were? Or the 24 people in Oklahoma City on May 20 who were killed in a massive 200 mph tornado- do you think that they were worse sinners than the other Americans who escaped that day? I tell you, No; but unless you repent- you will all likewise perish.*"

And even though this is the verbatim Word of the living God- this statement by the Savior would seem to many today to be a slap in the face- a rude and unnecessary insult to people who at least thought enough about Jesus to follow Him around.

And this frightens me more than anything else- that my Redeemer

could say something like this to me and my response would be anger instead of humility; that His Words would insult me rather than break me; that these sorts of Words from the One Who bled and died to rescue my sinful soul could make me want to retaliate against Him or make me want to walk off and leave Him rather than fall on my face and repent to Him.

But we have never had an encounter with anybody like this because nobody spoke like this Man spoke. Nobody spoke like Jesus. People would come to Him with a concern or with a puzzling theological question, and He would look them right in the eye and say, *"Nothing you just asked me matters at all because the single most urgent issue is your own soul. And if you don't get right with God- you are going to perish."*

So Jesus was always blood-earnest about personal commitment. Truly Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. So when He was presented with a problem or a situation- He always dealt with the real issue- our separation from God. And His speech was salted with fire- so that nobody slept through a conversation with Jesus, nobody got bored with what Jesus was saying- nobody fell asleep as Jesus was talking- and you either hated Him or loved Him- but nobody ever stayed the same after they were in His Presence.

Now these five verses are filled with awesome implications about the way the world really is. And it is not the way that most people think it is. And that is because the world, in general, is lost and it is fallen and it is absolutely wrong about the most important issues of life. I suggest to you that the lost world doesn't have the correct answer to any of life's troubles- they are wrong about everything- which is why it is so dismaying for me to see professing believers look to the world and the people of the world for answers rather than looking to God and His Word.

So my goal this morning is to impress upon our consciences the urgency of the fact that people are perishing. And if we are going to be the kind of witness for Jesus Christ that we ought to be- we need to know and feel what is really at stake. And what is at stake is not the economy or the politics of the moment or the recent ruling by the Supreme Court for Hobby Lobby- but it is that unrepentant people are perishing. So the real issue is two-fold:

1. God's Wrath is absolutely Certain
2. We are completely Deserving of It

And we are living in a time when both of these facts are under assault by many in the modern Church who would much rather go to Church to hear a Christian Comedian than to discuss the deep and serious things of God; they would much rather pay good money to hear a Concert by the latest musician singing about a Man walking up a lonely dark hill than to actually embrace this Man and follow Him.

Now the first issue is a great Revelation to many people who have manufactured a "god" after their own image and likeness and who only has characteristics that they have assigned to Him. So for these people to hear that God has Wrath and that this Wrath is certain really staggers them.

But we must go even further because it is not enough to say that God issues out Wrath- we must determine by the Scriptures whether that Wrath is "Just", whether it is "Right" and "Correct", and even "Good". So you could ask this question:

Is God's Wrath a manifestation of His Perfect Character and Nature
as much as His Mercy?

And the answer to that question is, "Yes", but not in the same way. You see the Bible clearly teaches that "**God is Love**". So it isn't just that God *loves* but that He *is* Love. So Love is a part of Who God is- Love is part of the DNA of God.

But while it is true that God *exercises* Wrath- Wrath is *not* a part of God's Nature. So from where does Wrath come? Wrath is a component of God's Righteousness. Wrath comes forth as God's Righteousness is belittled and diminished and trampled on. So it is correct to think that God's Wrath is the *result of* and the *response to* our sin.

And Wrath is horribly frightening and eternal because the punishment must fit the crime. You see, there is no greater atrocity than to belittle God's Glory, to minimize or marginalize the Fame of God's Name. So because an attack against the Glory of God is the most horrible offense- the punishment response must itself reflect the Value that God has placed on that which has been sinned against.

So contrary to what the modern PCUSA has recently ruled- Jesus assumed that the Wrath of God was real and that it was terrifying and that it was eternal and that it was the correct and proper Divine Response to our refusal to confess our sins and repent.

Jesus' response to these people telling Him about the murder of the Galileans through their persecution by the Romans and the natural disaster of the Tower falling on the 18 was to get to the very heart of the matter about just who *deserves* God's Judgment and Wrath and who deserves His blessings. And I suggest to you that that is a very important subject to discuss indeed.

Now to unfold this text I simply want to focus on four words in the key sentence in verses 3 and 5. The sentence is:

"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

... and the four words I want us to focus on are

- **All**
- **Likewise**
- **Perish**
- **Repent**

So let's look at them quickly:

1. "All"

Unless you repent you will ALL likewise perish.

Here a group of people came to Jesus and told Him about how Pilate had murdered some worshipping Galileans and taken their blood and mixed it with the blood of their sacrifices—their sheep and pigeons and doves.

This is the same thing as though some anarchist broke into our Church this morning as we were partaking of the Lord's Supper and they cut the necks of a few worshipers and poured their blood into the communion cups. So this was a horrible thing that Pilate did.

And the people don't say it- but Jesus hears it in their voices- the people who came and told Jesus this horrible news have the real bad

theology that says that these slain Galileans must have done something horrible for God to allow something so horrible to happen to them. In other words extraordinary tragedy must signify extraordinary guilt.

Now ponder for a moment how you would have answered at this point. What does *your* theology of suffering and sin call for in the face of this kind of tragedy? In other words- do you have a Biblical Theology about Suffering and Sin? So what Jesus said was this. He said:

"No, their sin was not extraordinarily horrible. It was ordinarily horrible- just like yours. And if you don't repent- you too will experience a horrible end- all of you."

In other words- instead of saying that those people were more sinful than we are and being amazed at their death- Jesus says that we are just as sinful as they were, and, therefore, we should get ready to die like they did.

So what Jesus teaches then, is that all of us are extremely sinful. We are so sinful that calamities and disasters should not shock us as though something unwarranted were coming upon innocent human beings. And that means that there are no innocent human beings.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Romans 3:10

...as it is written, *THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE*

So what should amaze us in our sin is not that some people are taken in calamity- but that we are spared and given another day to repent. The really amazing thing in this universe is not that some of the guilty sinners perish- but that God is so slow to anger that you and I can sit here this morning and have one more chance to repent.

2. "Likewise"

"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Now the word "likewise" means: *in the same way*. So does this mean that all unrepentant people will be murdered in the act of worship? No, it can't mean that because in verse 5 Jesus says that *some* people will perish like those who were killed by a falling tower. But all people will not die either like the Galileans who were murdered or like those on whom the tower of Siloam fell. So the word "Likewise" must mean something else.

And it also can't mean that unrepentant people will die- because even those who repent and are saved will one day at God's Discretion- die. *Everybody* dies- whether they are saved or lost- until Jesus comes again. But Jesus implies here that if we repent- we will not perish.

So what does Jesus mean when He says that all unrepentant people will likewise perish? I think He means something like this:

You see what a horrible end those people came to; they didn't think it was going to happen. Oh, they knew they were going to die someday- but they didn't know what that would mean. And the horror of their end took them by surprise. So unless you repent- that is the way it is going to be for you. Your end will be far more horrible than you think it will be. And you will not be ready or prepared for it. It will surprise you terribly. So in that sense- you will all LIKEWISE perish.

And the parallel between us and them is that there was something dreadful about the way they ended, and Jesus says here that there will be something dreadful about the way our life ends too- unless we repent. Those people were not expecting that kind of end and you will not be expecting it either. And, so, only genuine repentance can make you ready to meet God.

3. "Perish"

Unless you repent you will all likewise PERISH.

Now exactly what does "perish" mean? Sometimes the word simply means: *to die*- in the sense that we all will die physically. But that would not fit here since Jesus implies that if we repent- we will *not* perish. "**Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.**" So if you DO

repent- you won't perish. So perishing is something more than simply dying a physical death.

Here's what it means. Since Jesus connects it directly to sin and since He says it can be escaped by repentance- to perish in this sense- means a final horrific Judgment. So Jesus is referring to something beyond physical death. Those Galileans were taken unaware and they experienced a horrible end. And unless you repent- you, too, will be taken unaware and experience a horrible end- which is- the Judgment of God beyond the grave.

Now the word "perish" often refers to a terrible judgment in the New Testament. For example in **John 3:16** it says,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

... so perishing is the alternative to having everlasting life. The same thing turns up in **John 10:28**. There Jesus says,

and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

... so Perishing is what happens to you if you don't have eternal life. In **1 Corinthians 1:18** Paul says:

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

... so perishing is the opposite of being saved by the Cross of Jesus. And in **1 Corinthians 15:17&18** Paul says:

17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

In other words perishing is something that happens beyond the grave. **Hebrews 9:27** says,

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,

And Jesus describes that judgment in **Matthew 25** as a separation of the sheep from the goats, and says,

Matthew 25:46

These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

So Perishing is the eternal punishment that people fall into when they die if they have not repented. That's how serious sin is. And we have all sinned, and sin every day.

Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Now please don't treat this as mere "Church talk". Write it on a card and use a rubber band to bind it on the visor of your car. All those people out there will perish if they do not repent. Tape it in your wallet to see it every time you buy something- the clerk that just sold you that item will perish if he/she does not repent. Your children will perish, your parents will perish, your neighbors will perish, your colleagues will perish- if they do not repent. So this is not irrelevant "church talk". This is very practical and very urgent and important.

In fact, let us learn from the Surgeon General's office how the world expects people to respond to their fellow men when they know they are in danger of perishing. All you can lose when you get AIDS is your earthly life. But Jesus said,

Luke 12:4&5

4 "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"

Sin is an infinitely more dangerous a disease than AIDS. And if the world is willing to spend millions and millions of dollars to wake this country up to its danger of AIDS- how much more should we- who

know the cure- spend whatever it costs to wake this city up to the danger of sin!

C. S. Lewis, the brilliant English scholar and Christian writer, died the same day that President John Kennedy did. And this November will be the 51st anniversary of his death. Even today his books on the Christian faith are being reprinted by the thousands.

And one of the reasons I think God so greatly blessed the ministry of C. S. Lewis, and still blesses it, is that Lewis never had an elitist, artsy love for fine literature or fine music or fine culture in any form, though he himself was a great artist. In his life- everything is subordinate to the salvation of lost sinners.

And I find what he says a tremendous inspiration to keep the perishing before our eyes as we do our work and pray how God would use us to wake them up. Listen to Lewis for the sake of your own ministry.

“It is hardly possible for [us] to think too often or too deeply about [the glory] of our neighbor . . . It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” (*The Weight of Glory*, pp. 14f.)

... and he says of his own scholarly discipline,

“The Christian will take literature a little less seriously than the cultured Pagan . . . The Christian knows from the outset that the salvation of a single soul is more important than the production or preservation of all the epics and tragedies in the world.” (*Christian Reflections*, p. 10)

This tips us off to what C. S. Lewis' life was really devoted to. In 1952 an American liberal theologian criticized Lewis for using simple analogies to try to shed some light on the Trinity. Lewis' response was passionate and shows where his heart really was in all his work.

“Most of my books are evangelistic, addressed to [those outside]. I was writing to the people not to the clergy. Dr. Pittinger would be a more helpful critic if he advised a cure as well as asserting many diseases. How does he himself do such work? What methods, and with what success, does he employ when he is trying to convert the great mass of storekeepers, lawyers, realtors, morticians, policeman and artisans who surround him in his own city?” (*God in the Dock*, pp. 181–183)

That was Lewis' burden as a literary scholar. I hope it is your burden whatever your profession. You have never talked to a mere mortal. People will live somewhere forever. And unless they repent- Jesus says here that they will perish.

4. "Repent"

Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Now Dr. Luke gives us three illustrations that show us what true and genuine repentance looks like in the face of Judgment. The first one is found in **Luke 10:10-16**- please turn there with me:

10 "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

12 "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

14 "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.

15 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!

16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

Now turn forward to **Luke 11:32:**

The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Now go with to the Old Testament to **Jonah 3:5-9:**

5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat on the ashes.

7 He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water.

8 "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.

9 "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish."

Now finally go to **Luke 16:19–31:**

19 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.

20 "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

21 and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'

27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house —

28 for I have five brothers — in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

So I conclude that true and genuine repentance- the kind of repentance that will keep you from perishing involves four things:

1. True and genuine Repentance involves believing God's Promise (**Jonah 3:5**) rather than the Satan's claim that more joy can be found in sin than in obedience to God.
2. True and genuine Repentance is "being persuaded" about the danger of impenitence (**Luke 16:31**) and the way of escape through repentance for the forgiveness of sins (**Luke 24:47**).
3. True and genuine Repentance involves grief over past sins and present sinful tendencies. This is the significance of the sackcloth and ashes (**Luke 10:13; Jonah 3:5**).
4. True and genuine Repentance involves turning from evil ways (**Jonah 3:8**) and turning to God and His Ways.

So faith and repentance are not properly two separate things. The "turning" of repentance is a turning from trusting in other things to a

trusting in God. And with a new trust in God as Counselor and Protector and Provider- there is also a turning to a new life of joyful obedience. So I pray that you will repent and trust in Jesus Christ today so that you will never perish.

Amen. Let's pray