

CHAPTER 13

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The good improvement Christ made of a piece of news that was brought him concerning some Galileans, that were lately massacred by Pilate, as they were sacrificing in the temple at Jerusalem (v. 1-5).
- II.** The parable of the fruitless fig-tree, by which we are warned to bring forth fruits meet for that repentance to which he had in the foregoing passage called us (v. 6-9).
- III.** Christ's healing a poor infirm woman on the sabbath day, and justifying himself in it (v. 11-17).
- IV.** A repetition of the parables of the grain of mustard-seed and the leaven (v. 18-22).
- V.** His answer to the question concerning the number of the saved (v. 23-30).
- VI.** The slight he put upon Herod's malice and menaces, and the doom of Jerusalem read (v. 31-35).

LUKE 13:1-5

THE MURDERED GALILEANS

We have here,

I. Tidings brought to Christ of the death of some Galileans lately, whose blood *Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices*, v. 1. Let us consider,

1. What this tragical story was. It is briefly related here, and is not met with in any of the historians of those times. Josephus indeed mentions Pilate's killing some Samaritans, who, under the conduct of a factious leader, were going in a tumultuous manner to mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans' temple was; but we can by no means allow that story to be the same with this. Some think that these Galileans were of the faction of Judas Gaulonita, called also *Judas of Galilee* (~~457~~ Acts 5:37), who disowned Caesar's authority and refused to pay tribute to him: or perhaps

these, being Galileans, were only suspected by Pilate to be of that faction, and barbarously murdered, because those who were in league with that pretender were out of his reach. The Galileans being Herod's subjects, it is probable that this outrage committed upon them by Pilate occasioned the quarrel that was between Herod and Pilate, which we read of in ~~423~~ Luke 23:12. We are not told what number they were, perhaps *but a few*, whom Pilate had some particular *pique* against (and therefore the story is overlooked by Josephus); but the circumstance remarked is that he *mingled their blood with their sacrifices* in the court of the temple. Though perhaps they had reason to fear Pilate's malice, yet they would not, under pretence of that fear, keep away from Jerusalem, whither the law obliged them to go up with their sacrifices. Dr Lightfoot thinks it probable that they were *themselves* killing their sacrifices (which was allowed, for the priest's work, they said, began with the *sprinkling of the blood*), and that Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at the time when they were off their guard (for otherwise the Galileans were mettled men, and generally went well-armed), and mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices, as if it had been equally acceptable to God. Neither the holiness of the place nor of the work would be a protection to them from the fury of an unjust judge, *who neither feared God nor regarded man*. The altar, which used to be a sanctuary and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap, a place of danger and slaughter.

2. Why it was related *at this season* to our Lord Jesus.

(1.) Perhaps merely as a matter of news, which they supposed he had not heard before, and as a thing which they lamented, and believed he would do so too; for the Galileans were their countrymen. Note, Sad providences ought to be observed by us, and the knowledge of them communicated to others, that they and we may be suitably affected with them, and make a good use of them.

(2.) Perhaps it was intended as a confirmation of what Christ had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the necessity of making our peace with God in time, before we be *delivered to the officer*, that is, to *death*, and so *cast into prison*, and then it will be too late to make agreements: "Now," say they, "Master, here is a fresh instance of some that were very suddenly *delivered to the officer*, that were taken away by death when they little expected it; and therefore we have all need to be

ready.” Note, It will be of good use to us both to explain the word of God and to enforce it upon ourselves by observing the providences of God.

(3.) Perhaps they would stir him up, being himself of Galilee, and a prophet, and one that had a great interest in that country, to find out a way to revenge the death of these Galileans upon Herod. If they had any thoughts of this kind, they were quite mistaken; for Christ was now going up to Jerusalem, to be *delivered into the hands of Pilate*, and to have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice.

(4.) Perhaps this was told Christ to *deter* him from going up to Jerusalem, to worship (v. 22), lest Pilate should serve him as he had served those Galileans, and should suggest against him, as probably he had insinuated against those Galileans, in vindication of his cruelty, that they came to sacrifice as Absalom did, with a *sedition* design, under colour of sacrificing, to raise rebellion. Now, lest Pilate, when his hand was in, should proceed further, they think it advisable that Christ should for the present keep out of the way.

(5.) Christ's answer intimates that they told him this with a spiteful *innuendo*, that, though Pilate was unjust in killing them, yet without doubt they were secretly bad men, else God would not have permitted Pilate thus barbarously to cut them off. It was very invidious; rather than they would allow them to be martyrs, though they died sacrificing, and perhaps suffered for their devotion, they would, without any colour of proof, suppose them to be malefactors; and it may be for no other reason than because they were not of their party and denomination, differed from them, or had difference with them. This fate of theirs, which was capable not only of a favourable, but an honourable construction, shall be called a *just judgment of God upon them*, though they know not for what.

II. Christ's reply to this report, in which,

1. He seconded it with another story, which, like it, gave an instance of people's being taken away by sudden death. It is not long since *the tower of Siloam fell*, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. Dr Lightfoot's conjecture is that this tower adjoined to the *pool of Siloam*, which was the same with the pool of Bethesda, and that it belonged to those *porches* which were by the *pool*, in which the *impotent folks* lay, that *waited for the stirring* of the water (~~411~~ John 5:3), and that they who were killed were some of them, or some of those who in this

pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service, for it was near the temple. Whoever they were, it was a sad story; yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: for *as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them,* ^{<202>}Ecclesiastes 9:12. Towers, that were built for safety, often prove men's destruction.

2. He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and similar events, nor take occasion thence to censure *great sufferers*, as if they were *therefore* to be accounted *great sinners*: *Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay,* v. 2, 3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans were Jews, and were glad of any thing that furnished them with matter of reflection upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ retorted upon them the story of the *men of Jerusalem*, that came to an untimely end; for, *with what measure* of that kind *we mete, it shall be measured to us again*. “Now suppose ye that *those eighteen* who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, were *debtors* to divine justice *above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you nay.*” Whether it make for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's *sins* by their *sufferings* in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold to be purified, not as dross and chaff to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in their censures of him, lest we condemn *the generation of the righteous,* ^{<204>}Psalms 72:14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we *know love or hatred by all that is before us,* because *all things come alike to all,* ^{<205>}Ecclesiastes 9:1, 2. And we might as justly conclude that the *oppressors*, and Pilate among the rest, *on whose side are power* and success, are the greatest saints, as that the *oppressed*, and those Galileans among the rest, who are all in tears and have no comforter, no, not the priests and Levites that attended the altar, are the *greatest sinners*. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by; for as we do we shall be done by: *Judge not, that ye be not judged,* ^{<206>}Matthew 7:1.

3. On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,* v. 3-5.

(1.) This intimates that we all deserve to *perish* as much as *they did*, and had we been dealt with according to our sins, according to the *iniquity of our holy things*, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices by the justice of God. It must moderate our censure, not only that we are *sinner*s, but that we are as great sinners as they, have as much sin to repent of as they had to suffer for.

(2.) That therefore we are all concerned to *repent*, to be sorry for what we have done amiss, and to do so no more. The judgments of God upon others are loud calls to us to *repent*. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty which he came not only to *gain room* for, and *give hopes* to, but to enjoin upon us — and that is, to *repent*.

(3.) That repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way: *so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, but upon no other terms.

(4.) That, if we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some lay an emphasis upon the word *likewise*, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had *their blood mingled with their sacrifices*; and many of them, both in Jerusalem and in other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their ears, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Siloam. But certainly it looks further; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perished out of this world. The same Jesus that calls us to *repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, bids us *repent* because otherwise we shall perish; so that he has set before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to our choice.

(5.) The perishing of *those* in their impenitency who have been most harsh and severe in judging others will be in a particular manner aggravated.

LUKE 13:6-9

THE BARREN FIG-TREE

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*; except you

be reformed, you will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down.”

I. This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and obedience from them, which, turning to his praise and honour, he would have accounted *fruit*; but they disappointed his expectations: they did not do their duty; they were a reproach instead of being a credit to their profession. Upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but, upon Christ's intercession, as of old upon that of Moses, he graciously gave them further time and further mercy; tried them, as it were, another year, by sending his apostles among them, to call them to repentance, and in Christ's name to offer them pardon, upon repentance. Some of them were wrought upon to *repent*, and bring forth fruit, and with them all was well; but the body of the nation continued impenitent and unfruitful, and ruin without remedy came upon them; about forty years after they were cut down, and cast into the fire, as John Baptist had told them (⁴⁰⁰Matthew 3:10), which saying of his this parable enlarges upon.

II. Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church, to see to it that the temper of their minds and the tenour of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the *fruit* required. Now observe here,

1. The advantages which this fig-tree had. It was *planted in a vineyard*, in better soil, and where it had more care taken of it and more pains taken with it, than other fig-trees had, that commonly grew, not in *vineyards* (Those are for vines), but by the *way-side*, ⁴¹⁰Matthew 21:19. This fig-tree belonged to a *certain man*, that owned it, and was at expense upon it. Note, The church of God is *his vineyard*, distinguished from the common, and fenced about, ²⁰⁰Isaiah 5:1, 2. We are *fig-trees planted* in this vineyard by our baptism; we have a place and a name in the visible church, and this is our privilege and happiness. It is a distinguishing favour: he has not *dealt so with other nations*.

2. The owner's expectation from it: *He came, and sought fruit thereon*, and he had reason to expect it. He did not *send*, but came himself, intimating his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, *came to his own*, to the Jews, seeking fruit. Note, The God of heaven requires and expects *fruit* from those that have a place in his vineyard. He has *his eye* upon those that *enjoy* the gospel, to see whether they *live* up to it; he seeks evidences of their getting good by the means of grace they enjoy. *Leaves* will not serve, crying, *Lord, Lord; blossoms* will not serve, beginning well and promising fair; there must be *fruit*. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be according to the gospel, light and love.

3. The disappointment of his expectation: *He found none*, none at all, not one fig. Note, It is sad to think how many enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and yet do nothing at all to the honour of God, nor to answer the end of his entrusting them with those privileges; and it is a disappointment to him and a grief to the Spirit of his grace.

(1.) He here complains of it to the dresser of the vineyard: I come, *seeking fruit*, but am disappointed — *I find none*, looking for grapes, but behold *wild grapes*. He is grieved with such a generation.

(2.) He aggravates it, with two considerations: —

[1.] That he had waited long, and yet was disappointed. As he was not *high* in his expectations, he only expected fruit, not *much* fruit, so he was not *hasty*, *he came three years*, year after year: applying it to the Jews, he came one space of time before the captivity, another after that, and another in the preaching of John Baptist and of Christ himself; or it may allude to the three years of Christ's public ministry, which were now expiring. In general, it teaches us that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. How many times three years has God come to many of us, *seeking fruit*, but has *found none*, or next to none, or worse than none!

[2.] That this fig-tree did not only not bring forth fruit, but did hurt; it *cumbered the ground*; it took up the room of a fruitful tree, and was injurious to all about it. Note, Those who do not *do* good commonly *do hurt* by the influence of their bad example; they grieve and discourage those that are good; they harden and encourage those that are bad. And the

mischief is the greater, and the ground the more cumbered, if it be a high, large, spreading tree, and if it be an old tree of long standing.

4. The doom passed upon it; *Cut it down*. He saith this to the *dresser of the vineyard*, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the ministers who are in his name to declare this doom. Note, No other can be expected concerning barren trees than that they should be *cut down*. As the unfruitful vineyard is dismantled, and thrown open to the common (²³⁶⁵Isaiah 5:5, 6), so the unfruitful trees in the vineyard are cast out of it, and wither, (⁴³⁶⁶John 15:6. It is cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, ²³⁶⁹Isaiah 6:9, 10. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell; and with good reason, for *why cumberst it the ground?* What reason is there why it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose?

5. The dresser's intercession for it. Christ is the great Intercessor; he ever lives, interceding. Ministers are intercessors; they that *dress* the vineyard should *intercede* for it; those we *preach to* we should *pray for*, for we must give ourselves to the *word of God* and to *prayer*. Now observe,

(1.) What it is he prays for, and that is a reprieve: *Lord, let it alone this year also*. He doth not pray, "Lord, let it never be cut down," but, "Lord, not now. Lord, do not remove the dresser, do not withhold the dews, do not pluck up the tree." Note,

[1.] It is desirable to have a barren tree reprieved. Some have not yet *grace to repent*, yet it is a mercy to them to have *space to repent*, as it was to the old world to have 120 years allowed them to make their peace with God.

[2.] We owe it to Christ, the great Intercessor, that *barren* trees are not cut down immediately: had it not been for his interposition, the whole world had been cut down, upon the sin of Adam; but he said, *Lord, let it alone*; and it is he that upholds all things.

[3.] We are encouraged to pray to God for the merciful reprieve of barren fig-trees: "Lord, *let them alone*; continue them yet awhile in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious." Thus must we stand in the gap, to turn away wrath.

[4.] Reprieves of mercy are but for a time; *Let it alone this year also*, a short time, but a sufficient time to make trial. When God has borne long,

we may hope he will bear yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always.

[5.] *Reprieves* may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not *pardons*; there must be our own faith, and repentance, and prayers, else no pardon.

(2.) How he promises to improve this reprieve, if it be obtained: *Till I shall dig about it, and dung it*, Note,

[1.] In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours. The dresser seems to say, “Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that which is my part; but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness.” Thus in all our prayers we must request God’s grace, with a humble resolution to do our duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for.

[2.] In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The dresser of the vineyard engages to do *his* part, and therein teaches ministers to do *theirs*. He will *dig about* the tree and will *dung* it. Unfruitful Christians must be *awakened* by the terrors of the law, which *break up the fallow ground*, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warming and fattening, as manure to the tree. Both methods must be tried; the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

(3.) Upon what foot he leaves the matter: “Let us try it, and try what we can do with it one year more, *and, if it bear fruit, well*, v. 9. It is possible, nay, there is hope, that yet it may be fruitful.” In this hope the owner will have patience with it, and the dresser will take pains with it, and, if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word *well* is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt: *If it bear fruit!* — supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the owner and dresser will be. If it bear fruit, there will be cause of rejoicing; we have what we would have. But it cannot be better expressed than as we do: *well*. Note, Unfruitful professors of religion, if after long unfruitfulness they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find *all is well*. God will be *pleased*, for he will be *praised*; ministers’ hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it; the ground will be no longer cumbered, but bettered, the vineyard

beautified, and the good trees in it made better. As for the tree itself, it is *well* for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall *receive blessing from God* (~~SMIT~~ Hebrews 6:7); it shall be *purged*, and *shall bring forth more fruit*, for the Father is its husbandman (~~SMIT~~ John 15:2); and it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth to the paradise above.

But he adds, *If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down*. Observe here,

[1.] That, though God bear long, he will not bear always with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and, if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be *cut down* at last, and *cast into the fire*.

[2.] The longer God has *waited*, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be: to be cut down *after that*, after all these expectations from it, these debates concerning it, this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation.

[3.] Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God does not take pleasure in: for observe here, the owner said to the dresser, “Do thou *cut it down*, for it cumbereth the ground.” “Nay,” said the dresser, “if it must be done at last, *thou shalt cut it down*; let not my hand be upon it.”

[4.] Those that now intercede for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay, they will approve and applaud, the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it, ~~SMIT~~ Revelation 15:3, 4.

~~SMIT~~ LUKE 13:10-17

THE INFIRM WOMAN HEALED

Here is,

I. The miraculous cure of a woman that had been long under a spirit of infirmity. Our Lord Jesus spent his *Sabbaths* in the *synagogues*, v. 10. We should make conscience of doing so, as we have opportunity, and not

think we can spend the sabbath as well at home reading a good book; for religious assemblies are a divine institution, which we must bear our testimony to, though but of two or three. And, when he was in the synagogues on the sabbath day, *he was teaching there* — *en didaskon*. It denotes a continued act; he *still taught the people knowledge*. He was in his element when he was teaching. Now to confirm the doctrine he preached, and recommend it as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance, he wrought a miracle, a miracle of mercy.

1. The object of charity that presented itself was a woman in the synagogue that had *a spirit of infirmity eighteen years*, v. 11. She had an infirmity, which an evil spirit, by divine permission, had brought upon her, which was such that she was *bowed together* by strong convulsions, and could *in no wise lift up herself*; and, having been so long thus, the disease was incurable; she could not stand erect, which is reckoned man's honour above the beasts. Observe, Though she was under this infirmity, by which she was much *deformed*, and made to look mean, and not only so, but, as is supposed, motion was very painful to her, yet she went to the *synagogue on the sabbath day*. Note, Even bodily infirmities, unless they be very grievous indeed, should not keep us from public worship on the sabbath days; for God can help us, beyond our expectation.

2. The offer of this cure to one that sought it not bespeaks the preventing mercy and grace of Christ: *When Jesus saw her, he called her to him*, v. 12. It does not appear that she made any application to him, or had any expectation from him; but *before she called he answered*. She came to him to be *taught*, and to get good to her soul, and then Christ gave this relief to her bodily infirmity. Note, Those whose first and chief care is for their souls do best befriend the true interests of their bodies likewise, for *other things shall be added to them*. Christ in his gospel calls and invites those to come to him for healing that labour under *spiritual infirmities*, and, if he *calls us*, he will undoubtedly help us when we come to him.

3. The cure effectually and immediately wrought bespeaks his almighty power. He *laid his hands on her*, and said, “*Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity*; though thou hast been long labouring under it, thou art at length released from it.” Let not those despair whose disease is *inveterate*, who have been long in affliction. God can at length relieve them, therefore though he tarry wait for him. Though it was a *spirit of infirmity*, an evil spirit, that she was under the power of, Christ has a power superior to that

of Satan, is *stronger than he*. Though *she could in no wise lift up herself*, Christ could lift her up, and enable her to lift up herself. She that had been *crooked was immediately made straight*, and the scripture was fulfilled (⁴¹⁸Psalm 146:8): *The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down*. This cure represents the work of Christ's grace upon the souls of the people.

(1.) In the *conversion* of sinners. Unsanctified hearts are under this *spirit of infirmity*; they are distorted, the faculties of the soul are quite out of place and order; they are *bowed down* towards things below. *O curvae in terram animae!* They can in no wise *lift up themselves* to God and heaven; the bent of the soul, in its natural state, is the quite contrary way. Such crooked souls seek not to Christ; but he calls them to him, lays the hand of his power and grace upon them, speaks a healing word to them, by which he *looses them from their infirmity*, makes the soul *straight*, reduces it to order, raises it above worldly regards, and directs its affections and aims heavenward. Though *man cannot make that straight which God has made crooked* (²⁰³Ecclesiastes 7:13), yet the grace of God can make that straight which the sin of man has made crooked.

(2.) In the *consolation* of good people. Many of the children of God are long under a *spirit of infirmity*, a spirit of bondage; through prevailing grief and fear, their *souls are cast down and disquieted* within them, *they are troubled, they are bowed down greatly, they go mourning all the day long*, ⁴⁸⁶Psalm 38:6. But Christ, by his Spirit of adoption, looses them from this infirmity in due time, and raises them up.

4. The present effect of this cure upon the *soul* of the patient as well as upon her *body*. She *glorified God*, gave him the praise of her cure to whom all praise is due. When crooked souls are made straight, they will show it by their glorifying God.

II. The offence that was taken at this by the *ruler of the synagogue*, as if our Lord Jesus had committed some heinous crime, in healing this poor woman. He *had indignation* at it, because it was *on the sabbath day*, v. 14. One would think that the miracle should have convinced him, and that the circumstance of its being done on the sabbath day could not have served to counteract the conviction; but what light can shine so clear, so strong, that a spirit of bigotry and enmity to Christ and his gospel will not serve to shut men's eyes against it? Never was such honour done to the synagogue he was ruler of as Christ had now done it, and yet he had indignation at it.

He had not indeed the impudence to quarrel with Christ; but he said *to the people*, reflecting upon Christ in what he said, *There are six days in which men ought to work, in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.* See here how light he made of the miracles Christ wrought, as if they were *things of course*, and no more than what quacks and mountebanks did every day: “You may *come* and be healed any day of the week.” Christ's cures were become, in his eyes, cheap and common things. See also how he stretches the law beyond its intention, or any just construction that could be put upon it, in making either healing or being healed with a touch of the hand, or a word's speaking, to be that *work* which is *forbidden* on the sabbath day. This was evidently *the work of God*; and, when God tied us out from working that day, did he tie himself out? The same word in Hebrew signifies both *godly* and *merciful* (*chesed*), to intimate that works of *mercy* and *charity* are in a manner works of *piety* (~~sure~~ 1 Timothy 5:4) and therefore very proper on sabbath days.

III. Christ's justification of himself in what he had done (v. 15): *The Lord then answered him*, as he had answered others who in like manner cavilled at him, *Thou hypocrite*. Christ, who knows men's hearts, may call those *hypocrites* whom it would be presumption for us to call so. We *must* judge charitably, and *can* judge only according to the outward appearance. Christ knew that he had a real enmity to him and to his gospel, that he did but cloak this with a pretended zeal for the sabbath day, and that when he bade the people come on the *six days*, and be healed, he really would not have them be healed any day. Christ could have told him this, but he vouchsafes to reason the case with him; and,

1. He *appeals* to the common practice among the Jews, which was never disallowed, that of *watering* their cattle on the sabbath day. Those cattle that are kept up in the stable are constantly *loosed from the stall on the sabbath day, and led away to watering*. It would be a barbarous thing not to do it; for *a merciful man regards the life of his beast*, his own beast that serves him. Letting the cattle *rest* on the sabbath day, as the law directed, would be worse than working them, if they must be made to fast on that day, as the Ninevites' cattle on their fast-day, that were not permitted to *feed nor drink water*, ~~sure~~ Jonah 3:7.

2. He applies this to the present case (v. 16): “Must the *ox* and the *ass* have compassion shown them on the sabbath day, and have so much time and pains bestowed upon them *every sabbath*, to be loosed from the stall,

led away perhaps a great way to the water, and then back again, and shall not this woman, only with a touch of the hand and a word's speaking, be *loosed* from a much *greater* grievance than that which the cattle undergo when they are kept a day without water? For consider,”

(1.) “She is *a daughter of Abraham*, in a relation to whom you all pride yourselves; she is *your sister*, and shall she be denied a favour that you grant to an ox or an ass, dispensing a little with the supposed strictness of the sabbath day? She is *a daughter of Abraham*, and therefore is entitled to the Messiah's blessings, to the *bread* which belongs to the *children*.”

(2.) “She is one whom Satan *has bound*. He had a hand in the affliction, and therefore it was not only an act of charity to the poor woman, but of piety to God, to break the power of the devil, and baffle him.”

(3.) “She has been in this deplorable condition, *lo, these eighteen years*, and therefore, now that there is an opportunity of delivering her, it ought not to be deferred *a day* longer, as you would have it, for any of you would have thought eighteen years' affliction full long enough.”

IV. The different effect that this had upon those that heard him. He had sufficiently made it out, not only that it was lawful, but that it was highly fit and proper, to heal this poor woman *on the sabbath day*, and thus publicly in the synagogue, that they might all be witnesses of the miracle. And now observe,

1. What a confusion this was to the malice of his persecutors: *When he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed* (v. 17); they were put to silence, and were vexed that they were so, that they had not a word to say for themselves. It was not a shame that worked repentance, but rather indignation. Note, Sooner or later, all the adversaries of Christ, and his doctrine and miracles, will be made *ashamed*.

2. What a confirmation this was to the faith of his friends: *All the people*, who had a better sense of things, and judged more impartially than their rulers, rejoiced *for all the glorious things that were done by him*. The shame of his foes was the joy of his followers; the increase of his interest was what the one fretted at, and the other triumphed in. The things Christ did were *glorious things*; they were all so, and, though now clouded, perhaps will appear to, and we ought to rejoice in them. Every thing that is the honour of Christ is the comfort of Christians.

LUKE 13:18-22

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Here is,

I. The gospel's progress foretold in two parables, which we had before, ^{<13>}Matthew 13:31-33. The *kingdom of the Messiah* is the *kingdom of God*, for it advances his glory; this kingdom was yet a mystery, and people were generally in the dark, and under mistakes, about it. Now, when we would describe a thing to those that are strangers to it, we choose to do it by similitudes. "Such a person you know not, but I will tell you whom he is like;" so Christ undertakes here to show *what the kingdom of God is like* (v. 18): "*Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?*" v. 20. It will be quite another thing from what you expect, and will operate, and gain its point, in quite another manner."

1. "You expect it will appear *great*, and will arrive at its perfection all of a sudden; but you are mistaken, *it is like a grain of mustard-seed*, a little thing, takes up but little room, makes but a little figure, and promises but little; yet, when sown in soil proper to receive it, it *waxes a great tree*," v. 19. Many perhaps were prejudiced against the gospel, and loth to come in *to the obedience* of it, because its beginning was so small; they were ready to say of Christ, *Can this man save us?* And of his gospel, *Is this likely ever to come to any thing?* Now Christ would remove this prejudice, by assuring them that though *its beginning was small its latter end should greatly increase*; so that many should come, should come upon the wing, should *fly like a cloud*, to lodge in the branches of it with more safety and satisfaction than in the branches of Nebuchadnezzar's tree, ^{<20>}Daniel 4:21.

2. "You expect it will make its way by *external* means, by subduing nations and vanquishing armies, though it shall work *like leaven*, silently and insensibly, and without any force or violence, v. 21. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; so the doctrine of Christ will strangely *diffuse* its relish into the world of mankind: in this it triumphs, that *the savour of the knowledge of it* is unaccountably made manifest *in every place*, beyond what one could have expected, ^{<21>}2 Corinthians 2:14. But you must *give it time*, wait for the issue of the preaching of the gospel to the world, and you will find it does wonders, and alters the property of the souls of men. By

degrees *the whole will be leavened*, even as many as are, like *the meal* to the *leaven*, prepared to receive the savour of it.”

II. Christ's progress towards Jerusalem recorded: *He went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying*, v. 22. Here we find Christ an itinerant, but an itinerant preacher, journeying towards Jerusalem, to the feast of dedication, which was *in the winter*, when travelling was uncomfortable, yet he would be about his Father's business; and therefore, whatever cities or villages he could make in his way, he gave them a sermon or two, not only in the cities, but in the country villages. Wherever Providence brings us, we should endeavour to be doing all the good we can.

LUKE 13:23-30

THE DOOM OF SINFUL PROFESSORS

We have here,

I. A question put to our Lord Jesus. Who it was that put it we are not told, whether a friend or a foe; for he both gave a great liberty of questioning him and returned answers to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The question was, *Are there few that are saved?* v. 23: *ei oligoi hoi sozomenoi* — “*If the saved be few?* Master, I have heard thou shouldst say so; is it true?”

1. Perhaps it was a *captious* question. He put it to him, tempting him, with a design to ensnare him and lessen his reputation. If he should say that many would be saved, they would reproach him as too loose, and making salvation cheap; if few, they would reproach him as precise and strait-laced. The Jewish doctors said that *all Israel should have a place in the world to come*; and would he dare to contradict that? Those that have sucked in a corrupt nation are ready to make it the standard by which to measure all men's judgments; and in nothing do men more betray their ignorance, presumption, and partiality, than in judging of the salvation of others.

2. Perhaps it was a *curious* question, a nice speculation, which he had lately been disputing upon with his companions, and they all agreed to

refer it to Christ. Note, Many are more inquisitive respecting who shall be saved, and who not, than respecting what they shall do to be saved. It is commonly asked, "May such and such be saved?" But it is well that we may be saved without knowing this.

3. Perhaps it was an *admiring* question. He had taken notice how strict the law of Christ was, and how bad the world was, and, comparing these together, cries out, "How few are there that will be saved!" Note, We have reason to wonder that of the many to whom the word of salvation is sent there are so few to whom it is indeed a saving word.

4. Perhaps it was an *enquiring* question: "*If there be few that be saved, what then? What influence should this have upon me?*" Note, It concerns us all seriously to improve the great truth of the fewness of those that are saved.

II. Christ's answer to this question, which directs us what use to make of this truth. Our Saviour did not give a direct answer to this enquiry, for he came to *guide* men's *consciences*, not to *gratify* their *curiosity*. Ask not, "How many shall be saved?" But, be they more or fewer, "Shall I be one of them?" Not, "What shall become of such and such, and *what shall this man do?*" But, "What shall I do, and what will become of me?" Now in Christ's answer observe,

1. A quickening exhortation and direction: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*. This is directed not to him only that asked the question, but to all, to us, it is in the plural number: *Strive ye*. Note,

(1.) All that will be saved must *enter in at the strait gate*, must undergo a change of the whole man, such as amounts to no less than being born again, and must submit to a strict discipline.

(2.) Those that would enter in at the strait gate must *strive to enter*. It is a hard matter to get to heaven, and a point that will not be gained without a great deal of care and pains, of difficulty and diligence. We must strive with God in prayer, wrestle as Jacob, strive against sin and Satan. We must strive in every duty of religion; strive with our own hearts, *agonizesthe* — "*Be in an agony*; strive as those that run for a prize; excite and exert ourselves to the utmost."

2. Divers awakening considerations, to enforce this exhortation. O that we may be all awakened and quickened by them! They are such

considerations as will serve to answer the question, *Are there few that shall be saved?*

(1.) Think how many take *some pains* for salvation and yet perish because they do not take *enough*, and you will say that there are *few that will be saved* and that it highly concerns us to *strive: Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; they seek, but they do not strive.* Note, The reason why many come short of grace and glory is because they rest in a *lazy seeking* of that which will not be attained without a *laborious striving*. They have a *good mind to happiness*, and a *good opinion of holiness*, and take some *good steps* towards both. But their convictions are weak; they do not consider what they know and believe, and, consequently, their desires are cold, and their endeavours feeble, and there is no strength or steadiness in their resolutions; and thus they *come short*, and lose the prize, because they do not press forward. Christ avers this upon his own word: *I say unto you*; and we may take it upon his word, for he knows both the counsels of God and the hearts of the children of men.

(2.) Think of the *distinguishing* day that is coming and the *decisions* of that day, and you will say there are *few that shall be saved* and that we are concerned to strive: The *Master of the house will rise up, and shut to the door*, v. 25. Christ is the *Master of the house*, that will take cognizance of all that frequent his house and are retainers to it, will examine comers and goers and those that pass and repass. Now he seems as if he left things at large; but the day is coming when he will *rise up, and shut to the door*. What door?

[1.] A door of *distinction*. Now, within the temple of the church there are *carnal* professors who worship in the *outer-court*, and *spiritual* professors who worship *within the veil*; between these the door is now open, and they meet *promiscuously* in the same external performances. But, when the *Master of the house is risen up*, the door will be shut between them, that those who are in the *outer-court* may be kept out, and left to be *trodden underfoot by the Gentiles*, ⁽⁶¹¹⁾ Revelation 11:2. As to those *that are filthy*, shut the door upon them, and let them be *filthy still*; that those who are within may be kept within, that those who are *holy may be holy still*. The door is shut to *separate* between the *precious* and the *vile*, that *sinner*s may no longer *stand in the congregation of the righteous*. Then you shall return, and discern betwixt them.

[2.] A door of *denial* and exclusion. The door of *mercy* and *grace* has long *stood open* to them, but they would *not come in by it*, would not be beholden to the *favour* of that door; they hoped to *climb up some other way*, and to get to heaven by their own merits, and therefore when the Master of the house is risen up he will justly *shut that door*; let them not expect to enter by it, but let them take their own measures. Thus, when Noah was safe in the ark, God *shut* the door, to *exclude* all those that depended upon shelters of their own in the approaching flood.

(3.) Think how many who were very *confident* that they should be *saved* will be rejected in the day of trial, and their confidences will deceive them, and you will say that there are *few* that *shall be saved* and that we are all concerned to *strive*. Consider,

[1.] What an *assurance* they had of *admission*, and how far their hope carried them, even to *heaven's gate*. There they *stand and knock*, knock as if they had authority, knock as those that belong to the house, *saying*, "*Lord, Lord, open to us*, for we think we have a right to enter; take us in among the *saved ones*, for we joined ourselves to them." Note, Many are ruined by an ill-grounded hope of heaven, which they never distrusted or called in question, and *therefore* conclude their state is good because they never doubted it. They call Christ, *Lord*, as if they were his servants; nay, in token of their importunity, they double it, *Lord, Lord*; they are desirous now to enter in by that door which they had formerly made light of, and would now gladly come in among those serious Christians whom they had secretly despised.

[2.] What *grounds* they had for this *confidence*. Let us see what their plea is, v. 26. *First*, They had been *Christ's guests*, had had an intimate converse with him, and had shared in his favours: *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence*, at thy table. Judas ate bread with Christ, dipped with him in the dish. Hypocrites, under the disguise of their external profession, receive the Lord's supper, and in it partake of the children's bread, as if they were children. *Secondly*, They had been *Christ's hearers*, had received instruction from him, and were well acquainted with his doctrine and law: "*Thou hast taught in our streets* — a distinguishing favour, which few had, and surely it might be taken as a pledge of distinguishing favour now; for wouldest thou teach us, and not save us?"

[3.] How their confidence will fail them, and all their pleas be rejected as frivolous. Christ will say to them, *I know you not whence you are*, v. 25.

And again (v. 27), *I tell you, I know you not, depart from me*. He does not deny that what they pleaded was true; they had *eaten and drunk in his presence*, by the same token that they had no sooner eaten of his bread than they lifted up the heel against him. He had *taught in their streets*, by the same token that they had despised his instruction and would not submit to it. And therefore, *First*, He *disowns* them: “*I know you not; you do not belong to my family.*” *The Lord knows them that are his*, but them that are not he does not know, he has nothing to do with them: “*I know you not whence you are. You are not of me, you are not from above, you are not branches of my house, of my vine.*” *Secondly*, He *discards* them: *Depart from me*. It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ, the principal part of the misery of the damned. “*Depart from my door, here is nothing for you, no, not a drop of water.*” *Thirdly*, He gives them such a character as is the reason of this doom: *You are workers of iniquity*. This is their ruin, that, under a pretence of piety, they kept up secret haunts of sin, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery.

[4.] How terrible their punishment will be (v. 28): *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, the utmost degree of grief and indignation; and that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is a sight of the happiness of those that are saved: *You shall see the patriarchs and prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out*. Observe here, *First*, That the *Old-Testament saints* are in the kingdom of God; those had benefit by the Messiah who died before his coming, for they *saw his day* at a distance and it reflected comfort upon them. *Secondly*, That *New-Testament sinners* will be *thrust out* of the kingdom of God. It intimates that they will be *thrusting in*, and will presume upon admission, but in vain; they shall be *thrust out* with shame, as having no part or lot in the matter. *Thirdly*, That the sight of the saint's glory will be a great aggravation of sinner's misery; they shall thus far *see the kingdom of God* that they shall see the *prophets* in it, whom they hated and despised, and themselves, though they thought themselves sure of it, *thrust out*. This is that at which they will *gnash their teeth*, ⁴⁹²⁰Psalm 112:10.

(4.) Think who are they that shall be saved, notwithstanding: *They shall come from the east and the west; and the last shall be first*, v. 29, 30.

[1.] By what Christ said, it appears that but *few shall be saved* of those whom we think most likely, and who bid fairest for it. Yet do not say then that the gospel is preached in vain; for, though Israel be not *gathered*,

Christ will be *glorious*. There shall come many from all parts of the Gentile world that shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. Plainly thus, when we come to heaven, we shall meet a great many there whom we little thought to have met there, and miss a great many thence whom we verily expected to have found there.

[2.] Those who *sit down in the kingdom of God* are such as had taken pains to get thither, for they came from far — *from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south*; they had passed through different climates, had broken through many difficulties and discouragements. This shows that they who would enter into that kingdom must *strive*, as the queen of Sheba, who came from the *utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon*. They who *travel* now in the service of God and religion shall shortly *sit down* to rest in the *kingdom of God*.

[3.] Many who stood fair for heaven came short, and others who seemed cast behind, and thrown quite out of the way, will win and wear this prize, and therefore it concerns us to *strive to enter*. Let us be *provoked*, as Paul desires the Jews might be, to a holy emulation, by the zest and forwardness of the Gentiles, <B114>Romans 11:14. Shall I be outstripped by my juniors? Shall I, who started first, and stood nearest, miss of heaven, when others, less likely, enter into it? If it be got by striving, why should not I strive?

<B13>LUKE 13:31-35

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO HEROD

Here is,

I. A suggestion to Christ of his danger from Herod, now that he was in Galilee, within Herod's jurisdiction (v. 31): *Certain of the Pharisees* (for there were those of that sect dispersed all the nation over) *came* to Christ, pretending friendship and a concern for his safety, and said, *Get thee out of this country, and depart hence, for otherwise Herod will kill thee*, as he did John. Some think that these Pharisees had no ground at all for this, that Herod had not given out any words to this purport, but that they framed this lie, to drive him out of Galilee, where he had a great and growing interest, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those

that really sought his life. But, Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem that the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was enraged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had borne to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance which John preached. Herod was willing to get rid of Christ out of his dominions; and, when he durst not put him to death, he hoped to *frighten him away* by sending him this threatening message.

II. His defiance of Herod's rage and the Pharisees' too; he fears neither the one nor the other: *Go you, and tell that fox so*, v. 32. In calling him a *fox*, he gives him his true character; for he was subtle as a fox, noted for his craft, and treachery, and baseness, and preying (as they say of a fox) furthest from his own den. And, though it is a black and ugly character, yet it did not ill become Christ to give it to him, nor was it in him a violation of that law, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*. For Christ was a prophet, and prophets always had a liberty of speech in reproving princes and great men. Nay, Christ was more than a prophet, he was a king, he was King of kings, and the greatest of men were accountable to him, and therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name; but it is not to be drawn into an example by us. “Go, and tell *that fox*, yea, and *this fox too*” (for so it is in the original, *te alopeki taute*); “*that Pharisee*, whoever he is, that whispers this in my ear, let him know that *I do not fear him*, nor regard his menaces. For,”

1 “I know that I must die, and must die shortly; I expect it, and count upon it, *the third day*,” that is, “very shortly; my hour is at hand.” Note, It will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death, to make death familiar to us, to expect it, think of it, and converse with it, and see it at the door. “If Herod should kill me, he will not surprise me.”

2. “I know that death will be not only no prejudice to me, but that it will be my preferment; and therefore tell him I do not fear him; when I die, *I shall be perfected*. I shall then have *finished* the hardest part of my undertaking; I shall have completed my business;” *teleiouvmai* — *I shall be consecrated*. When Christ dies, he is said to have *sanctified himself*; he consecrated himself to his priestly office with his own blood.

3. “I know that neither he nor any one else can kill me *till I have done my work*. Go, and tell him that I value not his impotent rage. *I will cast out*

devils, and do cures, to-day and to-morrow,” that is, “now and for some little space of time yet to come, in spite of him and all his threats. I *must walk*, I must *go on* in my intended journey, and it is not in his power to hinder me. I must *go about*, as I do, preaching and healing, *to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following.*” Note, It is good for us to look upon the time we have before us as but a little, two or three days perhaps may be the utmost, that we may thereby be quickened to *do the work of the day in its day*. And it is a comfort to us, in reference to the power and malice of our enemies, that they can have no power to take us off as long as God has any work for us to do. The witnesses were not *slain* till they had *finished their testimony*.

4. “I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because *my time* is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction: *It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem,*” that is, “any where but at Jerusalem.” If a *true prophet* was put to death, he was prosecuted as a *false prophet*. Now none undertook to try prophets, and to judge concerning them, but the great sanhedrim, which always sat at Jerusalem; it was a cause which the inferior courts did not take cognizance of, and therefore, if a *prophet be put to death*, it must be at Jerusalem.

III. His lamentation for Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city, v. 34, 35. This we had ⁴²⁵⁷Matthew 23:37-39. Perhaps this was not said now in Galilee, but the evangelist, not designing to bring it in in its proper place, inserts it here, upon occasion of Christ's mentioning his being put to death at Jerusalem.

Note,

1. The wickedness of persons and places that more eminently than others profess religion and relation to God is in a particular manner provoking and grieving to the Lord Jesus. How pathetically does he speak of the sin and ruin of that holy city! *O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!*

2. Those that enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, are often prejudiced against them. They that would not hearken to the prophets, nor welcome those whom God had sent to them, *killed* them, and *stoned* them. If men's corruptions are not conquered, they are provoked.

3. Jesus Christ has shown himself willing, freely willing, to receive and entertain poor souls that come to him, and put themselves under his protection: *How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, with such care and tenderness!*
4. The reason why sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, is because they will not: *I would, I often would, and ye would not.* Christ's willingness aggravates sinners' unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads.
5. The house that Christ leaves is *left desolate*. The temple, though richly adorned, though greatly frequented, is yet desolate if Christ has deserted it. He leaves it *to them*; they had made an idol of it, and let them take it to themselves, and make their best of it, Christ will trouble it no more.
6. Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them. They would not be *gathered* by him, and therefore, saith he, "*You shall not see me, you shall not hear me, any more,*" as Moses said to Pharaoh, when he forbade him his presence, ~~Exo~~ Exodus 10:28, 29.
7. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers that would not now be convinced: "Then you will say, *Blessed is he that cometh,*" that is, "you will be glad to be among those that say so, and *will not see me* to be the Messiah till then when it is too late."