

III. Crisis and the Christian in Biblical Perspective “One Lesson from Jesus on Two Crises”

Luke 13:1–5

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This is our third study on the theme of crisis and the Christian. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. Luke 13:1–5 says *[1] There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. [2] And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? [3] No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. [4] Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? [5] No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”*

The grass withers, the flower fade, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it now be preached for you.

So when a crisis occurs, either that which comes upon the earth as a curse of sin which is called natural evil or crisis that occurs due to our personal sins which is called moral evil, people tend to ask a question. I love to read history and it was really only until the 20th century that these constant movement of plagues, fevers, wars and catastrophes were just regularly encountered. While we regularly encounter what we call natural evils or the brokenness of creation with storms, volcanoes, tornadoes, etc. and the work that is happening in this creation that is groaning to be delivered. We have also experienced somewhat of a mitigation of other crisis and catastrophes our forbearers used to go through all the time.

One of the things I do is exegete cemeteries where I will just walk through them and by looking through them you see what has happened in the society. Many times you will see the evidence of small pox, measles, yellow fever and all kinds of things as you go through the grave markers particularly noting the number of children which was common place until the turn of the century. Back then it was common that at least 50 percent of the children would not be raised due to certain kinds of illnesses because they wouldn’t make it through childhood. It’s amazing how those things have mitigated through our society but yet we still face crisis and catastrophes.

Currently we are in the midst of a virus that is not new for we’ve know about it since 1960 but now a new strain that has its lethality has hit the world so people begin to ask questions, even as they do when some tragedy occurs. You can always count on the fact that there will be a question that arises during crisis, tragedy or catastrophe. That question is inevitable, consistent, continual and universal that comes from everyone in one form or fashion is, why? The ‘why’ is attempted to be answered in two directions. One is in terms of science and the other is in terms of morality. Why has this happened to them? Why has this happened now? We will inescapably ask this question when things happen. In the midst of a crisis or catastrophe when that question is asked what would Jesus say? And that is what I want to try and answer in this study.

In this series I have attempted to do a couple of things. In the first study I did an overview by look at one of the great texts on the power of God’s grace in Titus 2:11–14. I used this to show how we live in this present age. Jesus said in this present age that there would be famines, earthquakes, sickness, death, wars, rumors of wars and the poor, in which He says they are the birth pangs of something new that is coming. How by grace do we respond to them? The

Titus passage told us that we live sensibly, righteously and Godly in this present age. We live by His power, grace, His Word and the Holy Spirit guiding us.

When we encounter a broken world and the triumphant of God's grace at work then we are to trust God by living according to His Word but we don't tempt God. We live with prudence but we don't panic. We live faithfully so that we might live fearlessly. Fear is an emotion that God has given us. It has been said that when you fear something you will do one of three things – you will either freeze, flee or fight. The Bible tells us that while fears are there for a reason we are to address them with that which God has given to give us courage.

What is the opposite of fear? Courage? No, is the response when the opposite of fear is at work. The opposite of fear is perfect love. I John 4:18 says that perfect love casts out all fear. That is the love of Christ that fills us addresses our fears so that they no longer control us or paralyze us for we now are controlled by the Spirit of God so that we can deal with the issues sensibly, righteously and Godly in this present age.

To see this from a real life example we looked at the life of Joseph. At the end of Jacob's life when the brothers are now in Egypt and Joseph is the like the prime minister of Egypt, second in command next to Pharaoh, but as he is in control the brothers come to him fearful now that Jacob has died. Joseph has the power to do away with them in a moment and when the brothers come asking Joseph for mercy, Joseph says to them 'Don't fear for what you meant for evil God meant for good.' There is the doctrine of God's providence at work. God is sovereign over this. Joseph realizes that God's providence has been superintending to bring about this very thing which is the salvation of many.

Out of that we have learned something very important. In the second study from the life of Joseph we learned that God's providence is not singular for God's providence overall has multiple providences. In a crisis or catastrophe God is capable, we can't so please don't text and drive for we can't multi-task, but God can and God does. Not only was God working in Joseph but He was working in Pharaoh, his brothers, his father, a jail keeper, and Potiphar so not only was God working on people but He was also working through events to bring a people down to mature them and mobilize them for 430 years where He would bring them to the Promised Land. God was also working in multiple purposes to establish His covenant people to bring a covenant nation through which He would bring a Seed to bring a Redeemer.

In this study I want us to look at Jesus who gives us a case study for us on this. Luke 13:1 starts out by saying Luke 13:1 says [1] *There were some **present at that very time**...* What is that very time? Here is the context. In Luke 9 Jesus has left Galilee and has set His face to Jerusalem. It is not His first trip but it is His last trip and He has gone down by way of the river Jordan coming up from Jericho. All along the way He has taught, given parables, done miracles and a variety of things as crowds keep increasing as He ascends up the hills to Jerusalem. At that very time they come to Him with a question and it's a why question.

They want to know about the Galileans who Pilate killed and had mingled their blood with their holy sacrifices and why it happened to them. It's a moral question. Jesus gives a very simple, pointed and insightful response. Jesus knows what they are asking and part of His response is in Luke 13:2 which says [2] *And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?"* They expect Jesus who was raised as a Child and the majority of His ministry was in Galilee to be familiar with this event. The event that took place is not surprising for if you read extra Biblical literature on the history of Pilate you would see that he was a very cruel man. When Pilate did this he was clearly making a statement to this population who would seek to rise up and

revolt against Rome. This isn't justice but it's what we call deterrence. So they want to know why these Galileans would suffer this way since they were people who wanted to obey the law and make sacrifices. We see the inevitable question and the insatiable inquiry here.

This is not going to disappear. Every tragedy, crisis or catastrophe people are going to ask why. They will come to Christians and ask us why. They will say something like 'You believe there is a God and that He is sovereign so why would He allow this? Why would this be in any way the design of God?' They can't help themselves. They are made in the image of God. They know there is something called eternity. It's in the heart of a man. They know there is something called morality. They know there are consequences to sin. So when they see dire consequences they automatically ask 'is this because of their sin?'

This isn't the first time Jesus has dealt with this in Scripture. There is the blind man healed where His own Disciples question Jesus in John 9:1-3 which says [1] *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. [2] And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."* The Disciples are asking Jesus if this is a consequence of the blind man's moral evil or his parents. It certainly can be. If I go out, get drunk and lose control of a car I'm responsible for the consequence of that wreck and it was so due to the moral evil of drunkenness.

Going back to the Luke passage it seems that the first question asked tends to do with the moral evil of the person. When Jesus responds to them He clarifies the fact they are asking why it happened due to the moral evil of the Galileans and then He will answer by asking another question which is a tactic He uses a number of times in the Gospels. We see this in His response in Luke 13:3-4 which says [3] *No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. [4] Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?*

I find this interesting that Jesus has just left Galilee on His way to Jerusalem and they bring to Him this national crisis/catastrophe of these Galileans who have been put to death by Pilot and He brings up the scaffold incident that happened in Jerusalem. I have been to both places where these two different events took place. The event where the blood was mingled took place on this large mountain by the city of Magdala. The other event took place at the pool of Siloam in Jerusalem. So Jesus is basically asking them if the ones in Galilee were worse than the ones in Jerusalem. Then Jesus repeats Himself in Luke 13:5 by saying [5] *"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

Their question is 'why' and people even write books on the underlying issue here of 'bad things can't happen to good people' so are these bad people or worse bad people than other bad people and is that why it happened to them? Perhaps they are asking if this happened to bad people then we must be good people? Why do bad things happen to good people?

Here is the real question and it really has two sides to it. Jesus is really saying the question should be 'why does anything good happen for me?' I like the way Dr. Murray says this and here is a paraphrase; anything that you experience on this side of hell, yet should perish for under the judgement and wrath of God righteously for our sins, is grace. God's grace is evident because what we are experiencing is temporary, measured. It is not the unmeasured wrath of God which hell is the declaration of. God's grace is mingled in it and all around it. One aspect of God's grace is God's gracious purpose in the crisis and catastrophe.

In other words, Jesus is telling them 'you're question should not be why was their blood mingled with the sacrifice but why was my blood not mingled with the sacrifice or why did the

tower fall on them by why didn't the tower fall on me.' The reason Jesus says this is that God is calling to you from the crisis and the catastrophe. This measured judgment of God, this measured consequences of a fallen world, this measure temporary consequence that's present, is a megaphone of God's Gospel preaching to repent or you will likewise perish.

Not only is there a real question but there is a real answer. The real answer is that there are no good people. There is none good, no one (Romans 3:12). The real answer is that God's judgment should rightly fall upon each one of us right now but the fact that it didn't is the call from the crisis and the catastrophe to repent or we will likewise perish. Everything that we experience on this side of hell has been mingled and saturated with God's grace. In the crisis and catastrophe it is the reminder that sin costs death and brings judgment but this crisis that is short of the judgment day and the lake of fire, is the patience of God calling us to repentance.

We make fun of preachers all the time saying things like 'oh that's one of those turn or burn preachers' but to some degree when you say that you are ridiculing Christ for that was His message when He was here on earth – repent or perish. Out of His love He has come to rescue the sinner. Even in the crisis and catastrophe He is calling 'sinner leave your sin and come to Me. I am your Redeemer.'

So here is your takeaway. In the providence of God catastrophe and crisis have multiple providences in His sovereign designs for each one shares a foundational and urgent message – repent or perish. So in the midst of what we are going through here is God's grace and God's call to us. If we repent and trust in Christ as Lord and Savior then we don't perish and praise God we have a Savior! John 3:16 says *[16] For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

How do you know when people have turned from their sin and put their trust in Christ? It's not because they all of sudden become sinless but they do develop a deep desire to sin less and a great desire to worship with God's people. Because of the current social and medical limitations we are having to limit our gatherings to 10 people or less so why is it that in a gathering like this someone like me is willing to sing with all of my might with no ability to sing with all of my might.

*Amazing grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

It's because I'm not going to perish. Jesus took my judgment. The wrath of God fell upon Him in my place.

Another thing that marks out those who have repented and put their trust in Christ and will never perish, is they not only love Christ but they love to hear His Word, the Gospel of grace being preached, they don't sit over that Word but under that Word. Another thing they do out of their thanksgiving from being delivered from the wrath to come, they want to tell others of this Christ who saved them out of the love He has given to them for them. If you think these crises and catastrophes are a fearful thing, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God without Christ. Repent and come to Christ who died for you.

This study opened up with a question – Jesus, the Galileans that Pilot killed and mingled their blood with sacrifices, were they worse than other Galileans? As they spoke to The Galilean, Jesus and in just a few short days Pilot again, on the day of sacrifice, will mingle the blood of a Galilean with the sacrifices in Jerusalem for by God's sovereign decree Pilot will hand

Jesus over to the cross, but this isn't the blood of any Galilean. This is the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Turn from your sin that you will not perish.

Every crisis bears God's call to you. Turn and put your trust in Jesus. Turn from sin, self and the world and turn to Christ who saves us with His redeeming blood and His perfect righteousness. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer considering what our Savior is saying to you? What is He communicating to you? In the midst of a crisis His providences are multiple. He is doing many things in people, places and events and He has multiple purposes but there is one, clear, unmistakable call from every crisis including this one and Jesus has enunciated it for us – repent of your sin and put your trust in Christ that you will not perish under the wrath of God. The way has been made for your salvation for the same Lord of Glory who will sit as Judge has already come and poured out Himself on the cross that you may not perish but have everlasting life. Take these moments to turn from sin with your eyes upon Jesus. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Two Crises/Catastrophes

The Question

The Real Question

The Answer

Life Takeaway

In the Providence of God, catastrophe and crises have multiple Providences in His Sovereign designs, but each one shares a foundational and urgent message...

Repent or Perish