

June 3, 2012

EXCEPT YOU REPENT

Luke 13: 1-5

Today, we will look at an emphatic statement made by Christ to His hearers on a given occasion. **In fact**, we will look at three such statements. **These** statements are IMPERATIVE. **They** are VITAL commands involving life and death issues. **To** continue on in disobedience to any one of these commands, is to continue on a way that SEEMS right. **But**, it is a way that is leading to (eternal) death.

Look at Luke 13: 1-2 “**There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.**

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?”

Look at Luke 13: 3 “**I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. First EMPHATIC statement. Life and death.**

Look at Luke 13: 4 “**Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?**

5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Christ is using two different instances here where some died horrible deaths. The first is where some Galileans were slaughtered while they were sacrificing and THEIR blood was mixed with the blood of their sacrifices.

The other is where eighteen died when a tower fell on them in the area of Siloam. Siloam was a part of Solomon's temple. **There** was a pool there where many handicapped or infirmed came or were brought to bathe. **Both** parties mentioned died gruesome deaths.

Christ asked them what He knew them to be thinking. **Do** you suppose that these were the WORST (possible) sinners, (“**sinners above all**”), because they suffered such horrible and gruesome deaths? **Do** you think that their TRAGIC deaths MUST (of necessity) BE an indication of the GREATNESS of their sinner-hood? **Do** you think these sinners died the way they did because they MUST have DESERVED such a death?

Christ is addressing a (foundational) ERROR in the thinking of ALL of us by nature.

What is that ERROR? **There** are DEGREES of sinner-hood (some GREATER, some LESSER). **There** are DEGREES of DESERVEDNESS (some MORE deserving, some LESS deserving).

This is FOUNDATIONAL (it is fundamental) because this is the way we ALL think by nature. **By** nature we ALL believe that we can DO (something) to become LESS deserving of God's wrath. **We** ALL believe we can DO (something) to become MORE deserving of God's blessings. The Philippian jailer.

Also, you will recall a story in the scriptures concerning a rich young ruler, who came to Jesus and asked, **“Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”**

Recall the story!

But, here is what I want you to see. **Listen** to the response of the disciples.

Look at Mark 10: 26-27 **“And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?”**

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”

The disciples were **ASTONISHED** that Christ said of this wealthy man, this ruler of men, this man zealous to keep the law, (they were **ASTONISHED**) that **THESE THINGS** gave no indication that he was saved. **And**, why were they **ASTONISHED**? **They** were **ASTONISHED** because (at that time) **THESE THINGS** made up a part of their **STANDARD** of judging saved and lost.

And, this is not just the thinking of the disciples. **It is** the thinking of **ALL** of us by nature.

Haven’t you heard (or said yourself) of someone who survived a terrible tragedy, “They must have been doing something right.” **Or**, of a farmer who got abundant rain, while others around him got no rain, “He must be paying the preacher.” **Or**, of a city like New Orleans, (devastated by Katrina), “They finally got what they deserved.”

Are some sinners **MORE** deserving of God’s (temporal) judgment in this world than others? **If so**, (if some are **MORE** deserving), then, that (of necessity) means some are **LESS** deserving than others.

Back in our context, the issue here is **DEGREES** of sinner-hood; **DEGREES** of deservedness. **Because** these Galileans and these eighteen died such horrible deaths, they **MUST** have been the **GREATEST**, (They must have been the **WORST**) of sinners.

Then, what about God’s eternal wrath against sin? **Are** there **DEGREES** of deservedness here, as well? **Is ONE** sinner **MORE** deserving of God’s eternal wrath than **ANOTHER** sinner? **If so**, then, that (of necessity) means **SOME** are **LESS** deserving of God’s eternal wrath than **OTHERS**. **Truth is. ALL** are **EQUALLY** deserving of eternal wrath.

The bottom line on the problem being addressed here: It is an **ERROR** in judgment. **It is** an **ERROR** in our **STANDARD** of judgment. **It is ESPECIALLY** an **ERROR** in our **STANDARD** of judging saved and lost.

When it comes to judgment (especially judging save/lost), all of us by nature have the **SAME** hang-up. **We** have the **SAME** problem. **We SHARE** the same **ERROR** in judgment. **We INSIST** on judging by what we can **SEE**. **We INSIST** on judging by outward appearance.

By nature we **INSIST** on comparing ourselves with others, which the Apostle, Paul, told the Corinthians is “not wise.”

Look at II Corinthians 10: 12 “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

Let me show you how this mindset, (one sinner comparing himself with other sinners), plays out in the scriptures. We can see it in the Pharisee. **Who** is the Pharisee? The Pharisee is a religious man (the most religious of his day). **He** is a man ZEALOUS to keep the law. **He** is a student of the Word.

But, ultimately, the Pharisee is one who looked at himself and saw õrighteousnessö within.

Look at Luke 18: 9 “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:”

What I want you to see is the attitude the Pharisee’s thinking caused him to have toward others. See the last phrase, (“**and despised others**”).

Because he saw himself õrighteousö within; because he thought he was doing something that made up his õrighteousnessö, this zealous, dedicated, religious man õdespised othersö. **That** is all that self righteousness can lead to, õdespisingö those who aren’t measuring up to (our) STANDARD. **That** is what this mindset causes in life.

And, then, look at WHERE those who hold this mindset through life END UP.

Look at Matthew 7: 21-23 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

The scene here is final judgment. **Those** Christ is speaking of are religious. **They** were careful to give God the credit for the things they trusted in (õin thy nameö). **But**, their end was eternal misery.

Not only is comparing ourselves with others õnot wiseö; (**It can** only cause us to õdespise othersö.) **and**, not only is comparing ourselves with others deadly; (**It** leaves us on the õwayö which ends in eternal misery.) **SUCH** judgment is (clearly) forbidden by the Scriptures.

Look at John 7: 24 “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

Judge! But, DON’T judge õby appearanceö. **The** VERY way the disciples judged, the VERY way the Pharisee judged, the VERY way those in Matthew 7 judged, the VERY way that ALL of us judge by nature, is the VERY way that is FORBIDDEN by scripture.

The (two-fold) command is, “**DON’T judge by appearance**”. But, DO “**judge righteous judgment**”. õ**Righteous** judgmentö is something NONE of us know by nature. **This** is something ALL are ignorant of before we are taught.

What is **righteous judgment**? **Righteous judgment** is judging as God judges. **It is** judging by God's STANDARD of judgment. **What** is God's STANDARD?

Look at Psalm 9: 7-8 **“But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.**

8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.”

Look at Acts 17: 30-31 **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:**

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

That is why Christ is so **EMPHATIC** in His command in this passage in Luke. **That** is why He is so **INSISTENT** that our thinking be **CHANGED** on this issue. **For ANY** sinner to continue on in the (wrong) STANDARD of judgment is to be headed for eternal death.

Look back at Luke 13: 3;5 **“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”**

“I tell you, Nay” (NO)! I.e. **Your** thinking is **WRONG** here. **Your** STANDARD of judgment is **WRONG** here. **“Except (unless) you repent”** (I.e. **Unless** you change your mind; **UNLESS** you undergo a **RADICAL** change in your thinking; unless your STANDARD of judgment is changed). **“You shall all likewise perish”** (I.e. **You** are headed for eternal misery).

The truth on this matter is: **There** are (no) **DEGREES** of **DESERVEDNESS** whether of God's temporal and eternal judgments or His temporal and eternal blessings. **We are ALL** sinners (by nature and by practice). **And**, as sinners, **ALL** are (equally) **DESERVING** of God's judgments (temporal and eternal). **ALL** are (equally) **UNDESERVING** of God's blessings (both temporal and eternal).

Temporally speaking, I don't and you don't **DESERVE** the next breath we take. **I don't** and you don't **DESERVE** to live in a country like America. **Neither** of us **DESERVES** a healthy and prosperous life. **We** have done **NOTHING** that gives us a **RIGHT** to these temporal blessings.

If God gave us what we **DESERVE** (what we have earned), He would give us death. **We** are sinners. **And**, the (ultimate) **RESULT** of sin is (physical) death. **Life (ITSELF)** and the temporal blessings we enjoy in this life are ours **ONLY** because God has providentially determined them to be so.

This is equally true of God's **ETERNAL** blessings. **If God** gave us what we **DESERVE**, He would send us all to eternal misery. **The** wages of sin is death.

If you or I go to heaven, (if we are saved), it is **NOT** because we **DID** something to earn or **DESERVE** it. **But**, it is so **ONLY** because God has **DETERMINED** it; because He put us in Christ; because Christ has met every condition for our **COMPLETE** salvation.

What makes you think, what makes me think we will ESCAPE the wrath of God? **If our** answer here is ANYTHING but the mercy and grace of God in Christ, we are STILL judging by a different STANDARD than God is. **If our** answer here is ANYTHING but to have the Righteousness Christ worked out charged (imputed) to our account, we are still in need of the ðrepentanceö Christ is talking about in Luke 13.

Christ addressed a similar issue in a different setting and with different words, but with a same conclusion.

Look at Matthew 18: 1 “**At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?**”

The disciples are voicing the same idea as Jesus addressed with them in our context in Luke 13. **The** issue is DEGREES. **There**, it was DEGREES of ðdeservednessö. **Here**, it is DEGREES of ðgreatnessö. **Who** is the ðgreatestö? **Who** is the ðleastö? **Where** do I fit in? **Ultimately**, it is the same ERROR in judgment. **I remind** you of Christ’s command, “**Except you repent, you shall all likewise perishö.**”

Godly repentance requires sinners to do something (totally) out of character for the natural man. **It** requires us to lose our INDEPENDENCE. **It** requires us to become (totally) DEPENDENT.

Look at Luke 18: 2-3 “**And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.**”

Look at one verse in Mark 10: 15 “**Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.**”

What does it mean to “**become as little children**”? **What** does it mean to “**receive the kingdom of God as a little child**”? **Lose** our independence. **Become** dependent!

Losing our independence, (i.e. becoming (totally) DEPENDENT), is not a position any of us will EVER choose by nature. **Becoming** (totally) DEPENDENT requires a work of grace in the heart. **It** requires a RADICAL change in our thinking. **It** requires a CONVERSION.

Then, WHO or WHAT must we become DEPENDENT on? **Sinners** are (totally) DEPENDENT on God, ðwho is rich in mercyö. **As** sinners, we are (totally) DEPENDENT on God to give us what we CANNOT earn and what we DO NOT deserve. **As** sinners, we are (totally) DEPENDENT on Christ, who has done EVERYTHING a Just and Holy God demands in the salvation of ungodly sinners. Seeing and acknowledging our (total) DEPENDENCE on Christ is THE evidence that we are saved.

Look at John 6: 30-33 “**They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.**”

Look at John 6: 48-51 “**I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**”

Look at John 6: 53-54 “**Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.**”

In verse 53 we see another of those EMPHATIC statements Christ made to His hearers. **Obviously**, Christ is not talking about cannibalism (literally eating His flesh or literally drinking His blood). **He** is talking about becoming (totally) DEPENDENT on His life and death for all of salvation.

Christ ALONE met and satisfied God STANDARD. **He ALONE** made perfect satisfaction to God's law and justice. **He ALONE** established the ONE Righteousness by which God is just to justify ungodly sinners. **He ALONE** is the bread of life. Verse 54.

Repentance, then, is a RADICAL change of mind concerning our STANDARD of judging saved and lost. **Repentance** is losing our INDEPENDENCE and becoming (totally) DEPENDENT. **Repentance** is looking to and resting in Christ ALONE for all of salvation.

Christ said, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”

These are EMPHATIC statements. **They** are IMPERATIVES. **They** are COMMANDS. **Unless** you do these things, you do not have life. **Unless** you obey these commands, you are headed for eternal death.

Does that, THEN, mean that these are CONDITIONS for salvation? I.e. **Does** that mean that IF we obey these COMMANDS, God will save us? **Does** that mean that OUR response to God will CAUSE Him to accept us?

NO! Emphatically NO! **There** are (no) CONDITIONS sinners must meet in order to be saved. **If there** were, ALL would be doomed to eternal misery. **Why? Because** ALL are born into this world (spiritually) dead. (Ephesians 2: 1). “**For you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.**”

And, (spiritually) dead sinners have NO ability to respond. **It would** be as IMPOSSIBLE for a (spiritually) dead sinner to respond to God as it would have been for Lazarus to come out of the tomb on his own (without Christ giving him life).

Changing your STANDARD of saved and lost; **beginning** to judge saved and lost by Christ's imputed Righteousness ALONE; **becoming** (totally) DEPENDENT upon Christ for ALL of salvation, these are (not) CONDITIONS sinners meet IN ORDER FOR God to save them.

They are (rather) EVIDENCES that God has ALREADY saved them. **They** are EVIDENCES that the Spirit of God has done His work in the heart. **They** are EVIDENCES that can only be the fruit and result of Christ's Righteousness imputed.

If you find yourself having no hope of salvation but in Christ's imputed Righteousness ALONE, rejoice. **That** is EVIDENCE that you have "found grace" in God's sight. **It is** EVIDENCE that God has been merciful to you, "the sinner".

In Luke 13 Christ is addressing sinners who are judging by appearance. **He is** speaking to those who are comparing themselves with others. **He is** confronting those who are not judging by God's STANDARD of Righteousness.

What about you? **What** about me? **Has** God CHANGED our thinking on this issue? **Have** we understood that God's STANDARD is NOT how we compare with other sinners, but, how we compare with Christ? **How** does our "righteousness" compare to the "Righteousness" He worked out by His obedience unto death? **He is** God's STANDARD of judgment.

God is "not willing that any of His elect should perish, but that all of them should come to repentance".

We all start out judging saved and lost by a STANDARD that robs God of His glory. **It is** a STANDARD that fails to give Christ the preeminence He deserves. **It is** a STANDARD that causes us to boast in our own self righteousness ("despising others").

We judge "by appearance". **We** "compare ourselves with others". **Clearly**, the end of that road (that way) is eternal death.

But, just like those in Luke 13, that is where all are headed, "EXCEPT YOU REPENT"!

By Mark Pannell