

## LUKE 13

## HEALING FOR A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM

At the very time when Jesus was urging upon His hearers their need of repentance, a report was made of a cruel slaughter of Galileans at the hand of Pontius Pilate (verses 1-9). The people probably expected that Jesus would declare the poor sufferers to have merited their fate, and that He would fall into the common fallacy of supposing that exceptional suffering is a proof of exceptional guilt on the part of the sufferer. Jesus, however, replied that temporary exemption from suffering is a mark of special grace on the part of God! All impenitent persons are certain to suffer; indeed, their sins and rebellions make them deserve to suffer. And if judgment has not fallen, the delay should be regarded as a merciful opportunity to repent. Jesus supported this truth by referring to a recent calamity, in which 18 people had been crushed by the fall of a tower. Their fate was not to be regarded as a sign of their special sinfulness, but as a warning to others that they would likewise suffer – unless they repented of their sins. The Master further enforced His call to repentance by the parable of the fruitless fig tree. God mercifully preserves and blesses and spares; but eventually, the day of mercy will end. The nation or the individual which produces no fruit of penitence and righteousness is certain to be cut down. While the opportunity is given, repentance must be shown! “Now is the acceptable time... now is the day of salvation!”

One Sabbath Day, as Jesus worshiped in the synagogue, He found an occasion to reveal His sympathy and power by releasing a poor woman who – for 18 long years – had been bound by “a spirit of infirmity” (verses 10-21). And in the same way, even today, His Word still brings deliverance to souls that are bound by the power of sin. It was Jesus’ tender sympathy which prompted His act of love for this poor woman, who could not stand up straight on her feet; and that same sympathy further led Him to use this opportunity to relieve the consciences of His hearers from the burden of man-made traditions, which had been placed upon them by false interpretations of the Law. The ruler of the synagogue criticized Jesus by addressing the healed woman and all other sick and physically afflicted persons whom she represented. He claimed that such healing broke the law of Sabbath-rest. However, this man’s hypocrisy was quickly unmasked by the Savior’s reply; for He reminded him that where their own selfish interests prompted them, they interpreted the Law as loosely as they

**Outline of the chapter:**

- ❖ *Christ exhorts His listeners to repentance and faith – verses 1-9*
- ❖ *He heals a woman who had been bound in infirmity for 18 years – verses 10-17*
- ❖ *He gives two parables and an exhortation to enter the narrow gate – verses 18-30*
- ❖ *He sends a message to Herod and laments over those in Jerusalem – verses 31-35*

pleased. For example, they would allow themselves, on the Sabbath Day, to untie their cattle (which had only been bound for a few hours) and give them a drink of water. Yet they refused to allow Jesus to relieve a true daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound with invisible chains for nearly two whole decades. What gross hypocrisy! They were pretending to be zealous for the Law; but at the same time, they were denying its essential principle of love. Their real breach of the Law was shown by their lack of sympathy for this woman, as well as by their hatred of Christ. Their interpretation of the Law was shown to be absurd; for it prevented an act of mercy which was not only allowable on the Sabbath, but also very necessary. Jesus never taught or indicated that He would abolish the Sabbath. He only intended to restore its true spirit of worship, love, liberty, and joy.

In view of this gracious work of power which Christ had just performed, the multitude rejoiced. And then He spoke the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. The former showed that His power was yet to extend over all the earth, and the latter demonstrated that it was to transform all human life. Small beginnings and invisible forces are not to be despised or distrusted by the followers of the Lord Jesus; for someday, He will deliver the entire suffering creation "from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God!"

In verses 22-30, we find the first in a new series of incidents on the last journeys of Jesus toward Jerusalem. One of Jesus' hearers asked Him the question, "Lord, are they few that are saved?" He did not reply directly; but His answer implied that many Jews who expected to be saved would be lost, and many Gentiles whom the Jews expected to be lost would be saved. In a parable, He compared the blessings of His Kingdom to a banquet that is served in a palace. The door into this palace is narrow, but many of those who are invited refuse to pass in thereby. After a time, this door is shut; and then those who have refused to enter shall beg the Master of the house to reopen it. But alas! It shall be in vain. They will be forever excluded, and they will be overwhelmed with remorse and disappointment. The narrow door is that of repentance and faith in Christ; the opportunity for entrance is present, but not endless. Those who reject Christ will be excluded from His Kingdom; and among these, there will be many whose folly will be especially apparent.

Thus Jesus gave a very practical answer to the question which had been asked in mere curiosity. It is not important for us to know exactly how many will be saved. The responsibility of each and every person who hears the Gospel is to make sure that he or she is included in that number. It is not enough that one lives in a Christian land, and in a religious home, and possesses knowledge of saving truth; each person must repent and believe in Christ for himself. Sadly, however, there are many who are like the Jews in Jesus' time; they have the



greatest religious privileges and opportunities, but they are the furthest from salvation. “There are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last.”

A report reached Jesus that Herod was threatening His life (verses 31-35). This report was brought to Him by the Pharisees, who hoped that it would terrify His followers and induce Him to flee to Jerusalem – where He would fall into the hands of the Jewish rulers. Instead, however, Jesus sent the king a message of defiance and irony; it has no note of insolence, but it does reveal the courage and indignation of a true man. “Go and say to that fox...” Jesus thus addressed Herod because He saw his craftiness. Herod did not wish to have the bad reputation of killing another “prophet” so soon after the death of John the Baptizer, but he wished his realm to be rid of One Whom he regarded as a dan-

gerous leader. So he did not arrest Jesus, but he did try to put Him to flight. The Pharisees were asked to bear this message to the king because Jesus saw that they were united with him in the malicious cunning of their report.

“Behold,” said Jesus, “I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow; and the third day I am perfected.” Thus Jesus declared that His time and task were Divinely allotted; no king could shorten His time until His task was done. When His work was complete, then – in His death and resurrection – the glory and grace and power of Jesus would be made perfect. “Nevertheless I must go on my way.” Jesus was to leave Galilee and Perea, the realm of Herod – not because He feared the king, but in fulfillment of His task which would take Him to Jerusalem. The reference to Jerusalem was made in a tone of solemn irony: “For it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” That city had a monopoly in murdering prophets; it would almost be improper for Jesus to be killed in any other place. However, the reference to Jerusalem led Jesus to pronounce a touching lament over the city that He truly loved. He saw that His rejection and death would hasten the destruction of the city. He saw its doom already hovering over it like a bird of prey. He would have gladly given the people therein His Divine salvation and protection, but they would not accept Him. And now they would be left to their own defense – that is to say, to the ruin which He alone could have averted. Henceforth they would not see Him in His saving power, until – in a state of repentance – they would finally welcome His return as their true Savior and Lord. Alas! How sad it is that Jesus is so often spurned and rejected by those who need Him the most!

*Lord Jesus, we confess that in our natural state, we are bound by Satan in the Adam-nature of sin; but we pray that You would be pleased to lay Your Almighty hand upon us, and make us whole! Bestow upon us the gifts of true faith and repentance, we beseech You. Amen.*