

REPENT OR PERISH

Luke 13:1-9, “Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ²Jesus answered, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.’ ⁶Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, “For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?” ⁸“Sir,” the man replied, “leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.””¹

- This passage is filled with some unnerving implications about the basic nature of reality; and it is not the way people think it is. My objective: to impress upon your consciences *that people are perishing*. If we are going to be the kind of witness for Christ that we ought to be, we need **to know and feel what is at stake**.¹
- **Stuart Briscoe** defines a *pulpit committee*: “A group of people in search of a man who will be totally fearless and uncompromising as he tells them exactly what they want to hear!”²
- Jesus’ preaching would not please many congregations because he was certainly not in the habit of telling people what they wanted to hear.³

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

- This horrific event took place **inside the temple sometime during Passover** (this was the only time laymen were involved) in the actual sacrificial procedures of the temple sacrifices.⁴
 - So the victims were **Galilean pilgrims offering their Passover sacrifices**.
 - **Pilate seems to have thought these people were guilty of some kind of sedition** and he had his soldiers butcher them when they least expected.
 - In the ensuing skirmish human blood was mixed in with the lambs’ blood.
- Everyone knew of the event, but apparently the reason it was mentioned to Jesus is that **it was generally believed that victims of calamities and misfortunes were guilty of extraordinary sins that they had kept hidden**. Another example of this can be found in John.
- **John 9:1-3**, “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ³Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.’”

¹As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

- **Congenital blindness was rather common in the first century**.⁵
- **To the disciples this man presented a theological puzzle**. They probably reasoned as follows:

¹ John Piper, “Clarifying the Tornado,” Aug 22, 2009, www.desiringgod.org/Blog/1968_clarifying_the_tornado/, <Acc. Feb 2, 2010.>

² D. Stuart Briscoe, *Patterns for Power* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1979), 87.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, in the *Preaching the Word* series (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 79.

⁴ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, II* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 1006.

⁵ “Blindness,” in *Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, James Hastings, ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1953).

- Back of every physical affliction or defect lies a sin, generally the sin of the afflicted one.
- But how can this be true if the man is born with a defect?
- In that case he cannot have brought it upon himself through his own misconduct, can he?
- Is he being punished, then, for the sin of the parents? If this is the case, is it fair?
- **Another possibility:** the individual who was born with a defect may be the cause of his own misfortune; for he may have committed acts of sin while he was still in the womb!⁶
 - It was common in rabbinic thought that babies were able to sin in the womb.
 - They concluded that “in the womb Esau had tried to kill Jacob.”⁷

³“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

- “[The disciples] must learn to look upon such cases of diseased and afflicted humanity as opportunities for the manifestation of the works of God’s redemptive love.”⁸
- **What are some of the reasons for healing?**
 - **Function as a sign**—to authenticate the gospel message
 - **Bring comfort**—demonstrated God’s attribute of mercy
 - **To equip for service**—as physical impediments to ministry are removed
 - **God’s glory**—people see the physical evidence of God’s goodness, love and power.
- **Does God heal today?**
 - Yes, Christ provided for healing in the atonement
- **Job 4:7**, “Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?” This was the dominant way of thinking in first century Jerusalem.

²Jesus answered, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

- This was an attractive way to think about life for those who had been spared adversity. Their goodness had spared them!
- Jesus was not denying that sin sometimes brings tragedy, because it does (cf. Matthew 9:2). But he flatly refused the idea that *all* tragedy is due to the sins of its victims.
- Some of Jesus’ listeners could have argued that the Galileans had “asked for” such tragedy from Pilate due to their political activity and thus were morally culpable, but no one could say the same about the random deaths from the collapse of the tower of Siloam.⁹
- Jesus assumed and taught the universality of sin, and of death as its consequence.¹⁰
- **Repentance is intellectual, volitional and emotional**—a radical change of one’s entire being.
 - I’ve come across a number of works that state that repentance is both intellectual and volitional, but that it may or may not involve the emotions. Although I suspect that such writers have the best of intentions when they say such things and that they are probably attempting to avoid rooting repentance into the willy-nilly nature of emotionalism, never-

⁶ William Hendriksen, *John*, in *New Testament Commentary* series, 12 vols (Baker: Grand Rapids, 2002), 4:72.

⁷ Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, II, 527-529, as quoted by Hendriksen, *John*, 73.

⁸ J. W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1939), 359.

⁹ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, vol. 2 of 3 (Dallas: Word, 1993), 719, explains: “While in vv. 2–3 we were dealing with the act of a cruel leader and perhaps of people who “asked for it” by their political activity, now we are probably to think of an “act of God” falling randomly on those who just happen innocently to be present. The same judgments apply.”

¹⁰ E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 185: “In the Gospels Jesus does not speak to the question of original sin. However, in this saying he assumes the universality of sin and death as its consequence. In every death, whether an accident at “Siloam” or an execution by Pilate, the funeral bell “tolls for thee.”

theless such claims are simply not in keeping with the biblical message. One need only read through the Psalms for a few chapters to see that the affections of a believer play an integral role in the spiritual growth. See Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*.¹¹

- **Religious Affections**, "...true religion, in great part consists in the affections... You may ask what I mean by affections I answer: The affections are nothing more than the vigorous and perceptible inclinations of the soul's will."¹²
 - **Thesis Expanded**: "...the degree of religion is rather to be judged of by the fixedness and strength of the habit that is exercised in affection, whereby holy affection is habitual, than by the degree of the present exercise; and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to outward effects and manifestations, or inward effects, in the hurry and vehemence, and sudden changes of the course of the thoughts of the mind. But yet it is evident, that religion consists so much in affection, as that without holy affection there is no true religion; and no light in the understanding is good, which does not produce holy affection in the heart: no habit or principle in the heart is good, which has no such exercise; and no external fruit is good, which does not proceed from such exercises."¹³
 - **God Insists Upon Fervency**: "The kind of faith acceptable to God does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes, raising us only a little above a state of indifference: God, in His Word, insists that if we are in earnest, we will be 'fervent in spirit,' and our hearts will be vigorously involved with our faith."¹⁴
 - **John Piper**, "Saving faith is the heartfelt conviction not only that Christ is reliable, but also that he is desirable. It is the confidence that he will come through with his promises and that what he promises is more to be desired than all the world."¹⁵
 - **Edwards Test of True Affections**: "By this, you may examine your love to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the word of God, and your joy in them, and also your love to the people of God, and your desires after heaven; whether they be from a supreme delight in this sort of beauty, without being primarily moved from your imagined interest in them, or expectations from them. There are many high affections, great seeming love and rapturous joys, which have nothing of this holy relish belonging to them."¹⁶
 - **Therefore true repentance is a turnaround of one's entire life in respect to sinful conduct.**¹⁷
 - The people who tell Jesus of Pilate's actions don't say it, but Jesus sees their underlying message:
 - Those slain Galileans must have done something horrible for God to allow something so horrible to happen to them.
 - In other words an **extraordinary tragedy** must be a sign of **extraordinary guilt**.
 - Now ponder for a moment: What you would have answered at this point?
 - **What does your** theology of suffering and sin call for in the face of this kind of tragedy?
 - Jesus essentially says, "No, their sin was **not extraordinarily horrible. It was ordinarily horrible**, just like yours. And if you don't repent, you too will all experience a horrible end."
 - Notice what Jesus **does not** and what he **does** say:
 - **Does Not**: "Those Galileans were no more sinful than you, so their deaths are really remarkable!"
 - **Does**: "You are just as sinful as they are and should get ready to die just like they did."
- ⁴Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them¹⁸—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.'

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990).

¹² Edwards, *Religious Affections*, The Banner of Truth Trust edition, 237, and Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, Ellyn Sanna, ed. (Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing, MCMXCIX), 22.

¹³ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, The Banner of Truth Trust edition, 243.

¹⁴ Edwards, the Barbour edition, 25.

¹⁵ John Piper, *Desiring God*, (Multnomah: Sisters, 1996), 69.

¹⁶ Edwards, Carlisle, 189.

¹⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, in the *Preaching the Word* series (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 81.

¹⁸ Many people believe that the tower stood at the juncture of the south and east walls of Jerusalem and they may have fallen during the construction of an aqueduct from the reservoir of Siloam to improve the water supply. See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 554. Marshall explains, "Σιλωάμ was the name of the reservoir associated with the water supply from Gihon to Jerusalem; it lay near the junction of the South and East walls, and the tower may have been part of the fortifica-

- *In the local paper this past week were the two following snippets:*
 - **China: Seven children hacked to death at kindergarten.**
 - “Seven children and one teacher were hacked to death and at least 20 others injured in a rampage Wednesday at a kindergarten in Hanzhong city in northwest Shaanxi province, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Liu Xiaoming, a Hanzhong city official, said the killer committed suicide. The news agency did not immediately give any other details. Three attacks at schools and kindergartens late last month left dozens of children injured. The slaying came despite an ordered boost in security at school grounds.”¹⁹
 - **Russia: Hopes dim on miners.**
 - “Thirty-eight Siberian coal miners are buried so deep in Russia’s largest underground coal mine that rescuers use up most of their oxygen tanks trying to reach them and can’t spend much time searching for the missing men, the regional governor said Tuesday. So far, 52 are confirmed dead from the two explosions that hit the Rapsadskaya mine in the Siberian region of Kemerovo late Saturday and early Sunday. Many of the dead were rescue workers who went into the shafts after he first blast and were caught in the second explosion.”²⁰
 - The meaning of the seven Chinese children that were hacked to death and the 90 dead Russian coal miners²¹ in light of Luke 13:1-5, is that Jeffrey Anderson is a sinner and should repent or forfeit his life forever. “That means I should turn from the silly preoccupations of my life and focus my mind’s attention and my heart’s affection on God and embrace Jesus Christ as my only hope for the forgiveness of my sins and for the hope of eternal life. That is God’s message in the collapse of this bridge. That is his most merciful message: there is still time to turn from sin and unbelief and destruction for those of us who live. If we could see the eternal calamity from which he is offering escape we would hear this as the most precious message in the world.”²²
- “Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’” ⁸“Sir,” the man replied, “leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.”“**
- The above parable is composed of three essential elements:
 - The Owner of the vineyard,
 - The Caretaker or Gardner, and
 - The Fig Tree itself.
 - The *Owner* is emblematic of **God the Father**, and
 - The *Caretaker/Gardner* represents **Jesus Christ**.
 - The *Fig Tree* is a picture of **Israel** or **us** (any would-be follower of Jesus Christ).²³

tions in this area. Pilate built an aqueduct to improve the water supply, and it is also possible that the tower (and its collapse) had something to do with this building operation” (554).

¹⁹ From Herald News Services, Snohomish County, *The Herald*, Wednesday, May 12, 2010, A3.

²⁰ From Herald News Services, *The Herald*, Wednesday, May 12, 2010, A3.

²¹ As the article indicates, 52 are confirmed dead and 38 still remain uncertain, although their prospects do not look promising; hence, my total of 90 dead people.

²² From John Piper, “Putting My Daughter to Bed Two Hours After the Bridge Collapsed,” August 1, 2007, http://www.desiringgod.org/Blog/745_putting_my_daughter_to_bed_two_hours_after_the_bridge_collapsed/, <accessed May 11, 2010.>

²³ The nation of Israel was identified with a fig tree on several occasions in the Old Testament (cf. Jer 24:1–10; Hos 9:10; Mic 7:1; etc.

- Both the owner and the caretaker are, as it were, singing the same song, but (to press the analogy even further) they appear to be singing distinct parts, yet, their parts are in harmony.
 - The owner argues from **the logic of righteousness**.
 - The caretaker reasons from **the logic of mercy**.²⁴
- **The Owner:** The owner's wishes are perfectly reasonable. Three years earlier he had a fig tree planted on a sunny slope in the fertile ground of his vineyard. As expected, it rose above the garden with the whole sky to itself. Its large dense leaves blocked out the sun from the grapes below, and it drew precious nourishment from the soil. This was expected and acceptable because of the fruit it promised. Excellent care was given to it by the caretaker. But after one, then two, then three years there was no fruit! So the owner's common sense commanded, "Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" (v. 7). The useless tree was taking up precious space and exhausting the soil. It must go.²⁵
- **The Caretaker:** The caretaker pleaded for one last opportunity for the tree. This is astonishing mercy and grace, since there simply is no reason to extend such aid to something like a tree. It is astonishing because it means that the Lord of the universe, gives us an extended period of grace during which he painstakingly does what he can to bring forth the fruit of repentance.
- John Bunyan, a well-known Puritan preacher that also happen to know something about gardening, saw that the promise to "dig around it" indicated that **its root structure was earthbound**.
- **John Bunyan**, "Barren fig-tree! See how the Lord Jesus, by these very words, suggesteth the cause of thy fruitless soul. The things of this world lie too close to thy heart; the earth with its things has bound up thy roots; thou art an earth-bound soul."²⁶
- **John Bunyan**, "Lord, I will loosen his roots; I will dig up this earth, I will lay his roots bare. My hand shall be upon him by sickness, by disappointments, by cross providences. I will dig about him until he stands shaking and tottering, until he be ready to fall. . . Thus, deals the Lord Jesus oftentimes with the barren professor; He diggeth about him, He smiteth one blow at his heart, another blow at his lusts, a third at his pleasures, a fourth at his comforts, another at his self-conceitedness: thus He diggeth about him. This is the way to take bad earth from the roots, and to loosen his roots from the earth. Barren fig-tree! see here the care, the love, the labor, and way, which the Lord Jesus, the Dresser of the vineyard, is fair to take with thee, if haply thou mayest be made fruitful."²⁷
- The caretaker's other stated method is to fertilize your soul with the Word and the Spirit.
 - Month after month he applies the hearty, life-giving nourishment of the gospel.
 - He sends the Spirit to minister his Word.
 - He brings to memory failures and sins and great needs.
 - Has the Word been coming to you? Has the Spirit been stirring your soul?
- If the Lord does not return while we are here on earth, we are all going to die.
- Some of us will live for many more years.
- Others will die much sooner due to weakness, illness, trauma, or violence.
- That day is coming sooner than we may think, and if you do not repent you will most certainly perish. The wrath of God abides on the unbelieving, unrepentant heart.
- **John 3:18**, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."
- **John 3:36**, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

²⁴ Hughes, *Luke*, 82.

²⁵ Hughes, *Luke*, 83.

²⁶ John Bunyan, "The Barren Fig-Tree" in *Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching*, 13 vols. Clyde E. Fant and William M. Pinson, eds. (Waco: Word, 1976), 2:332.

²⁷ Bunyan, "The Barren Fig-Tree," 333.

- **1 John 5:12**, “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”
- C. S. Lewis, the brilliant English scholar and Christian writer, died the same day President John Kennedy did. One of the truly refreshing characteristics of Lewis was his complete lack of elitism in the way he writes. But even more importantly was his insistence upon subordinating everything to the salvation of lost sinners.
- I find what he says to be very helpful in keeping the perishing constantly before our eyes.
- **C.S. Lewis**, “It is hardly possible for [us] to think too often or too deeply about [the glory] of our neighbor. . . It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.”²⁸
- **C.S. Lewis**, “The Christian will take literature a little less seriously than the cultured Pagan. . . The Christian knows from the outset that the salvation of a single soul is more important than the production or preservation of all the epics and tragedies in the world.”²⁹
- This tips us off to what C. S. Lewis’ life was really devoted to. In 1952 an American liberal theologian criticized Lewis for using simple analogies to try to shed some light on the Trinity. Lewis’ response was passionate and shows where his heart really was in all his work.
- **C.S. Lewis**, “Most of my books are evangelistic, addressed to [those outside]. I was writing to the people not to the clergy. Dr. Pittinger would be a more helpful critic if he advised a cure as well as asserting many diseases. How does he himself do such work? What methods, and with what success, does he employ when he is trying to convert the great mass of storekeepers, lawyers, realtors, morticians, policeman and artisans who surround him in his own city?”³⁰
- That was Lewis’ burden as a literary scholar. It should be your burden also in whatever your profession. You have never talked to a mere mortal. They will all last forever. And unless they repent, they will perish.
- **God in the Dock**, Imagine yourself looking down from a height on two crowded express trains that are traveling towards one another along the same line at 60 miles an hour, You can see that in forty seconds there will be a head-on collision. I think it would be very natural to say about the passengers of these trains, that they were objects of pity. This would not mean that they felt miserable themselves; but they would certainly be proper objects of pity. I think that is the sense in which to take the word ‘miserable’. The Prayer Book does not mean that we should feel miserable but that if we could see things from a sufficient height above we should all realize that we are in fact proper objects of pity.³¹

²⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 14f.

²⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 10.

³⁰ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, Walter Hooper, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 181-183.

³¹ The illustration above and the following paragraphs originated from chapter 14, “‘Miserable Offenders’ An Interpretation of Prayer Book Language,” of C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, Walter Hooper, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 120-121: One advantage to having a printed (Order of Service or written Liturgy), is that it enables you to see when people’s feelings and thoughts have changed. When people begin to find the words of our service difficult to join in, that is, of course, a sign that we do not feel about those things exactly as our ancestors. Many people have, as their immediate reaction to that situation, the simple remedy — ‘Well, change the words’ — which would be very sensible if you knew that we are right and our ancestors were wrong. It is always at least worthwhile to find out who it is that is wrong.

[The word] *Contrite*, as you know, is a word translated from Latin, meaning *crushed* or *pulverized*. Now modern people complain that there is too much of that note in our Prayer Book. They do not wish their hearts to be pulverized, and they do not feel that they can sincerely say that they are ‘miserable offenders.’ I once knew a regular churchgoer who never repeated the words, ‘the burden of them (i.e. his sins) is intolerable,’ because he did not feel that they *were* intolerable. But he was not understanding the words. I think the Prayer Book is very seldom talking primarily about our feelings; that is (I think) the first mistake we’re apt to make about these words ‘we are miserable offenders.’ I do not think whether we are feeling miserable or not matters. I think it is using the word *miserable* in the old sense — meaning *an object of pity*. That a person can be a proper object of pity when he is not feeling miserable, you can easily understand if you imagine yourself looking down from a height on two crowded express trains that are traveling towards one another along the same line at 60 miles an hour, You can see that in forty seconds there will be a head-on collision. I think it

- **Appointed prayer for Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent):**
 - Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.³²
- **The “General Confession,” in the “Evening Prayer”**
 - “Almighty and most merciful Father, We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws, We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, And we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us: But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders; Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults, Restore thou them that are penitent, According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord: And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.”³³
- **The “General Confession,” made during Holy Communion:**
 - “Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed by thought, word, and deed against Your divine majesty, provoking most justly your wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us. The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, Most merciful Father for your Son our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake; forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of Your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”³⁴

- We Can Come
- It is Well with my Soul
- Before the Throne of God Above

would be very natural to say about the passengers of these trains, that they were objects of pity. This would not mean that they felt miserable themselves; but they would certainly be proper objects of pity. I think that is the sense in which to take the word ‘miserable’. The Prayer Book does not mean that we should feel miserable but that if we could see things from a sufficient height above we should all realize that we are in fact proper objects of pity.

³² Appointed prayer for Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent), within the Church of England/Episcopal Church.

³³ “The General Confession,” from “Evening Prayer” from *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church/Church of England.

³⁴ “The General Confession,” conducted just prior to Holy Communion within the Episcopal Church/Church of England.

We Can Come

By Jeffrey Anderson

F C/E Gm Dm
 God put forth his Son to turn aside His anger

Bb F/A Csus C
 And now that this is done we can come

F C/E Gm Dm
 All of this to show His justice and His glory

Bb F/A Csus C
 And now that this is done we can come

F/A Bb F/A C Dm
 We have peace with God through Jesus Christ

Bb F/A Csus C
 And we declare the wonders of the cross

F/A Bb F/A C Dm
 We raise our hands to Jesus Christ

Bb Bb/C C F
 And savor all the good that You have won

F C/E Gm Dm
 Through the work of God we are now seen righteous

Bb F/A Csus C
 And now that this is done we can come

F C/E Gm Dm
 Holy now we stand and altogether perfect

Bb F/A Csus C
 And now that this is done we can come

It Is Well With My Soul

Words by Horatio G. Spafford. Music by
Phillip P. Bliss. Public Domain.

C G/B Am F G C
When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
Am D G
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
C F D7 G
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
C F C/G G C
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

chorus:

C G
It is well (It is well)
G C
With my soul (With my soul)
F C/G G7 C
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed his own blood for my soul.
(chorus)

My sin, o, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
(chorus)

And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

Before the Throne of God Above

G D
 Before the throne of God above
 F#m
 I have a strong a perfect plea
 G D/F# A Bm
 A great High Priest whose name is Love
 G G/A A D
 Who ever lives and pleads for me
 G D/F# D A
 My name is graven on His hands
 G D/F# A Bm
 My name is written on His heart
 G D/F# A Bm
 I know that while in heaven He stands
 Em Em/A Bm
 No tongue can bid me thence depart
 Em Em/A D
 No tongue can bid me thence depart

G D
 When Satan tempts me to despair
 F#m
 And tells me of the guilt within
 G D/F# A Bm
 Upward I look and see Him there
 G G/A D
 Who made an end of all my sin
 G D/F# D A
 Because the sinless Savior died
 G D/F# A Bm
 My sinful soul is counted free
 G D/F# A Bm
 For God the Just is satisfied
 Em Em/A Bm
 To look on Him and pardon me
 Em Em/A D
 To look on Him and pardon me

A E
 Behold Him there the Risen Lamb
 G#m
 My perfect spotless righteousness
 A E/G#mB C#m
 The great unchangeable I Am
 A A/B E
 The King of glory and of grace
 A E/G#m E B
 One with Himself I cannot die
 A E/G#m B C#m
 My soul is purchased by His blood
 A E/G#m A C#m
 My life is hid with Christ on high
 F#m F#m/B C#m
 With Christ my Savior and my God
 F#m F#m/B E
 With Christ my Savior and my God

UNLESS YOU REPENT YOU WILL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH³⁵

To unfold this text I simply want to focus on four words in the key sentence in verses 3 and 5. The sentence is, “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” The four words I want us to focus on are “all,” “likewise,” “perish,” and “repent.”

1. “All”

- “Unless you repent you will ALL likewise perish.” A group of people come to Jesus and tell him about how Pilate had murdered some worshiping Galileans and taken their blood and mixed it with the blood of their sacrifices—their sheep and pigeons and doves. It’s as though some anarchists should break into our church this morning during the Lord’s Supper, cut the necks of a few worshipers, and pour their blood into the communion cups. It was a horrible thing that Pilate did.
- The people don’t say it, but Jesus hears it in their voices—these slain Galileans must have done something horrible for God to allow something so horrible to happen to them. In other words extraordinary tragedy must signify extraordinary guilt.
- Now ponder for a moment what you would have answered at this point. What does your theology of suffering and sin call for in the face of this kind of tragedy?
- What Jesus said was this. He said, “No, their sin was not extraordinarily horrible. It was ordinarily horrible, just like yours. And if you don’t repent, you too will experience a horrible end, all of you.” In other words instead of saying that they are no more sinful than we are and being amazed at their death, he says that we are just as sinful as they are and should get ready to die like they did.
- What Jesus teaches, then, is that all of us are extremely sinful. We are so sinful that calamities and disasters should not shock us as though something unwarranted were coming upon innocent human beings. There are no innocent human beings. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “There is none righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10). And what should amaze us in our sin is not that some are taken in calamity, but that we are spared and given another day to repent. The really amazing thing in this universe is not that guilty sinners perish, but that God is so slow to anger that you and I can sit here this morning and have one more chance to repent.

2. “Likewise”

- “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Does this mean that all unrepentant people will be murdered in the act of worship? No, it can’t mean that because in verse 5 Jesus says that we will all perish like those who were killed by a falling tower. We can’t all die just like the Galileans who were murdered and just like those on whom the tower of Siloam fell. “Likewise” must mean something else.
- It can’t just mean die, since that’s going to happen to those who repent to. Everybody dies until Jesus comes again. But Jesus says implies that if we repent, we will not perish.
- So what does Jesus mean when he says that all unrepentant people will likewise perish? I think he means something like this: you see what a horrible end those people came to; they didn’t think it was going to happen. O they knew they were going to die someday; but they didn’t know what that would mean. The horror of their end took them by surprise. Well unless you repent, that is the way it is going to be for you. Your end will be far more horrible than you think it is. You will not be ready for it. It will surprise you terribly. In that sense you will LIKEWISE perish.
- The parallel between you and them is that there was something dreadful about the way they ended, and there will be something dreadful about the way your life ends. They were not expecting that kind of end and you will not be expecting it either (Luke 17:27-30). Only repentance can make you ready to meet God.

3. “Perish”

- “Unless you repent you will all likewise PERISH.” Now what does “perish” mean? Sometimes the word simply means die in the sense that we all will die physically. But that would not fit here since Jesus implies that if we repent, we will not perish. “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” If you DO repent, you won’t perish. So perish is something more than simply die a physical death.

³⁵ The above message was taken directly from John Piper, “Unless You Repent You Will All Likewise Perish,” June 5, 1988, http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1988/642_Unless_You_Repent_You_Will_All_Likewise_Perish/, <Accessed May 11, 2010;> it is included for those interested in reading more on the subject of this passage.

- Here's what I think it means. Since Jesus connects it directly to sin and since he says it can be escaped by repentance, I take it to mean final judgment. He is referring to something beyond death. Those Galileans were taken unawares and experienced a horrible end. Unless you repent, you too will be taken unawares and experience a horrible end—the judgment of God beyond the grave.

“Perish” in the New Testament

- The word perish often refers to this terrible judgment in the New Testament. For example in John 3:16 it says, “For God so loved the world that whosoever believes on him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” So perishing is the alternative to having everlasting life. The same thing turns up in John 10:28. Jesus says, “I give them eternal life, and they shall not perish for ever.” Perishing is what happens to you if you don't have eternal life.
- In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul says, “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” Perishing is the opposite of being saved by the cross of Jesus. And in 1 Corinthians 15:18 Paul says, “If Christ has not been raised . . . those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” In other words perishing is something that happens beyond the grave.
- Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that comes judgment.” And Jesus describes that judgment in Matthew 25 as a separation of the sheep from the goats, and says, “The one will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (v. 46). Perishing is the eternal punishment that people fall into when they die if they have not repented. That's how serious sin is. And we have all sinned, and sin every day. “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

A Practical and Utterly Urgent Message

- Now don't treat this as mere church talk. Write it on a card and use a rubber band to bind it on the visor of your car. All those people out there will perish if they do not repent. Tape it in your wallet to see it every time you buy something—that clerk will perish if she does not repent. Your children will perish, you parents will perish, your neighbors will perish, your colleagues will perish if they do not repent. This is not irrelevant church talk. This is just as practical as the AIDS brochure we all got in the mail from Dr. Koop. And it is a thousand times for urgent and more important.
- In fact let us learn from the surgeon general's office how the world expects people to respond to their fellow men when they know they are in danger of perishing. All you can lose when you get AIDS is your earthly life. And Jesus said, “Do not fear what kills the body and after that can do nothing. Fear what can cast both soul and body into hell” (Luke 12:4-5). Sin is an infinitely more dangerous disease than AIDS. And if the world is willing to spend millions and millions of dollars to wake this country up to its danger of AIDS, how much more should we, who know the cure, spend whatever it costs to wake this city up to the danger of sin!

4. “Repent”

Luke gives us three illustrations of repentance in the face of judgment.

- **Luke 10:13-15**, “Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.”
- **Luke 11:32**, “The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”
- **Jonah 3:5, 7-9**, “The people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. . . . The king made proclamation. . . . “Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands.”
- **Luke 16:29-31**, “After his death the unrepentant rich man is in torment. He asks Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers, so they don't perish in this place of torment. But. . . Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” And he said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” He said to him, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”
- I conclude that repentance involves believing God (Jonah 3:5) rather than the Satan's claim that more joy can be found in sin than in obedience. It is a “being persuaded” about the danger of impenitence (Luke 16:31) and the way of escape through repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47). It involves grief

over past sins and present sinful tendencies. This is the significance of the sackcloth and ashes (Luke 10:13; Jonah 3:5). And it involves turning from evil ways (Jonah 3:8).

- So faith and repentance are not properly two separate things. The turning of repentance is a turning from trusting in other things to a trusting in God. And with a new trust in God as counselor and protector and provider there is also a turning to a new life of joyful obedience.