

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 13:1-9

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 13. Today, we will read verses 1-9.

Verse 1: "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

Why did they bring these things to Jesus? We must go back to the opening phrase, "at that season." At the end of chapter 12, Jesus rebuked them as hypocrites who could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but could not discern this time. Then Jesus spoke to them about the very serious matter of judgment, and told them, "you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite." In order to show Jesus that they understood judgment, they brought up this incident.

What incident? The full details are not entirely clear. It seems that there was a revolt in Galilee, and Pilate, the governor at that time, sent troops to suppress it. Roman governors generally did not care much about the lives of the Israelites. They valued Roman citizens highly, but toward the Israelites under their rule, they were often quite brutal. When they went to Galilee, they quickly suppressed the revolt, and many innocent people were implicated. Some people were offering sacrifices at the time, and in the process of suppressing the rebellion, they were killed, and their blood was mingled with their sacrifices.

The scribes and Pharisees believed that sacrifices were holy, and if they were defiled with human blood, they became unclean. Therefore, in their view, these Galileans must have committed extremely grievous sins. This reveals their understanding of judgment.

Verses 2–3: “And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.’”

Most of these scribes and Pharisees came from Jerusalem. Those from Jerusalem looked down on the Galileans, especially those who were killed while offering sacrifices. In their thinking, there was a strong sense of cause and effect: if they were killed, they must have committed some sin worthy of death. They used this concept to interpret what Jesus said about judgment. But Jesus told them, no.

Of course, in human life there are matters of cause and effect. For example, if you eat but do not exercise, you will become overweight. If you frequently break traffic laws, sooner or later you will be caught. These are cause-and-effect consequences. But this is not the judgment Jesus was speaking of.

The judgment Jesus spoke of is far more serious—it is something no one in the world can escape. Therefore He said, “unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Jesus made it clear that all humanity is heading toward destruction. Along that path, there may be smaller cause-and-effect events, but those are secondary. The main issue is this: if you are on the path to destruction and do not repent, you will perish.

Verses 4–5: “Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

Since they brought up an example from Galilee—a place they despised—Jesus gave another example, one that happened in Jerusalem. Near the pool of Siloam, there was a tower that collapsed, and eighteen people died in that incident. Jesus asked them, were these people more sinful than others?

In human life, many things happen that are not directly related to a person’s personal sin. The deeper reason is that all humanity suffers the consequence of

Adam's fall: sin entered the world through one man, and death reigns. No one can escape death; everyone must eventually face it.

The judgment Jesus speaks of is not the judgment we experience in this life in the body, but the judgment the soul will face after death. If what lies before us is eternity—where we will be forever—then we will not be concerned with temporal comparisons, such as whether I am slightly better than you.

Jesus solemnly told them, “unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” When the tower of Siloam fell, eighteen people died. One day, you will also die. Perhaps you will die peacefully in bed—but does that make them more sinful than you? No. One day we will all die, and after death we will face that great judgment. At that time, the question is simple: have you repented? If your mind has not turned, you will face that final judgment, and you will likewise perish. We live in time, and we often care about how well we eat, how well we live, and how much enjoyment we have. But time is at most a hundred years; compared to eternity, it is very short. What Jesus cares about is that they would understand eternal matters.

Verse 6: “He also spoke this parable: ‘A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.’”

This man is God, and each of us is like this tree planted in His garden. He comes seeking fruit, but finds none. God has given us life and breath; one day, He will look to see whether there is eternal fruit in us.

Verse 7: “Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’”

In Jesus' context, this fig tree refers to Israel, for the fig tree is a symbol of Israel. Jesus had already been ministering for three years. Jesus is the keeper of the

vineyard, and God says to Him, “For three years I have come seeking fruit and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?”

Verses 8–9: “But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’”

Jesus is full of mercy and gentleness. He intercedes, saying, “let it alone this year also.” Let Me do more work. What work? To dig around it—the soil may contain stones or things that hinder fruit-bearing. Let Me loosen the soil, remove what should not be there, and add fertilizer.

Fertilizer is something people dislike and reject, yet it becomes nourishment for the tree. Then He says, “if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.” This “after that” refers to the final judgment Jesus mentioned earlier. When that judgment comes, it will be seen whether the tree has borne fruit.

Jesus continually gives us time, in His mercy. He digs around us and adds fertilizer, all for one purpose—that we may bear fruit. While Jesus originally spoke this to the scribes and Pharisees concerning Israel, today the same applies to every saved person. The Lord looks to see whether we bear fruit in our lives.

What is this fruit? Galatians 5:22 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” If we are believers and have eternal life, these fruits of the Spirit should grow in us. If not, the Lord is patient. He is willing to dig around us—loosening the soil of our lives to expose what hinders fruit-bearing. Perhaps there are many large stones—unforgiveness, hidden sins, lingering anxieties. After removing these stones, He adds fertilizer.

What is fertilizer? It is what we do not like, yet benefits us—namely, the trials God allows in our lives. No Christian can bear the fruit of the Spirit without going through trials. Throughout chapter 13, Jesus seems to especially show us how to face

suffering and trials as Christians. In our lives, God allows various difficulties, but His purpose is positive: through these sufferings, the fruit of the Spirit may be manifested in us.

May the Lord help us, giving us a humble heart to come before Him often in repentance, and to recognize His ongoing work in us—loosening the soil of our hearts. In our daily lives, He also allows trials that benefit us, so that the fruit of the Spirit may grow in us.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us not to fall into the pride of the scribes and Pharisees. Give us a humble heart, that we may continually confess our sins and repent before You. Help us also in our daily lives, through the various circumstances You arrange, to bear the beautiful fruit of the Spirit. Bless our lives today, that we may glorify Your name. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.