

**UNLESS YOU REPENT, YOU WILL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH - Biblical Commentary
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Lk 13.1-9

At that time there were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 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? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.

Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

Every time in the Gospels when Jesus frees people immediately the enemies of freedom intervene, as in this case. Let's read Luke's Gospel, chapter 13.

"There were some present at that very time....." Jesus says (Luke chapter 12 , 57) "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" Jesus wants to emancipate the people. He wants to make them mature, not religiously childlike, always dependent on the thoughts of an authority, of the chief, always unable to think what to do, that which is good, that which is bad and always have need of somebody else's opinion.

Jesus invites us to think for ourselves. And this is extremely dangerous especially in the religious sphere. And then someone intervenes. The evangelist does not say who it is. *"There were some present.."* giving Jesus a clearly threatening warning. *"..who told him about the Galileans..."* At the time of Jesus, for Galileans one did not mean only the people of that region, but the hot heads, rebels, zealots, revolutionaries, terrorists which at that time came from

Galilee. They still remembered the deeds of Judas the Galilean, found in the Acts of the Apostles.

So they tell Jesus "...about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." Obviously a threatening warning. Jesus is a Galilean and these are practically saying. "Beware, because here the Galileans end up badly."

Well, Jesus is not intimidated nor frightened and goes straight on to the counterattack. "And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." They had threatened Jesus – He who is a Galilean - saying: "Beware, because here the Galileans end up badly.", but Jesus counterattacks saying: "You will end up badly if you do not repent, meaning if you do not change the direction of your existence"

And if Jesus here has spoken of the Galileans, now He speaks of the habitants of Jerusalem, that is His questioners, and Jesus insists: "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? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

So, first Jesus spoke of the Galileans, now of Jerusalem. To the received threat, "The Galileans here with us come to a bad ending", Jesus replies "Beware, you will come to a bad ending if you do not change your way of life" Then to this and what we see in the relation between sin and punishment, that is we see this disgrace as a punishment from God, Jesus announces that God's reaction to sinners is not punishment, nor destructive, but life giving.

And He does this by contentiously taking the distance from the image that John Baptist had said of the Messiah, the one that had the ax in hand and very tree that did not bear fruit he would have cut down and thrown on the fire. Nothing of this. Jesus says "And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard,..." They are the trees that symbolically represent Israel.

"...and he came seeking fruit on it and found none." Here is the tree without fruit. Well the Lord does not cut it down and throw it on the fire. His action is life giving, not destructive. "And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down.'" This is the current mentality.

"Why should it use up the ground?" Here is the reply in which is reflected all Jesus' actions with sinners: "And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Therefore, Jesus' reaction is to aerate, give it manure, and to wait one, two or three years, a defined time, to bring to life. Jesus excludes any relationship between sin and punishment on God's behalf.

God shows love – as Jesus has already said in this Gospel - to all. It is like the sun that shines on the just and unjust. God's love is also for the bad and evil. Therefore there is no relation between the misfortunes of life and one's sin: God does not punish, he forgives.

