

Divine Compassion for Those Deserving Condemnation, Part 2

Scripture: Luke 13:34-35

Code: 42-188

2005

Now we come to the time in the word of God which is so important for us, such a blessed time. Luke 13, verses 34 and 35; Luke 13, verses 34 and 35. We started to look at this brief text last week. We'll continue looking at it this morning and again next Sunday. And though it's only two verses, it opens up a whole world of important revelation for us. Let me read it to you so you have it in mind. Luke 13:34, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not have it. Behold your house is left to you desolate. And I say to you you shall not see me until the time comes when you say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

We have just passed a very important event. In fact, the most important event in the Jewish calendar, Passover. Just a week ago the supreme season for the Jewish people. The supreme celebration of the greatest event in Israel's history as a nation, her redemption from Egypt. That is where Israelites go in their memory to affirm the divine origins really of their national identity. Rescued out of hundreds of years of slavery and captivity in a pagan land in order to be brought in to the land of Canaan, the land of promise, the beloved nation of Israel.

That is their great redeeming moment in history. And God, Himself, originally instituted a memorial celebration called the Passover. It was to be a remembrance celebrated every year that the Jews might never forget the greatness and the goodness of God in rescuing them from Egypt to take them into the land He had promised to them. And you remember, it was called Passover because the angel of death passed over the houses which were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificial lamb. And every other house, the first born were slain by that angel of death.

And so God in His wonderful mercy and with His great power delivered Israel to bring them to the land of promise where they could worship Him. Where they could be blessed by Him, where they could be sheltered by Him, where they could be protected by Him. Where they could love Him and worship Him freely. However, it wasn't long after they left Egypt in a flurry of incredible divine miracles, including the parting of the Red Sea so that the whole nation of up to two million people walked across on dry land, subsequently followed by the closing of that sea on the whole of the Egyptian army and drowning them.

It wasn't long after coming out under those unbelievable miracles that they became characterized by rebellion, distrust of God, disobedience of His word, unbelief, complaining, immorality, and even idolatry. Their sins were many and they were constant so that God kept them wandering in the wilderness in no-man's land between Egypt and Canaan for 40 years until the whole generation who came out and rebelled had died off. Forty years of wandering, waiting to enter the land that God had promised to them.

Finally, after 40 years, after the whole generation had died out, that generation of adults, the people found themselves camped on the east side of the Jordan River. Really a very narrow river and just across the Jordan was the land of Canaan. The land that God had promised to them. They were in that valley east of the Jordan that was called in ancient times the plains of Moab. In fact, they were basically directly across from the very well known town called Jericho, just north of the Dead Sea.

They had been nomads for 40 years, and they were still nomads pitching their tents in that very location. They were there for about a month. In God's timing, they were now going to go into the land. But before they went into the land, they needed to be rehearsed on some very important issues. They needed to hear again the law of God and that came to them in the book of Deuteronomy, which means second law. Let's turn back to Deuteronomy. The book of Deuteronomy was given to the people of Israel as they stood on the brink of entering in the promised land, to remind them of what was required by God. The Ten Commandments had been given by God at Mount Sinai and, of course, the rest of the law had come after that, but that generation had turned from that law of God into sin and all that adult generation had perished. Now as they stood on the brink of going into the land again, the law needed to be given a second time.

So they knew what God required. Blessing awaited them if they were obedient. If they were not obedient, then God promised them curses. Let's pick up the story in the 26th Chapter of Deuteronomy. After the law had been given again, after the requirements of God had been repeated and rehearsed in detail, we come down to Chapter 26 and verse 16. "This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul." This was never to be anything superficial. God never would be satisfied with superficial obedience. It was from the heart and the soul.

Verse 17, "You have today declared the Lord to be your God. And that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His ordinances and listen to His voice." And that's exactly what they did at Sinai when Moses gave the law. They went through a ceremony. They even were bathed in blood to affirm their commitment to obey the law of God and they had been unfaithful and that's why they had languished 40 years in the wilderness. But here they are again, the law is repeated, they affirm that they will keep the law, they declare the Lord to be their God. They will walk in His ways, His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and they will listen to His voice.

And verse 18, "And the Lord has today declared." You've made your promise today, God makes His. You are His people. You are a treasured possession as He promised you and "you should keep all His commandments and that He shall set you on high above all nations which He has made for praise, fame, and honor, and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God as He has spoken." God says, you keep your side of this covenant and this commitment and I promise you that I will set you on high above all nations. I will make you a people for praise and fame and honor as a consecrated people to the Lord your God.

And so God in general says I promise you greatness and national prosperity and national prominence and national glory for your obedience. And verse 1 of Chapter 27, "Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people saying keep all the commandments which I command you today." And that is the way they are prepared to enter the land. And then they are told when you go in the land, there's something the Lord wants you to do. He's giving you the land. When you go, down to verse 4, "When you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal these stones as I'm commanding you today and coat them with lime and build an altar there to the Lord your God, an altar of stones, uncut stones."

Verse 6, "Offering a burnt offering to the Lord your God sacrificing peace offerings, eating there, writing on the stones the words of this law very distinctly." White-wash the stone, write the law on it. Now, what's this all about on Mount Ebal? Well, there was another mountain. Drop down to verse 11. "Moses also charged the people on that day, saying when you cross the Jordan these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin." That's six of the twelve tribes. "And for the curse, these shall stand on Mount Ebal, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali." Two mountains near each other. On one, you're going to stand six tribes of you and you're going to there represent the blessings. On the other mountain, Mount Ebal, you're going to represent the curses and the Levites are going to answer and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice, verse 15, "cursed is, cursed is, cursed is," and go through all the curses.

This is that monumental moment when they've just gone into the land and the people are split into the six tribes on Ebal and the six on Gerizim and they are reminded in this dramatic graphic, unforgettable event of the fact that God promises to bless their obedience and promises to curse their disobedience. And the curses go on starting in verse 15 to the end of the chapter. They're picked up again in verse 15 of Chapter 28. "If you will not obey the Lord your God to observe all to do His commandments and statutes," etc., "cursed, cursed, cursed, cursed."

All of this was told to them and then they were told to go and rehearse it back in forth in antiphonal sense on the mountains when they came into the land so they would never forget. Verse 1 of Chapter 28 says, "If you will diligently obey the Lord your God careful to do all his commandments, which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you. If you will obey the Lord your God, blessed,

blessed, blessed, blessed."

God makes promises to them as they go into the land. He says when you get in the land, hold this dramatic ceremony so no one will forget and everyone will know in which you rehearse the promise of God to bless your obedience and to curse your sin. Well sadly, sadly disobedience was the path they chose. And Israel's history from the time they entered into the land, is a history of curses. It is a history of curses. They refused to believe God. They didn't even believe God could overcome the occupants of that land. They feared that the occupants of the land of Canaan were like giants and they were like grasshoppers. They didn't have the faith to believe in the God who had delivered them from Egypt being able to bring them into the land of Canaan. They were marked by unbelief. They were marked by fear. And even when they conquered a city, they were marked by outright disobedience. One man in particular Achan did exactly what God told him not to do, steal something, buried it in his tent. As a result, he was executed before the eyes of the whole nation that they might understand the curse that comes upon disobedience.

Nonetheless, it wasn't very long in the land until they were marked by disobedience until they fell into immorality and idolatry, until the kingdom was split, until they were overcome often by their enemies, until they experienced wicked wretched rulers in both the north and the south. There wasn't one righteous king in the northern kingdom at all. They were literally under the seduction of false and lying prophets and corrupt priests and there awaited them more captivity. They were hauled off to Babylon. Later, they were defeated by the Greeks and their temple was desecrated.

By the time we get to our text, and you can go now to Luke 13, the Romans occupy their land. They're still under the curse. Not only are they under Roman sovereignty, and with that, their land is filled with pagan Gentiles. And there are idolatrist representations of Caesar everywhere, on banners and on placards and on buildings and on coins. They are also under the rule of the Herodian family non-Jewish Idumeans. Their land is not their own. And the curse has gone on for centuries. Their religion, by the time Jesus comes, is apostate. Their leaders are hypocrites. And the people have followed the apostasy and the hypocrisy.

Consistent with their past disobedience, they have killed the messengers of God. They have stoned the prophets, and in some cases cut them in half. And now, God sends His son and they kill Him. And the curses reach the climax. The words that Jesus speaks at the end of the 13th Chapter of Luke reflect that reality. Verse 35, "Behold your house is left to you desolate." Brief words of judgment, but familiar, familiar to the Jews. They understand that. Really, that's been their history. And I told you last time that that statement of Jesus' really turns out to be a prophecy. A prophecy to began to unfold in 66 A.D., about 30 years after this when the Jews fomented a rebellion against Rome and led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the complete dismantling of the glorious temple to the point where there wasn't one stone on top of another and all that's left of it today is a western wailing wall that holds up the hill it was on. It's not even a wall from the temple.

You can actually look at...you can actually look at the history of Israel and the exclamations points are the destruction of the temples. The great Solomonic temple, the most glorious of all the temples ever built was glorious in its beginning and God came in his Shekinah glory and dwelt there. But of course, the sin, the immorality, the idolatry, the unbelief eventually caused God to leave. And Ichabad was written on that temple, the glory has departed, and the prophets give images of the glory going up over the door and out over the top of the temple and out over the mountain and gone.

And God left. And the Babylonians came and smashed that Solomonic temple to the ground, massacred tens of thousands of Jews and hauled others off into captivity. By then the northern kingdom had disappeared forever. Seventy years after captivity, the Jews came back and Nehemiah helped them to build the wall and eventually they rebuilt a temple under the leadership of a man named Zerubbabel. It was a rather meager thing compared to the Solomonic temple. But they continued the same pattern of disobedience, the same pattern of rebellion, the same pattern of sin, the same pattern of immorality, though they seemed to have been cured of worshipping other gods, they disobeyed the true and living God.

And so the Greeks came and the Greeks came and a Greek monarch by the name of Antiochus, who called himself Epiphanes meaning Antiochus the Great one. The Jews called Epimanes which means the madman, the maniac. Antiochus came and slaughtered a pig on the altar in the holy place and desecrated that temple. Herod came along and spent years in this great enterprise to build the Herodian temple, the third temple. It wasn't as glorious as the Solomonic temple, but it was a lot more glorious than the second temple. God had left the first temple, Ichabad and it was destroyed. God had left the second temple, Ichabad and it was destroyed. And right here, Jesus says, "your house." "This once was my Father's house. This once was my house. You've made it into a den of thieves. It is not your house."

Which is to say I'm gone. God abandoned His people again. Your house is left to you. The translators have added the word desolate. It's not in the original here, but Jesus says the same words later on in Jerusalem as recorded by Matthew 23, verses 37-39 and there the word desolate He did use. But on this occasion, He didn't use it. You don't need to say it. All you have to say is your house is left to you. Which is His way of saying God has abandoned it.

You can see then the story of Israel's iniquity and curse culminates in a final destruction or desecration of the temple. Your house is left to you. And indeed being left to you, it is a wasteland. It is void of divine presence. In Luke 21:20 listen to what Jesus said. "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies," Titus Vespasian and the Roman armies, 70 A.D., "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand." So when He's talking about desolation, He's not talking in vaguery, He's talking about a specific event, which is that exclamation point that comes at the end of an error of disobedience. The destruction or desecration or both of the

temple. There will be, by the way, another temple in the future.

The Jews will build a temple in the future. They're planning now. Sometime down in the future, they will be allowed to build that temple, but it will suffer another desecration, which Daniel the prophet called the abomination of desolation. And Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 24. The abomination of desolations in the time of the tribulation. Every time they build a temple it ends in a disaster of divine judgment. This is their said history. This is the exclamation point, the punctuation mark as it were, at the end of an era of disobedience. And the story of Israel, it is the greatest of human national tragedies.

I always think back to that 13:6-9 part of Luke where the vineyard keeper says the tree one more year and see if it'll bear fruit and then if not, cut it down. Well, it's cut it down time now. This is the sad story of Israel. It's heartbreaking. It made God weep. It made God weep tears through the eyes of Jeremiah. It makes every faithful lover of God weep over this tragic reality. It made Jesus weep. Luke 19:41 says "That when He came to Jerusalem and He saw the city, He wept." He wept. There is a pronouncement of judgment here obviously at the beginning of verse 35 as we said last time, but there's more here than just that. So let's back up a little bit.

There are three words, I want you to see here; compassion, condemnation, and conversion; compassion, condemnation, and conversion. Let's look back at compassion for a moment. Verse 34, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen gathers her brude under her wings and you would not have it." That's the heartbreak of God right there. That's the heartbreak of God. There's no way in the world that you can view God as being indifferent to those who perish.

The Old Testament says He finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He finds grief in the death of the wicked. Jerusalem stands for the whole nation. The words the city in NAS are added, they're not in the original. It really says, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem that kills the prophets." It's not limited just to that city. Although, many of the prophets were killed in Jerusalem, it's simply a representation of the whole nation and the phrase is "that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her are parallel." They say the same thing.

You kill the prophets, you stoned those that were sent to you. The messengers of God you killed. And you remember the last time I pointed you to Luke 11:47-51 where Jesus actually said, "You this generation, alive right then," when Jesus was there, "you are charged with the accumulated guilt of all of Israel's sins, of all of people's sins, all humanity's sins against the true saints of God, the true prophets of God. You're charged with the blood of everybody from Abel, the first martyr, to Zechariah, the final martyr in the Old Testament," that prophet who was killed by the Jewish people in the temple area.

You're charged with the blood of all of them. You say how in the world could that generation be charged with the blood of all that? Because one, you have the truth of God. You've had it, and you've had it for a long time and you've been around long enough to have it all. It's fully completed. It's in your hands. This is 400 years after the Old Testament was completed. They knew the law of God. Not only that, they knew the history of divine judgment. So they had to spurn the divine law. They had to ignore divine judgment. They have accumulated guilt, because they have the accumulated revelation and the accumulated warnings. They knew about the destruction of the first temple because of sin and disobedience. They knew about the desecration of the second one. They knew about the captivities. They knew what God expected.

Theirs is an accumulated guilt, but God is still heartbroken. While God is righteous and holy and therefore angry about sin, He is at the same time perfectly compassionate. His compassion is as perfect as His justice, His tenderheartedness is equal to His anger. Psalm 86, verse 15, "But thou Oh Lord are to God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness." That's exactly right, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness. This is all over the Psalms. You can read them for yourselves, but Psalm 111, just a couple of more. Psalm 111, I think it's verse 4, says essentially the same thing. "He is gracious and compassionate." 112, verse 4, "He is gracious and compassionate toward the end of the Psalms. Psalm 145, verse 8, "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, great in loving kindness."

And I love what it says in Lamentations Chapter 3. Lamentations written by Jeremiah in verse 22. "The Lord's loving kindness indeed never cease for His compassions never fail. They're new every morning, great is your faithfulness." God is compassionate. Christ as God had the same compassion. In Mark 1:41, it says Jesus was moved with compassion when He saw the leper. It tells us in Matthew's gospel that when He saw the people like sheep without a shepherd, He was moved with compassion. It tells us in Luke 15 that when the prodigal son came home, his father again was moved with compassion and ran out and kissed him and embraced him.

God is a God of compassion. He feels pain. That's what compassion means to suffer with. To show you His pain, He even speaks of it. Verse 34, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brude under her wings." How often I wanted to gather your children together. Into what? Into the safety of His saving love. Into a protected place. How often indicates a constant desire. It isn't a matter of how many times He went to Jerusalem and seeing Jerusalem felt this way. He felt this way all the time.

This refers not just to His frequent trips to Jerusalem, which are chronicled predominantly by John in his gospel, but also in the other gospels. But He is simply saying this is an ever present reality. He wanted to gather them together, to gather them in a safe place. To gather them in a protected place. To protect them from what? Protect them from Himself? For to Him had been given all judgment to

protect them from the very God of compassion who would become the God of wrath.

I mean, the imagery is agrarian. The imagery is the farm which all these people, of course, knew very well. A chicken hawk circling above looking down on a mother hen, sees a chick and wants to dart down and grab that little chick if its out of the safe shelter of its mother's wings. Or perhaps a storm is approaching and lightening is flashing and electrical discharges are everywhere and a cloud bursts and all of a sudden the little ones run into the shelter of a mother hens protection. That's the kind of imagery they were used to seeing and that's what He says. The actual word for hen is bird. "How often I wanted to gather your children together just as a bird gathers her brude under her wings."

While God is the judge and God is the avenger and God is the executioner, this is not all there is about God. When you ask the question being saved from what? The answer is you're saved by God from God. You're saved by Christ, from Christ. You're saved from the very judgment that God Himself brings. And this is, of course, the heart of God. And it's always been that way and they knew that. Let me take you back to Deuteronomy. You don't have to turn it, I'll just read it to you, but back in Deuteronomy where all this was set in motion, where all the promises of blessing and cursing were made. Deuteronomy 32, God reminds that they are His people, verse 9. "You are the Lord's people." Verse 10, He says, "He found him in a desert land and in a howling waste of the wilderness. And He encircled him and cared for him and guarded him as the pupil of His eye."

You know, he pictures God like an eagle. Like an eagle that stirs up its next, that hovers over its young. He spreads His wings and caught them. He carried them on His pinions. The picture here is of God the protector. The imagery is beautiful, you know. An eagles next, the little eagles basically are kicked out of the nest and as they flop and flutter the eagle flies under them and spreading great wings catches them in midair. He guards them. They knew that. They knew God was there to hide them under His wings to catch them as they fell. They understood that that was what the Old Testament promised and God comes in Christ and says the kingdom is yours. Peace is yours. Forgiveness is yours. Salvation is yours. Heaven is yours. They even knew that in Jewish tradition Gentile converts were said to have come under the wings of the Shekinah.

This is the heart of God. This is the heart of God. But end of verse 34, "you would not." To add the words have it as they are added by the translators doesn't really add anything. I think it would be better if a period were after the word not, "and you would not." They refused God's protection. They refused God's love. They refused God's salvation. They refused His kingdom. This is their history. It's always this way, rebellious, disobedient, pitting themselves against the will of God killing the prophets, killing the messengers and finally killing their own Messiah.

That's why God in, as Paul puts it, in Romans 10:21, says "I have stretched out my hands all day long to a disobedient and obstinate people." And he's quoting Isaiah. All day long I reached out. All day long I put my wings out to catch you. You didn't want it. All day long I wanted to gather you and

protect you and you would not. That's the word *thelo*, which means to want or to will or to desire. You didn't want it. That's the issue. Listen beloved, that is always the issue with sinners. People who perish, perish because they don't want it. The gospel gives no place to absolute determinism. While we believe in divine election and sovereign election and those who are saved are saved by the will and the power and the sovereign choice of God.

At the same time, we believe the Bible is crystal clear on teaching that people perish and go to hell because they refuse to believe. They make that choice. Now if you don't understand how those two harmonize, join the human race. Nobody understands that, but you can't change that. The Bible is filled with those kinds of invitations and those kinds of statements which hold the sinner completely responsible. In Matthew Chapter 22, Jesus tells the story, a parable, about a king who was going to give a wedding feast for his son. The king is God and the son is Christ. This is the time to come and be a bride to the son. This is the time to come and be saved and be part of the kingdom.

Sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding. Let me tell you how a wedding worked in those days. You never knew when it was actually going to start. They didn't do it like at 5 o'clock on Saturday. Couldn't be that precise. They had to...it lasted for a week or up to a week. It was a long event. You had to feed all those people all that time. Massive preparations had to be made for that, accumulating the food, taking care of all that, accommodations, housing people, doing that, so the actual event began in an undetermined time. So what you did was you pre-invited guests. You sent out invitations and said, sometime in March or whatever, this thing is going to crank and you have an invitation and we'll give you notification when it's time for it to begin.

So you had the pre-invited guests waiting to hear that it had begun. Pre-invited guests to the wedding of God's son was Israel. It was the Jews who were the pre-invited guests. They were invited through the whole Old Testament. They were invited through whole ministry of Jesus. They were invited by John the Baptist to enter the kingdom, by Jesus, by the twelve, by the seventy that were sent out. And in the story, Jesus said, He sent out His slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast and they were, here's the same word, unwilling to come. That was it.

They were unwilling to come. You say well, everything's ready. The dinner's ready, the feast is ready. They didn't pay any attention and one of them went to his own farm, one to his business. They were the indifferent. Some others seized the servants who came to get them, mistreated them, and murdered them. That's what happened to the apostles. And the king was angry and sent his armies and destroyed those murderers. Set their city on fire. That looks ahead to the destruction of Jerusalem. And He said, well, we still have a wedding so go in the highways and go everywhere, in the streets and everywhere you can go and let's fill up this place. And that's the church.

That's the church and Israel forfeits its opportunity, because Israel is unwilling. "You will not come to me that you might have life," Jesus said, in John. You will not come to me that you might have life.

Put it where it belongs in your will. You will not come. John 5, in verse 40. This is something we should be very clear on. People perish because they will not come. We're going to see this in Luke 14. Look at it just quickly, verse 15 and following is a very similar story to the one that I just pointed to you in Matthew 22. Same thing.

A man gives a dinner, invites people, and it says in verse 17, he says to his slave, "go get those who have been invited." That's Israel. "Tell them come, for everything's ready. They all made excuses." You know, I bought a piece of land. I need to go and look at it. Let me out of that. I've got some oxen. I...it's just all kinds of excuses. They aren't all hostile. They aren't all murderous. A lot of them are just indifferent. One in verse 20 says "I have married a wife." I don't know what that has to do with anything. And for that reason I cannot come, but I have a suspicion that once you marry a wife, she can weigh in on the decision. Slave came back and said "nobody wants to come." He says, "Go to the streets, get the lame people, the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. Go into the highways, the hedges, compel them to come. My house may be filled."

They didn't want to come. I mean, it came down to that. They were unwilling to come. Stephen preaching in his sermon before they crushed him under the bloody stones says to the Jews who were listening to him, you...this is Acts 7:51, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit. You're doing just what your fathers did." You're always resisting. It's you. You resist. You are unwilling. You don't want it. There is no salvation without an act of the human will.

God's sovereignty does not obviate human responsibility. This is not absolute determinism. This is not fatalism. Look, I don't know how God works all of those things in His own mind, but that's not a problem for me. God is God and I'm not. You know they said in Luke 19:14, "we do not want this man to reign over us." We don't want this man. We don't want this man. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all you that labor a heavy laden, I'll give you rest, come."

In Isaiah 55, He says, "Oh everyone that thirsts, come, come, come, come. Revelation 22, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'come.'" Whoever comes, whoever believes. Why don't they come? Well, they don't come for a very simple reason and it's always the same. Listen to this, John 3:18...3:19, this is the judgment. "Light has come into the world and men loved," what, "darkness rather than light, for their deeds were evil." They love their sin. "Everyone who does evil hates the light, does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed."

When I give the gospel to people and I do in many environments, when I give the gospel to people I always know what the issue is. I always know. Once I clarify the gospel, I know what the issue is. I said to the rabbi I was on television with, I said, "Now I just want to make something clear, nobody's good enough to get to heaven," this was not on the air, but "nobody's good enough to get to heaven, only one ever satisfied God's law perfectly that's Jesus Christ." Well, that's not something he

necessarily wanted to hear, but that's okay. I said, "Look, only Jesus Christ, only Jesus Christ satisfied God's law and the wonderful thing is this, God will impute credit, His perfect righteousness to you if you put your trust in Him as your Savior."

He said, "I don't believe that." I said, "I know, I'm just clarifying it. I'm just clarifying it." That's what I said. "I'm just clarifying so you kind of know where I'm coming from." And then wanting to be sure I went back through it again. And said essentially the same thing. "I just want to make sure you understand this." I owe that man. If I'm in that environment, I owe that man that truth. What he does with that is up to him, but I owe him that truth. And by the way, everybody else was listening. That's all I have to offer. That's all I have to say. I can't determine what anybody's going to do with that, but I need to be faithful to discharge that and I can only hope and pray that, you know, maybe there's something in the heart of that man that can be willing. All I can do is what our Lord did and then you weep over the unwillingness of the sinner to repent.

Don't ever let your adoration of the doctrine of sovereignty crowd out God's compassion or replace human responsibility with some kind of fatalism. Jesus wept because of this unwillingness to believe. It grieved His heart and it should grieve ours as well. In Acts 3, Peter is preaching and he says, "repent." This is after the cross, after the resurrection, after the ascension. He's preaching to the Jewish people. He says in verse 14, "You disowned the holy and righteous one. You asked for a murderer. You put to death the prince of life. The one God raised from the dead."

Wow, this is such rejection, but he still says, "repent and return that your sins may be wiped away." And the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Repent and return. And he pleads with them. And he goes down to verse 26, look at Acts 3:26, "God raised up His servant and sent him to," what, "to bless you." It's always been God's way. I want to bless you. I'm telling you that from Deuteronomy 27 on. "I want to bless you. I've sent my son, my servant to bless you." How? By turning everyone of you from your wicked ways. That's Peter.

He wants to bless you. He's always wanted to bless you. Chapter 4 says and as they were speaking, the priests, the captain of the temple guard, the Sadducees, this is all the religious leaders, came on them being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead and they laid hands on them and put them in jail. Well, what are you going to do? The next day, they told them to stop doing that.

It's a matter of the will, and the sinner is responsible for being unwilling. David Gooding whose a very helpful theologian wrote, "When men set their will to reject Him, He accepts their rejection. Jerusalem was Messiah's on capitol city and in Jerusalem was the very house of God. Christ did not raise an army nor use His miraculous powers to drive out His enemies from Jerusalem and throw Israel's rebellious priesthood out of His Father's house. Instead, He let them throw Him out of both the temple and the city and what had been His Father's and His, He left in their hands." He goes on, "It is an

awesome thing to contemplate. If men used the will God has given them to reject the Savior, neither God nor Christ will overrule that will or remove it. That does mean of course that puny man has the power to defeat the will of the All Mighty. It was always God's will that man's will should be free and man be able to say no to God if he chooses."

And that's why Simeon said this child is for the rising and the falling of many. So in verse 34, you see the compassion of God and that compassion demands man's will. Why would God weep unless He was sad over what men chose to do? And if He was sad over what they chose to do then it had to be their choice. Or His tears are ridiculous, pointless, meaningless. And so compassion, the second word and we've already talked about it, but I'll bring it up, condemnation. Verse 35, "Behold your house is left to you." Your house, not mine, yours, it's left. I'm out. I'm gone. It's now a wilderness.

This reminds me of a powerful image in Isaiah 5. If you look at it for just a minute, it's really powerful. It's memorable enough to look at. Isaiah 5, this is the word of the Lord to Isaiah prior to the Babylonian captivity, prior to the destruction that would come by the Babylonians on that great temple, that first temple. And it's all in the imagery of a parable. It's a song. It happens to be an allegory or eulogy. It's a dirge, it's a plaintive weeping song. It's a song from God to His well beloved. It's from the Father to the Son, Christ being the angel of the Lord, the protector of Israel.

And it says, "My well beloved has a vineyard on a fertile hill," Isaiah 5:1-2, "he dug it all around, removed its stones, planted it with the choicest vine, built a tower in the middle of it, hued out a wine vat. In it, expected it to produce good grapes. It produced only bu ushim, sour berries." It's really a sad song. If you live in an agrarian world and you make all of this effort to produce some good grapes and all you get is inedible sour berries, this is a huge disappointment. The story here is the best hill to plant it, dug it all around, which means you create a mote, which they did at vineyards, a mote to keep small animals from coming in and eating the fruit. Removing stones from the ground so that the roots could move to the water, planting the choicest vine, the very best stock. Put a tower which is used as an observation point a place to make sure it was protected, put a wine vat in it where the grapes were to be produced into juice and expected good grapes because of that great effort and got only worthless berries.

This is a picture, a very vivid picture of a huge disappointment. Verse 3, "Now inhabitance of Jerusalem, men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I haven't done to it? What more could have been done?" And the answer is absolutely nothing. Everything was done the best it could be done. When I expected it to bring forth good grapes, why did it bring forth worthless grapes? Whose fault is it? Is it mine? That's what God is asking. Is this my fault? And the answer is of course not. The fertile hill is the land of Canaan digging it all around as giving laws to Israel that kept them from easy intercourse and access to the nations around them. Removing the stones was taking the Canaanites out. Planting the choicest vine, the nobility of the Jewish strain of people. The tower problem of Jerusalem. The wine vat may symbolize

the sacrificial system where their sins could be dealt with.

I did everything I could do for you. What more could I have done? Nothing. And what did I get? Sour berries, so let me tell you what I'm going to do, verse 5. "I'm going to remove its protection. I'm going to let it be consumed, break down its wall." They were all trampled and break down the walls. It'll be trampled ground, lay at waste. It won't be pruned. It won't be hoed. Briars and thorns will come up and no rain is going to rain on it. I'm going to make of that vineyard a desolation.

Now who's He talking about? Verse 7, "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house Israel." And what's this about? Verse 7, "He expected justice and righteousness. All He got was bloodshed and a cry of distress." It's the same thing. This is the desolation of the Babylonian captivity. I'm gone. I'm not protecting you any more. You're exposed. And later in the same 5th Chapter, verse 24, He says, "When the Babylonians come, when they come, they're going to come like a tongue of fire consuming stubble like dry grass collapsing into a flame and it's going to go all the way down to the root and the root will become like rot and the blossom will blow away as dust."

Why? "For they have rejected the word of the Lord of Hosts, the law of the Lord of Hosts and despise the word of the Holy One of Israel. And on account of this, the anger of the Lord has burned against His people and He stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked and the corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets, for all this His anger is not spent. His hand is still stretched out."

It goes in verse 26 to talk about an army from a distant nation. He's talking about the Babylonians. Well, they knew this history. They knew this. They knew that God promised them desolation for their sin and desolation had come and their land had been destroyed and their temple had been destroyed and leveled to the ground and they were in captivity. They knew that. They could go back even further into their history back to 1 Kings. Back into the glory days of the Solomonic monarchy and they would hear God say, "if you or your sons shall indeed turn away from following me and not keep my commandments and statutes that I've set before you and go and serve other gods and worship them, I will cut off Israel from the land I've given them and the house which I have consecrated for my name. I will cast them out of my sight. Israel become a proverb and a byword and this house shall become a heap of ruins."

God always promised them desolation. That's why I say it was the captivities and it was the desolation of their temples that were the exclamation points on God's curses. Jeremiah told them the same thing Isaiah told them. Yet Israel continues to reject. And so here it is that they are told "your house is left to you desolate." And over in Chapter 19 of Luke, verse 43, "The days are going to come when your enemies will throw a bank before you," this is a siege, "surround you, hem you in on every side, level you to the ground and your children within you. They will not leave in you one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

70 A.D. was really a horrific event. "While the sanctuary was burning, set on fire by Titus and his army, neither pity for age nor respect for rank was shown," writes the Jewish historian Josephus. "On the contrary," he writes, "children and old people laity and priests alike were massacred. The Emperor ordered the entire city and the temple to be raised to the ground leaving only the loftiest of the towers and the portion of the wall enclosing the city on the west, the western wailing wall. All the rest was so completely raised to the ground as to lead future visitors to the spot, no reason to believe that the city had ever been inhabited."

Yes, this is the devastation and the utter devastation on that generation is still going on on generations today through the Holocaust and all the horrible things that come upon Israel. Why have they suffered greatly? Why do they suffer even now? The horrible deadly terrorist killings? Why will they yet suffer in the future? It is the curse that takes you all the way back to Deuteronomy when they stood on the edge to enter the land, God warned them. And the pouring out of the cup of centuries of evil and still not empty. But there's always a remnant. There was a remnant in Isaiah's day and Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's and there's always a remnant. There's a remnant of Jews today who know their God and know their Messiah. Many of you in our church are among them.

But there will be yet another chapter to be written on this story, and that's for next Sunday. Verse 35, "There will be a day when they will see me and then they will say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." There is coming the salvation of Israel. That's going to be our story next Sunday.

Father, again this is so powerful and so gripping and so definitive as we look at history. Thank You for the way the word lays it out for us to understand. Thank You for the remnant that have believed that have been willing, that have seen the glory of Christ and embraced Him. Thank You for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. And Lord may this spur us on to give the gospel to the people of Israel for there are many who will hear and will believe even as Isaiah was told, there is a holy seed. There is a remnant. Help us to be faithful to proclaim that gospel, as well as calling all those on the highways and byways to come in to the salvation feast of forgiveness in Your house in honor of Your son. Save many, Jew and Gentile, even now. We look forward to that day when Israel collectively will look at You, our Lord Jesus Christ, and say blessed is He. Blessed is He. He is the one who came in the name of the Lord.

Father, we pray that You'll do Your great work. We rejoice in what You've done in our lives. Continue oh God to rescue sinners to invite them and may they be willing to respond and be saved. We pray in Your son's name, Amen.

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