

Divine Compassion for Those Deserving Condemnation, Part 4

Scripture: Luke 13:34-35

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One of the things that I enjoy when I go to the country of Italy is the food. Not just the flavor of it, but the volume of it. It seems like every meal is five courses. And I'm not exaggerating. Some are six and some are seven. I feel a little bit like I'm inviting you to one course this morning out of five. This is really not fitting for a good host to do. And so I apologize for the fact that for those of you who haven't been with us in the past and won't be with us next Lord's day, you're just going to get one out of the five courses.

This is something of the nature of expositional preaching that when you dig into a passage and it begins to unfold its riches and its glories and the revelation of God it can't always be completely developed, explained, and applied in one 45 or 50 minute session. This while I suppose being a difficulty in Bible exposition is that at the same time the glory of Bible exposition that you allow the word to say what God wills it to say in all its breadth and length and depth and height. And while at the same time I both regret the inability to start and finish. I relish the inability not to finish because it simply means there is more to come.

The word of God for you I trust is enriching, but I am quite confident it is even close in terms of its enrichment to you as to its enrichment in my own life. So in a sense you are indulging me. I'm never here to give you a sermon. I'm here to let the Lord speak through the truth of His word and with all those disclaimers aside, turn to Luke 13 and I will give you this one piece of a five part look at these verses. Two verses, you say how could anyone turn two verses into a five part series. Well, it depends on the nature of the verses doesn't it? It depends upon the nature of the content. It just so happens that one could spend months, if not years developing all that is explicit and implicit in these two verses.

Verse 34, Luke 13, "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."

Simple enough you say. Brief enough and yet vast in their implications. These are the sweeping words of our Lord that gather up the whole history of His chosen people, the Jews. And we have

already broken those two verses into three parts. Looking at them as a snapshot, we see the Lord's compassion in verse 34 as with pathos. He says, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem," and says, "how often I wanted to gather your children together like a hen gathering her brude under her wings and you would not." There we have seen the compassion of God for Israel. The compassion of Christ for the Jews.

Looking again at this snapshot, we see not only the compassion of the Lord, but the condemnation of the Lord in that very moment on that occasion, verse 35, He said, "Behold your house is left to you desolate." And also looking at the snapshot we saw thirdly the conversion. "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." Compassion, the compassion of God for a rebellious recalcitrant, unbelieving Israel. Condemnation, desolation pronounced upon them and yet the glimpse of conversion, hope.

That simple outline really looks at the snapshot of those two verses. And by the way, Jesus repeats these exact words several months later inside Jerusalem. He says the very same thing as recorded in Matthew 23, verses 37-39. But there's more here than just a snapshot. More here than just a glimpse of a moment. This is not about a moment sadness. This is not about a moment's fury. It's not about a moment's hope. What you have here is a long video, a long full-length feature film, if you will, that depicts the entire history of Israel. These few words sweep from the beginning of Israel's history in the promises of God to the end of Israel's history culminating in the fulfillment of those promises.

I want to go back then for the fourth time to these two verses and look at them not as a snapshot, but as a long history. Look at them not from the attitude that our Lord conveys toward them in these words, but looking at them purely chronologically, purely historically and that's easy to do. You have three components, past, present, future. Look again at the past. "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 is the history of Israel.

It is the history of two things, love and hate. God's love for Israel and Israel's hatred for God's messengers. It is the greatest historical story of unrequited love for it demonstrates the greatest love ever given and demonstrates the most inexplicable hatred ever returned. Two things rise out of that as you look at the past and Israel's history. One, God set on the Jews a special love. A gracious covenant love sovereignly given to this people.

That love is manifested in pathos of the words of our Lord, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem." There is pain in the repetition. There is pain in the Oh. There is explicit agony expressed in the words, "how often I want to gather your children together like a hen gathering her brude under her wings for safety, protection. You wouldn't have it." Here are the tears of God and Jesus will burst into tears when He approaches Jerusalem, enters the city later on and repeats these words. He will say them through His

tears and the text will say, Jesus wept.

But these are the tears of God wept centuries earlier through the eyes of Jeremiah who said on behalf of God his eyes would run down with tears over the people Israel. Unrequited love, that's the story of Israel, that's the story of the Jews. To look at that a little more closely turn to Deuteronomy Chapter 7. This is everywhere throughout the Old Testament given and repeated and rehearsed, but just a few passages will help establish it in your minds. Deuteronomy Chapter 7, the book of Deuteronomy finds the children of Israel across the Jordan on the edge of the land of promise ready to go in after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. It's now time to enter the land. Upon the entrance to the land they are given the law again. That's what Deuteronomy means, second law, the repeating of the law.

Earlier in this book, the law was given to them again to remind them of what God required. And now in Chapter 7, they are reminded of their unique place in the divine purposes. Chapter 7 and verse 6, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God." That is to say separated from all other peoples. "For the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." If you think the idea of sovereign election is a New Testament innovation, you are wrong.

Verse 7 then says, "That this choice of God was based upon divine love. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples." When it all started, it was really just Abraham and Sarah and Isaac. But verse 8, "Because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."

Why did God bring them out of Egypt? Because they were the best people, the best choice, the noblest of people, the most righteous of people, hardly. It was because He had sovereignly set His love upon them. He had made promises to their forefathers, promises by which He bound Himself. And He is a faithful covenant keeping God. Verse 9 says it, "Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God the faithful God who keeps His covenant and His loving kindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." God keeps His promise. "I determined to love you. I set my love upon you. I chose you. I delivered you because I keep my word."

This is repeated, by the way, in a number of places in Deuteronomy. I won't look at all of them. Chapter 4, verse 37 adds one note, "because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendents after them and He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power." God is personally involved with this nation as an object of His divine sovereign love.

Moving ahead to Deuteronomy Chapter 9, it's instructive for us to hear Moses speaking and reiterating God's special love for Israel. Verse 4 of Deuteronomy 9, "Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven the nations out before you, because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land. Don't think it's because of your righteousness. It is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is dispossessing them before you." It's not about how good you are, it's about how bad they are.

Verse 5, He repeats it. "It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land. It is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out before you. In order to confirm the oath, which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, know then it is not because of your righteousness that Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess. For you are a stubborn people."

Electing love is not set upon the people who have earned it. No one can. And then Moses goes on to reiterate the history of their stubbornness in the wilderness. You provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord. You would perhaps think that God would just obliterate them and leave it at that and start all over again. Certainly there would be some justification in that.

Verse 16 of this Chapter, Moses reiterates how bad it was. "You indeed sinned against the Lord. You did the worst thing possible. The worst thing anyone could ever do. You broke the premier of all commands. You made a molten calf, an idol, you caused me to," verse 17, "take the two tablets of the law and smash them before your eyes. And I had to fall on my face and pray for forty days and forty nights that God not destroy you." Verse 22, "At Taberah and Massah, Kibrothhattaavah, you provoked the Lord to wrath and the Lord sent you from Kadeshbarnea saying go up and possess the land which I've given you then you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. You neither believe Him nor listened to His voice. You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day I knew you."

Now is it time now to write them off? Moses says look I didn't want God to write you off. You deserve it. I didn't want Him to do it, so verse 25, "I fell down before the Lord forty days and nights and I did it because the Lord said He would destroy you. The Lord brought up that possibility and so I prayed to the Lord and I said oh Lord God do not destroy thy people." Why? Because they're so righteous, they're so good, they're so noble, they're so helpful. No.

Because they're you're inheritance whom you have redeemed through your greatness. You brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the ones to whom you gave and reiterated the covenant of blessing, salvation, a land and a future. Remember your covenant. Do not remember the stubbornness of the people or look at their wickedness or their

sin, otherwise, the land from which thou didst bring us may say...here's what the Egyptians are going to say if you just wipe them all out here. Well, the Lord wasn't able to bring them into the land. So much for the God of Israel. He's impotent. He made a promise He couldn't keep or because He hated them. He brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. And neither His power is called into question or His love.

And the Moses says in verse 29, "Yet they are Your people. You're inheritance, You brought them out by Your power and Your outstretched arm." And he is saying is what's at stake in the perpetuity of Israel, what's at stake in the future of Your people is Your integrity, God. Your integrity. You're at stake. Are you a covenant keeping God? Are you a faithful God? Do You do what You say You will do when You make an unconditional unilateral promise? Do You keep it? Can God be trusted? As we discussed last week, this isn't just about Israel. This is about God.

There are a lot of people who say God's through with Israel. It's over. It's done. The church is the new Israel. There is no future for Israel. That not only calls into question Israel, that calls into question God. Does not God keep His word? Isaiah 43:1, "But now thus says the Lord, your creator Oh Jacob, and He who formed you oh Israel do not fear for I have redeemed you." Why? "Because I called you by my name. You are mine." Down in verse 11, He says, "Even I am the Lord and there is no Savior beside me. You are my witnesses, I am God. Thus says the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, you're mine."

Later God made a covenant with David recorded in 2 Samuel 7. A covenant that David's loins would produce eventually a great king far greater than Solomon, the great Messianic king. The king who would rule over a kingdom that would have everything the Abrahamic promise contained; a land, blessing, redemption, and a witness to the world and even more. The glory of a king and a kingdom. David understood exactly what that promise meant. It was a real promise of a real kingdom just like the promise to Abraham was a real promise of real land and a people. So the promise given to David was a promise of a true kingdom.

In 2 Samuel Chapter 7 the promise comes early in the chapter and in the end of the chapter if you look say at verse 18, David went into the king and sat...David the king went in and sat before the Lord and said "Who am I oh Lord God? What is my house that thou hast brought me this far? And yet this was insignificant in thine eyes oh Lord God for thou hast spoken also of the house of thy servant concerning the distant future."

The promise that God made to David was of a distant future Messiah, a great king who would establish according to verse 12-13 a kingdom that would last forever. David understood it to mean just that. David understood that this was a promise of a future kingdom. And He goes on to express that. David is clear on his understanding. For this reason, verse 22, "thou art great oh Lord God for there's none like thee, no God beside thee according to all that we have heard with our ears. And

what one nation on the earth is like thy people Israel whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself and to do a great thing for thee and awesome things for thy land."

Verse 24, "Thou hast established for thyself thy people Israel as thine own people forever." May I say to you that David was a pre-millennialist. David was a literal interpreter of scripture. Verse 25, he understood this to be literal. "Now, therefore, oh Lord God, the word which thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and His house, confirm it forever and do as thou hast spoken." Why? "That thy name may be magnified forever." What is at stake in the future of Israel, dear friends, is the name of a covenant keeping and faithful God.

You can read the rest of the text down to verse 29. "Therefore, may it please thee to bless the house of thy servant that it may continue forever before thee, for thou oh Lord God has spoken and with thy blessing, may the house of thy servant be blessed forever." David understood exactly what he was being promised. A kingdom in the future that would last forever. David knew, Abraham knew, the Jews knew, the Jews of Jesus' time knew. There was to come the fulfillment of Abrahamic promise. There was to come the fulfillment of Davidic promise. It hadn't come yet.

They didn't have all their land. They didn't have the full joys of salvation, the full blessings of their freedoms. They were not enjoying their own king and their own kingdom. They had no Messiah. They had no Messianic blessing. That's why Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was so ecstatic and burst out in praise at the end of Luke 1 when he got the word that he is going to have a son, he and his wife, Elizabeth, being barren in their old age. And that son to be the forerunner of the Messiah and he says, finally, God has visited redemption on Israel. Finally, God has raised up a horn of salvation. And he goes on to say to fulfill the promises made to David. To fulfill the promises made to Abraham.

The sun is going to rise and bring an end to our long darkness. The Jews knew that God had a long term, permanent, everlasting covenant with them. And that He had set His love upon them to the very end. And so we see first of all as we look at the past, the love of God for Israel. You would think time and time and time and time again He would have cancelled it out, walked away permanently, but He never did.

The second thing you see in the past is Israel's hatred of God's messengers, back to verse 34. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," capital city represents the whole nation "that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her." You have killed my messengers. This shows your attitude toward me. You hate the very God who loves you. You hate the word of the God who loves you. You hate the messengers who bring the word of the God who loves you. You should say with Isaiah, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news," but you don't.

You kill them. What is Israel's past? Love and hate, love from God, hate in return. Is it any wonder they were beleaguered by the nations around them and the land? Any wonder they were hauled into captivity for 70 years in Babylon and any wonder they were terrorized when they came back and tried to rebuild? Any wonder they were overrun by the Greeks? Any wonder that they were oppressed and occupied and scandalized and terrorized and destroyed by the Romans? Any wonder that they had been scattered throughout the world since the time of the New Testament? Any wonder that they have suffered at the hands of slaughterers and killers throughout all these years? Any wonder that they are sitting in the middle of the sea of Arabs terrorized on all sides? They have returned their divine lover hate for His love.

And that leads to the present and the present which I've just described is in the words verse 35 give us, "Behold your house is left to you desolate." The issue is God has abandoned it. It's yours. It could be an illusion to the temple, your house, not mine. It once was mine, it's now yours. You can have it, I'm gone. But it goes beyond that. That would be emblematic of a whole nation that is devoid of the presence of God. In the present, they are in a desolation. The word desolate is not in the text here. It is however used by Jesus in the text later in Matthew 23 when He says these words again. There He does use the word desolate. Here it's implied because if your house is left to you, it is desolate as far as God is concerned.

Why this? Why now this statement of a severer judgment? Up to now you could say God was still working. God was still there. In fact, He brought John the Baptist to call the nation to repentance and He brought the Messiah to bring salvation, but to reject John the Baptist to reject the Messiah and in rejecting the Messiah, you have rejected the forerunner is the final straw and judgment is pronounced and so the present tense of Israel and we are still living in it is a time of immense desolation that began with the rejection of Jesus Christ. It began to come down on their heads in 70 A.D. and it's been crashing in on them ever since. It is the great sadness of our world to see this covenant people living under desolation, God being absent.

It always interests me to see how these people bring together organizations called Christians and Jews coming together because we worship the same God. Nothing could be further from the truth. While we love the people of Israel, long for their salvation like Paul could almost wish ourselves accursed for their salvation, we cannot embrace Jews or the nation of Israel as brothers worshipping the same God for they have rejected the true and living God who is the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the sad present state, but what about the future. The future, is it just for Israel's sake that God will do this? No, because they have no claim on God. They have no demand that they can lay at His feet. They are not righteous. They never were. They are not now. In fact, whatever smattering of interest they had in the law of God in the past that was legitimate, they have none now nationally speaking. But is there a future? Look at verse 35 again. "I say to you, you shall not see me until,"

there's the key word, circle it, underline it, mark it, until. In that word until are all the covenant promises of God captured and sealed. "Until the time comes when you say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," which I read you out of verse 26 in Psalm 118, that great Messianic Psalm that we read earlier.

The Jews have always understood Old Testament promises to Abraham as literal. They always have understood Old Testament promises to David as literal. David understood them that way. I read you what David's interpretation was in 2 Samuel 7. You can actually go to 1 Chronicles Chapter 6 and read Solomon's interpretation of the Davidic covenant and you'll find out he understood it as literal as well. They always understood it that way. They believed in a real restoration, a real kingdom. They even believed it when the Messiah came. And the disciples believed that just before the ascension, when they said to Him "will you at this time bring the kingdom?"

And even after that they were talking about the times of restitution and the times of restoration. Why? Because Israel was worthy? No, because Israel was going to keep its side of the bargain? No, God had made a unilateral covenant both with Abraham and David. God had sworn by Himself and the issue at stake here is not the righteousness of Israel to be rewarded. The issue at stake here is the character of God to be vindicated. Does God speak the truth or does He not? Does He promise and fulfill or does He promise and renege? Does He keep His covenants? Is He faithful or unfaithful? The implications of that obviously are massive.

If God's word to Israel cannot be trusted then how can we know that we can trust anything He has said? You tell me that nothing can separate me from the love of Christ. You tell me that. You tell me that I am secure in Jesus Christ no matter what until my eternal glory and then you tell me that God made promises to Israel that He has cancelled. You make me very nervous. It's about God's faithfulness. That's the issue. But there are many who believe that because of Israel's unfaithfulness continually and because finally, climatically Israel's unfaithfulness in rejecting the Messiah, God has cancelled all His promises to Israel. The church is the new Israel. We get all the promises. All they get is the curses.

That's not what verse 35 says. That's not what comes out of the lips of our Lord. What our Lord says, "You will not see until the times comes when you say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." He didn't say I'm so sad that you'll never say it. He said the time will come when you do say it. And it's emphatic. "I say to you," that's emphatic. "Hear me, hear me," he says, "you shall not see me," what does He mean? Physically? No. You'll never really recognize me. You'll never really know who I am until sometime in the future and then you will say "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

He's not talking about seeing Jesus necessarily in a physical sense. Although certainly, the glorified Christ will be revealed to all those who believe in Him in the end. He's talking here not so much about

physical recognition. He's talking about spiritual recognition. Now you remember Simeon. Simeon, the old man in the temple in Luke Chapter 2, who, when the Messiah was brought there, he took Him in His arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, thou doest let thy bond servant depart in peace according to thy word for my eyes have seen thy salvation."

You can't see salvation. What he means is the Messiah's here, this is the Messiah, I'm aware of the arrival of the Savior. Talking about spiritual sight. Another way to explain this kind of sight is to remember 2 Corinthians Chapter 5, a really wonderful verse tucked into that Chapter, very often overlooked, but very useful verse. 2 Corinthians 5:16, Paul says, "Therefore, from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh." We recognize no man according to the flesh. What does he mean by that? He didn't know people when he met them? He didn't recognize faces? He couldn't remember names? No. What he meant was, I don't see people physically anymore. I don't see them with only my physical eyes. Everyone I meet is far more to me than their physical presence. I understand that as believer. I understand that. I cannot look at people on the outside. I cannot be ultimately impressed by how they appear.

How they appear is in the sense, meaningless to me and it is and should be to any believer, because we understand that living inside that shell is an eternal soul. We do not know people after the flesh. When I meet an unbeliever, I cannot take him at face value, I cannot take her at face value. All I can think about is there's an eternal soul headed into either an eternity with or without God in bliss or punishment. I can't deal with people purely on the superficial level.

Paul goes on to say, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer." You know, Paul's first understanding of Jesus was He was a man, He was a Jewish man, and He was a problem for Judaism. He came in and He assaulted Judaism, the Phariseeism that Paul cherished, the legalism, the tradition, Jesus was destructive to that religion and He set off in His life to destroy the influence of this man Jesus. He was there, you know, right when Stephen was being stoned to death and from there he went out breathing threats and slaughters against the church, imprisoning and executing Christians. Why? Because he thought Jesus was a man. One day on the Damascus Road he found out Jesus was not a man. Jesus was God. He no longer saw Jesus according to the flesh.

The Jews today, the Jews since Jesus came, the Jews on into the future only see Jesus in the flesh. They see Him the way Paul saw Him. They see Him as an intruder into Judaism. They see Him as a problem. They see Him as a troublemaker, but they are hostile. I was talking to a rabbi one day in his office and I brought up the name Jesus Christ. He slammed his fist on the desk and said "do not mention that name in my presence." He doesn't see Jesus at all. He doesn't see Him with spiritual eyes, with true knowledge. But Jesus says here, "I say to you, you're not going to see me until, until you say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." When you confess me as the coming one, the Messiah, the long promised Messiah, the one who came to bring the gospel, the one who

came to be your Deliverer, your Savior, your Redeemer, when you see me that way, then you will know truly who I am.

That hasn't happened, but it will. The until indicates that it will. There is a future for this nation. Right now there are individual Jews being saved. There's always been a remnant, always been a remnant. Clearly Isaiah talked about the remnant. Isaiah 6, elsewhere in his wonderful prophesy, Isaiah Chapter 11, verse 11 and 12, he talks about the remnant. There's a remnant now just like in Elijah's day. Always a remnant of Jews coming to Christ and we go out loving these people, calling them to faith in Christ, calling them to acknowledge their Messiah and many come and many believed and we thank God for that.

But we're talking here about the nation. Is there a future for the nation as such? Is there going to come a time when all Israel will be saved? That's exactly what the apostle says in those very words in Romans 11. "And so all Israel will be saved." And the Bible even explains exactly how it's going to take place. That's for next time. Our final look at this. Why is this important? It's important for a couple of reasons. One, the faithfulness of God is at stake and we believe in God's faithfulness. He is faithful even to a covenant that has been abused by a difficult and rebellious people.

A second thing to think about is God's grace is at stake. Why us? Why have we been brought in? Why have we been grafted in in the language of Paul? Why has a new channel been cut out? Why have we, the riffraff out in the highways and byways been invited to the banquet to take the place of the guests who were originally supposed to be there? Why us? This is grace, this is grace. For Christ came to die not only for the Jews, but the Gentiles also. Our hearts break over the unbelief of Israel. Our hearts break over their rejection. The heart of God breaks over it. But our hearts rejoice that God in His mighty grace has overcome our own blindness and brought us to the Savior. And so while we are sad over what's happened to them, we are glad because of God's grace for us. We've come to this table with joy to thank God for the gift of His Son on the cross. We come also longing for that day when, together with a redeemed Israel, we'll come to this table in the kingdom with our Lord Himself present there.

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