



Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

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### “The Right to Live Belongs to God”

I didn't come up with those words, Warren Wiersbe did. But there is a truth we need to comprehend, and a strategy we need to employ.

In Luke 13:1-9 Jesus is continuing His journey toward Jerusalem. Of four situations He will address, the first one involves a question about justice and a call to repentance.

Some present with Jesus at the time were telling Him about certain Galileans. Pilate had mingled their blood with certain sacrifices. Pilate, the Roman governor, didn't get along with the Jews. We don't know the exact details here, but we do know people were talking.

Jews at that time believed that all suffering resulted from God's judgment on sin (Job 2:11-13). So Jesus asks His audience whether these Galileans were greater sinners than other Galileans because of what they had suffered. Jesus says NO. Rather, if people want to take that position, they had best repent lest they all likewise perish.

Then Jesus brings up 18 who died when the tower fell and killed them in Siloam. Jesus wants to know whether the people thought that these debtors were greater debtors than all the people dwelling in Jerusalem. Jesus says, NO, I say to you, but whenever you repent not, you will all likewise perish.

Jesus says nothing about Pilate's sins; He deals with the sins of those questioning Him. But who's a “debtor”?

“Definition: (a) a debtor, one who owes, one who is indebted, (b) one who has sinned against another (an Aramiasm), a sinner. **3781** *opheilētēs* (a masculine noun) – a *debtor*; someone under *obligation* to pay back (discharge) a debt.

For the *believer*, [3781](http://biblehub.com/greek/3781.htm) /*opheilētēs* ("being a debtor") ends at Calvary where Christ paid *all our debt in His blood*. He extends *total* release to us, forgiving the penalty for each time we *spent* His gift of life rather than *invested* it. Indeed, the blood of Jesus removes all the *penalty* (condemnation) of sin (Jn 19:30).” <http://biblehub.com/greek/3781.htm>

Jesus is saying that human tragedies are not always divine punishments. We are not to “play God” and sit as Judge in the legal sense (not in the sense of exercising discernment). Remember

Job and his friends? They saw Job's afflictions as evidence that Job was a sinner beyond other sinners. Job was a sinner, as are all in Adam; but every tragedy or suffering is not because of someone's sin.

Jesus is in the process of preparing His disciples for the suffering they would experience for His sake and the Gospel. It is not new: prophets and apostles and people of God have suffered for righteousness. Christ suffered, the just for the unjust. 1 Peter 3:8-18; 1 Peter 4:1-6

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. 1 Peter 3:18 KJV

Timothy planted a church in Ephesus and took the Gospel throughout Asia. Paul prepares him for the Call.

<sup>8</sup> So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. <sup>9</sup> He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, <sup>10</sup> but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. <sup>11</sup> And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. <sup>12</sup> That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day. 2 Timothy 1:8-12 NIV

Everyone will face “that day,” the Judgment. Not everything that happens results from sin, but nothing happens outside of God's sovereignty. God does care. At a certain point in my life, I wasn't too sure about that; but I am now. God just has a different perspective on things; our job is to align ourselves with His perspective. It makes our lives go better.

Jesus is saying that if God does punish sin in this way, as was commonly thought, then the disciples and all of us for that matter had better repent! As Warren Wiersbe notes: “The question is not, ‘Why did these people die?’ The question is, ‘What right does anyone have to live?’ The right to live belongs to God.” (Deuteronomy 32:39; Psalm 31:15).

See now that I, *even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.* Deuteronomy 32:39 KJV

God allows temporal disasters to happen for various reasons—one of which is to lead people to repentance. Although God may punish some sin with suffering, because we corrupt ourselves and consequences result, it is often a testing or learning process designed for our ultimate growth and good. Always, we are called to a life of repentance. For more, see my article “This Thing is from Me.” <http://www.marycraig.org/NewsViews/ThisThingIsFromMe.htm> There you will find seven reasons “bad things can happen” and learn more of God's purposes.

Oddly, Jesus starts speaking a parable. (Luke 13:6-9; cf. Isaiah 5:1-7) The literal from the Greek, and yes, awkward to most, goes like this:

A certain man had planted a fig tree in his vineyard. And he came seeking fruit on it, and NOT did find any. He said moreover to the vinedresser, Behold throughout these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and NOT do find any. Therefore, cut it down in order that why even the ground should it use up? And answering, he says to him, Lord (Sir), let it alone also this year, until when I shall dig around it and put in manure/dung, if indeed it should bear fruit in the time about to be; if however not, you shall cut it down. [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)

Leviticus 19:23-25 tells us that people did not eat fruit from newly planted trees the first three years. The fourth year the crops belonged to the Lord. A farmer would not get any figs for himself until the fifth year, but this man had now been waiting for 3 years and wanted to cut the tree down.

What is the point? Jesus is addressing individuals and the nation of Israel. We also need to heed what Jesus is saying. God is gracious and long-suffering and does plenty to encourage repentance and the bearing of fruit. He has the right to cut down whatever He wants, but in His mercy He spares. Nevertheless, the Day of Judgment will surely come. Therefore, repent.

God also showed special goodness to Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7; Romans 9:1-5). God waited three years during Jesus' earthly ministry, but where was the fruit? Where was the repentance? Jesus was bringing a new thing, the New Covenant in His Blood. Jesus would die, be buried, and rise again from the dead in order that those believing in Him, believing Him, would live in Him.

The parable doesn't tell us what happened. The question is: Who will bear the fruit of righteousness in the Kingdom of God? (Galatians 5:22-26)

There is another thing operating here: the Law of the Dung. I know it sounds gross, but from it we can begin to formulate a strategy when going through hard times, disastrous events, and suffering.

12>You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, 13and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement. 14"Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you....Deuteronomy 23:12-14 NAS

Dung is food that has been processed and eliminated. Dung was not meant for food. It was meant to be used as fertilizer, to fertilize the ground in order to bring forth fruit. Jesus likened Israel to a fig tree that did not bear fruit unto God. That fig tree needed to be "dunged."

**Bury the dung.** Deuteronomy 23:12-14. We need revelation by the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation along with true spiritual food so that we can assimilate truth and understand it. Otherwise, we swallow lies along with truth and can get off the path with things like the traditions of men, false teaching, skewed interpretations, distorted views, twisted thinking, etc. Here, the people had false premises, false assumptions that led to false conclusions. Jesus makes the correction. Then He needs to be believed and people need to repent, change their thinking, turn away from what is slanted and turn to Jesus, who stands straight.

What do we do whenever we find ourselves with a "dung" problem? Bury it in the ground outside the camp. Use it as fertilizer. Let your/God's enemies be as dung. (Psalm 83, especially

Ps. 83:10) According to Leviticus 11, where we find the laws of clean and unclean, we are to eat clean food. (Read Ezekiel 4:9-12 and his obedience to the LORD.)

**We need food that edifies. In the process, we also need to ask God to grant us the grace of forgiveness. (Ephesians 4:17-32) And we need God to grant us repentance. 2 Timothy 2:25, 26.**

**Do not swallow the dung.** Bury it in the ground, and let God come on our field and deliver us from our enemies/His enemies.

**Do not throw dung back into the faces of others.** Bury it and let God deal.

Paul said this: *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: Philippians 3:8, 9 KJV*

**Eat true spiritual food.** Whatever is not truth, eliminate it. Bury it. Once falsehood is detected, let it be as fertilizer spurring the bearing of the fruit of righteousness through repentance. Bury the dung so that God will come on our ground and fight our battle.

Jesus acknowledges disasters, evil, misery, and suffering. He desires that we acknowledge a coming Day of Judgment, that the Creator, the Living God, is also a Redeemer. Jesus is that Redeemer. Following Him may mean being persecuted and suffering for righteousness' sake. His disciples, and all who would follow the Lamb wherever He goes, must be prepared. We need a real God, and we have one.

The right to live belongs to God, and God is asking "Who will bear the fruit of righteousness in the Kingdom of God?" There has only been One born without sin. There is only One who fully and truly bears the fruit of righteousness. He is the Righteous One. We only have righteousness in Him, His righteousness being imputed to us. He walked among us, God in the flesh. His Name is Jesus, and He is Christ, the Wisdom of God. Let Him live in you.

Glorifying Jesus Christ, the Holy One,

*Mary Craig*

Mary Craig, D. Min.

**The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof;  
The world and they that dwell therein.  
Psalm 24:1**

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