

08.23.26

Luke

Chapter 13 - An Unpredictable End

No Concern for the Downtrodden (vs. 10-17)

Luke 13:10-17: And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.” And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God. But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, “There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.” But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom

Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

I realize in Scripture that there are no isolated texts. They are built upon other things. And especially in the Gospel of Luke, you see a progression of ideas, or more specifically, of principles and thoughts in which he is bringing us down through and building upon. And so, as you look at Luke, we have this passage that is dealing with an individual in which Jesus sees a woman that's been sick for 18 years, and we oftentimes look at a passage like that and we go, "Okay, that's an entity in itself," but Luke has been building upon and bringing us up to this point.

What is the point? Well, clearly, He has been demonstrating that man has a tendency to not see the things that he's supposed to be doing. As you come to the end of Chapter 12, He says, "You need to think in terms of

going before the Judge. And on your way to the Judge, you need to think, 'Maybe I need to get some things straight.' But you're not thinking about those things." He'll even make an interesting analogy of the fact that you can see the signs in the weather, but you can't understand that these things are coming to a head.

At this particular time in the life of Christ, Rome was in control. They had been in some ways oppressive to the Jews. Of course, the Jews were extremely rebellious against their authority, and they continually had trouble with the Jews. It was their arrogance that brought them many problems. And so, it was actually brought up at the beginning of Chapter 13 that even the Galileans were starting to cause problems. And because of that, many of them were slain as Pilate would have to take control. Jesus, in a way, was telling those around Him, He says, "You do know you're heading towards a judgment. You're on a path and the time is short. You need to realize these things that are happening." Of course, their perception was, "There are certain people that need to repent, but we don't need to repent." And He says, "No, everybody

needs to repent. Everybody needs to change their way of thinking. Everybody needs to think differently than they're thinking." But it's easy for us to point to everybody else. Of course, it would be the Gospel of Luke in which you have this one righteous Pharisee that will turn and look at this tax collector and say, "I thank God that I'm not like him." And so, the tendency is to always think that there's somebody worse than us and God's going to judge on a scale. But God doesn't judge on a scale. God is judging according to His righteousness. And you're heading towards the Judge, and you haven't been thinking about it.

And I'll tell you what else we don't think about. We don't think about the sin of omission. That is to say, we don't think of the many things that we should be doing that we're not doing. We think oftentimes in the terms of, "Well, I'm not a really bad person, so obviously God's not going to hold me accountable to anything really bad." And Christ says, "You're really bad if you're neglecting to do something that you're supposed to be doing, if you're holding back." Scripture is full of reminders of the fact

that we should be ministering to people, and the things that God gives us is for the purpose of benefiting others. It's not for us just looking good. The Pharisees are very much into the thought that it was all about looking good before men, and of course that's why Jesus would declare, "You need to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Because they're only interested in wearing a mask and looking a certain way and their performance. But though man looks at appearance, God looks at the heart, and He's concerned about who you really are. So, don't think for one moment that you're prepared just because you look good. The Pharisees, according to Matthew 6, would say their prayers on the street corners so they could be noticed by man. But He says, "Go in the closet, shut the door and talk to God because God's the One that hears you." The same thing was true with their giving of alms. They would announce before their giving of alms. And once again, the perception in their mind is, "Well, I'm really a very gracious person because I'm giving, especially when everybody can see me." And God says, "Well, that's not the heart that I'm looking for." But we're not thinking

about those things because we're not understanding the Judge that we're coming before.

Israel was coming to a point, and the Jews in particular were coming to a point in which they were about to have a destruction of their city. The destruction of the city would happen in 70 A.D., and Jesus is reminding them, "You're coming before the Judge. So, you need to get things straight." We know that Jerusalem was literally leveled, and people were massacred, and people were dying by the thousands, and they were trying to hide in Masada, and all these places; they were being attacked. There was no place to run. There was no place to hide. They would die, and Jesus would warn them of this.

You see this at the end of this particular chapter, and once again, this chapter is written in a setting, but His statement is in verse 34,

(Luke 13:34) "O 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!"

(Luke 13:35) Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

A very interesting warning.

And Jesus will follow through with this if you look with me in Luke 21, in which He reminds them that shortly there's going to be a time when Jerusalem is going to be surrounded.

(Luke 21:20) "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

(Luke 21:21) Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;

(Luke 21:22) because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

(Luke 21:23) Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

(Luke 21:24) and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

And that's exactly what happened, isn't it?

Of course, He will remind the ladies that are following Him as He's going to the cross, and we've made mention of this before in Luke 23, in which as Christ was going to the cross, there were women following, crying and weeping.

It says,

(Luke 23:26) "When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

(Luke 23:27) And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.

(Luke 23:28) But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

(Luke 23:29) For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'

(Luke 23:30) Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.'"

Jesus is clearly, especially in the Gospel of Luke, warning them, "You're on a path; you're heading before the Judge."

And of course, if you look at the end of Luke 12,

(Luke 12:58) "For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him..."

Make an effort to get right. And then, of course, the next chapter starts off, "You need to repent." So, don't think that you're not one of those that need to repent.

Everybody needs to repent. And I think the initial response of people is that "I'm not a bad person." And God says, "I'm not asking you if you're a bad person. I'm asking if you doing what I'm telling you to do. And what

I'm looking for is fruit." And so, He brings that wonderful example of that parable of the tree that's not bearing fruit. And once again, it's an interesting picture of a tree that looks good, but it's not doing anything beneficial. And God says, "I'm going to come; I'm going to look for fruit. If it's not there, then we're going to chop it down." That's not the first time that's mentioned. Whereas John the Baptist would come on the scene, he'd go, "You know, the winnowing fork is already here. You know, we're getting ready to burn things up. So, you need to prepare. Behold, get ready to meet your God." So, there is a preparation that needs to be taken place. Luke is actually paving the way for that kind of thought.

As we come now to this, the fact of the matter is that the one who owns the garden comes and he can't find any fruit, and he says, "Just go ahead and cut it down." The one in the field is saying, "Give me one more year. One more year." Three years, nothing. Of course, that's the time of the ministry of Christ. They didn't respond to the ministry of Christ. "Let me put some fertilizer around it." And as we were talking about last week, that's an

interesting picture of that which is spread around that really represents decay; it represents decline; it represents degradation. And so, he says, "Let's put a little of that in and around the tree. Let's see if it responds." We question when we have to go through difficult times, when we're faced with pain and sorrow, when we're faced with days in which it's not only frustrating, but goes into the realm of just plain distressful. And we wonder, "What is God doing?" And I would say to you, He's fertilizing. Because unfortunately, oftentimes, we don't produce the fruit that we're supposed to be producing. We take the benefits that God has given us. Of course, as He states in Matthew 5, He causes the rain and the sun to shine on both the righteous and the unrighteous. He gives us all these benefits, and yet what do you do with it? You know, He's benefited you, according to Hebrews 6, with all these things. You hear the word of God, you hear these things, and what have you done with it? How have you helped somebody? You say, "Well, I don't know, but I feel good and I look good." And God goes, "That's not enough. That's not what I'm looking for. The whole reason why I'm doing this is for you to bring benefit (i.e. fruit) that would

help somebody else." That's what He's going to be looking for.

When you consider some of the Old Testament books, I think one of the ones that jump off the page to us is the Book of Jeremiah. And one of the reasons why is, you have a young man that God calls into a ministry and I don't think he really wants to go. I mean, on the onset, he says, "I'm too young. I'm not the right tribe. I'm not really fit for this. I'm not even sure I can talk right." And God says, "Just tell them what I tell you to tell them and everything will be okay. I'm going to make you strong in this." But as we follow the pages of Jeremiah, what you see is a young man that goes through horrific times. I mean, you wouldn't wish it on your worst enemy. And you say, "What in the world is God doing?" And I would say, He's pruning, He's putting fertilizer down, and He's causing this young man to go through difficult times so that he's going to bear fruit. And what is the fruit that he's going to bear? "Well, he's going to represent Me and he's going to declare the truth unapologetically. And ultimately, what he's going to do is he's going to love

these people." If you follow the Book of Jeremiah all the way to the end, he's going to love these people in spite of themselves, even though by loving them it will literally cause him to die. He will do that. Whereas on the onset, his first thought was, "I don't think I want to go through this." In fact, when he first starts going through the problem, he goes, "Why was I even born? I wish that God would have just taken me before I was born." And so, he begins to cry out in such a way where you begin to see his separation from wanting to do that.

Out of all of his pain and suffering comes an interesting chapter in the Book of Lamentations. And I want you to just share this with me. If you turn with me to the Book of Lamentations and in particular in the third chapter, Jeremiah will write how he has seen affliction.

He starts off this way,

(Lamentations 3:1) "I am the man who has seen affliction
Because of the rod of His wrath."

(Lamentations 3:2) He has driven me and made me walk
In darkness and not in light.

(Lamentations 3:3) Surely against me He has turned His hand Repeatedly all the day.

(Lamentations 3:4) He has caused my flesh and my skin to waste away, He has broken my bones.

(Lamentations 3:5) He has besieged and encompassed me with bitterness and hardship.

(Lamentations 3:6) In dark places He has made me dwell, Like those who have long been dead.

(Lamentations 3:7) He has walled me in so that I cannot go out; He has made my chain heavy.

(Lamentations 3:8) Even when I cry out and call for help, He shuts out my prayer.

(Lamentations 3:9) He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked.

(Lamentations 3:10) He is to me like a bear lying in wait, Like a lion in secret places.

(Lamentations 3:11) He has turned aside my ways and torn me to pieces; He has made me desolate.

(Lamentations 3:12) He bent His bow And set me as a target for the arrow.”

Sometimes you feel like just a big target out there, don't you?

(Lamentations 3:13) “He made the arrows of His quiver To enter into my inward parts.

(Lamentations 3:14) I have become a laughingstock to all my people, Their mocking song all the day.

(Lamentations 3:15) He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood.

(Lamentations 3:16) He has broken my teeth with gravel; He has made me cower in the dust.

(Lamentations 3:17) My soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness.

(Lamentations 3:18) So I say, “My strength has perished, And so has my hope from the LORD.””

And then everything changes.

(Lamentations 3:19) "Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness.

(Lamentations 3:20) Surely my soul remembers And is bowed down within me.

(Lamentations 3:21) This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.

(Lamentations 3:22) The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

(Lamentations 3:23) They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

(Lamentations 3:24) "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

(Lamentations 3:25) The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him.

(Lamentations 3:26) It is good that he waits silently For the salvation of the LORD.

(Lamentations 3:27) It is good for a man that he should bear The yoke in his youth.

(Lamentations 3:28) Let him sit alone and be silent Since He has laid it on him.

(Lamentations 3:29) Let him put his mouth in the dust, Perhaps there is hope.

(Lamentations 3:30) Let him give his cheek to the smiter, Let him be filled with reproach.

(Lamentations 3:31) For the Lord will not reject forever,

(Lamentations 3:32) For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion According to His abundant lovingkindness.

(Lamentations 3:33) For He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men.

(Lamentations 3:34) To crush under His feet All the prisoners of the land,

(Lamentations 3:35) To deprive a man of justice In the presence of the Most High,

(Lamentations 3:36) To defraud a man in his lawsuit— Of these things the Lord does not approve.

(Lamentations 3:37) Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it?

(Lamentations 3:38) Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?"

Where do you think hard times come from? What is God doing?

Why would I read to you that particular passage? Well, the reason I'd read it to you is because that particular

passage Jeremiah realizes, "There is a reason for the suffering that I'm going through. God doesn't do this willingly."

Interesting example, the tree is not bearing fruit. He's going to have to put fertilizer. He's going to have to put degrading, hard, difficult things around the tree.

Jerusalem's going to have to go and suffer great loss in order to be humbled. They're going to have to be scattered across the nations in order to ultimately come back to God. The difficulties that you're going through is God producing fruit. Because the tendency is for us to get wrapped up in ourselves and to think that we actually exist here so that we can look good. We think that we exist by virtue of the fact that we accumulate stuff, as Scripture says, and all kinds of greed starts coming in and thinking that our life consists of the things that we have. But God says, "It has nothing to do with that. You're here for another reason and you're walking towards the Judge and you're not thinking right." He then begins to fertilize, and He begins to prune.

You read in John 15, every tree that doesn't bear fruit, He begins to prune the trees so that it might bear fruit. So, He's beginning to work in a life. Now, the thought is, "No, no, no. He doesn't need to do that." Oh really? That's what this paragraph's about. Because here you see this woman and she's been ill for 8 years and no one seemed to care! Why doesn't anybody see her? Why doesn't anybody care? And why are people more concerned about how things look on the healing of a particular day than of the hurt that this woman is going through? It's because they're so involved in themselves, they can't even see the pain around them. They don't want to see the pain around them. There are people hurting all around us, and God says, "I've placed you there for a reason. I've given these things in your life for a reason. You're looking for ways to perhaps make your life more comfortable. I'm looking for ways to produce fruit."

So, the incident comes up in verse 10, if you look with me in Chapter 13, in which Jesus is teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. There is a passage in Isaiah 58 that really describes the purpose of the Sabbath,

probably better than any other passage. And I would have you read it with me so that there can be a clarification of what should be done during the Sabbath rather than what different ones were saying should be done during the Sabbath.

If you look with me in Isaiah 58, it states this in verse 13, (Isaiah 58:13) “If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your own pleasure...”

You see, "sabbath" actually means not rest, but cessation. That is to say, a ceasing from something. What are you to cease from? Your own pleasure, your own desires, your own profit. It's one of the reasons why you don't work on the Sabbath because you're setting aside your profit. It doesn't mean that you don't do any work at all because the priests were obviously doing work, probably more work on the Sabbath than anybody else. But it's that you're not pursuing your ways. It's you setting aside your desires.

So, it reads this way,

“If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your own pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, And honor it, desisting from your own ways, From seeking your own pleasure And speaking your own word,

(Isaiah 58:14) Then you will take delight in the LORD...”

And that's what the Sabbath is about.

Now, what's interesting is the way this chapter starts off; in which many were crying before God, and they were going, "Hey, we worship You, we worship You." And He goes, "Really? I'm not seeing it." And they're going, "Well, look at all the stuff that we do." So, they say they delight to know God, and they say they delight to be near to God.

And so, they cry unto God, if you look in verse 3, and they say,

(Isaiah 58:3) ““Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?’ ...”

And God goes, "Because you didn't humble yourself. You didn't care for people."

"... Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire,
And drive hard all your workers."

In other words, the same day that you're fasting and the same day that you're crying out and saying, "We love God and we love His ways and we care for people," He said, "Those same days you go out and you beat your laborers to death. You take advantage of them."

(Isaiah 58:4) "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high."

(Isaiah 58:5) Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD?

(Isaiah 58:6) Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke?"

In other words, "Am I not looking for you to help people, to free them? Isn't that what I'm looking for? Isn't that

the fast I'm looking for? For you to cease from doing your own desires and to help somebody else out?" It is the sabbath that Jesus is teaching as we come to Luke 13, and that's the Sabbath that he's looking for.

(Luke 13:11) "And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness..."

This is actually going to be repeated again in verse 16, in which Jesus reminds us this is Abraham's daughter, and she's been bound by Satan for 18 years. Actually, the word here for "sickness" is describing somebody that really literally lacks strength. And so, we see this individual and she's bent over. So, it's very noticeable that she has something wrong and it doesn't necessarily mean and have to mean a physical thing. But it can mean an emotional thing that has so overwhelmed her that she's bent down and she cannot get up. She's just so overwhelmed by this.

"(Behold) there was a woman who for eighteen years..."

I like the fact that it starts off with that demonstrative "behold". I mean, did anybody see this?

"... who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.

(Luke 13:12) When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness."

And of course, in Luke 4, as Jesus is in the synagogue in Nazareth, He begins to read out of Isaiah 61, and the great passage that says what the Messiah is going to do, which the fact is that He's anointed to preach the gospel of the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to set free those who are downtrodden. That's exactly what He's doing. And you know, the Pharisees and those that were so much in a religion could applaud the fact that was a wonderful thing to do. But then all of the people around them that needed somebody to care for them were being totally neglected as they were basking in the fact that, "Oh yeah, that's a wonderful thing to do to help people." I mean, one of the great points in Scripture has always been that we should help those that are oppressed.

James 2:15-16, if a brother or sister is without clothing, in need of daily food, you can't just walk up to them and say, "Be warm, be filled, be clothed." You've got to do something. And so, James will ultimately say, "You know, if you're just talking and you're not helping, can this faith save you? Is that real faith?"

James will go on to say in James 1:27, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our Lord and God is to visit the orphans, the widows in their distress, and to keep one unstained by the world."

John will write in 1 John 3:17, "Whoever has the world's goods and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Let us not love with word or with tongue." You know, I've known some people that are really good at writing stuff out. You know, they can talk about love, they can write about love. But I've watched their life, and I go, "I don't think they've helped anybody." But they're the ones that are writing about it. It's just amazing to me. And there will be those that will philosophy about it and talk about it all day long. People can talk about helping people

all day long. But have you opened up your house to anybody? Have you helped somebody in need? I'm talking about those around you. I mean, you can send money to people that are foreigners way often because they're somebody that you don't have to deal with. But it's usually your neighbor that God is going to call you to minister to.

So, what is God calling us to do? God is calling us to minister in deed and in truth. And let me just say this. It's that second part that always gets me. Because I can do the deed stuff, but "in truth" means I've got to do it sincerely and genuinely with the love of Christ. And I think that's the hardest part for me. But that's what God is looking for. And let me just say this. That's what fruit looks like. Fruit looks that way.

So, here He is, and He immediately calls her to Himself. He frees her from her sickness.

(Luke 13:13) "And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God.

(Luke 13:14) But the synagogue official..."

Or the ruler; the one that's supposed to set the decorum within the service.

"... indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

(Luke 13:15) But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?"

Of course, that's beneficial to them if they do that, because that would be something that would give them benefit in the long run.

(Luke 13:16) "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

(Luke 13:17) As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated..."

I think it's interesting; they're disgruntled, obviously, disagreeable, clearly, displeased, indignant; they're even humiliated, but they're not repentant. That's very interesting. They were being humiliated.

"... and the entire crowd was rejoicing..."

Here they are joyfully beginning to cry out and probably some applause and all sorts of things were going on.

"... over all the glorious things being done by Him."

This is a very poignant chapter because it hits the religious leaders, and oftentimes, many of those people who attend church right between their eyes in many ways. But let me emphasize one thing in particular, and let me take you to a very obscure passage that you would say really has nothing to do with this, but it does.

If you turn with me to the Book of Judges, Judges 3. There was a time in which the children of Israel were in bondage. Now the question is, why were they in bondage? Why were they suffering loss? Why were they going through such difficult times? And I would say, because they left the Lord. They stopped doing what God

had told them to do and they started doing evil things. Look, you're ultimately going to submit to some authority, whatever it is. It might be the authority of the world in which they'll tell you, "This is the way to have fun," and you'll begin to go their way. And by so doing, you begin to worship the things of the world and before long you're sold out to them. Or you're going to follow God, which will benefit others. I can say, as James will say, when you're going the route of selfish ambition, you're only going to create mayhem and destruction all around you. Judges 3, in the Book of Judges, every man does what is right in his own eyes. That's really the theme of Judges, right? So, what happens when you do whatever you want to do? Well, bad things happen. And so, what does God have to do? Well, He has to send that pain. We'll call it fertilizer. He has to send that pain and distress upon you; things that are repulsive to you; things that you don't want to have to deal with in order to straighten you up, to get you thinking right, to get you bearing fruit. Because quite frankly, at this juncture, you're only thinking of yourself and you could care less about anybody that has

any need. In fact, you're using people that have need and you're exploiting those people instead of helping them.

So, Judges 3:12 says this,

(Judges 3:12) "Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

(Judges 3:13) And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel..."

Why would God's people ever be defeated? Because they deserted God.

"... and they possessed the city of the palm trees."

Which means that there's not going to be any pleasure anymore.

(Judges 3:14) "The sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

(Judges 3:15) But when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them..."

It took 18 years for them to cry out to God.

Go a little bit further in the Book of Judges and go with me to Chapter 10.

This will be no surprise,

(Judges 10:6) "Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, served the Baals and the Ashtaroath, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him."

It's interesting how we'll go to almost every source but God.

(Judges 10:7) The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the sons of Ammon.

(Judges 10:8) They afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year; for eighteen years they afflicted all the sons of Israel..."

And then it says in verse 10,

(Judges 10:10) "Then the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD..."

There is a prayer by the Jews, it's called "Shemoneh Esrei". You know what it means? 18. It was a prayer that was devised by Ezra some 400 to 500 years before Christ came and by many of his rulers. And to this day, the Jews pray this prayer three times a day, morning, noon, and evening. And they will pray it on the Sabbath, on the time of prayer, this particular prayer. They will call out 18 blessings. Some will even add a 19th, but they will pray 18 blessings. The first 3 blessings that they begin to pray, begin to declare God's praises. The middle prayers are dealing specifically with requests and needs. And the last 3 that they will pray will be the blessings of thanksgiving unto God. This prayer will be done and repeated over and over again. By the time that Jerusalem was completely destroyed, this prayer became a staple, and even today in the synagogues it is used. They say in order to pray this prayer, they encourage you not to speak it out loud, but to say it silently. You can whisper it. What is also interesting about "Shemoneh Esrei" is that when a Jew is giving gifts or giving charity, it will be always by the number 18. Always 18. They would give in 18 or any kind of mathematical equation with 18 in order to display what

they believe 18 is about. Well, the way it's listed in the Jewish way is that you have an 8 and you have a 10. And both these numbers together really display two things. 1, 8, life. It's one of the reasons why "8" is a resurrection number, which after the 7, God rose from the dead. And in the Old Testament, you'll see "8" being used. It'll be used for the circumcision of a child on the 8th day. So, it is that interesting picture of resurrection or life, and beyond that, "10" will show that sense of completion. The two of them together are always perceived as an act of charity. So, when Jesus turns to them, and He goes, "On the sabbath, shouldn't we be giving charity?" And when He uses the word "18" there, they're hearing the prayer that they had been praying on that giving day, which was a request. And let me just say this. When you start off in that prayer, when it goes into your first request, it starts off with repentance. And so, when He displays and cries out "18 years," it's pulling on their heartstrings. And that's one of the reasons why they're so humiliated. Because it's the very thing that they've been proclaiming. And that's why He turns to them, and He says, "You're such

hypocrites. You pray these prayers and declare that you're men of charity."

In fact, go back with me to Matthew 6, and we're reminded of the way that they come before the services.

Of course, the warning starts off this way,

(Matthew 6:1) "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 6:2) So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet..."

Talk about your charity. It's easy to sound the trumpet than to ignore the person that has a need right next to you.

"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

(Matthew 6:3) But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

(Matthew 6:4) so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

(Matthew 6:5) When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

(Matthew 6:6) But you, when you pray, go into your inner room..."

This is why the “Shemoneh Esrei” should be prayed in silence. You're not on the street corners. All these things Jesus was pointing to, and it was a very poignant point in which He's conveying to them, "You guys are just a bunch of liars. You talk about these things, you write about these things, but you could really care less about the people that are suffering. This is a daughter of Abraham." And what does she do when she's healed? The first thing she does is she glorifies God. That's the first thing she does. She's no heathen. And they can't even show care for the very people that they say that they love the most.

God places us in families. God gives us people in our lives. The very people we say we love the most. We'll talk about giving; we'll talk about caring; we'll talk about ministry; we'll talk about charity. But doesn't charity begin at home? If there's a need among us or somebody's hurting around us, is there any empathy? Is it a surprise that sometimes God has to maybe put a little hardship in our life in order for us to pay attention? You know, it's not until the children of Israel have to go through suffering that they cry out to God. And it's in that crying out to God that they begin to treat each other nicer. Unless you and I go through hardship, we don't see things around us. I can tell you this, when I go through difficulties, I begin to see the hurt and the pain that other people are suffering. And you know what that produces? Fruit. I actually began to care for other people. And that's what God is looking for.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for the opportunities that You give us. We thank You for Your word and for bringing us

to humility. Father, take us beyond the humiliation and the shame that we might feel personally and take us into the realm of humbling ourselves before the mighty hand of God, that we might have Your heart and Your Spirit, that we might see the pain and the suffering around us and care for those that are there. This is what You're looking for. For You've given us benefit. You've given us life. You've given us health. You've given us two legs, two arms, and the ability to do something. You've given us good minds. You've given us the sunshine and the rain. You've given us abundant supply for so many things. Oh God, help us not to waste it. For we know that You've given it all to us for a reason, that we might bear fruit. Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. We're just asking you to examine yourself as you pray.