

Lessons From A Fig Tree

Introduction; We don't get unlimited chances at everything.

- A. There comes a time when we must face consequences.
 1. A student in school may be given a number of times to complete homework and do the other things necessary to get a good grade.
 2. However a time comes when the grading period is over and his grade must be averaged. The student may ask for more time but it is usually too late.
 3. There comes a time in many things where it is too late to do something. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. Jacob and his mother tricked Isaac into giving him the blessing. Esau wanted the blessing very much, but it was too late.
 4. *Heb 12:17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*
 5. There comes a time in all things where it is too late to change things. While many of these are a tragedy, the greatest tragedy will be in the judgment when many will hear, *"Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you"* —Matt 25:12; Parable of the Ten Virgins.
- B. Jesus taught that we do not get an unlimited number of chances to obey God.
 1. This is taught a number of times and in a number of ways in the N.T. We are not guaranteed a lot of chances to change our lives and follow the Lord.
 2. One way Jesus teaches this is with the Parable of the fig tree in Luke 13. The fig tree was given one more chance and that was it.
 3. On another occasion Jesus also used the fig tree to show that the chances to repent were up.
- C. Today we will consider the 'Fig Tree's Situation'.

I. Let's consider the parable of the fig tree.

- A. In Luke 13 Jesus is questioned about faithfulness to God.
 1. **Luke 13:1;** Some tell Jesus about some Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Evidently some people from Galilee were at Jerusalem for a feast and making sacrifices. Pilate sent his soldiers into the temple for some reason and their blood was shed with their sacrifices. This is all we know of this event.
 2. The implication of the ones asking the question is that these people were being punished by God for their sins. God had used pagan peoples to punish sinners before. They thought this was another example.
 3. **Vs 2, 3;** Jesus answers their question plainly. What happened to them was not due to their sins. They were no greater sinners than other Galileans.
 4. In reality everyone needed to repent or they would perish just as the Galileans did. They were all in sin and would suffer for it if they didn't do something about their sins.
 5. **Vs 4, 5;** Jesus then uses another example of a great tragedy. Apparently some were building a tower south of Jerusalem and it fell on some of the workers. Eighteen were killed.
 6. This also was not God's supernatural judgment on eighteen people. Evidently some thought it was.
 7. Jesus makes the point again. They all needed to repent. Just because no great tragedy has happened to us does not mean we are pleasing to God. We all need to repent and turn to God.
 8. While this lesson applies to all in one sense, it had a specific application to Israel. They needed to repent and change or a great tragedy would overtake the nation.
- B. Next, Jesus teaches a parable that applies the lesson to Israel.
 1. **Luke 13:6-9;** Jesus teaches the Parable of the Fig Tree. It shows that an unprofitable fig tree may be given another chance, but it would be its last chance.
 2. The tree has been fruitless for three years. The master is ready to cut it down. It is wasting space.
 3. The vineyard-keeper asks for one more year. He will fertilize it and do whatever else he can to make it produce. If it doesn't he will cut it down.

4. The application is to Israel. This is a continuation of some of the teachings of Luke 12. Israel needs to take advantage of its last opportunity to repent.
 5. The cutting down of the fig tree is probably the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
 6. The last chance is probably the work of the apostles after they have killed the Messiah on a cross.
- C. Later Jesus uses a fig tree to show the end of Israel.
1. *Mark 11:12-14 Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it.*
 2. This is the last week of Jesus' ministry on earth. He curses a fig tree for being fruitless, even though it is not the season for figs —there are three months yet to wait.
 3. *Mark 11:20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.*
 4. The next day the tree is dead from the roots up. This amazes the disciples and ask Jesus about this. He teaches an immediate lesson about faith and how He could do it.
 5. However I believe there is a greater lesson here. This is just after Jesus' 'Triumphal Entry' into Jerusalem and His second cleansing of the temple.
 6. Many spend a lot of time wondering why Jesus would curse a poor fig tree for having no fruit when it was not the season. Several explanations are given but I think none are needed. The lesson has nothing to do with the time of the year but with its fruitlessness.
 7. The fig tree represented Israel. This is a symbolic act to show the consequences of not producing the fruit they should have. They had no fruit and would be destroyed because of it.
- D. We see that being unfruitful will bring strong consequences from God.

II. Now we will consider lessons from the Fig tree.

- A. First there are consequences to not bearing fruit.
1. We must bear fruit. We must be the kind of women and men Jesus Christ expects us to be. In the Parable of the Sower the seed (word of God) that fell on good ground (a good heart) produced much fruit. We must do this to not be cut down and cursed.
 2. *Matt 13:23 "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*
 3. *John 15:2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."*
 4. The fruit we produce is the life we live before men. We show them the character of Christ and how He lives in us. We behave in a certain way so we may lead others to Christ by our character, attitude and behavior.
 5. *Mat 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*
 6. *Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*
 7. Much of the N.T. deals with our attitudes, character and behavior. Worship is an important part of being a Christian. Worship must be according to the N.T. pattern. However most of our life is lived before the world. This is where we really show our religion and faith in God.
 8. Jesus was talking about the nation of Israel. However this same principle is often applied to individuals in scripture. We must bear fruit or we will be punished too.
- B. Second, we do not get an unlimited number of times to become a child of God.
1. We do not get an unlimited number of chances to be saved. Some argue for salvation by faith only. One argument they use is of a person who has a terrible accident and is dying. He becomes a believer but does not have time to be baptized. Is he saved?
 2. How does he, all of a sudden, become a believer? He must have heard the gospel before and rejected it. Now he is dying and wants to be saved. It may be too late.
 3. *Matt 25:10-13 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*
 4. Jesus said to watch. Many do believe today. Yet they are not watching. Scripture often uses the image of a thief to describe the coming of the Lord. Believers must be ready now! They are ready by being fruit-bearers.

5. *Rev 3:2-3 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."*
 6. We cannot put off doing what we know to do. The five foolish virgins wanted to go in and were waiting to go in. However they did not prepare like they should.
 7. The church in Sardis was ready to die. They were a church of the Lord but not doing the works the church should do. If they didn't change quickly it would be too late.
 8. Many like to think they can wait and decide to follow the Lord any time. This may not be true. What if the person in the illustration (point 1) died in the accident. Since he would have believed if he didn't die, why wouldn't he still be saved?
- C. We must nourish and care for ourselves in order to produce the fruit we should.
1. The vineyard-keeper said he would fertilize and water the tree to help make it produce fruit. Christians must likewise be cared for if they are to produce fruit.
 2. *2 Tim 3:14-17 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,*
 3. Christians are nourished by the word of God. They need to study it daily and follow it. We cannot be fruit-bearers if we do not know what the fruit is. We must...
 - a. have the proper attitudes
 - b. have the right character
 - c. have righteous behavior
 - d. do good deeds and help others
 - e. let our lights shine before men so our God and Lord will be praised
 4. We must also spend time in prayer. We must talk to God about our problems and needs and weaknesses.
 5. *Heb 4:116 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
 6. We cannot do everything ourselves. We need God's help. We must learn to depend on Him and not our own strength.
 7. *2 Cor 12:9-10 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
 8. Christians must lean upon each other. They must depend on and support one another. We have great responsibility as the church.
 9. *Heb 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*
 10. Local churches are very important in God's plan to spread the gospel and strengthen the saints. Christians must be very active in the local church.
- D. God does give us an opportunity to repent. We need to take it now while we can.
1. *2 Cor 6:1-2 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*
 2. Paul pled with the church in Corinth to not receive God's grace in vain. The time to accept it and obey it was now. They needed to take it and follow the Lord.
 3. Jesus Christ calls us now. He calls by the word of the N.T., by preachers of the Gospel, by His church and by all His saints. We can respond to the call or we can reject it.
 4. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
 5. Jesus send His followers out to preach to all the world. They are to call men to repent and bear fruit by the gospel. We see an example of this in Acts 2. Peter preaches the first Gospel sermon and 3000 respond.
 6. *Acts 2:36-38 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every*

one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

7. These people believe. They know they did wrong and want to be forgiven. They ask what to do. These believers are told to repent and be baptized. This is what Jesus said to preach. No one in the N.T. was saved by 'faith only'.
8. *Rom 6:3-4 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*
9. Those who believe and repent are to be baptized into Christ. They are raised to walk a new life. This is a life of fruit bearing. This is how we become a Christian, a child of God. This is a commitment to Him!

E. We can learn important things from a fig tree, if we will listen.

Conclusion; Don't wait to serve the Lord.

- A. We are not promised unlimited opportunities to serve God.
 1. We need to obey Him now. Tomorrow may never come. If it does we may not live until tomorrow.
 2. If you are not a Christian you need to repent and be baptized because you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross for your sins.
 3. If you are a Christian in sin you need to repent and pray for forgiveness —Act 8:22-24.
- B. If we can help anyone serve the Lord today, please let us.