SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

†
13:24

DEEP DIVE

Luke

Chapter Thirteen, Verses 1–35

Unless You Repent — a fallen tower, a fruitless fig tree, a bent woman set free, and a narrow door that will not stay open

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

When the news is of slaughtered worshipers and a collapsed tower, Jesus refuses to rank the dead and tells the living to repent; a barren tree gets one more year, a bent woman stands up straight, and on the road to Jerusalem He weeps over a city that would not be gathered. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Luke 13:1–35

repent · fruit · loosed · door · Jerusalem

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Six movements from the news of the day to the lament over Jerusalem

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"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." — Luke 13:3

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Luke 13:1–35

Unless You Repent — Jesus turns a crowd's question about other people's tragedies into a call to every listener

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Luke 13 in 6 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · LUKE 13:24

"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

† Before the Passage

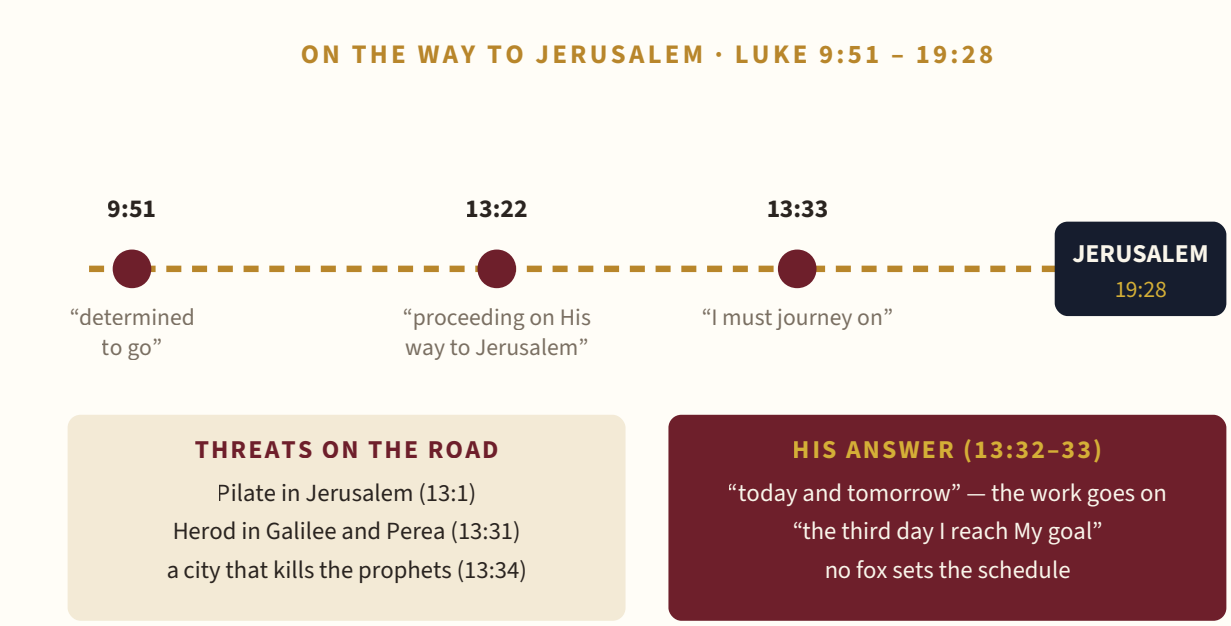
Luke 13 belongs to the long middle of Luke's Gospel, the journey that began when Jesus "was determined to go to Jerusalem" (9:51). Luke reminds us of it twice here — Jesus is "proceeding on His way to Jerusalem" (13:22), and "it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem" (13:33). Chapter 12 ended with Jesus scolding the crowds: they could read the clouds and the south wind but could not read "this present time" (12:56), and they should settle with their opponent while they were still on the way (12:58–59). Chapter 13 opens "on the same occasion," and the warning keeps going.

The two disasters in verses 1–5 are known only from Luke. Pilate governed Judea from AD 26 to 36, and Guzik notes, "We don't have a record in secular history about the specific incident mentioned here," though it fits what we know of the man. Galileans offering sacrifices at the temple were cut down so that their blood mixed with their offerings. The tower in Siloam stood near the pool of Siloam at the south end of Jerusalem; eighteen people died when it fell. One was cruelty, the other an accident. People wanted to know what the victims had done.

The Old Testament gives the pictures Jesus uses. Israel was God's vine and vineyard (Isaiah 5:1–7; Psalm 80:8–16), and the prophets pictured God coming to look for fruit and finding none (Micah 7:1; Jeremiah 8:13). The great tree whose branches shelter the birds comes from Ezekiel 17:23 and Daniel 4:12. The hen gathering her brood echoes the Psalms' refuge under God's wings (Psalm 91:4), and the closing line is Psalm 118:26, the pilgrims' blessing on the one who comes in the name of the LORD.

Herod Antipas, the "fox" of verse 32, ruled Galilee and Perea, where much of this journey took place. He had already beheaded John the Baptist (9:9). Luke's chapter closes on a word with a door still open in it: Jerusalem's house is left desolate, yet "you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'" (13:35).

FIGURE · ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM



Luke keeps reminding us where the road ends; read the threats on the left against Jesus' calm answer on the right.

I
MOVEMENT

LUKE 13:1–5

Unless You Repent

Galileans slaughtered at the altar, a tower falling in Siloam, and the question turned around

> [1] *Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans ⚠ whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.* [2] *And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were ⚠ greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?* [3] *"I tell you, no, but ↻ unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.* [4] *"Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom ◷ the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?* [5] *"I tell you, no, but ↻ unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*
>
> LUKE 13:1–5

> *"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."*
>
> EZEKIEL 18:32

μετανοέω

METANOEŌ · "REPENT" · G3340

From *meta* (after, change) and *noeō* (to think): to change one's mind, and with it the direction of a life. Jesus says it twice in identical words (vv. 3, 5), and Guzik points out that "The verb tense in Luke 13:3 (unless you repent) described a continuing repentance." Repentance is not a single tearful moment but a turned life that keeps turning. Luke loves the word: it runs from John the Baptist's preaching (3:3, 8) to the commission that "repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations" (24:47).

ἀπόλλυμι

APOLLYMI · "PERISH" · G622

To destroy, to lose, to perish. It is the word of the lost sheep, coin and son in Luke 15 ("lost") and of John 3:16 ("shall not perish"). In verses 3 and 5 it carries a double edge. Within a generation, many in Jerusalem would die under Roman swords and falling stones in AD 70, and Guzik sees that warning here. But Jesus' word reaches past the year 70 to the final loss of the soul — the perishing that repentance escapes.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes, "We don't have a record in secular history about the specific incident mentioned here," but says "it shows how completely consistent it was with the character of Pilate." The crowd assumed the victims must have deserved it; Jesus denies the link, and Guzik quotes Barclay: "We cannot say that individual suffering and sin are inevitably connected." Jesus then turns the question onto the hearers. "The verb tense in Luke 13:3 (unless you repent) described a continuing repentance," and he connects the warning to the destruction that later fell on Jerusalem.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "The Locus of Astonishment" (16 March 2014) tells the scene vividly: worshipers "were met by soldiers sent by Pontius Pilate, who massacred them in cold blood," and a tower "suddenly fell, and crushed eighteen people to death." People ask why God allowed it; Jesus redirects them: "The question you should come to Me with is, 'Why wasn't I slaughtered along with the others?'" No one has a claim on God's mercy. "On the one hand, we should never be amazed by grace because God is so gracious. … On the other hand, in one sense at least, we should always be surprised by His grace."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached "Accidents, Not Punishments" (No. 408, 8 September 1861) after a deadly railway collision in the Clayton tunnel. He refuses the easy moral: "It is true, the wicked man sometimes falls dead in the street; but has not the minister fallen dead in the pulpit?" Telling a widow that her husband died for being worse than others is cruel and false — "Now, I defy you to whisper it in the widow's ear." "Brethren, I would not tell a lie to save a soul." The right use of such news is to ask whether I am ready to die, because unless I repent, I will likewise perish.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry draws the lesson plainly: “we cannot judge of men’s sins by their sufferings in this world.” He feels the horror of the scene — “The altar, which used to be a sanctuary and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap” — and of the second: “Towers, that were built for safety, often prove men’s destruction.” Instead of judging the dead, we should “do as we would be done by,” and hear God’s voice for ourselves: “The judgments of God upon others are loud calls to us to repent.”

II
MOVEMENT

LUKE 13:6–9

The Barren Fig Tree

Three years of looking, one more year of mercy, and an ending left open

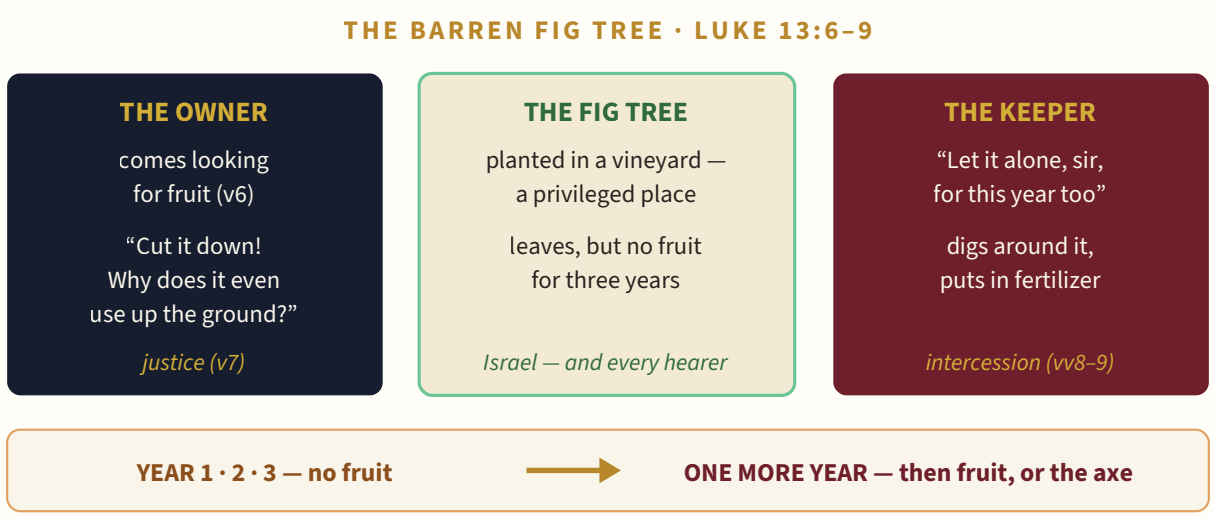
6 *And He began telling this parable: “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.* 7 *“And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’* 8 *“And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;* 9 *and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.’”*

LUKE 13:6–9

“What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?”

ISAIAH 5:4

FIGURE · THE BARREN FIG TREE



The story stops before the year is over. Jesus leaves the ending to the hearer.

Sproul: "Jesus did not tell us what happened to the fig tree."

Three characters, three years and one more: notice that the story stops in the year of mercy, before anyone knows how it ends.

συκῆ

SYKĒ · "FIG TREE" · G4808

A fig tree was the ordinary fruit tree of Israel's hills, and figs were a picture of the nation (Jeremiah 24; Hosea 9:10; Micah 7:1). A fig tree planted in a vineyard was in the best soil, with the best care. Henry: "God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him." Matthew and Mark record a later, acted parable on the same theme, when Jesus curses a leafy, fruitless fig tree in Holy Week (Mark 11:12–14, 20–21).

καταργέω

KATARGEŌ · "USE UP" · G2673

Literally to make idle, to render useless, to nullify. The owner's complaint is not only that the tree bears nothing, but that it "even" uses up the ground (KJV "cumbereth"). It drinks the water and takes the nutrients a fruitful tree could use. Sproul: "Not only was it fruitless, but it was damaging the rest of the vineyard." Paul uses the same verb for what God does to death and to the old order (1 Corinthians 15:26; 2 Timothy 1:10) — a fruitless life ends up a nullified one.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik keeps the parable simple: "The first point was simple: God looks for fruit." The owner had every right to expect it, and yet "He waited three years and gave it a second chance." He gathers Barclay's lessons from the story — that uselessness invites disaster, that God gives second chances, and that there is a final chance. The vineyard-keeper's plea is grace, but it is a plea for a limited time. Patience is not the same as approval.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "The Parable of the Barren Fig" (23 March 2014) presses fruit as the evidence of real faith: "The presence of fruit is essential to be assured of the reality of your conversion." The fruitless tree was worse than useless: "Not only was it fruitless, but it was damaging the rest of the vineyard." The extra year is mercy, not a guarantee: "You cannot assume three more years of patience, three more years of longsuffering." "God commands us to repent of our sins now." And he notes the open ending: "Jesus did not tell us what happened to the fig tree."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Judgment Threatening but Mercy Sparing" (No. 650, 17 September 1865) on verses 7–8 argues first that judgment is fair: "It is right and reasonable to fell barren trees, and it is just as right and reasonable that you should be cut down." Then he marvels that the axe is held back — "Admire and wonder at this longsuffering." The reason is the Intercessor: "Jesus Christ has pleaded for you, the crucified Saviour has interfered for you." And the digging is real: "The gardener spoke of dunging as well as of digging, and some of you have had plentiful helps towards repentance."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the vineyard as Israel's privilege: "God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him." The keeper's plea pictures intercession on two levels: "Ministers are intercessors; they that dress the vineyard should intercede for it," and above them, "Christ is the great Intercessor; he ever lives, interceding." But mercy has an end: "No other can be expected concerning barren trees than that they should be cut down." Even so, God takes no delight in it — "Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God does not take pleasure in."

III
MOVEMENT

LUKE 13:10–17

Loosed on the Sabbath

Eighteen years bent double, a word and a touch, and a ruler who cared more for the calendar

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 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. 12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." 13 And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God. 14 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." 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? 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?" 17 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.

LUKE 13:10–17

συγκύπτω

SYNKYPTŌ · "BENT DOUBLE" · G4794

To bend together, to be bowed down completely; found only here in the New Testament. Luke adds that she "could not straighten up at all" — the word for straighten (*anakyptō*, G352) is the one Jesus uses in 21:28: "straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." When Jesus laid His hands on her, "she was made erect again" (*anorthoō*, G461), the verb Acts 15:16 uses for rebuilding the fallen tabernacle of David.

λύω

LYŌ · "UNTIE, RELEASE" · G3089

To loose or untie. Jesus' answer is a play on this one word. Every man "unties" (*lyei*) his ox or donkey on the Sabbath (v. 15); should not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had "bound" (*deō*, G1210), be "released" (*lythēnai*) from this bond (v. 16)? Verse 12 uses the compound *apolyō* (G630): "you are freed." And verse 16 adds the divine "must" — *dei* (G1163), "should she not" — the same word the ruler used for the six days "in which work should be done" (v. 14).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that "Though the opposition against Jesus continued to rise, apparently He was still welcomed into some synagogues." Luke says a spirit lay behind the woman's sickness, but Guzik warns against overreading it: "We are foolish to think that spiritual issues cause all physical problems." The ruler's complaint was empty: "The ruler of the synagogue did not have the ability or the authority to heal on any day of the week." And Jesus' logic is simple: "If you can help an animal on the Sabbath, why can't you also help a suffering person on the Sabbath?"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "A Little Leaven" (4 May 2014) begins with the woman: "She walked bent over, completely double." Jesus spoke, and "Then He laid His hands on her." "The ruler of the synagogue was indignant about Jesus' action," and Sproul gives Jesus' reply its full force: "Hypocrite! You're a ruler of the synagogue, and you're outraged because I've just healed this lady." He asks the ruler's question back: "Do you think it's a violation of the Sabbath day to give the necessary basic requirements of life to your jackasses?" From there he turns to our own day, setting care for animals beside the lack of outrage over abortion.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "The Lifting Up of the Bowed Down" (No. 1426, 14 July 1878), Spurgeon sees in her bent body a picture of the depressed believer. "Jesus always occupies a place from which he can spy out those who are bowed down." Satan's grip is strong — "The devil can tie in a moment a knot which you and I cannot unloose in eighteen years" — and he "had bound the woman to herself and to the earth." Yet she was still a daughter of Abraham and still in the house of prayer. Then Christ spoke, and "She was like one new-born." "The deeper her sorrow the sweeter her song."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes, “Our Lord Jesus spent his Sabbaths in the synagogues,” and that this woman came too, though she could not stand straight: “Even bodily infirmities, unless they be very grievous indeed, should not keep us from public worship on the sabbath days.” In the healing, “Christ has a power superior to that of Satan, is stronger than he.” The ruler had grown used to miracles: “Christ’s cures were become, in his eyes, cheap and common things.” Jesus answers from ordinary kindness — “a merciful man regards the life of his beast” — and “all his adversaries were ashamed.”

IV
MOVEMENT

LUKE 13:18–21

A Mustard Seed and a Little Leaven

Two small things that grow — and two ways our teachers read them

18 *So He was saying, “What is the* ↻ *kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?* 19 *“*☆ *It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.”* 20 *And again He said, “To what shall I compare the* ↻ *kingdom of God?* 21 *“It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour* ☆ *until it was all leavened.”*

LUKE 13:18–21

κόκκος σινάπεως

KOKKOS SINAPEŌS · “MUSTARD SEED” · G2848, G4615

Kokkos is a grain or seed; *sinapi* is mustard. The black mustard of Galilee grows from a pinhead seed to a shrub as tall as a man in one season. Sproul: “We know that the mustard seed was one of the tiniest of all the seeds that could be found in Palestine.” Jesus later uses the same seed for faith (17:6). Luke alone says the man threw it “into his own garden.” The birds nesting in its branches echo Ezekiel 17:23 and Daniel 4:12, where a great tree shelters the nations.

ζύμη

ZYMĒ · “LEAVEN” · G2219

Leaven was a bit of old fermented dough kept back and worked into the new. Everywhere else in the New Testament it pictures something bad spreading — “the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (12:1); “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9). That is why our teachers divide here. “Three pecks” (three *sata*) is a large batch, about the amount Sarah baked for her three guests (Genesis 18:6). Whatever the leaven is, it works hidden and it works all the way through.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes the usual reading — that the parable “describes the growth and spreading influence of the church” — and then departs from it. A mustard plant that becomes a tree “describes something unnatural,” and he gathers others who read the birds as trouble: Carson observes that “birds regularly symbolize evil and even demons or Satan,” and Morgan says, “Birds lodging in the branches most probably refers to elements of corruption.” He reads the leaven the same way, as corruption working its way into the kingdom community, and he cites Barclay: “There would be a certain shock in hearing the Kingdom of God compared to leaven.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul reads both parables as hope. "We know that the mustard seed was one of the tiniest of all the seeds that could be found in Palestine," and yet "Small beginnings yield great and vast fruit." The woman "takes a tiny piece of leaven, a little bit of yeast," and "Just a tiny bit of yeast will leaven the whole measure." For a church that feels small against a hostile culture, he says, the kingdom of God does not stay small; it spreads until it fills everything.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the seed as the kingdom's humble start — "a little thing, takes up but little room, makes but a little figure, and promises but little" — that nevertheless grows. Of the leaven he says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and "By degrees the whole will be leavened." "The kingdom of the Messiah is the kingdom of God, for it advances his glory." Here Henry and Sproul stand together against Guzik's reading; the honest reader should weigh both.

V
MOVEMENT

LUKE 13:22–30

The Narrow Door

"Are there just a few?" — strive to enter before the Master shuts the door

22 *And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.* 23 *And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them,* 24 *"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.* 25 *"Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.'* 26 *"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets';* 27 *and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.'* 28 *"In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.* 29 *"And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.* 30 *"And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last."*

LUKE 13:22–30

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

MATTHEW 7:13–14

FIGURE · THE NARROW DOOR

THE NARROW DOOR · INSIDE AND OUTSIDE · LUKE 13:24–30



The question was "are there just a few?" The answer is "strive to enter" — while the door is open.

Knowing about Him (v26) is not the same as being known by Him (v27).

Compare the two sides of the shut door: the people outside claim familiarity with Jesus, while strangers from every direction sit with the patriarchs.

ἀγωνίζομαι

AGŌNIZOMAI · "STRIVE" · G75

To contend for a prize, to fight, to labor with all one's strength — the athlete's and the soldier's word. Sproul: "The word translated "strive" is the Greek word from which we get the English word agony." Paul uses it for running to win (1 Corinthians 9:25), for prayer (Colossians 4:12) and for the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). Striving does not earn the door; the door is Christ. But it rules out the casual "seeking" of the many who "will not be able."

θύρα

THYRA · "DOOR" · G2374

Luke says "door," where Matthew 7:13 says "gate." A door belongs to a house, and the picture moves from a road to a home: the head of the house gets up, shuts the door, and the latecomers knock outside (v. 25). "Narrow" is *stenos* (G4728) — tight, constricted. Jesus says in John 10:9, "I am the door," and Guzik makes the link: "Jesus Himself is the gate; He is the door."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Jesus never answers the curiosity question — how many will be saved — but answers the personal one: will you be? The door is a Person: "Jesus Himself is the gate; He is the door." He quotes Spurgeon, "You will see a considerable difference between seeking and striving." Those shut out had eaten and drunk in His presence, but that was not knowing Him, and "their racial identity was no guarantee of the kingdom" either. Strangers from every direction will sit with Abraham.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "The Narrow Way" (18 May 2014) admits the question is natural: "Did you ever wonder what proportion of fallen humanity, in the final analysis, would make it to heaven?" Jesus answers with a command. "The word translated "strive" is the Greek word from which we get the English word agony." "Whatever agony it takes, be willing to go through it, because many will seek to enter and will not be able." "There is a door to heaven, but there comes a time when even the door of the narrow gate is shut," and "once the door is shut, there is nothing you or I can do to get it open." "When He said He did not know them, that does not mean He was unaware of them."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Strait Gate" (No. 3560) presses the verbs: "Striving is a more vehement exercise than seeking." "You are not merely advised to seek; you are urgently bidden to strive." The gate is Christ, entered by faith, and he names what keeps seekers outside. Pride: "There is no believing in Jesus with a proud heart." Pet sins: "Sin-lovers may seek to be saved, but they shall not be able." Delay: "Procrastinators are among the most hopeless of people," and "Little hope have I for deathbed repentances."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry writes, "It is a hard matter to get to heaven," and warns of the confident: "Many are ruined by an ill-grounded hope of heaven, which they never distrusted or called in question." Familiarity with Christ's preaching will not save; "Many who stood fair for heaven came short." The sentence "Depart from Me" is itself the punishment: "It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ, the principal part of the misery of the damned." "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

VI
MOVEMENT

LUKE 13:31–35

That Fox, and the City That Would Not

Herod's threat, the third day, and a hen's wings spread over Jerusalem

31 *Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill*
You." 32 And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and
tomorrow, and △ *the third day I reach My goal*.' 33 *"Nevertheless* △ *I must journey on today and tomorrow and*
the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. 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! 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!'"

LUKE 13:31–35

"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD."

PSALM 118:26

ἀλώπηξ
ALŌPĒX · "FOX" · G258

Three New Testament uses: the foxes that have holes (9:58; Matthew 8:20) and Herod here. Guzik, following Geldenhuys, explains that calling someone a fox described "a 'cunning but weak ruler.'" Set the two animals side by side: a fox raids the henhouse; a hen spreads her wings over her brood (v. 34). Herod would destroy; Jesus would gather. The verb "gather" is *episynagō* (G1996), to gather together to oneself.

τελειόω
TELEIOŌ · "REACH MY GOAL" · G5048

To complete, to bring to its end, to perfect (KJV "I shall be perfected"). "Today and tomorrow, and the third day" is a Semitic way of saying "a short, set time," but no Christian reader can hear "the third day" without thinking of the resurrection. Hebrews uses the same verb of Christ "made perfect" through sufferings (2:10; 5:9). Then verse 33 adds *dei* (G1163): "I must journey on." Herod could not stop Him and could not hurry Him.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik, citing Geldenhuys, says "the idea behind calling someone a fox was to describe them as a 'cunning but weak ruler.'" Jesus was not frightened off His path: "Jesus wanted Herod to know that He would continue His work, even to its conclusion." He hears real grief in the lament — "How often I wanted to gather your children together" — and real refusal: "But you were not willing!" With Pate, he sees the desolate house as pointing to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "The Narrow Way," Sproul weighs the Pharisees' warning: "I think there was some truth in what they said, although I am not sure Herod wanted to kill Jesus." Then he reads the lament as real affection: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!" Sproul holds two truths together here: people do not come to Christ because they are unwilling, and yet none can come apart from God's enabling grace.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the warning as politics: "Herod was willing to get rid of Christ out of his dominions." Jesus answers as a prophet — "prophets always had a liberty of speech in reproving princes and great men" — and as One who knew His road: "I know that I must die, and must die shortly." Over Jerusalem he writes, "Christ's willingness aggravates sinners' unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads." "The house that Christ leaves is left desolate," for "Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them."

VII
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From Ezekiel's call to repent to Israel's future welcome of her King

"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'"

EZEKIEL 33:11

> *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."*
>
> 2 PETER 3:9

> *"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."*
>
> JOHN 15:8

> *"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."*
>
> JOHN 10:9

> *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."*
>
> ZECHARIAH 12:10

> *"and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.""*
>
> ROMANS 11:26

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik ties the chapter to the rest of Scripture at two points: the narrow door is a Person — "Jesus Himself is the gate; He is the door" (John 10:9) — and the desolate house of verse 35 looks ahead to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and gathers other commentators; Sproul presses the doctrine — no one has a claim on mercy, fruit proves faith, the door will shut; Spurgeon pleads with sinners and comforts the bowed down; Henry turns every verse into counsel. They part ways on the mustard seed and leaven — Guzik reads corruption, Sproul and Henry read growth — and agree that the time to repent is now.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The tower	No secular record, but just like Pilate; repentance that keeps going.	Ask not why they died but why I was spared.	Accidents are not punishments; ask whether you are ready to die.	Sufferings do not measure sins; others' judgments call us to repent.
II · The fig tree	God looks for fruit; three years, then a second chance.	Fruit proves conversion; do not assume three more years.	Felling is just; the axe is stayed because Christ pleads.	Ministers intercede, Christ intercedes; God takes no pleasure in cutting down.
III · The bent woman	Not every sickness is spiritual; help a person as you would an ox.	"Hypocrite!" — water your donkeys, but not heal a daughter?	Satan ties knots we cannot untie; the deeper sorrow, the sweeter song.	Christ is stronger than Satan; cures had grown cheap to the ruler.
IV · Seed and leaven	Unnatural tree, birds of evil, leaven of corruption.	Small beginnings, vast fruit — the kingdom will fill the world.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	A little thing that grows; by degrees the whole leavened.
V · The narrow door	He answers not "how many?" but "will you?"; Jesus is the door.	Strive is agony; once the door is shut no one opens it.	Striving is more than seeking; pride, pet sins and delay keep men out.	An ill-grounded hope ruins many; the hell of hell is to depart from Christ.
VI · Fox and hen	A cunning but weak ruler; Jesus finishes His work.	Some truth in the warning; unwilling, and unable without grace.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Prophets reprove princes; Christ's willingness aggravates our unwillingness.

LUKE 13:1–35 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Jesus refuses to rank the dead.** The crowd wanted a moral for someone else's tragedy. Jesus gave them one for themselves: "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (vv3, 5). THE TEXT
- **The right question is "Why not me?"** Sproul: "The question you should come to Me with is, 'Why wasn't I slaughtered along with the others?'" Every breath I take is mercy, not a debt God owes me. SPROUL
- **Do not lie to make a point.** Spurgeon would not tell a grieving widow her husband died for being worse than others: "Brethren, I would not tell a lie to save a soul." SPURGEON
- **Repentance keeps going.** Guzik: "The verb tense in Luke 13:3 (unless you repent) described a continuing repentance." Turning is a direction of life, not a single moment. GUZIK
- **Mercy has a deadline.** One more year, with digging and fertilizer — and then fruit or the axe. Sproul: "You cannot assume three more years of patience." SPROUL
- **The barren tree is not harmless.** It "even" uses up the ground (*katargeō*) — taking what a fruitful tree could use. Sproul: "it was damaging the rest of the vineyard." THE GREEK

- **Untie the ox — release the woman.** Jesus plays on *lyō*: you untie your animals on the Sabbath; should not a daughter of Abraham bound by Satan be released? Spurgeon: "The devil can tie in a moment a knot which you and I cannot unloose in eighteen years." THE GREEK
- **Small beginnings — but watch the leaven.** Sproul and Henry read growth: "Small beginnings yield great and vast fruit." Guzik reads corruption creeping in. Both are true of the church's history; Jesus' main point is that the kingdom does not stay small. THE TEXT
- **Knowing about Jesus is not being known by Him.** "We ate and drank in Your presence" (v26) — and still, "I do not know where you are from." Henry: "Many are ruined by an ill-grounded hope of heaven." HENRY
- **A fox cannot rush the Lamb.** Herod threatens; Jesus keeps His schedule — "today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal" — and weeps like a mother hen over the city that will kill Him. THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

1 **When I hear about a tragedy, is my first thought about what "they" must have done — or about whether I am ready to meet God?**

Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

13:1-5; Ezek 33:11

2 **If the Owner came looking for fruit in my life this year, what would He find? What is the "digging and fertilizer" He has been putting around me?**

Fruit is the evidence of a real conversion (Sproul).

13:6-9; John 15:8

3 **The woman was bent double for eighteen years and still came to the synagogue. What has bent me over — and what would standing up straight look like?**

Jesus always occupies a place from which he can spy out those who are bowed down (Spurgeon).

13:10-13

4 **Where have I cared more about rules, schedules or my own convenience than about a hurting person in front of me?**

Untie the ox — release the woman.

13:14-17

5 **Am I seeking or striving? What would it look like to strive to enter the narrow door this week?**

Striving is a more vehement exercise than seeking (Spurgeon).

13:24-27; Matt 7:13-14

6 **Jesus wanted to gather Jerusalem like a hen gathers chicks, and they would not have it. Where am I resisting His gathering?**

How often I wanted to gather your children together.

13:34-35; Ps 91:4

Luke 13 begins with headlines and ends with tears. Jesus will not let us judge the dead; He tells the living to turn while the year of mercy lasts and the door still stands open. The same Lord who straightened a bent woman in one touch still spreads His wings over sinners — come under them now.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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