

4. God is more willing to save us than we are to be saved, ver. 15, 16. Matt. xxiii. 37.

5. The danger of lingering when God is urging us, ver. 16.

6. God will not save us against our wills, ver. 17.

7. The danger of resting in anything short of Christ.

8. The danger of worldly conformity, and evil companions. Lot choose Sodom from worldly considerations, and reaped bitter fruit.

9. The danger of looking back, ver 26.

10. What a privilege to have a godly friend, praying for us, ver. 29; Luke xxii. 32; 1 John ii. 1.

#### DOCTRINE TO BE PROVED.

God's people under the care of angels. Ps. xxxiv. 7; Matt. iv. 6; Acts xii. 7-10; Heb. i. 14.

### THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT: *The barren fig-tree.* Luke xiii. 1-9.

V. 1.—Of the slaughter of these Galileans, we have no trace in history. Between Pilate the governor of Judea and Herod the governor of Galilee there was a standing quarrel (Luke xxiii. 12); and these quarrels were often espoused by their respective subjects. These Galileans were offering sacrifices in the temple at Jerusalem, where Pilate came upon them and put them to death.

Ver. 2.—*Suppose ye?*—From this question we infer that the narrators of this calamity, regarded it as proof of the signal wickedness of the slaughtered men. We have an instinctive perception of the inseparable connection between sin and suffering. See Acts xxxiii. 4.

V. 3.—*I tell you, nay.* Though sin and suffering are always connected, it is not our part to judge of men's character from the afflictions that befall them in this life. Job's friends erred in doing so, and the righteous often suffer more in this life, than the wicked. Judgments falling on others are calls to us to repent.

V. 4, 5.—As confirming the same principle, Jesus refers to the death of eighteen men from the falling of Siloam, and draws from it the same warning. Mark, Jesus does not say these men were not sinners, nor does he deny all connexion between their sin and their punishment. He simply warns against the error of supposing that those who escaped these calamities were less sinful, and escaped on that account. God may bear long with great sinners; and to illustrate this truth the parable is added.

V. 6.—The owner of the fig tree is God; the vineyard is the professing church;

the fig tree represents, in the first instance the Jewish people, and then all professing christians within the enclosure of the visible church. The fruit expected is described in Gal. v. 22, 23. To expect fruit was reasonable, and the disappointment proportionately great. See Isa. v. 1-7.

Vv. 7-9.—*Dresser*—the gardener, representing the Saviour. *These three years*—by these some have understood the ministry of Moses, then, of the prophets, and, last, of Christ. Some refer this to the three years of Christ's ministry. Others applying it to individuals, understand, childhood, manhood, old age. The meaning is, the Lord comes often, and more especially at particular junctures in our life. *Cut it down*, see Matt. vii. 19; Mark xi. 13, 14. *Cumbereth the ground.* Not only by occupying space that might be more profitably filled, but by injuring the ground—wasting it. *Lord, let it alone.* This is Christ's intercession, see Job xxxiii. 22-24; Zech. i. 12; Heb. vii. 25. *If it bear fruit, well.* The vine-dresser intercedes, not that the tree may stand for ever, though it continue barren, but only for a year, that other means may be tried; and if these are not successful, then even he will consent to have it cut down.

#### LESSON.

1. Instead of judging others, let us regard all the calamities happening around us as so many warnings and calls to repentance.

2. We are like this tree. God has placed us within the visible church, and given us rich and abundant means of grace,—the bible, the sabbath, parents, teachers. Compare your privileges with the state of the heathen.

3. Fruit is reasonably expected; and not only the fruit of social and moral virtue, as truth and honesty and kindness; but the fruits of the spirit, faith, repentance, love and holiness.

4. Observe how earnestly God looks after us. He comes often and looks anxiously for fruit. Every mercy, every affliction, every death, every sabbath, is a visit from God seeking fruit. Read Psalm cxxxix.

5. God's patience has a limit. Eccles. viii. 11; Prov. i. 24-31.

6. How much do we owe to the intercession of Christ. But even he asks only a year, and then, if no fruit, he consents to have it cut down.

#### DOCTRINE TO BE PROVED.

Christ expects fruit from his professing people. Matt. vii. 16-27; John xv. 8; Col. iii. 1-3.