

A Study of “Perish” in Luke 13:3, 5

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

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God’s word tells us that the Gospel of Christ “is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). According to I Thess. 2:4, we, as believers, are entrusted with the gospel and should then speak “not as pleasing men but God, which trieth our hearts.” If we are saved by the gospel and we are commanded to share it with others, then it would certainly be prudent to determine that we are sharing the *true* good news of Christ. Galatians 1:6-10 warns us of the terrible consequences of departing from the gospel of grace to a perverted gospel.

A “gospel” message frequently heard from pastors and evangelists today is the exhortation to “repent of your sins¹ and believe in Christ.” An honest evaluation of this statement would dictate that this message consists of *two requirements* needed in order to receive eternal life. This is not logically, theologically, or even mathematically the same as the *one* Biblical requirement to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,…” (Acts 16:31).

The purpose statement of the Gospel of John is found in John 20:31, “But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.” Not only does the Gospel of John never mention

¹ An interesting fact worth noting is that the terms “repent of sin” or repentance of sin” are *nowhere to be found in Scripture*. I have stated this to people who would not even believe it to be true because they had heard the phrases so often. This statement can easily be verified with any computer Bible concordance software. This fact should make us very wary of using these extra-biblical terms in our evangelistic presentation. Although the terms are not used, the *concept* is to be found in Scripture. Occasionally this is focused upon unbelievers, but not for eternal life. (See Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11, where unbelievers experience temporal suffering for not repenting of named sins during the Tribulation). More frequently *believers* are told to repent of some sinful pattern (e.g. Acts 8:22, where Simon the Sorcerer is exhorted to repent for *forgiveness* (not for justification as he was already justified by believing, 8:13); and five of the seven churches of Rev. 2 and 3 are told to repent of some specific sins to avoid temporal judgment). The Greek word “repentance” (μετάνοια) simply means “a change of mind.” Some try to include in the definition a resulting change of life or turning from sin also. That is not found in the word. The context determines the expected result and the *object* of the repentance. Frequently in Scripture the *context* indicates a change of mind resulting in judging and refraining from the particular sin or sins mentioned. The best book that I know that covers this subject in what I believe to be a Biblical manner is “[Harmony With God: A Fresh Look at Repentance](#)” by Zane Hodges. It is available for loan from this writer or to purchase from <http://www.faithalone.org/bookstore/books.html> or can be read online at:
Part 1 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n3/v8n3_1.pdf
Part 2 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n4/v8n4_3.pdf
Part 3 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v9n1/v9n1_2.pdf

the word repent, it repeatedly gives the *one* requirement for eternal life; believe in Jesus (John 3:16, et al).

Seeing that the purpose of the book is that people would believe and have eternal life and that John does not even mention repentance, I therefore conclude that John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, did not think that repentance was necessary for receiving eternal life.

I have read from and spoken to quite a few Bible teachers who offer the “salvation” message of “repent of your sins and believe in Jesus.” In my experience, most often the first and sometimes the only verse offered to validate their claim is Luke 13:3, and/or 5, which are identical to each other. One of the major assumptions and claims made is that the word “perish” (απολλυμι, *apollumi*) means *eternal damnation*. Therefore Jesus must be telling His audience that they must repent (turn from their sins) in order to receive eternal life. I have asked some of these same teachers if they have turned from their sins. I have never received an adequate answer.

Notice that the *one* biblical requirement, “believe in Jesus,” *is not mentioned at all* in this context. How could Jesus be telling them how to be eternally saved and not mention what He Himself requires all through the Gospel of John?

Even with a casual reading, does not the context clarify what is meant by the word “perish?” Prior to both statements examples are given of people who had *physically* died under calamitous circumstances. He warns them of a “likewise” fate that is related to them not repenting of their ongoing sin. In verse 34 we see that the warning seems to be related to the coming destruction of Jerusalem where over a million Jews died at the hand of Titus in 70 AD.

The main purpose of this study is to establish that the word “perish” (απολλυμι) is *not* defined as “eternal destruction, damnation or eternity in Hell,” and that it *cannot* mean that in this passage. Though in a few contexts it does refer to eternal damnation, here it is obviously referring to *physical* death.

The phrase in question in verse 3 (Majority text) is “παντες ὁμοιωσ ἀπολεισθε” and in verse 5 is “παντες ὡσαυτως ἀπολεισθε,” both of which can be literally translated as “all likewise you shall perish.” “Perish” in this text is 2nd person plural future indicative middle, for those who are interested. (The Critical text reverses the above verses.)

Strongs Concordance defines the word as follows:

622. ἀπολλυμι *apollumi* *ap-ol'-loo-mee*; from 575 and the base of 3639; to destroy fully (reflexively, to perish, or lose), literally or figuratively:— destroy, die, lose, mar, perish. (Note, the last five words after the colon show the words in KJV that are used to translate the Greek word.)

According to the Online Bible Greek Lexicon:

622 ἀπολλυμι *apollumi* *ap-ol'-loo-mee*
from 575 and the base of 3639; TDNT-1:394,67; v
AV-perish 33, destroy 26, lose 22, be lost 5, lost 4, misc 2; 92

- 1) to destroy
 - 1a) to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin
 - 1b) render useless
 - 1c) to kill
 - 1d) to declare that one must be put to death
 - 1e) metaph. to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell
 - 1f) to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed
- 2) to destroy
 - 2a) to lose

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised 1978 Edition, edited by Harold K. Moulton, defines “απολλυμι” as “To destroy utterly” and then gives examples of the following ways in which it is used in the NT. It also supplies a representative verse address with each heading.

To kill - Mt 2:13

To bring to nought, make void - 1Co 1:19

To lose, be deprived of - Mt 10:42

To be destroyed, perish - Mt 9:17

To be put to death, die - Mt 26:52

To be lost, stray - Mt 10:6

In the quest for clarity, comprehensiveness, and accuracy, I have documented every NT use of the Greek word απολλυμι and placed it under Moulton’s headings as appropriately as I could see fit.

(Note to reader: If you do not presently wish to wade through every occurrence of the word, please go to the conclusion on page 8)

To kill - To be put to death, die

(I merged these two headings due the similarity between the two)

Mt 2:13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

Mt 8:25 And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

Mt 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

Mt 21:41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Mt 22:7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Mt 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Mt 27:20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

Mr 3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

Mr 4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Mr 9:22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Mr 11:18 And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

Mr 12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

Lu 6:9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

Lu 8:24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

Lu 11:51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

Lu 13:3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Lu 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3, 5 are included in the “Put to death, die” heading due to the context. The term “likewise perish” refers to the two examples of physical and calamitous deaths mentioned in this account.

Lu 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Lu 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all.

Lu 15:17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

Lu 19:47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,

Lu 20:16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard *it*, they said, God forbid.

Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

Joh 18:14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

1Co 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

2Pe 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (Note, this is put under the heading of physical destruction instead of eternal judgment due to the context of physical destruction and other factors. Bible studies are available from this writer on the subject).

Jude 1:5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Jude 1:11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

To bring to nought, make void

1Co 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

To lose, be deprived of

Mt 10:42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Mr 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward

To be destroyed, perish

Mt 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Mr 2:22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Mt 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Mt 5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell

Lu 5:37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

To be lost, stray

Mt 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Mt 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Lu 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

Lu 15:6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

Lu 15:8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*?

Lu 15:9 And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

Lu 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Lu 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Added categories:

Eternal judgment for the lost

Mt 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Joh 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Joh 6:39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Joh 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Joh 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

Ro 2:12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

1Co 15:18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (Note, the context of this verse is saying that *if* "Christ be not raised" then this would event would have occurred. The chapter emphasizes the importance of the resurrection of Jesus.)

2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

Apparent spiritual damage or loss of blessing

Mt 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Mt 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Mr 8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Lu 17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Lu 9:24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Lu 9:25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Joh 12:25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Ro 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

1Co 8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

2Jo 1:8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward

Uncatalogued for various reasons

Mt 18:11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Mt 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Mr 1:24 Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

Lu 4:34 Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, *thou* Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

Lu 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

Lu 13:33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the *day* following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

Lu 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Lu 21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

Joh 6:12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

Joh 6:27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Joh 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

Joh 11:50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

Ac 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

1Co 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

2Co 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

2Co 4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

Heb 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

Jas 1:11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Jas 4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

1Pe 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Conclusion:

It is likely that a Bible student reading this paper will differ with me on my “verse cataloguing” expertise concerning some of these verses. Although this criticism is likely to be correct in some cases, it does not negate the results of the study.

Even with a reasonable margin of error in my interpretation of some of the above verses, it should be quite evident that:

1. The word “perish” (απολλυμι) does *not* mean “eternal damnation” or the like. That claim is proven false by the variety of ways the Bible uses it. The context of the *majority* of the uses of the word do not even *permit* the definition of eternal damnation.
2. Of the above groupings of how the word is used, the meaning has to do with *physical death* more often than any of the other groups; around 30% of the total.
3. Of the above grouping of how the word is used that the meaning has to do with eternal damnation close to 10% of the total.
4. The definition of the word *allows* “physical death” to be the meaning of perish in Luke 13:3 and 5, and the context demands it.
5. Therefore, Luke 13:3, 5, cannot legitimately be used to establish that a person must “repent of sin” in addition to believing in Christ in order to receive eternal life. The passage does not reference believing in Christ and this is *not* a “Gospel” verse.

Some of these verses contrast “destroy” with “save” or “salvation.” In some cases the context dictates temporal destruction and also temporal salvation. Just as many Bible teachers assume that “απολλυμι” always refers to eternal damnation, many also assume that “save” or “salvation” always refers to eternal life.

Another beneficial word study is on the words “save” and “salvation.” In the OT, salvation is almost always or possibly always referring to some kind of temporal salvation such as being saved from death by enemies, from pestilence, famine, etc. In the NT the ratio of eternal salvation to some sort of temporal salvation is closer to 50/50. A proper understanding of key words is essential for proper doctrine. Significant doctrinal error may otherwise result.