

Cornerstone
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Luke 20:9-18

Opening: “Don’t say you weren’t warned!” Are you a person who reads warning labels before you use a product, a machine, or a medicine or do you just assume you know enough that you’ll never have a problem? How about weather warnings? When the tornado sirens go off do you go to the basement or an inside room or do you think it doesn’t apply to you?

Have you ever heard of the legal concept of “assumption of risk?” It is often illustrated by what they call the “baseball rule.” If you attend a baseball game and read the “fine print” on the back of your baseball ticket it likely has language about a *“waiver of liability [stating] that by entering the venue, the ticket-holder voluntarily assumes all risks and acknowledges the danger associated with the game, and that injury may result from thrown or batted balls and bats leaving the field of play and entering the seating areas.”* In plain English, If you choose to sit there and get hit you can’t sue us and win. Don’t say you weren’t warned!

The problem is who actually reads warning labels or the fine print? Most people live their life believing warnings don’t apply to them; things will just “work out.” Sadly, we live in a world where most people think where they will go after they die will just “work out.” Their approach to their eternal destiny goes like this: *“We don’t need to hear all the ‘hellfire and brimstone’ stuff because God (if there is one) is love. If I’ll just be a good boy or girl it will all work out, right?”*

Those are the words of someone who has never understood the message of the gospel. Let’s be fair, what should we expect from an unsaved person? It’s the responsibility of Christ-followers to help them understand what Jesus did for them on the cross. Here’s another problem, many who profess to be followers of Christ also want to avoid all that “hellfire and brimstone” stuff because we might scare someone away. Warning labels are not meant to scare you

away from the medicine; they are there to make sure you apply it correctly to benefit from it.

This parable in Luke 20 is a heavy passage. It was hard for the religious leaders of Jesus' day to swallow then and it's distasteful to many people today. The other day I heard someone say, "*Can't we all just follow what Jesus said?*" The answer is YES, as long as you're willing to acknowledge EVERYTHING He said. In this passage Jesus explained Who He is and how people are to respond to Him. Essentially His concluding point was, "*Don't say you weren't warned.*"

Truth that should change us: There is a heaven to gain, a hell to shun and the only way to do both is by trusting God's Son.

Luke 20:9–18 (ESV) — 9 And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. **10** When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. **11** And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. **12** And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. **13** Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' **14** But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' **15** And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? **16** He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!" **17** But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written: " 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'? **18** Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

- It's the middle of Passion Week, a couple of days before the Jesus' crucifixion. Verse one sets the scene. Jesus was teaching "the good news" in the temple. The teachers of "religious law" demanded, "*By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right?*"

- Jesus' parable of the vineyard mirrors Isaiah 5:1–7 "...[where] the picture of a vineyard refers to Israel...God looks for good produce; yet instead of sweet grapes, 'wild grapes' grow there. The vineyard owner [God] would destroy the unproductive vineyard [disobedient Israel.]"ⁱⁱ
- It's easy enough for us to understand who/what are represented in the parable. It was also clear to the religious leaders who hated Jesus.
- God is the owner of the vineyard. The vinedressers are God's people Israel who refused to hand over the fruit. The servants the owner sends represent the prophets of the Old Testament who were abused. The "cherished son," they should have respected but killed is of course, Jesus.
- Jesus asked the question: *"What then will the owner of the vineyard do" to those wicked "vinedressers?"* In Matthew's account, the religious leaders seemed to be caught up in the parable and hadn't yet realized what Jesus was driving at. In Matthew 21:41 they replied to Jesus: *"He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Jesus is nodding and smiling now. In Luke's account He repeats what the religious leaders just said: ¹⁶ He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!"^{iv} Now it occurred to them what Jesus was really saying. This wasn't just a story about wicked vinedressers. This parable was about THEM!
- The Bible Knowledge Commentary tells us, *"They understood the implications of what Jesus was saying: the Jewish system was being set aside because the religious leaders were rejecting Him. Luke pointed out the seriousness of the situation by recording that **Jesus looked directly at them** and quoted from Psalm 118:22, a verse which noted that a seemingly insignificant thing (a **stone** thrown away by stone masons) was really the most important thing (this stone became **the capstone**)."*^v
- What IS a cornerstone? *"A stone that can be in the foundation, above ground level or at the summit of the roof (the "capstone"). The cornerstone of a large building gives it a reliable and firm foundation, leading to the cohesion and*

stability of the whole building. In Scripture, such foundation-stones are taken as symbolic of the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and the church. Jesus Christ is thus represented as both the foundation upon which the church is built, and the capstone which crowns the whole.^{vi}

- The “builders” of Israel’s dead religion of rule keeping had totally rejected Jesus as Messiah and the Son of God. Now He gave them the news that He [Jesus] is the cornerstone that holds up God the Father’s plan to save sinful people and offer us eternal life.
- Peter wrote about Jesus as our cornerstone in first Peter chapter two. He is quoting from Isaiah 28:16

1 Peter 2:4–8 (ESV) — 4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

- There is a truth that should make followers of Christ rejoice! He is the “*cornerstone*” and “*whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.*”
- The truth that Jesus is the cornerstone also brings a warning.
- Peter said in verse 7: “*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...“A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*”
- Back to Luke 20 verse 18 Jesus said: “*Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.*”
- The NKJV renders it, ¹⁸ *Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.*^{vii}
- Jesus is the cornerstone of salvation. He is the solid rock for those who trust Him, however rejecting Him will result in eternal disaster!
- A strong, solid rock can be a place of protection to hide from a storm. On the other hand if you fall against that rock you can be “broken to pieces.”

- Coming into contact with Jesus the cornerstone brings two kinds of brokenness. The Life Application Study Bible comments, *“God offers a choice of ‘brokennesses.’ Those who cast themselves on Jesus, submitting their wills and all that they are to him, will be broken by him of arrogance, hard-heartedness, and self-centeredness. It is not a pleasant process but an absolutely necessary one. For those who do not submit to him, he will ultimately ‘fall on’ them, an experience that can only be described as ‘crushing.’ The choice is yours: broken before him, or crushed by him.”*^{viii}
- Verse 19 tells us, **(NLT) — 19** The teachers of religious law and the leading priests wanted to arrest Jesus immediately because they realized he was telling the story against them—they were the wicked farmers. But they were afraid of the people’s reaction.
- Before the week was out they WOULD crucify Jesus; but He would rise from the dead as the Chief Cornerstone of the Father’s plan of salvation.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- To say the least, this passage is not “warm and fuzzy;” it’s a warning.
- Whether we want to admit it or not, we live in a “post-Christian” era.
- If we truthfully proclaim Jesus as the only way to eternal life we’re not only seen as narrow-minded fanatics, now we’re accused of “hate speech.”
- The religious leaders questioned Jesus’ authority in that time. Most people today not only question His authority, but also minimize Him altogether.
- What is a Christ-follower to do with this passage? If we take this warning seriously, how do we reach people for Christ without pushing them away?
- Here are some things to consider:
- Jesus was confronting and warning those aggressively rejecting Him. That’s different than lovingly engaging those who need to hear the gospel.
- This parable should give us urgency for sharing Christ as Savior, but it should not be seen as a technique for evangelism.

When sharing Christ with unbelievers we can't lead with a "Jesus will grind you like powder" approach and hope to be effective!

- We also can't see evangelism as a debate society.
- No one ever came to Christ at the end of an argument.
- We need to be firm in our convictions but loving in our approach.

2 Timothy 2:24–26 (NLT) — 24 A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. **25** Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. **26** Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.

- Basically, we need to witness like Jesus Himself when He was on earth.
- Just look at His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4.)
- Steve Cole points out what we see in how Jesus witnessed to her:
 - Jesus pointed out the need but did it graciously (Jn. 4:16-18)
 - He avoided arguments (4:12-14, 21-24)
 - He didn't make concessions but offered gentle correction (4:22)
 - He confronted with the person of Christ and His claims (4:13-14,26)^x [Link to full articles below in the footnotes]
- As we said, there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun and the only way to do both is by trusting God's Son.
- If we haven't trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, we can't say we haven't been warned.
- As a Christ-follower I need to feel an urgency to reach people for Him but I need to witness like Jesus did, lovingly, winsomely, and truthfully.
- This week, let's strive to be certain in our convictions but loving in our witness for Him.

ⁱ <https://www.maynardjurylaw.com/liability-for-batted-balls-and-flying-objects-at-sporting-events/>

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- ii Childress, G. (2006). [*Opening up Luke's Gospel*](#) (p. 176). Leominster: Day One Publications.
- iii [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 21:41). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- iv [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 20:16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- v Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 255). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- vi Manser, M. H. (2009). [*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*](#). London: Martin Manser.
- vii [*The New King James Version*](#). (1982). (Lk 20:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- viii Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 165142-165145). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.
- ix <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-5-jesus-teaches-us-witness-part-1-john-41-42> <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-6-jesus-teaches-us-witness-part-2-john-41-42>