Let us have a look at the parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13 and the passage coming before that.

**1** There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. **2**And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? **3**I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. **4**Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? **5**I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

**The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**

**6**He also spoke this parable: “A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. **7**Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ **8**But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize *it.* **9**And if it bears fruit, *well.* But if not, after that you can cut it down.’ ” (Luke 13:1-9)

We see that the disciples informed Jesus of two events: about certain Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, and the collapse of a tower in Siloam that resulted in fatalities. These occurrences can be attributed to accidents, which are inevitable and beyond our control. Pilate's attack on those offering sacrifices serves as a reminder of the misuse of power by those in authority, a problem that persists in today's world. The second case they told Him was about a tower in Siloam that collapsed and caused fatalities, which was an accident. Those present waited to hear how Jesus would respond to the incident. To their surprise, He began to tell them a parable about a barren fig tree that bore no fruit. Accidents occur in our world due to its fallen nature, influenced by sin. Problems and wars occur because of the same reason. The people present at the time believed that those who perished were sinners, deserving of punishment. This belief was common amongst the Jewish community during that time. While it is true that God had punished disobedient individuals in the past, it cannot be assumed that this was the case in this instance. Accidents happen as a result of our fallen world, not solely as a form of punishment.

People harm other people or deprive them of their belongings because they are selfish. This is also one of the reasons there are wars and famines in the world. Car accidents happen, and people die in those accidents, but this often happens because people don’t follow up with traffic regulations. Somebody drives at 200 km/h instead of 80, jeopardizing his and other people’s lives.

There was an earthquake recently in Turkey, and we know these natural disasters occur in certain areas of the world. It is too deep of a topic to start reasoning if this is God’s judgment or not, but we can at least see it according to the point of view that concerns us. After some investigation about this earthquake, they discovered that some of the buildings were built with cheap materials; I mean that they used mostly sea sand in the construction instead of using proper sand to make the building stronger. If they had used a different material, the result would be different. By this, we see that accidents happen in this world, but mostly because its nature and values are fallen. They are influenced by sin. The decisions ordinary people are making and great people, politicians, and big figures are making are influenced by sin, and there are consequences because of this.

That’s why when the people reported these occurring to Jesus, He told them that those who perished weren’t worse sinners than them. This wasn’t the reason for which they perished. See how the people’s attitude is in general. They told about those events to Jesus, thinking that others were worse sinners than them because, as we said, they had that kind of belief and idea that if something wrong happened, it was because of God’s judgment caused by that person’s sin and disobedience. This might be true in part, but as we said, accidents happen because of the sin spread all over this world. Someone could even be a victim of an accident or someone who caused that evil to happen, and God will surely judge the person guilty of that. What Jesus wanted to accomplish with His answer was to direct their attention to themselves and not toward other people’s sins. This is the truth of the gospel. It leads us to see ourselves and not other people’s sins. “Don’t worry about other people’s wrongdoings; God will judge them. Worry about yourselves.”

**“Judgenot, that you be not judged**. **2**For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. **3**And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? **4**Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? **5**Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. (Matthew 7:1-5, emphasis added)

This passage is clearly talking about how God wants us to look first at ourselves. It is not that we cannot correct at all other people or guide them. We can do this at a later stage when we sorted out our situation and we first allowed God to judge us and change our lives. The problem is not looking at other people’s lives when trying to help them, but when we look at their life to esteem ourselves better and justify our faults.

“And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things?” (Luke 13:2)

People tend to see themselves better and easily see other people’s mistakes. Jesus instead wanted them to see this situation from the point of view of the opportunity they still had to repent and accept Him. They told Him what happened and expected another type of answer from Jesus. Instead, He told them: “Do you think those people were worse sinners than you because they suffered such things? Not, of course. But if you don't repent, you will all likewise perish.” Then He started telling them about the parable of the fig tree, which didn't bear fruit for three years, and after seeing this, the master of the vineyard told the keeper of his vineyard to cut it down. The vineyard keeper, who represents Jesus in this case, said to the owner, who is God, to leave this tree for another opportunity for a year more, and if it didn't bear fruit, he would cut it. This tree represents us. We are this barren fig tree that doesn’t bring fruit and are given an opportunity. This is also humankind in general. Humankind is given the opportunity to repent. God commands in His word that we have to repent.

This is what Acts 17:30 says:

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,” (Acts 17:30)

And people might be thinking and asking, “How is it that God commands us to repent? Which is His authority, and why is He doing it? If He is God, wouldn't He make things better? Could He let us avoid certain problems and situations and then do a miracle and make us become better people? If there are so many situations and problems in this world, why is it that He commands me now to repent?” And we can have many questions like these, and we can question God. Sometimes it could be good to discuss with God and be open to Him in prayer but not to question Him and His authority in a way and not to do it in a rebellious way. Still, we need to present ourselves humbly in front of Him. We can have doubts and sufferings, but let us instead go to Him with that and not run away from Him because of that.

It may not be easy to explain this in a few passages and sentences, but I'll try to do my best. We need to know that God is a God of the universe, and He is a God who created everything. He created everything in a perfect way. There is a perfect balance and justice in nature and all creation. We can also ask why is it that He demands this kind of justice, but here's why. He created everything in perfect order. Nature, constellations, natural laws. Still, the only ones not living according to this order are us. We've broken His laws. We, by nature, are far away from Him. I am saying “by nature” because we naturally resist Him. This is because we are incomplete. We lack Him in our lives. That’s why man constantly tries to fill up this void he feels with something else. Each person feels this void within himself. He knows that he lacks something. God, by His just nature, wants to place everything in order. This is because He is this nature that surrounds us. He is this perfect harmony. He sees us the way we are, sees us out of order, and wants to fix this. He wants to fix any disorder. It is difficult to explain it but it is not that He gets to decide this or is having some kind of a choice. This is not a matter of something He likes or not. Rather we can say that He is order and justice in Himself. This is not something that He performs or decides to do because He just likes it. He is entirely a justice.

“For the word of the Lord *is* right, and all His work *is done* in truth. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” (Psalm 33:4, 5)

“Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.” (Psalm 89:14)

Righteousness is in His nature. What happens when we pass by a place with a heavy rotten smell? Something that we cannot stand. We automatically turn our heads away because we cannot stand that because this is in our nature. The same is true of God with sin. He cannot stand it, and He needs to sort it out. He needs to place the situation in disorder, back in order, and that's why He demands justice. That's why He has the right to demand repentance from us. Here is where mercy is found. He is demanding us to repent rather than requiring us to pay back. It is because someone already paid on the cross. We need to know that He could let us pay for our sins because He, by nature, requires justice. Everyone needs to pay for whatever he has done. Here we are not just talking about something extremely wrong or evil but about any wrong. God’s standards for righteousness are much higher than ours or those of the society in which we live. Everyone who has sinned needs to pay, and He could have left us there to live out our lives and then to pay for the wrong, but instead of that, He sent His Son to pay the price. The sacrifice Jesus did on the cross is universal, meaning for everyone, but not for everyone talking about who will benefit from it. Everyone has been given an opportunity, but only those who believe will enter into the promise and have their sins forgiven. Also, the fact that He sent His Son shows that He couldn’t prevent justice from being served. Someone needed to pay for the sin. If not us, then His son. This shows us His nature.

This is the reason why people are not paying now for their sins. He is having patience with them at the moment as 2 Peter 3:9 is telling us. “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

It is because He decided to give an opportunity to everyone by sending His son. Obviously, one day, everyone will pay in the final judgment because He established to place the perfect justice and order then. Many people instead demand from God justice and order to happen now. Instead, He reserved this for later on because He is patient now. That's why things are going in this way. All of this makes it look like He is not present. Many people are asking why this evil is happening in the world, but in the end, we are the ones causing it. We want evil men to pay now for their crimes, and we wonder why they don’t receive now their deserved punishment. It even looks like they are apparently living a better life than godly people. We need to know that God is extremely perfect. We demand justice now, but what we don't know is that if this justice is executed at this moment, then everyone will need to give an account and pay for his transgressions. What most people have in common is that they tend to look more at other people’s sins and mistakes than their own. God is extremely perfect, and He cannot overlook any transgression. He cannot come and judge only a particular group of people. His perfect justice comprises everything. Therefore we see that the reason why it looks like He left people to do anything they choose and like, is because He wouldn’t manifest now His perfect justice because He doesn’t want to judge everyone now and to harm people. He wants to give them an opportunity. It is like that man in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 who distributed talents amongst his servants and then went on a journey (Matthew 25:14-30). This parable perfectly explains how God assigns his servants responsibilities and then “apparently” leaves.

“For *the kingdom of heaven is* like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.” (Matthew 25:14, 15)

We know He is always present and doesn’t leave, but in a way, He is not present here in this current moment with His complete justice. This is because, as we said, He doesn’t want to judge people before giving them an opportunity. He will give us a chance to repent first. He doesn’t want people to pay now. This patience He is showing now didn’t come without a price. It was His Son’s life that was sacrificed for us.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

This passage, that we all know of, depicts perfectly how God manifested His mercy by sending His Son. This shows that justice needed to be served, and God couldn’t avoid it. It shows that He couldn’t just forget about sin because His nature is extremely just and righteous. Knowing this, He still found a way. Someone had to pay. It couldn’t be avoided. Still, He wanted to do something; He wanted to show us mercy. That’s why instead of letting us pay, He let His Son pay for something we have done. That’s why the one that had to pay had to be completely innocent, so He can pay for us and not for some wrong He had done. This passage tells us clearly that the promise of eternal life is only for those who believe. They enter the promise. They find forgiveness. The rest of the people will still have to pay for their sins, but this will be after this life, on judgment day. Until then, they have an opportunity and live into the time of grace.

It is because He has mercy and doesn’t want people to pay now for their sins but wants to give them a chance to repent. Yes, His justice is still manifested, and He interferes from time to time, and He keeps on working to preserve the balance in a way so that evil cannot be manifested in its full form. He is the One withholding it. He is the One withholding the devil. **This means that even if it looks like He left humankind, it is not in a complete way. He is still working, and He is in control.** As we said, the reason why His complete justice is not manifested is that He doesn’t want just to judge people without giving them a chance first. One day, however, He will have to do that.

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **He who now restrains** *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” (2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7, emphasis added)

This passage explains that He is the One restraining the absolute evil from being manifested. This absolute evil in this passage refers to the antichrist who will come one day into this world. Then, as this passage says, the Lord will manifest His complete justice, and the judgment day will come.

In the end, everyone would pay, but those who accepted Jesus will not. People are asking why troubles are happening in the world, and He still demands us to believe and repent, but as we said already, He has patience with the world, and that’s why He is not showing now His complete justice. We are the ones who will answer for what is happening, and we are responsible for our actions. We can say that He left the responsibility to us. Same as that man from the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 did with the servants by leaving them talents. He left this world to us, and this is what happened. We’re the ones who caused ourselves all these problems and issues. “Do you want freedom; do you want to see what you can cause yourselves by turning your back to Me? You will see, therefore.” We need to know that God cannot force a person to believe in Him and follow His principles. He warns him as much as He can, and by the consequences of not following Him, man can see that this is not the right way. The problem is that the devil wants to lead man’s thoughts astray from God’s truth. He wants to let him think that there is a different cause for man’s downfall and problems and wants him to see God from the wrong perspective. The devil wants man to see God as the one causing him all the troubles and the one who, in a way, is a debtor to man to accomplish his selfish desires, when it is precisely the opposite. Man is God’s debtor, and God is the solution for man’s downfall, not the one causing it. It is difficult for us to see it from this perspective many times. The devil also wants to convince a man that he is self-sufficient and doesn’t need God when this is precisely what a man needs because he is incomplete without God.

Man is the one who causes himself the most harm. God gave us up to our desires, sins, and passions, and we damaged ourselves. There’s not a greater condemnation and punishment. God just left humankind by itself without punishing them directly. He just withdrew His protecting hand from them. This is because they didn’t look for Him or glorify Him as God. People are those who get themselves into trouble and are the major cause of accidents and troubles to happen in this world.

Speaking about the opportunity given to us, God could’ve left us to live our lives and then pay for what we deserve. It was still going to be right, and justice was going to be accomplished. He instead decided to do something more because He had pity on us. He saw that there wasn’t a way for us to please Him and to get saved. No one can accomplish the law, do what is right, and please the Lord with his own strength. This is where God stepped in by sending His only begotten Son to die for us and offer us an opportunity. This is why He has the authority to demand repentance. Because of His nature that demands justice, He cannot avoid it. It is like the Angel of Death passing through Egypt, and no one would be spared except those who had the blood of the Lamb (which represents Christ) on their doorposts. As we said, there is a perfect order that resides in God’s nature, but we are the only ones who went purposely astray. We can say that He, by nature, almost automatically, if we can say so, wants to establish and place everything in order. When He saw us, instead of letting us pay, He decided to act differently. Because of this, because He chose to show mercy instead of letting people pay for their sins right away, there are things, events, and situations happening now that we cannot comprehend. Still, He is in control. We can just think about the fact that the only begotten Son of God, being completely innocent, was crucified and had to suffer for something He hadn’t committed. He had to become a man and feel what a human feel while dying on the cross and crying out to His Father: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 24:46). He experienced separation from His Father. This is one of the greatest mysteries ever. There was something out of the ordinary happening there. Something that wasn’t supposed to happen. I think that it is like the whole universe stopped and remained still at that moment. The Father was turning His back on His only begotten Son. The One who was completely perfect and innocent. There wasn’t any other reason for that besides our sin. The whole God’s plan to save humanity is out of the ordinary. It is something extraordinary. We were supposed to pay for our sins and be punished, but He did instead of us. This explains why there are things out of the normal happening now and why there are tribulations, trials, and the powers of the heaven will be shaken one day, as Matthew 24:29 says. Because the whole plan of God that He chose to do **for our good** was out of what someone would consider ordinary or normal. It is like He was about to break His own principles and laws, but He didn’t because He let His Son pay for the injustice being committed by us. He did this because He cannot deny Himself and His justice.

Many times, people assume what is right or not or think of understanding everything, but God’s plan goes much beyond all of that, and we need to know that a high price was paid for us. The exhibition of this plan is also the reason why it looks like He left, as it is reported in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. As the man in the parable left those servants with certain responsibilities and tasks to perform, God gives us responsibilities and tasks in the same way. We see that He wants to use men to perform part of His will. We cannot obviously accomplish those tasks by ourselves; we need His Holy Spirit for that. He is the One who gives us the ability. Then the parable continues and tells us that after leaving the talents to his servants, that man went on a journey (Matthew 25:15). After a long time, he came back to settle accounts with them. In the same way, Jesus will come back one day and settle accounts with His servants and everyone. In the parable, it is said that he came back after a “long time” (Matthew 25:19). No one knows the exact time or hour when the Son of Man will come back. To many people, it looks like it takes a “long time”. This is so because, as we said already, He has patience with us now and doesn’t want us to perish. That’s why He wants to give us an opportunity to repent. Well, it will probably take “a long time” for Him to come back and establish perfect justice, but if we are not alive till then, if we are not able to wait for Him to come back to us, then we will go to Him one day when we end our life here on earth. In this way, we will have to settle accounts with Him the same way as when He comes back. In one way or another, we will have to face Him one day. In both situations, we will have to be ready for that moment. How do we get ready? By having a relationship with Him and having received His forgiveness in our hearts. When He comes back, perfect justice will be established, and we will live in it. Although it may seem like He has left, He is actually watching over and protecting the believers. He is also looking to see if there is someone who looks for Him and follows His will same as the servant entrusted by his master to look after his household and the other servants (Matthew 24:45-51). He has promised to never abandon those who seek for Him. He is always with them, guiding and strengthening them, and will one day come back for them. However, to those who have not accepted Him, it may seem like He has left. Nevertheless, everyone will have to face God one day. He does not come back right now because there is too much sin and by His nature, He cannot stand it. Only those who have accepted Him can have a relationship with Him and perceive His presence because they are covered by the blood of the lamb. His Son lives in them. Our God is like a consuming fire that burns and consumes everything as described in Hebrews 12:29. “For our God *is* a consuming fire.”

Sometimes people imagine Him as an old man with a white beard sitting on His throne amid clouds, but God is much more than that. He indeed has a throne, but He is not a man. Once He made Himself a man to save people, but He is an all-powerful being that fills everything we move in and live in. Many people refer to divinity as Mother Nature that created nature and life, but God is even much more than that. He is not just Mother Nature; He created everything we see, the whole universe and the stars in it.

He has all in perfect order. There is only us who went out of what He has established. God the Father is not a person that we can imagine. If we think of Him as a person, it is much easier to rebel against Him and to question Him. The reason why people are questioning Him is because they don’t have the right idea of who He is. We cannot just escape or hide from Him. He is not over there in the middle of clouds sitting on His chair. He is everywhere. It looks like He is far away, but at the same time, we live and move in Him. He is much bigger than we imagine. No one can stand in front of Him. That's why it was commanded in the Old Testament never to worship or make an image of God. This is why Paul started talking to the Athenians about one of the altars that drew his attention while visiting Athens and seeing all the deities and idols displaced there. This was the altar of the “unknown God”. Talking about this altar, he told them that this is the God whom he proclaims. The One who created everything. The One who doesn’t have an image like the rest of their gods. This means that God is much greater than anything we can imagine. Our mind cannot comprehend it, and He cannot fit into the box of our imagination.

**23**for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: **24**God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. **25**Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. **26**And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, **27**so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; **28for in Him we live and move and have our being**, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ **29**Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. **30Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent**, **3****1**because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:23-31, emphasis added)

We see that the description of who He is, and His greatness comes before His commandment to us to repent. He has the right to ask us to do that because of who He is and because He doesn’t want us to perish.

Even living in majesty and being the highest One, God humbled and made Himself a man. He did this out of love. He has feelings for us. He is not indifferent. He could’ve also left things to be, and we would’ve paid for our wrongs, but He interfered because of His mercy. That’s why we need to be thankful. I know that we may often feel the opposite, and we argue and rebel against God in our hearts. The devil is also instigating us to feel that. Our own passions and desires, especially when God is not in our hearts to bring a balance, are also against Him. Still, we need to resist this feeling, and we need to humble instead and go to God with these arguments and controversies and confess them to Him than run away from Him. The Bible says that He is ready to listen and show us grace.

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

It is not like when the Israelites went to Mount Sinai, and no one could even come close or touch it because the glory of God dwelt there, and His nature was like a consuming fire. After a time, Moses told them that one day God would send them a prophet so that they would be able to listen to Him and obey Him. He was talking of Jesus, who one day was going to establish a relationship between God and people, and in this way, they would be able to directly communicate with Him through Jesus.

**15**“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, **16**according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’ (Deuteronomy 18:15, 16)

In this way, He established a path and a relationship with God for us. We can boldly but humbly go today into His presence even having doubts, issues, and problems. He Is ready to receive us, forgive us, and restore our lives on the cross.