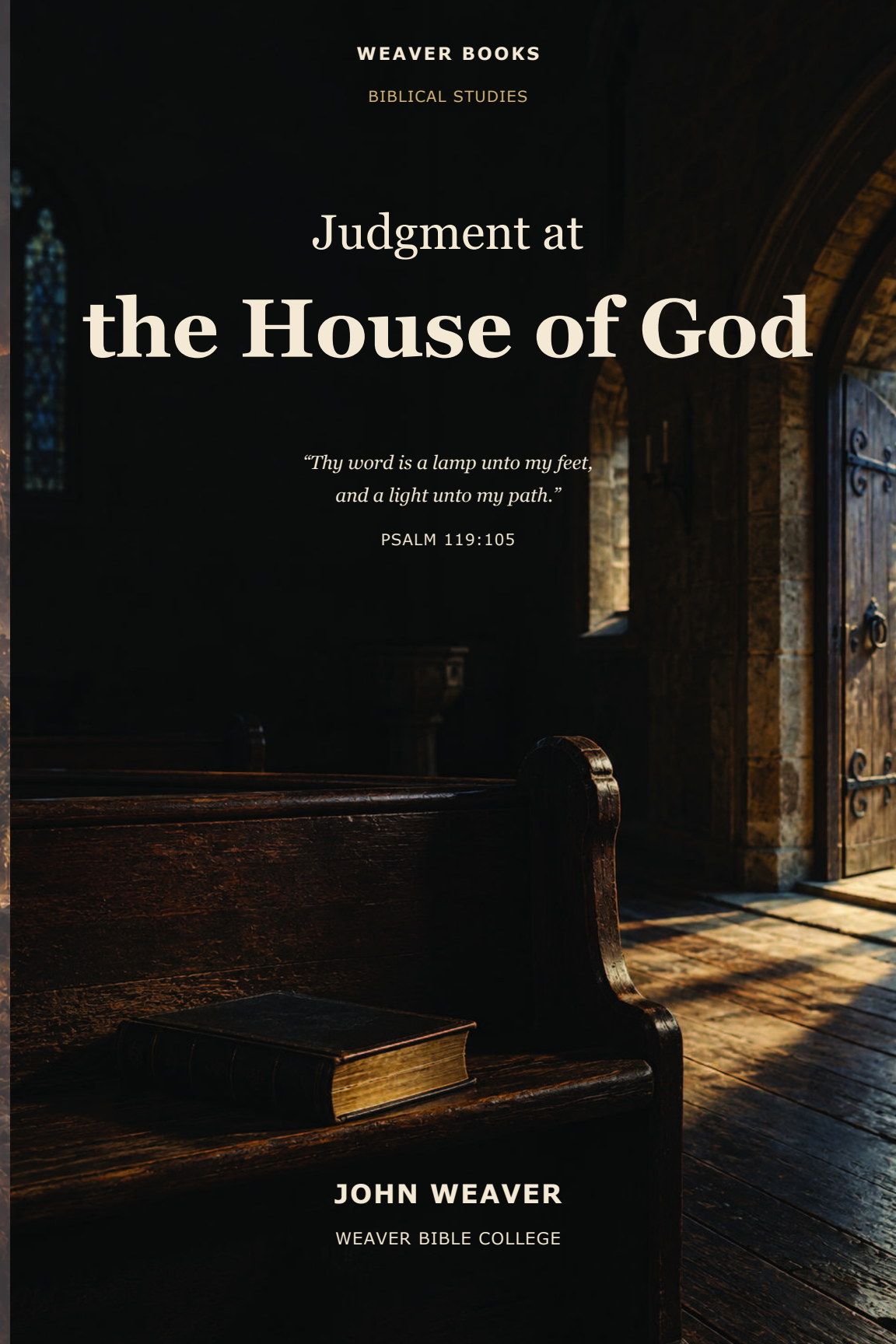
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Judgment at the House of God

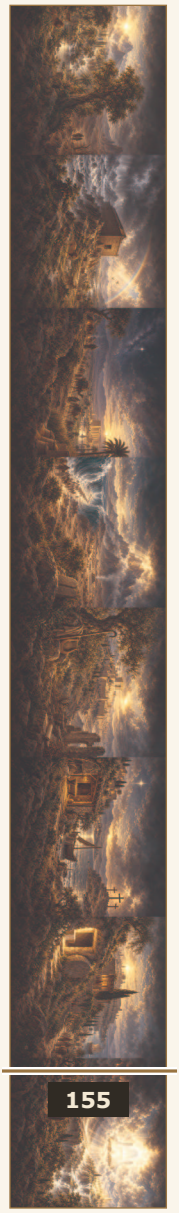
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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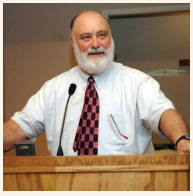
For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

1 PETER 4:17, EXCERPT

Judgment begins with those who bear God's name. John Weaver considers chastening, suffering, personal responsibility, and the faithfulness of God toward His people. These messages explain why correction should lead believers to examine their conduct, entrust themselves to their Creator, and continue in well-doing rather than abandon hope.

"Happiness is not something that we simply find; it is something we stumble upon in the path of duty and obedience."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Judgment at the House of God

Part One of Three

Introduction to the Passage

Let us open our Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4. We will be looking at verses 17 through 19. I will tell you before reading Scripture that we will be on this passage for the following two weeks as well. I encourage you to look at it not only today as we study it, but also in the coming weeks, and meditate upon it. There is a great deal of material in these three verses.

"For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end of them that obey not the gospel be? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Each of us has read, heard, and probably can quote the verse found in 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 17: “For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it first begin at us, what shall the end of them that obey not the gospel?” Those who cannot quote that verse at least understand its thrust: judgment first begins at the house of God and then spreads outward.

What I want to do in the next couple of weeks is break down this verse and demonstrate its teachings, not only based upon the context but even the remote context. We probably never considered that this verse has very wide applications. The truth of the matter is that most people do not want to understand this particular passage because most people do not really want to face truth.

You can ask this question: Why in the world would judgment first begin at the house of God? Why would God begin with His people? Unhappily, most professing Christians have no understanding of the principles of Holy Scripture. The average modern-day Christian bases his understanding upon his experience or his own thought pattern, and both are extremely defective. They are humanistic and rationalistic. Isaiah 55, verses 8–9, tells us, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord, and my ways are not your ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Very few people truly approach the Word of God as the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God.

Most of us never seek to understand truth from God's perspective. We prefer to understand everything from our own perspective because we want to be the interpreters of reality. We want to determine when judgment should or should not come and whether God is just or unjust in sending judgment. But we are not the interpreters of reality. God is, and God determines these things.

There are two major problems that the average Christian has when it comes to judgment, chastisement, and suffering. The first is that we have misconceptions of God. The basic misconception is that the average individual wants to view God as loving and merciful, but does not wish to view Him as righteous, holy, and just. The average professing Christian prefers to have God as an aged man in heaven, sitting in a rocking chair, with no interest in sin, rebellion, or

wickedness, leniently winking at our sins and indiscretions because He understands that we must sow our wild oats.

No. God is loving and merciful, but God is also holy and just. He said in Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 39, “See now that I, even I am He, there is no God with me, I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.” God says, “I, even I am He, I kill, and I make alive. I wound and I heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”

We try to make God like ourselves, yet God is infinitely different from us. God is infinitely holy and righteous, and God dwells in unapproachable light. Isaiah chapter 57 verse 15 tells us, “For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place.” God's holiness demands justice, and His righteousness makes justice inevitable. We fail to understand who God is and His attributes, trying to make God from our own selves, thinking, and perspective, while the God of Scripture is totally and completely different from the God of man's imagination. The second major problem is that we fail to understand the doctrine of total depravity.

The Season of Judgment

We try to think of man as good, moral, upright, and just simply because some individuals appear to be that way. We tend to think that is the way they are. We never seriously consider the dubious, hypocritical, scheming, sinful, wicked, and rebellious nature of man. Do you think that if I got on a modern-day television program, or before Congress, and said, “Men by nature hate God, and they do not want Him,” it would go over very well? And yet that is exactly what the Scripture teaches.

The Bible says in Romans 8, verses 7 and 8, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.” Enmity is a strong word for hatred. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” God specifically says that man's mind by nature is enmity against God.

What most Christians have done is buy into the humanistic, rationalistic idea that man is somehow good by nature. No, man by nature is not good; man by nature is wicked and evil. The Bible tells us in Romans 3, verses 10 and 12, “As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They're all gone out of the way. They're all together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Not one.

If we understood who God is and what man is by nature, then we would be more prone to understand God's judgment. If we really understood God's holiness and justice, and man's depravity and wickedness, we would not ask, “Why does God send judgment?” We would ask, “Why are any of us left alive?” Every sinner deserves death.

Judgment is not a pleasant issue to discuss. Most of us are uncomfortable discussing it, not only because of our lack of understanding, but also because of our detestation of suffering. Yet judgment is a reality of life. It is a reality not only for the unsaved, but also for the saved. I want to begin breaking down this passage and demonstrating what the Word of God actually teaches. Today we will cover two points. The very first is this: consider the season of judgment. Look in verse 17.

The Season of Judgment

He said, “For the time is come.” The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. So let us consider the season. The time has come. Has it ever dawned upon you that judgment, like everything else, is seasonal? We have spring, summer, fall, and winter. As long as God allows the earth to stand, those seasons are going to come continually. That is simply a fact of life. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 1, “To everything there is a season and a time and a purpose under the heaven.” To everything there is a season.

We are talking about the season. He said, “For the time is come.” In Deuteronomy 32 and verse 35, God says, “To me belongeth vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time. For the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come

upon them make haste." I do love this verse. Notice what God said: "Their foot shall slide in due time." When Peter said, "The time is come," he used the Greek word kairos, which is translated in our Bibles as time, season, and due time. The Greek word kairos refers to a definite time, a definite period, a time when things are brought to a crisis, and a time when events take place.

The best way to understand the seasonal aspect of judgment is to consider 2 Samuel 11 and verse 1. The Bible says, "And it came to pass after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him in all Israel, and they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabbah, but David tarried still at Jerusalem." Remember, we are talking about seasonal judgments and explaining the word season. Notice what that verse says: "And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle." You must remember that the Hebrew calendar actually began in the spring with Passover. When was the time when kings went forth to battle? It was in the spring.

When there was plenty of food available for horses and soldiers, and the winter rains and the winter cold were past, the right time, or the proper time, or the season for going to war was in the spring. When Peter said, "it is time," he was saying that there is a proper time, a proper season, for judgment.

When is the proper season for judgment? First of all, the general answer is this: judgment comes when our cup has been filled with sin and rebellion. God told Abram, "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, and thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they, that is the children of Israel, shall come hither again." Why? "For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

What did God do? He sent the children of Israel into Egypt for four hundred years because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. Their cup had not been filled to the brim. When it was filled to

the brim, God brought Israel out of Egypt, put a sword in their hand, and said, “kill every one of them.”

That general principle, which is true for the wicked, is also true for the saints. When we have become slothful, lazy, indolent, arrogant, and worthless, to the point that we are good for nothing, He will send judgment. How can you say “good for nothing”? Our Lord said it in Matthew 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is set forth good for nothing, but to be cast out,” and “to be trodden under the foot of men.” The phrase “trodden under the foot of men” refers to judgment.

That judgment may be mental and emotional, in the form of detestation and despisement; economic, involving the loss of dominion; or even militarily and physically, where we are defeated and beaten down, and some even lose their lives. But what did our Lord say? When the salt is lost its savor, it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of men.

That is the general answer, the general principle: when our cup of iniquity is full, God sends judgment. However, let me answer a little more specifically. Judgment, like chastisement—and they are intimately connected, as you will find out before I close today—may be sent for various reasons. There are different kinds of judgment, or different kinds of chastisement. First, there is punitive judgment, or punitive chastisement. Punitive means that someone is being punished for their sins.

Types of Judgment: Punitive, Corrective, Preventative

Have you ever whipped your child? That's punitive discipline. You're punishing them for their wrongdoing, for their wickedness. Now there are punitive judgments. There are punitive chastisements. For instance, the flood of Noah was punitive. The judgment of Canaan was punitive. Achan's judgment was punitive. There are many examples of punitive judgments in the Bible where God judged peoples and cities and nations for their sins. Secondly, there are corrective judgments or corrective chastisements in the Bible. For instance, the judgment at the Tower of Babel was both punitive and corrective. God judged them because of their sins and He corrected

the problem. You're going to see that sometimes you can have a combination of the reasons or the types of judgment and correction in just simply one judgment or correction. Jonah's judgment was corrective.

You remember how he got thrown overboard of the ship and the whale swallowed him? That judgment was corrective judgment. Because when the whale spit him out, he sure felt a whole lot more like preaching, didn't he? God changed his mind. God changed his conduct. So, corrective judgments and chastisements are spoken of numerous times in the Bible. Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to Psalm 39. We'll look in the book of Psalms and we'll go to the book of Jeremiah. Look in Psalm 39 if you would please. And verse 11. Just pointing out corrective judgments or corrective chastisements. Psalm 39 verse 11. Look what David said.

And I want to emphasize the word correct here. Notice Psalm 39 verse 11, David said, "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth, surely every man is vanity." But note, "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity," sometimes a rebuke is all that is necessary. But God's rebuke can make a man consume away like a moth. But notice he's talking about a corrective judgment or corrective chastisement. Look in Psalm 94 and verse 10. Psalm 94 verse 10. Look at what is asked. Psalm 94 verse 10. "He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teaches man knowledge, shall he not know? He that chastiseth the heathen shall not he correct?" There are indeed corrective judgments. There are corrective chastisements. Look in your Bibles to the book of Jeremiah chapter 2. Jeremiah. Turn right over to Jeremiah chapter 2. And notice if you would beginning there please with verse 19. Look what God tells the people. Jeremiah 2 verse 19. God says, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee."

"Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. Know that thine own wickedness shall correct thee." God is going to do some corrective chastening. Jeremiah prayed, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." Jeremiah wanted to be

corrected and understood that judgment or chastisement is one of the means that God uses. But he said, "I certainly don't want to be corrected in your anger."

There are corrective judgments and corrective chastisements. God tells His people, "For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee. Though I make a full end of all nations, whether I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in a measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." So there are corrective judgments. There are punitive judgments. But thirdly, there are preventative judgments.

There are some judgments and chastisements that God sends that are preventative. The judgment at the Tower of Babel was punitive, and it was corrective, but it was also preventative. What God did prevented the wicked, rebellious sinners from carrying out their purpose. In this one particular instance, you have all three: punitive, corrective, and preventative. There is another example of preventative judgment throughout the Bible.

The entire Syrian army was smitten with blindness just to prevent it from capturing Elisha and the man who was with him. In 2 Kings 6:18, Elisha prayed, "And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha." Elisha then led them to the king of Samaria. They had come after Elisha, and God prevented it by smiting them with blindness.

Acts 13 gives us another preventative judgment. Elymas, the sorcerer, was smitten with blindness because he was hindering the work of God and the spread of the gospel. “But Elymas, the sorcerer, for so is his name by interpretation, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the truth, or from the faith.”

“Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness,

and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

God smote Elymas with blindness to prevent him from hindering the work of God. It was a preventative judgment.

No doubt, he probably deserved that and a whole lot more. But in this instance, it was basically preventative. You say, "But that deals with sinners." This also refers very obviously to saints. I do not think there is anyone who will argue that the great apostle Paul was not a saint, was not a believer. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul said concerning himself, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." There was some judgment, some chastisement, placed upon Paul that kept him from pride, arrogance, and exalting himself above measure.

Some say it was ophthalmia. I do not know. It is a horrible eye disease because in Galatians Paul said, "You see how large a letter I've written with mine own hand," and the word large does not refer to length but to the size of the letters. Paul may have been nearly blind; I do not know. Whatever it was, there was this thorn in the flesh, this messenger of Satan, to buffet him and chastise him continually. Why?

Lest he should be exalted above measure and thus sin against God. It's a preventative judgment.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Job, chapter 37, and let me show you how this all works together. This is why I am explaining seasonal judgment: each one of these will have a different season. Generally speaking, you can say that judgment comes when our cup is full. Whether you are a saint or a sinner, it does not matter. But when you understand that there are punitive judgments, corrective judgments, and preventative judgments, each one of those would probably tend to have a different season. I will explain that a little later. Look in the book of Job, chapter 37.

Weather as an Instrument of Judgment

Let's begin reading with verse 9, and we will read through verse 13. Hold this passage for a little while; we will look at some other Scriptures in it. Beginning with verse 9, we read: “Out of the south cometh a whirlwind, and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given, and the breath of the waters is straightened. Also, by watering he wearieth the thick cloud, he scattereth his bright cloud, and it is turned round about by his counsels, that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth.”

He is talking about the clouds, rain, water, frost, sleet, snow—anything that has water in it. Now watch verse 13: “He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy.”

Now, let's stop right there. The word correction is translated as the word rod thirty-four times in our Bibles. What is the rod associated with? It is associated with chastisement and punishment. The idea that Job 37 expresses is that God, when He pleases, can send the rain or some type of element upon the earth for the purpose of executing His punishment.

That is exactly what He did in Genesis chapter 7 when He sent the flood in Noah's time. Today, God may send His rain in an overflowing flood to sweep away the works of man, lay waste our fields, drown our crops, destroy our houses, and cut off the wicked. God can use any of those things. Weather-related problems are just as much the judgment of God as pestilence and war. If we understand this simple truth, then we will understand Micah 6:9: "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

Every one of us has disciplined our children. The first way we discipline them is by verbal admonishment: "Don't do that. Please don't do that. Now this is for your good. Please do not do that. You're going to get harmed by it, or you're going to cause harm to someone. Please don't do this." You ask, and ask, and ask, but what does the child do? Ignore you. Then you bring the switch, and then you bring the rod. The thought is this: if you will not hear the word, you will

hear the rod. So God says, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

We are reading about rain in Job 37. Hold Job 37 and turn to Amos 4:7. Look at one of the judgments God sent upon His people: "And also I withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest. I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered." What did God do? He either sent the rain or withheld the rain.

Weather-related problems are in God's hands. Look again at Job 37:13: "He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." Notice the words, "or for His land." Sometimes God sends rain just for the earth's sake, not for our sake. He sends it irrespective of man.

Job 38:26-27 says that God causes it to rain on the earth where no man is, on the wilderness where there is no man, to satisfy the desolate and waste ground and cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth. In other words, God sends rain where there is no one around, simply for the land's sake.

God says, I can send that rain to accomplish My purpose. It may be for correction, it may be for the land, or it may be for mercy. Sometimes God sends rain to His people simply based upon His mercy.

I know I have probably told you this, but I am going to tell you again because I saw it with my own eyes. Whether you believe me or not is immaterial; it is still absolutely true. In 1954, there was a drought. I was a boy, ten years old. My father was a deacon in the church. He went around, gathered all the men together, and they began praying for rain.

My dad had a neighbor who was not only a lost man, but a drunk. Out of courtesy, Dad went to him and said, "We're having a prayer meeting and we'd like to invite you. All the farmers are getting together." I was with my dad. The man laughed in Dad's face and said, "What good will that do? I'm not coming." Within a day or two, God sent rain. I stood and watched that rain go right down our fence

line. It rained on our farm, and it did not rain on his farm. That is the absolute truth. I saw it with my own eyes.

God can send rain based upon His mercy. God was merciful to those who believed in Him, and God judged those who did not believe in Him.

There are seasons for judgment, and each season for judgment is based upon the reason for judgment, whether it is punitive, corrective, or preventative. God deals with us as a Father. When we are talking about preventative or corrective judgment, let me ask you a question: If your child is wicked and doing wrong, are you going to wait until he is in absolute rebellion before you try to do anything about it? No. Because you love that child, you are going to begin correcting him right away to prevent his course of action. God does like we do, or we do like God does. We try to head off rebellion and wickedness and do everything we can to prevent them.

It is true that the wicked do not understand these principles. They misinterpret God's patience, love, mercy, and forbearance. Look in Romans chapter 2, verse 4: "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance, but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Note carefully that God bears long with the wicked. When they despise His goodness and mercy, He bears with them. When they despise His forbearance, His longsuffering comes into play. When they despise His longsuffering, inevitably there is a day of judgment, because all they are doing is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 12:17-28 (KJV)

We are like Israel of old in this sense: we think, "Well, we're talking about judgment. That's a long way off. That's not coming down the pike in my lifetime." In Ezekiel 12, beginning at verse 17, the Lord says:

"Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness. And say unto the people of the

> land, Thus saith the Lord God of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel, They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate, and you shall know that I am the LORD. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, What is that proverb that you have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision, or every prophecy faileth?
>
> "Tell them therefore, thus saith the LORD God, I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel. But say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision, or every prophecy. And there shall be no more any vain vision, or flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord, I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass. It shall no more be prolonged, for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God. Again, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God."

What did God tell these people? You might as well quit talking about the future. Bad English, but good theology: it ain't going to happen in the future. I'm sending it now. Period. Now. There is a season for judgment. Whether it is punitive, corrective, or preventative, there comes a time in history when God's judgment is going to fall. And when it comes, it will come in its fullness and its fury.

Go back in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4. I want to cover the second point. He says, "For the time is come." That's the season. The time is come. Peter is saying judgment is about to fall. The time is now. Here's the second point: the sentence. "For the time has come that judgment..." What is the sentence? Judgment. The Greek word

for judgment is the word krima. It is translated in our Bibles as judgment, damnation, condemnation, and to be condemned. The word is a legal word. It is the decree of the judge. It is used in a forensic sense, and it refers to punishment of some sort.

The Sentence: Judgment

Now folks, listen carefully. Judgment is a severe trial. It may involve afflictions, sufferings, and even death. When you and I think of judgment, we tend to think of the judgment of unbelievers. We think of God's vengeance and God's wrath falling upon the wicked and rebellious. Now, it is true that God does judge the wicked. For instance, turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter, since you're right there. 2 Peter 2, verse 4: "For God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into the chains of darkness, to be reserved in a judgment, and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world the ungodly, and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that should afterwards live ungodly, and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, for that righteous man dwelling among them, and seeing and hearing vex his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds, the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished."

In verses 4, 5, and 6, he speaks of three major judgments: in verse 4, the judgment of the angels, the fallen angels; in verse 5, the judgment in Noah's day; and in verse 6, the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, you have three major judgments: fallen angels, the antediluvians, and Sodom and Gomorrah. The Word of God is simply replete with God's judgment against the wicked. However, God does indeed judge His people.

Chastening as Judgment for Believers

Some would say, "No, no, no. God does not judge His people. God chastises His people." That's merely semantics. Chastisement is a

judgment. If my child disobeys me and I chastise that child, I have judged him guilty and deserving of chastisement.

In one sense, yes, there is a difference between the ungodly and the godly. God does not treat His own the way He treats the ungodly; that is for sure. But if I chastise my child, I also judge my child. Hebrews chapter 12, beginning with verse 5, speaks not only of God's judgment against the ungodly, but of His judgment against the godly: "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." That means none of us get away without being chastened. "If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we've had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

"Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterwards it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." This passage is talking about chastisement. If you can sin and get away with it, if you can sin constantly and continually and never be chastised, you can mark it down: you do not belong to God. For he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. He said, "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards," which is an illegitimate child, "and not sons." A bastard is a child that the father does not recognize and will have nothing to do with; therefore, he will not teach, correct, or chastise him. But God says that He is going to correct us and chastise us.

He said, "We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence." I did not want my father to whip me. Sometimes I did not mind my mother, but I sure did not want my father, because my dad did not play when it came to whipping. I

learned an important lesson from him: if you whip or discipline a child correctly, you do not have to do it often.

You can ask any of my grandchildren except one. None of them ever wanted to be whipped by me. Lacey is the only grandchild I have never whipped; I never had to whip her. She was sweet and obedient. She watched me whip others and understood that she did not want any of that. I am simply saying that this is what our fathers did, and we submitted to them and recognized them.

Now look what God said: "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Our earthly fathers, "for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure." Sometimes parents chastened you because you made them angry or pushed them too far, which is not a good reason for whipping; you should have been whipped before they were pushed too far. Yet you gave them reverence. "But he," God, "chasteneth us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Why does God judge and chasten us? To make us more holy, obedient, and godly. Look in verse 11.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous.” I never saw my father coming with a switch and thought, “Thank God, here comes Dad to give me a whipping.” But I am now thankful that He whipped me as He did, no matter how much it hurt, because it corrected me and stopped me. It prevented me from a lot of things.

“Nevertheless afterwards”—that is, when God chastens us—“it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.” The Bible teaches that when God judges us, God chastens us; it is for our profit and benefit.

“But now wait a minute, Brother Weaver. This passage just talks about chastening. It doesn't mention the word judgment.” Oh? Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. I am trying to show you that chastening and judgment are one and the same. It is a matter of semantics. Look in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and let us begin reading with verse 30: “1 Corinthians 11 verse 30.”

Paul, writing to these Corinthian Christians, says, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep. For if we

would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." One and the same thing.

God's chastening is judgment. The word judged in 1 Corinthians 11:31–32 is the exact same word used in 1 Peter 4:17. The saints at Corinth were misusing and abusing the Lord's supper, and they were being judged for their sins. Why? Because they did not judge themselves. They did not confess, acknowledge, and repent of their sins. Therefore God judged them and chastened them. Why? That they might not be condemned with the world.

Some were sick, and some had even died. Thus, the judgment or chastening in 1 Corinthians 11 was physical sickness and death. You must understand that judgment may be mild or severe, but it is still judgment. Chastening may be mild or severe, but it is still chastening. "For the time is come"—that is the season. The sentence is judgment.

Applications: Judgment is for Our Good

Let me make two applications. First, judgment is either punitive, corrective, or preventative, yet it is still judgment. We as Christians must understand this important truth from Scripture: judgment, or chastening, is not against us, but for us. It is for our benefit and blessing. Whatever God does for His people is for our good and His glory. Ask yourself: Was the Apostle Paul's judgment—his thorn in the flesh—against him or for him? Obviously, it was for him. Was the judgment and chastening of Job against him or for him? Clearly, it was for him. When he came out of that judgment and chastening, he had a greater understanding of God and of himself.

You must remember that Jacob, when he thought Joseph was dead, Simeon was being held in prison, and the man in charge of Egypt was demanding that Benjamin come or there would be no more food for the family, said in Genesis 42:36, "And Jacob his father said unto them, Me have you bereaved of my children, Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and now you will take Benjamin away. All of these things are against me."

How many of those things were against Jacob? None. Joseph was on the throne in Egypt. Simeon was going to be released, and Benjamin was going to see his brother first. Then Joseph was going to send and bring every one of them into the land and feed them. Jacob counted all these judgments as being against him, but none were against him—not one.

The second thing we need to learn is that judgment always begins at the house of God. It begins with the people of God. If it first begins with us, what shall be the end of the ungodly? Judgment is never against us; it is always for us. It is meant to be a benefit, a boon, and a blessing. We need to learn to view it as such.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You, Lord, not only for all Your blessings, mercies, and benefits, but for all Your correction, chastisement, and multiple benefits that You have given us over these years, keeping us and correcting us. Help us, Lord, to live for Thee and honor Thee in all that we say and do. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Judgment at the House of God

Part Two of Three

The name of this brief series is “Judgment at the House of God.” Last week we were able to cover only a portion of one verse, and we will take up where we left off. There will be at least three messages in this brief series.

We will read 1 Peter 4:17–19: “For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

Review of Part 1: The Season and Sentence of Judgment

In review, last week I began on verse 17 and covered only two points, never getting past the first phrase, “for the time has come that judgment.” I pointed out, first, the seasonal aspect of justice or judgment. The phrase “the time is come” refers to due time, a season of time, or a time when certain events take place.

We saw an illustration in 2 Samuel 11:1: “And it came to pass after the year was expired, at the time that kings go forth to battle, that David tarried still at Jerusalem.” The time when kings went forth to battle was in the spring, when there was plenty of food for soldiers and horses and the cold and rain had passed. It was therefore a seasonal time. The Bible also tells us that “their foot”—speaking of the wicked—“shall slide in due time.”

There is a time for judgment. God calls it a seasonal or due time. Often you and I think God is too slow. We think He ought to move on our timetable and do things our way. But the truth is that God is always on time, always right on the dot. Whenever He sends judgment, He sends it in a timely manner.

When does God send judgment? The general principle is that God sends judgment when our cups are full of iniquity. That is what He said in Genesis chapter 15. He told Abram, “Your descendants are going down into Egypt for 400 years.” Here is why: “For the cup of the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” So after 400 years God brought the children of Israel out.

He put a sword in their hand and said literally, “Kill every one of them.” God still follows this principle. However, we have to remember that there are indeed special judgments that demand quick and timely action, and likewise God sends those when they are needed.

There are basically three types of judgments. First, there are punitive judgments. That is, God sends judgment directly for sins. An example in the Bible is Noah’s flood. God specifically said, “Their wickedness has come up before me.” So that was a punitive judgment.

Then, of course, there are corrective judgments, where God does correct, and sometimes these things intermingle. The Tower of Babel was not only punitive, but corrective, in the sense that it stopped the people from doing what they were doing.

There are not only corrective judgments, but preventative judgments. Sometimes God sends judgment to prevent someone from carrying out something. A preventative judgment does not necessarily have to be punitive. It does not necessarily have to be corrective. It can simply be preventative. Like the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, when he said, “A messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh, was given to me lest I be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations that were given to me.” God sent a preventative judgment, or a preventative chastisement, upon the Apostle Paul to prevent him from pride and exaltation. So there are preventative judgments, or chastisements, as well.

Judgment and chastisement are basically one and the same. Remember that judgment is a forensic term. It is indeed the sentence of a judge, and in this case it is the sentence of the Judge of all the earth, the one true and living God. In verse 17, we see the season—“for the time has come”—and the sentence—“judgment.” These are the different kinds of judgment.

The Source of Judgment

The Source: Judgment Begins at the House of God

“For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” The source designates the beginning or starting point. Thus, the starting point for judgment is the house of God. Very clearly, “For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.”

It was a maxim in ancient times that when God was about to pour down some general judgment, He began by afflicting His own people in order to correct them and amend them, that they might be prepared for the overflowing scourge. The maxim is certainly true, and it is based upon a number of Scriptures.

However, it is plainly taught in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 32. The Apostle Paul wrote, “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world.” The two terms, judged and chastened, are used interchangeably. “When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.” Why? “That we might not be condemned with the world.” This judgment begins at the house of God, and it is corrective and preventative, so that we might not be condemned with the world.

You have heard me say innumerable times that judgment is not our enemy; it is our friend. God prepares the way of judgment in order to work repentance and grace in us and prepare us for what is going to befall the world and the wicked.

Such judgments may indeed be severe at times, encompassing even the deaths of the righteous and the deaths of those who simply profess to be righteous. In the time of judgment, God separates the wheat from the chaff. You will remember the parable in Matthew chapter 13, called the parable of the tares or the darnel. The servants came and said, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How did these tares get here?” He said, “An enemy hath done this.” They asked, “Do you want us to go out and root them up?” He said, “No, let them both grow until the harvest.” Then he said, “You gather first the tares in the bundle and burn them in the fire.”

How did they know what the tare was from the wheat? A tare never ever produces fruit. Only the wheat produces fruit. Sometimes the wicked are mixed in with the righteous, and oftentimes God uses judgment to separate the wheat from the tares.

Now, if you would look in your Bibles—hold 1 Peter, but turn to Revelation chapter 2, then we're going to 2 Timothy chapter 2. But look in Revelation chapter 2 at verse 9. Because I'm simply pointing out the fact that sometimes the wicked are indeed mixed in with the righteous. Now you say, "Well, how in the world can the wicked be mixed in with the righteous?" Because not everyone that professes to be a Christian is a Christian. So if you look in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 9, when our Lord addressed the church here at Ephesus, He said this in verse 9.

He said, "I know thy works and tribulation and poverty, but thou art rich. And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." So here were some who professed to be associated at that time with the believers, but they were not. Likewise, if you will look in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 19, you will see this truth made exceedingly clear. 2 Timothy 2, I'm thinking of the text. 2 Timothy 2, verse 19.

"Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal." Now look, "The Lord knoweth them that are His. Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Notice, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal." What is the seal? "The Lord knows those who are His." You may fool the preacher, you may fool Christians, you may fool the world, but you cannot fool God.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 57 because we're talking about judgment beginning at the house of God, and I want you to understand that many times when judgment does begin at the house of God, the judgment is severe and people do die. Sometimes the godly die. Look in Isaiah 57 and verse 1. I want you to see what the Bible says. Isaiah 57 verse 1, the Bible says, "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart. And merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Did you see what I just read? "The righteous perisheth." Not the wicked. But "the righteous perisheth. And no man layeth it to heart."

No one really considers why the righteous are perishing, or why merciful men are taken away. They do not consider, says God, that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. Scripture declares that it is a merciful act on the part of God to take His most blessed and righteous children away from the evil that is to come. He removes them in His grace and mercy so they will not see or experience the evil to come. Remember this: when God sends His judgment, some are taken in mercy and some are taken in wrath. The Word of God is a two-edged sword; it cuts both ways, with the double effect of saving some and condemning others.

God's judgments will always draw His true children closer to Himself, and they will always drive false professors farther away

from Him. Now God said that judgment must begin at the house of God. What is meant by “the house of God”? The phrase is used in two distinct ways in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Sometimes it refers to a real, literal house, such as the tabernacle or the temple, or even what we would call a church building in the New Testament. But sometimes the phrase refers to the people of God.

The House of God as Both Building and People

For instance, look in your Bibles at 1 Samuel chapter 3, verse 15. In this passage, we are talking about the tabernacle. Samuel has been given to the Lord by Hannah, his mother, and the Lord is appearing to Samuel. The Bible says, “And Samuel lay until the morning and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.” Samuel opened the doors of the house of God. It was the tabernacle.

He pulled back the curtains as he was supposed to. The tabernacle is referred to as the house of the Lord. In 2 Samuel 12:20, David's first child by Bathsheba had died. David had fasted and prayed that God would allow the child to live, but the child did not live—he died. The Bible says, "Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his apparel and came into the house of the Lord," that is, the tabernacle, "and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat." Notice that he came to the house of the Lord. He was talking about the tabernacle.

In 1 Kings 6:37, the temple is also referred to as the house of the Lord. The Bible says, "In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the Lord laid in the month Ziph." We are talking about the building; we are talking about the temple. In 1 Kings 7:51, the temple has been finished: "So was ended all the works that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things that which David his father dedicated, even the silver, the gold, and the vessels did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord."

So twice here the temple is referred to as the house of the Lord. In the Old Testament, you have a physical structure referred to as the house of the Lord—both the temple and the tabernacle. However, turn back very quickly to Numbers 12:7 and look at the verse.

Numbers chapter 12, verse 7. Look what God says concerning Moses: “My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.” He was talking about His people. So Moses was part of the house of the Lord, and Moses was faithful in all of His house, referring to the people.

In Hosea chapter 8 and verse 1, God speaks to Hosea and says, “Set the trumpet to thy mouth, he shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they”—that is, the people—“have transgressed my covenant and trespassed against my law.” So here, the house of the Lord does not refer to a physical structure; it refers to the people.

When you get to the New Testament, you find that this phrase is used exactly the same way. The phrase “the house of the Lord” is used in Revelation 2 and 3, basically in referring to the seven churches, the letters there being addressed to seven churches. Those seven churches were real, literal church bodies.

They had a structure in which they worshiped. But look at 1 Timothy 3 and verse 15. Here is a good illustration. Paul writes to Timothy, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth.” I suppose you could make an application in both ways there, but Paul told Timothy, “I want you to know how to behave yourself in the house of God,” which he said is the church of God. He gives it very plainly in 1 Corinthians 11, 12, 13, and 14, how people are to act in the building, in the structure, in the house of God.

That is what he teaches here. That is what 1 Timothy chapter 2 is all about. He tells the proper role of the men and the proper role of the women in the house of God.

In Revelation chapter 2, both of these concepts are taught very clearly. The main verse we are emphasizing is verse 5. Verse 1 says, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” If you go back to Revelation 1, the seven stars are the preachers, and the seven candlesticks are

the churches. Verse 2 says, “I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience, how thou canst not bear them which are evil.”

“And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars. And hast borne and hast patience for my name’s sake, and hast labored and hast not fainted. Nevertheless,” he says, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Now look what he tells the church at Ephesus: “Repent therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” He says, “I’ll remove thy candlestick out of his place.” What were the candlesticks? Revelation 1:20 says, “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels or the preachers of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

What did he say? “Repent,” he said, “or I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place.” “Thy candlestick,” that is, the whole church body, “out of his place,” that is, the local assembly there. So the threat is that God will remove not just individuals, but an entire congregation. Think about that: God will remove not just individuals, but an entire congregation.

The Bible tells us, using the term “house of God,” to refer to God’s people. In Hebrews 3 and verse 6, we read, “But Christ, as a Son over His own house, whose house you are.” So we are the house of God. I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. I suppose this is the clearest teaching on this subject in the New Testament. Notice verses 16 and 17, beginning there with verse 16.

The Apostle Paul writes to the saints, “Know ye not”—he is talking to the saints now—“Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” So very clearly, the Bible teaches that we are the temple of God, or the house of God.

We refer to our church buildings as the house of God. But the real church is not the building; it is the people. Let me rephrase that: if

we gathered as believers to worship the Lord tomorrow in a saloon, would the church be there? Yes. If we gathered tomorrow to worship in a dance hall, would the church be there? Yes, because we are the church.

Now it is true that we have to meet somewhere, in a building or out in the forest. But if we met in the forest and worshiped God, would the forest be the house of God? Yes, it would, because we are the people of God. The building is not necessarily the church; it is simply where the church meets. That is why, in the New Testament, when the Apostle Paul wrote letters to the churches, he wrote to the church at Corinth, to the church at Rome, to the church at Thessalonica, and to the church at Ephesus, because that is where the people of God were.

Now, it is true, listen carefully, that the people of God gather in one locality to worship; therefore, there could be a localized judgment, just as He said to the church of Ephesus, “If you don't repent, I will remove thy candlestick out of his place.” In other words, God can take care of individuals, or He can take care of the whole body.

The passage in the Bible that prompted me to preach this brief series from 1 Peter chapter 4 was not the passage I was reading when this truth was impressed upon my mind. I was reading where the Apostle Peter received his revelation from—his illumination. Turn back in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel chapter 9, including at least the first seven verses.

SCRIPTURE READING - Ezekiel 9:1-7 (KJV)

Old Testament Foundation: Ezekiel 9 and Jeremiah 25

You remember now that the temple was at Jerusalem. Ezekiel chapter 9, beginning with verse 1:

“He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have the charge over the city”—that is Jerusalem—“to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.”

> So God has sent some destroyers. “And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand. And one man among them was clothed with linen and with a writer's inkhorn by his side.”
>
> “And they went in and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”
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> Here are men who are broken and humble because of the wickedness, corruption, and idolatry in Jerusalem. “And to the others, he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite. Let not your eyes spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly, old and young, both maids and little children, and women. But come not near any man upon whom is the mark, and begin at my sanctuary.”
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> Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house, and he said unto them, “Defile the house”—that is, the sanctuary, the temple—“and fill the courts with the slain. Go ye forth.” And they went forth and slew in the city.
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> What did God tell Ezekiel? “Begin at my sanctuary.” “Begin at my house.” Do you see why Peter wrote, “For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God”? That is where it began in the Old Testament. That is where it will begin in the New Testament. It began at the sanctuary. It began at the temple. It went into the city and then spread out from there. That is a principle, a maxim, used in the Old Testament and in the New.

Look at Jeremiah 25:29: “For lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name,” Jerusalem. “And should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished. For I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord.” God is calling

for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, and it is going to begin at Jerusalem, at the house of God, the temple, the city which is called by His name.

The Reality of Judgment: Death of Righteous and Wicked

It is important to note that judgment is real. God's judgment is real, and in that judgment people die. Some are slain because of their sins. Many who profess to be Christians, but are not, shall be slain as well.

What are we talking about when we speak of those who profess to be Christians and are not? In Matthew 7:21, our Lord says plainly, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Just because you mouth His name does not mean that you are saved. "But he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name"—that is, preached—"and in thy name have cast out devils, in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Our Lord makes it exceedingly clear that there is a vast difference between professing Christ and possessing Christ. He did not tell these people, "Depart from me, I forgot you." No, He said, "Depart from me, I never knew you." You were never in a covenantal relationship with Me. You were never intimate with Me. We never had a relationship at all.

You may have prayed. You may have preached. You may have prophesied. You may have practiced at being a Christian. But you were not a Christian. Many who profess to be Christians will always put their works and their religion above Christ and His redemption. "We've done this; look what we've done." Salvation does not revolve around what we have done, but what Christ has done. He is salvation. Therefore our Lord says, "Look, I never knew you."

During judgment, as Isaiah 57:1 shows, sometimes real, genuine Christians die as well. The sword, famine, disease, and pestilence affect saved and unsaved alike. Deuteronomy 32:25 says, "The sword

without and terror within shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also and the man of gray hair." The sword is without, and terror within. If a person does not get killed by the sword, there are always other pestilences, trials, and tribulations that attend war and judgment. Thus there is terror without, or sword without, and terror within. Someone may object, "But wait a minute, Brother Weaver, are you saying that sometimes Christians die when God sends judgment? You don't understand. I'm a Christian. I trust Him."

"Why in the world should I suffer?" You may be a Christian, but you must remember that you are also a sinner, and every sinner deserves judgment. Moreover, each of us must die, even as Christians. As a Christian, it does not really matter how, when, or where you die. For death for the child of God is nothing more than the passport into glory, into the presence of Jesus Christ. What difference does it make how we die? Death by a gunshot is just like death by a stroke or a heart attack. You cannot be more dead, dying naturally, than dying in judgment. You are dead, you are dead. But for the child of God, death is not the ending; death is the beginning.

Why Christians Suffer: Sin and the Gift of Suffering

Do you remember what God said in Amos 3 and verse 7? God told His people, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." "You only have I known." There is that word "known," which means a personal, intimate relationship. "You only have I known of all the persons of the earth. Therefore," says God, "I will judge you for your iniquity." That is why I can say truthfully, I whipped my children. I did not whip Henry's children because I knew my children. They were mine, and I chastened them. That is what God is saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore," says God, "I will judge you for your iniquities."

The sins of Christians are really worse than the sins of the unsaved because we sin against light. We know better. We have the revelation of God, the truth of God, and the will of God. So when we sin, we have to turn our backs upon His truth.

Jeremiah 25:29 says, "For lo, I begin to bring an evil on the city which is called by my name." And should you be utterly unpunished? In other words, have you not done something that deserves judgment as well?

Everyone here knows we had identical twins, still have identical twins, thankfully. But when they were young, it was very difficult to tell them apart, even for Alice and myself. They looked alike, talked alike, and dressed alike. One day, Leah, I believe it was, had done something, and I said, "I'm going to whip you." I got that girl and started whipping her. She kept saying, "But Daddy, I'm Laura. But Daddy, I'm Laura. But Daddy, I'm Laura." When I finished whipping her, I found out I was whipping the wrong one. Then I looked at her and said, "I'm sorry, sweetheart, but I'm sure that you have done something to merit that, that I didn't know about."

Well, this is what God said: "I'm going to punish everybody else for their sins. You're a sinner too. Should you go utterly unpunished?" Why should we not suffer? Let's be honest. We're equally sinners. Our sins are partly responsible, not only for God's judgment upon our church, but upon our state and upon our nation. Our Lord suffered. He was the only righteous one. Why is it that we are the only people who somehow do not deserve to suffer?

We have to remember something. This may come as a real shock and surprise, but suffering, according to the Word of God, is not only a ministry; it is also a gift. Look in your Bibles, Philippians 1 and verse 29. It cannot be stated more plainly: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

Notice the word "given": "for unto you it is given." Someone tell me, what is faith? It's the what? Gift of God. Why do you believe? God gave you the gift of faith. Now look at verse 29 again: "For unto you it is given"—that is, it's a gift—"in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him." So suffering for Christ is a gift. God does not give that gift to everyone, just like He does not give faith to everyone. Suffering, according to the Bible, is not only a ministry, it is not only deserved, but at times it is a gift.

The Speculation

When God sends His judgment, that does not mean that every Christian is going to die. In His judgment upon Jerusalem, there were true worshipers of God, and most of them were sent into captivity. They suffered, but they were not killed with the sword; they did not die.

But stop and think about this. If God sent His judgment on our church, our state, or our nation, and we were spared, consider the effect it would still have upon us when some of our family members and friends die, our economy is destroyed, society is loosed from its moorings, and everything is in shambles. When God says, "The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God," His judgment is not a Sunday school picnic, whether you are a believer or a non-believer. It is real. It is genuine. God's judgment was real for Judah. God's judgment was real for Israel. God's judgment is real for America. Neither Judah nor Israel experienced a Sunday school picnic.

The season is that it is time. The sentence is judgment. The source is that it must begin at the house of God.

The Speculation: What Will Be the End of the Disobedient?

Now, if you will go back in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4, let me give you the fourth point today: the speculation. When God sends His judgment, what will happen to us? How will it affect us? What will we do? What will others do? How can we help each other? How can we prepare?

There is another speculation, given to us in verse 17: "For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it first begin at us"—here is the speculation—"what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

The question is very pertinent. If God brings such trials, tribulations, and afflictions upon those who have obeyed the gospel, what will be the end, the outcome, and the result of those who have not obeyed the gospel? If God deals thusly with His own, how will He deal with His enemies and adversaries? If God deals severely with

His people, will He not deal more severely with those who hate Him? This question is akin to the thought expressed in Job 19:29: “Be afraid of the sword, for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.”

Now listen to what he said: “Be afraid of the sword.” Why? “For wrath bringeth the sword, that you may know that there is a judgment to come.” All the temporal judgments in time and history point to one full, final, and eternal judgment.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:32, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?” The phrase I want to deal with is, “if God spared not His own Son.” When sin was imputed to Jesus Christ, God did not spare Christ, even though Christ is the only begotten Son of God. If God would not spare His own Son, and if God does not spare His own people, what makes a sinner think that somehow he is going to escape the judgment of God? What makes him think that somehow he is going to get away with his sins? This is what Peter is saying.

“If judgment first begins with us, what will be the end of those that obey not the gospel of God?” In one sense, we do not have to speculate; in another sense, we do. We do not have to speculate because the Bible gives us some idea of what is going to happen to those who obey not the gospel. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9, “And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.”

Note what is going to happen: “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.” He is going to come back in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ. He will come “to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day.”

On the one hand, we do not have to speculate. On the other hand, we do, because we cannot conceive, think, or imagine the righteous vengeance and wrath of God upon the wicked. I can assure you, believing the Bible in its entirety still will not give us a proper perspective of the horror, anguish, and suffering of those who fail to repent and come to Jesus Christ. This is one particular truth I do not wish to discover by personal experience, I can assure you. I would rather speculate. I do not want to know. One last thought today, and I will make some applications.

The Situation: The Righteous Scarcely Saved

If you look at verse 18 of 1 Peter chapter 4, we have the situation. In verse 17 are the season, the sentence, the source, and the speculation. In verse 18 is the situation: "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" I want you to think about that: "If the righteous"—what?—"scarcely be saved? Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Now, let us go back first to Matthew 7, and then we will go to Acts 14. Let me show you why the Apostle Peter said, "if the righteous scarcely be saved." Look in Matthew chapter 7, beginning with verse 13. Our Lord says, "Enter ye at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The road to destruction is exceedingly broad, and many go in thereat. The way to life is exceedingly narrow, and few find it. Now look in Acts 14 and verse 22. Paul is writing to those who were converted under his ministry—to the saints of God, individuals who are genuinely saved and genuinely converted. He says, "Confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

Through what kind of tribulation? Much. Much. Much.

Now what did Peter write? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

In one sense, the situation is an affirmation of the speculation, but it is a little more than that. One author wrote concerning verse 18:

“No wonder that the apostle speaks of the righteous being saved with difficulty. Yes, the obstacles are many and immense, and there is no good thing in them that is in all that is naturally theirs, even while saints. What weakness and what exposure we experience. Who then can be saved, asked the disciples, when they heard of the special difficulty for the rich, who as they thought had such an advantage over all the others.”

“But Jesus looking upon them with his unfailing love replied, ‘With men this is’—that is salvation—‘is impossible. But not with God,’ thanks be to his holy name. ‘With God all things are possible.’ Salvation is of God, as is the gospel which proclaims it to everyone, poor and rich, who believe. But all the more appalling is the lot of those who not only violate his law, but scorn or neglect his gospel.”

“Where then shall the impious and the sinful appear?” Notice what he said: “if the righteous scarcely be saved.” What will be the end or outcome of the ungodly and unrighteous? This verse was practically literally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. When the Roman armies under Titus came to destroy Jerusalem, they brought the full power and authority of the Roman Empire. It was the Christians who barely escaped.

They heeded our Lord's words: “When you see these signs, then flee ye to the mountains.” They barely got out. The historian Josephus says that no Christians perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Over a million Jews, Pharisees, hypocrites, and Sadducees who did not believe the gospel perished. Josephus says that 97,000 more were captured and enslaved, and that 1,100,000 were slain. Can you imagine? Over a million people slain, and not one Christian among them. The other Christians barely escaped.

When you look back at 1 Peter 4:18—“If the righteous scarcely be saved”—you understand what that means. I have said it a hundred times, and I am sure my parents said it concerning me: when you look at your children and grandchildren, and other people's children and grandchildren, at the stupid, imbecilic things they do, you say, “It's a wonder any of them ever lived to be adults.” When you are young, you think you will live forever. You think you are indestructible. You take chances and do things that are absolutely ridiculous.

Let me apply that to the children of God. It is a wonder that any of us ever persevere in the faith. Consider our inclinations and proclivities, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, and the drawing of the world. It is a wonder, only by God's sovereign, immutable grace, that any of us perseveres. If God did not give us persevering grace, preserve us, and enable us to persevere, none of us would ever be saved.

I am thankful for this passage in Philippians: “Being confident in this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” If He did not perform it, it would not be done if it depended upon us. That is why Peter says, “If the righteous scarcely be saved, what in the world are the ungodly and the sinner going to do when they appear before a righteous, holy God?”

Applications

Applications: Warnings and Encouragements

The first application is a warning clearly implied and expressed in verse 18. Albert Barnes rightly observed: “If God brings such trials upon us who have obeyed his gospel, what have we not reason to suppose He will bring upon those who are yet in their sins? And if we are selected first as the objects of this visitation, if there is that in us which requires such method of dealing, what are we to suppose will occur in the end with those who make no pretensions to religion but are yet living in open transgression? The sentiment is that if God deals thus strictly with His people, if there is that in them which makes the visitation of his judgments proper on them, there is a certainty that they who are not as people, but who live in iniquity will in the end be overwhelmed with the tokens of his severe wrath. Their punishment hereafter will be certain and who can tell what the measure of its severity will be. Every wicked man, when he sees the trials which God brings upon his own people, should tremble under the apprehension of the deeper calamity which will hereafter come upon himself.”

But how do most ungodly people interpret the trials of God’s people? They say, “Boy, I’m thankful I’m not a Christian. Look what

he's going through." They never stop to think: If God deals thusly with His own, what will He do with the wicked?

The second application is something we must think about, and it makes me tremble, yet it is true. In the best of God's servants, in the best of God's people, those in His own household, there is so much amiss and so much wrong in us that it is absolutely necessary for God to chasten and judge us at times.

Has it ever dawned on you? I know it has dawned on me; it has happened to me. Here you are praying, asking God for help, blessing, and deliverance, and all of a sudden a most wicked, vile, ungodly thought comes into your mind. Sometimes it is the very thing you are praying against. You have to say, "Oh God, my flesh hates you. My flesh loves sin. God, help me. God, please deliver me." There is enough sin in our prayers to condemn us to hell. There is enough sin in everything to destroy us.

My prayer is, "Lord, I sure don't want to be chastened. I want to be such an obedient child. I want to listen. I want to hear. I want to obey." I know what it was like when my father took the switch to me, and I sure don't want my heavenly Father to have to take the switch to me. I want to listen and obey, but I have to confess and acknowledge that God has been so gracious and so kind to me and given me what I don't deserve.

Had I got what I deserved, I would not be here. How we should praise Him for His marvelous, marvelous grace. We have to remember this: absolutely nothing happens to a child of God by accident. There are no incidents, no accidents in a world that is ruled by God, only His providence.

The third application is this: we must also remember that whatever our tests, trials, afflictions, chastisement, or judgments, as children of God, we know they will soon pass away. Like that old black preacher who said his favorite phrase in the Bible was, "And it came to pass." He said it didn't come to stay; it came to pass. Thank God, our trials, tests, judgments, and chastenings come to pass.

We may sorrow for a little while, but the Scripture tells us joy cometh in the morning. Psalm 13 verse 5 says this: "For as anger

endureth but for a moment, in His favor is life, weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

I know that some of us go through deep trials—heartbreaking, heart-rendering trials. But none of us have ever suffered like the Apostle Paul. We've never been beaten with 39 stripes three times. We've never been a night and day in the deep, floating around in the ocean somewhere out there. We've never been in prison and beaten and stoned and left for dead. We've never been through all those things. We've had our trials, yes, but notice what the Apostle Paul said concerning his far greater trials in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 17.

He said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." What did he say? When you compare eternity to time, you have to come to the conclusion that all of our afflictions are exceedingly light.

I got whipped one time by my father that I thoroughly enjoyed. We often had to get up at two o'clock in the morning and go to work in the barn until daylight. Then we went to work in the fields and worked till dark. And in summertime, does it get dark from nine o'clock? My father had come in and awakened me and said, "Come on out and let's go to work." Well, I say he awakened me. He said I answered him, but I never did wake up.

The next thing I knew, my mother was shaking me and telling me, "You better get out of bed. Your dad's coming with a switch." I jumped up, pulled my blue jeans on, and ran out the door to go to the barn to work. There Dad was on the porch with a switch. He caught me. He hit me one time with that switch, and I hollered. Then he hit again, and I didn't holler. He hit again; I didn't holler. He didn't hit again. He didn't know what was wrong, and I didn't know what was wrong. Finally, he looked down, and the first time he hit me, the switch had broken off and was sticking out about an inch or two from his hand.

He said, “Boy, you surely are blessed. Get out that bar and go to work.” That was the only whipping I ever got that I enjoyed. I got whipped one time, and then the switch broke. I’m simply saying, folks, when you look at eternity, that’s a light affliction. Everything we face is exceedingly light. We’ve got to remember, it came to pass; it didn’t come to stay. We can rejoice in Him and thank Him that He does everything for our good and for His glory. Let’s pray.

Father, we are so thankful in the name of Jesus Christ for Your love, mercy, and grace. Oh Lord, we know that judgment must come. The season is here, that is for sure. The sentence is indeed judgment, and it will begin at the house of God. If it begins at us, what will be the outcome of the sinner and the ungodly? We acknowledge that if it were not for You, none of us would ever persevere. If You did not preserve us, and did not give us perseverance, grace, repentance, and faith, we would never be faithful unto Thee. In our salvation—in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end—You receive all the honor and all the glory, for salvation is of the Lord. We thank Thee and worship Thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Judgment at the House of God

Part Three of Three

Introduction and Review

This brief series has been known as "Judgment at the House of God." So 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 17: "For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

For the last two weeks, we have looked at verses 17 and 18. We began this discourse by considering judgment and the maxim that it always begins with the people of God, or the house of God. We looked basically at five points.

First of all, the season: "For the time is come." Judgment is seasonal. The Bible says, "It came to pass at the time or the season when kings went forth to war." There is a season for it; God gives a season of judgment.

Then there is the sentence: "The time has come that judgment must begin." Judgment can be punitive, corrective, or preventive.

Next, we considered the source: "It must begin at the house of God." That phrase represents not only the tabernacle and the temple, a physical structure, but also the people of God.

Then there is the speculation: "If it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" In other words, if God judges His people, do not think He will slack His hand at all with His enemies.

Finally, in verse 18, there is the situation: "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

When we come to verse 19, I want you to understand that practically every time I preach, I try and endeavor to make applications of the Word of God to each of those truths. The motive behind the application is to teach you to apply the Word of God to your life.

The Importance of Application

In reality, you should be making applications even if I do not. Whenever a message is preached, whenever truth is expounded, you should be asking yourself, “What am I to learn from this? How is it to affect my life? How am I to change? What is to be my course of conduct after this truth?” So you should be making applications, even if I do not make those applications for you. Applications are extremely important.

If you do not understand the importance of application, when you read your Bible, it is going to be nothing more than literature to you. I read a good book this past week on Lewis Wetzel. You say, “Who in the world is Lewis Wetzel?” Well, he was a frontiersman. He was an Indian fighter. But the point being, it was just literature. It was true. It was an accurate history. I will probably be able to use some of it in

the future, but it is simply literature. I have read it, put the book down, and already loaned it to someone else.

Biblical Examples of Application

Now, if you do not learn to make applications, that is what the Bible is going to be to you. You are simply going to read it: "Oh, I read my Bible today." You are going to close it, and that is it. Biblical applications are always based upon doctrine. If you understand that all Bible doctrine is applicable, then it is imperative that you learn how to apply that doctrine to your life. In fact, all of the biblical writers always made application. Why? Because they wanted their hearers to obey the Word of God.

One of the easiest passages to understand application is 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Now look at that verse, a very simple verse. Do you realize that verse 58 is the application of everything that the Apostle Paul has taught in 1 Corinthians chapter 15? What has he taught in 1 Corinthians chapter 15? First of all, he taught the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. And because our Lord was raised bodily from the grave, he also taught the bodily resurrection of believers. That is, we are going to be raised as Christ was raised.

What is he saying in verse 58? He is saying, in light of all his teaching on the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable." In other words, if you understand the doctrine of the resurrection, it has to have an effect upon your life. You say, "Well, what difference does it make if I am not honored in this life? What difference does it make if I am not recognized? What difference does it make if nothing happens to me that I think should happen to me? There is going to be a resurrection. God is going to reward the faithful. God is going to reward the obedient. Therefore, in light of the resurrection, I can be steadfast, unmovable. Why?"

"Because I know that I can abound in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as I know that my labour is not in vain." The Apostle Paul

is teaching perseverance, motivation, and application, and he says these things can be in your life if you understand the biblical doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. Very obviously, this application is based upon Bible doctrine, and the application teaches you how to apply that Bible doctrine in every day of your life. It should affect you every day.

In 2 Corinthians 4:13, the apostle writes, “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.” The interesting thing is that the Apostle Paul is quoting Psalm 116:10. There David says, “I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.” Notice that David said, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” The Apostle Paul says, “We have also this same spirit of faith, according as it is written,” and he quotes Psalm 116:10: “I believed, and therefore have I spoken.”

Then he makes this application: “We also believe, and therefore speak.” In other words, what you genuinely and truly believe comes out in your everyday conversation and in your everyday conduct. If you know the truth and genuinely believe the truth, it is impossible for that truth not to affect you and change your life. The opposite is also true: if you do not believe the truth, it is impossible for your unbelief not to affect your life.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 4 verse 23, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." We are the products of what we believe, or of what we do not believe. If you are an unbeliever, your actions, conduct, and conversation are products of your unbelief. You still believe something; you just do not believe the Word of God. But if you believe the Word of God, then it is bound to affect your life, and it is just that simple.

Verse 19 as Application of Judgment Doctrine

Judgment begins at the house of God. That means it begins with the people of God, or in our local assemblies. We, as children of faith, are not immune to judgment. It does mean, however, that we are certainly going to be saved from the wrath to come. God is not going to treat us as He treats unbelievers.

Peter does not leave us clueless as to what to do when we are experiencing God's judgment. In 1 Peter chapter 4, after saying, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" he says in verse 19, "Wherefore..."

Verse 19 is the application of what Peter has taught in verses 17 and 18. When you see the word "wherefore" in the Bible, you should understand that it introduces an application. This is what I want to make clear as we turn to Acts chapter 2.

The Persons Addressed

An application is being made. Notice Acts chapter 2 and verse 36. Peter had just preached upon the deity of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. He says, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

The word “therefore” lets you know that Peter is drawing a conclusion or making an application based upon what he has taught in the preceding verses. Verse 36 is the culmination, the climax, the height, and the apex of what he has been saying. If you understand what he has just taught, therefore, you are going to know that Jesus Christ is Lord and Christ. He is the sovereign. He is the Messiah.

Peter uses the word “therefore.” It does not matter whether you use “wherefore” or “therefore”; it still refers to what precedes. It is an application. Go back to verse 19: “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” In light of the truth taught in verses 17 and 18, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

When you see “wherefore,” “for this cause,” or “for this reason,” all of those are applications based upon doctrine. So let us look at verse 19 and break it down. I initially was going to include verse 19 in

the last message, but there is so much truth here that it demands its own message.

The Persons Addressed: Those Who Suffer According to God's Will

First of all, note the persons addressed: “them that suffer according to the will of God.” Peter applies the truth because he has been teaching that the saints of God are going to suffer. If judgment begins at the house of God, obviously those who are suffering are members of that house. They are members of that family, the family of God.

Now the Greek word for “suffer” is the word paschō, and it has reference to suffering, to being vexed, to being sick, to be in a bad plight, or undergoing some test or some trial. I want to show you that this word is used not only in reference to our Lord and the apostles, but to saints as well.

In Mark 8:31, you will find the exact same word used in reference to Jesus Christ. Our Lord is speaking, and the Bible tells us: “And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Note, if you would, the words, “And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer”—it is exactly the same word.

In 2 Corinthians 1:6, you will see how this same word is used in reference to the apostles. The apostle says, “And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer”—the word is paschō—“or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.”

Now, the interesting thing is that the apostle Paul talks about some of the things that he suffered. What were some of those things? Let us look in our Bibles to 2 Corinthians 11 and begin reading there.

Look at what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11: “Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in

prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one." One time they stopped at thirty-nine. Usually they always stopped at thirty-nine, unless they miscounted. But four of those times, they made sure they gave him the full forty. He says, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Did those apostles suffer? The answer is yes. Did Paul suffer? The answer is yes. Are Christians going to suffer? The answer is yes. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 3:4, "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know." Paul said, "I tried to tell you we're going to suffer. We're not going to get out of it." In 2 Thessalonians 1:5, he calls suffering "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God,"

Peter writes, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God." The word applied to the sufferings of Christ. It applied to the sufferings of the apostles. It applies to the suffering of saints. Do you think the Lord Jesus Christ suffered according to the will of God? Yes. Do you think the apostle Paul and the other apostles suffered according to the will of God? The answer is yes.

When Peter writes, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God," I do not think he has in mind suffering which we bring upon ourselves due to our own sin and stupidity. There is a principle of Scripture, plainly stated: he who sins must suffer. Suffering follows sin, just as sunrise follows sunset. If you sin, you are going to suffer. If you do something stupid, you are going to suffer. That is suffering you simply bring upon yourself.

When Peter speaks of suffering according to the will of God, he refers to suffering either for righteousness' sake or through some corrective or preventive suffering or judgment that God places upon us for our own benefit. Do you remember what our Lord said in

Matthew chapter 5, verses 10 and 11? “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” In other words, they are lying about you and slandering you. What they are saying is not true. We are not being blessed when what they say is truthful.

A comedian once said, "There's a lot of rumors going on around about me." He added, "Unhappily, some of them they can prove." But our Lord said, "When all men say these things against you falsely."

It is indeed possible to suffer according to the will of God. Philippians 1:29 says, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Pay close attention to the word "given." It is a gift "in the behalf of Christ," not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Is faith a gift? Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Does God give faith? Yes, God gives faith. Does God give faith to every man? No. Even the Apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians, "For all men have not faith." Faith is the gift of God. Does God give the gift of suffering? That is exactly what Philippians 1:29 says: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Suffering is just as much the gift of God as faith is. As God does not give the gift of faith to every individual, He does not give the gift of suffering to every individual; but He does give the gift of suffering to some individuals. Therefore Peter addresses those "that suffer according to the will of God."

How do we know if we are suffering according to the will of God? The answer should be obvious. Ask yourself: Am I suffering for righteousness' sake? Am I suffering by way of a corrective or preventive judgment in order to humble me, teach me, and correct me? Is my suffering in line with the Word of God? You could say it this way: if your suffering is not due to your own sin and stupidity, probably you are suffering according to the will of God. That is the easy answer. What is suffering according to the will of God?

God's Secretive and Revealed Will

You have to understand that the Bible speaks about two wills. There is God's secretive will, and there is God's revealed will. Deuteronomy 29:29 is a good verse to memorize: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

What is God's revealed will? It is His Word. What is God's secretive will? We do not know. How do I know whether God's secretive will is coming to fruition in my life? You will know it when it comes to pass in time and in history. Unless it comes to pass in time and in history, you do not concern yourself with God's secretive will. That is a secret. There is no way for you to know it. What you concern yourself with is His revealed will.

If you obey this revealed will, I will guarantee you, He is going to work out His secretive will in you. If you disobey His revealed will, I will guarantee you, He will still work out His secretive will in you. You will find out what it is when it comes to pass in time and in history. Our main concern is God's revealed will.

Suffering Under Tyranny as God's Will

Now Peter said, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God." I believe that those who suffer due to injustice, tyranny, and despotism are suffering according to the will of God. How can I say that? It is not something that you are bringing upon yourself because of your own sin and stupidity. Look at the murders. Look at the people who have been unjustly prosecuted and unjustly incarcerated and done anything. And yet the tank rolled over them.

Look at 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 13. I remember how, when some things strike your mind, you can remember where you were and what you were doing. I remember even the state I was in when I was reading this passage and it came out. I remember the very church I was preaching in, in a Western state, when I read this passage while reading through 1 Peter. First Peter 3 and verse 13. Look at this.

"And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" That's a good question, isn't it? I read that and all of a sudden it clicked in my mind. I said, "I know the answer to that. I know who will harm you if you're followers of that which is good: a wicked tyrannical civil government."

Then I looked at the next verse, 1 Peter 3 and verse 14: "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." What? Look at the two verses together: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

When I read that, Romans chapter 13 immediately came to my mind. Look at verses 3 and 4. Notice how clear this is in the scripture. Paul writes, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

"For he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Now go back to verse 3: "For rulers are not a terror to good works." They are to be a terror, but not to good works. They're to be a terror to evil works. Go back to 1 Peter chapter 3: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? And if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror." Their—plural—their terror. In other words, a wicked, corrupt, despotic, tyrannical civil government terrorizes good works, and they promote evil works.

Therefore, I am submitting to you that those who have been unjustly, despotically, and tyrannically incarcerated are suffering according to the will of God. Without getting into it, may I remind you that there is a vast difference between mala in se and mala prohibita? Those are two Latin terms, legal terms. Mala in se refers to that which is evil in and of itself: Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Murder, theft, and

adultery are evil in and of themselves. They are violations of God's law.

Mala prohibita is a violation only because man prohibits it. Do not walk on the grass. Do not drive over sixty miles an hour. You must file this paper; you must not file this paper. You must sign this way; you must not sign that way. Those things are crimes only because man said, "Do this" or "Don't do this." If there is a sign posted by a governmental official that says, "Do not walk on the grass," and I walk on the grass, have I become inherently evil because I have walked on the grass? No, I have not violated God's law.

If a policeman sees me, he might come over, give me a ten-dollar ticket, and say, "Can't you read?" But I am not sinful merely because I have walked on the grass. I have not violated God's law. So those who suffer under tyranny are, I believe, suffering according to the will of God.

The Act to Be Accomplished: Commit Your Souls to God

Now look again at 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 19, because Peter gives further instructions to the persons addressed: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God..." Here is the act to be accomplished: "Commit the keeping of their souls unto him." If you are suffering according to the will of God, then you must commit the keeping of your souls unto him. The word soul means far more than merely the spiritual part of our being. It represents the entirety of our life—our health, our life, our wealth, our possessions, everything that we have and everything that we are as beings.

In Genesis chapter 46, beginning with verse 22, watch carefully. I am telling you that the word “souls” means more than just the spiritual part of your body. Verse 22 says, “These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all the souls were fourteen.” I wonder if those souls had bodies when they were born. I believe they did, don’t you? The word “soul” therefore includes the body very obviously.

Skip down to verse 25: “These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the

souls were seven." Did they have bodies? Of course they did. Look in verse 26: "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six." Now watch this: "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt." Did they bring their bodies? Yes, they did. Did they bring their clothes? Yes, they did. Did they bring their possessions? Yes, they did. The word "souls" there refers to everything about their being.

In Acts chapter 27, verse 37, the apostle Paul is on a ship with a lot of individuals. There is a storm, and notice what the Bible says: "And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls." So that is 276 men. They had bodies. They also had their possessions with them, because you will remember that those possessions were what they threw over the ship to lighten the load in the storm. The word "souls" there includes the totality of our being. It includes our bodies. It includes our possessions.

Now go back to 1 Peter chapter 4 and look again at verse 19: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him." What are you to commit to Him? Everything that you are and everything that you have—your body, your health, your life, and your possessions. The word "commit" is the Greek word paratithēmi.

This happens to be a present passive imperative. An imperative in English and in Greek is a command. So here is something God is commanding you: if you are suffering according to the will of God, He is commanding you to commit the keeping of your soul unto Him. Para is a preposition meaning "alongside of." Tithēmi is a verb meaning "to cause to stand," "to set before," or "to place beside or near." What is God saying? You need to commit, cast, and place alongside of and in front of Him your health, your life, your possessions—everything that you have. Commit it all to Him. Entrust it to Him. Deposit it with Him. Charge it to Him.

In 1 Peter 5:7, Peter uses another word, but it is essentially the same: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Casting and committing are one and the same. You cast your care, your possessions, your burden, your life, and your health—all of it—upon Him, for He careth for you. One author wrote that most

people who cast their care upon our Lord trip over all the ropes they left tied to them as they walk away. They never really did any casting or committing after all.

Commit in Well-Doing

The persons addressed are "them that suffer according to the will of God." The act to be accomplished is to "commit the keeping of their souls." The understanding to be achieved is this: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing."

You do not simply commit the keeping of your souls to Him; you do that in well-doing. The word "well-doing" refers to the right course of action—something virtuous, something praiseworthy, that which is done in obedience to God. Peter uses this phrase so that we can understand it.

“In well-doing” means the right course of action, the right course of conduct, that which is virtuous and praiseworthy. Peter writes, “For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” How do you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? By obeying, by doing that which is right and holy. You will not silence them by disobedience; they will talk more. You will not silence them by being angry, vindictive, hateful, and ugly; they will talk more. The way you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men is by well-doing, by doing that which is virtuous and praiseworthy, so that your life proves them wrong.

Peter writes, “For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.” Here is the contrast: well-doing is doing that which is holy and right; evil-doing is doing that which is wicked and wrong. If we are suffering according to the will of God, then we must commit our souls unto Him in well-doing. In other words, what God says is this: it is obedience, and it is righteousness, to commit our souls unto Him.

Have you ever stopped to think that our Heavenly Father is too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake? I do not care what we go through or what sufferings we endure. He is still too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. Therefore, we

are to commit our souls unto Him in well-doing. It is the right course of action; it is that which God has commanded us to do.

Recognition of God as Faithful Creator

One last point is the recognition to be attained: “as unto a faithful Creator.” What are we to recognize as we suffer according to the will of God, committing our souls unto Him in well-doing? We are to recognize that He is a faithful Creator. Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 9, teaches us, “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant”

“And mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” He is the faithful God. In 1 Thessalonians 5:24 the Bible says, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

Have you ever stopped to think what it would have been like if Adam had never sinned, if sin had never entered this world? Can you imagine the relationship that every creature would have with its Creator? Sin destroyed that original relationship between creature and Creator. But faith restores that relationship, so that the believer, living according to the will of God, rests implicitly upon the Creator.

Albert Barnes writes concerning the faithful Creator: “God may be trusted, or confided in, in all his attributes and in all the relations which he sustains as Creator, Redeemer, moral Governor, and Judge. In these, and in all other respects, we may come before him with confidence and put unwavering trust in him. As Creator particularly, as one who has brought us and all creatures and all things into being, we may be sure that he will be faithful to the design which he had in view. From that design he will never depart until it is fully accomplished. He abandons no purpose which he has formed, and we may be assured that he will faithfully pursue it to the end. As our Creator, we may come to him and look to him for his protection and care. He made us. He had a design in our creation. He so endowed us that we may live forever, and so that we may honor and enjoy him.”

“He did not create us so that we might be miserable, nor does he wish that we should be. He formed us in such a way that if we

choose, we may be eternally happy. In that path in which he appointed us to go, if we pursue it, we may be sure of his aid and protection. If we really aim to accomplish the purposes for which we were made, we may be certain that he will show himself to be a faithful Creator, one in whom we may always confide.

"Even though we have wandered from him, forgotten why we were made, and loved and served the creature more than the Creator, if we return to him, he will not forget the design for which he originally made us. As our Creator, redeemed by the blood of his Son and renewed by his Spirit after the image of him that created us, we may still confide in him. We may pray that the high, noble ends for which we were made may yet be accomplished in us."

Conclusion: God's Faithfulness in Suffering

Doing this, we shall find him as true to that purpose as though we had never sinned. God did not make us to be miserable; he made us to be holy. If we are holy, we will find that we are happy. Happiness is not something that we simply find; it is something we stumble upon in the path of duty and obedience.

John Gill said this concerning committing our souls to him in well-doing as a faithful Creator: "It is not only their duty, but their privilege. When they are called to suffer for Christ, they should commit their souls to God, who, as he is the Creator, is the Governor of the universe and will judge righteously. When they are called to lay down their lives for his sake, they shall not lose them though their bodies are killed. They may and should commit their souls, when departing from their bodies, into the hands of God, as Stephen, the first martyr, committed his into the hands of Christ. He that made them is able to keep them and will faithfully preserve them in happiness and glory till the resurrection morn, when their bodies shall be raised and reunited to them.

"This is to be performed in well-doing, for which they suffer and in which they should continue to the last—not rendering evil for evil, but blessing. In imitation of Christ and his servant Stephen, they should pray for their worst enemies, wish them all good, and do them all the acts of kindness that lie in their power."

Now, let me tell you what Peter is actually telling us, plain and simple. Suffering is bound to occur. Sooner or later, even as Christians, we are going to suffer. There is no way out of it. But Peter is also telling us that our Heavenly Father is not only faithful to chastise us and judge us when we need it; He is equally faithful in sustaining us in that chastisement and delivering us out of it.

One of my favorite verses is found in Lamentations 3:33: “For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” God is not some mean old man up in heaven with a huge rod in His hand, just waiting to beat the living daylights out of somebody. How many of you, as fathers or mothers, ever really enjoyed whipping the daylights out of your children? None of us. We only did it because it had to be done. We did not enjoy it.

I used to think my father was lying when he said, “Now son, this gives me no pleasure.” Until I grew up, I thought he enjoyed it. He did such a good job of it, you know; he put his whole heart in it. We had a peach tree behind our house. That thing never did bloom until after I left home. Dad always got those tree limbs for me. But our Heavenly Father doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

And when He does, remember Hebrews 12:10–11: “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” The Bible also tells us, “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” And so Peter says that, when we suffer, we need to understand that we have a responsibility, a command.

We need to commit the keeping of our souls, our lives, our bodies, our health, our families, our possessions, everything we have, into the hands of a faithful Creator. I find it amazing and delightful that we may come to the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God of the universe and say, "Father, help me." And He's willing and ready. He's the faithful Creator.

Father, we're thankful for your love, grace, and truth. And we ask that you would teach us by faithfulness, as well as your graciousness

and kindness. We want to acknowledge, Lord, that everything we are, everything we have, everything we will have or will be, is ours because of your grace and mercy. Because every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And we rejoice in thee, Lord. Make us holy, make us godly. In thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

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