

Judgment is Certain

1 Peter 4: 17-19

Would you agree with me that we serve a holy God, One in whom there has never been or ever will be any sin? We accept that as truth concerning God; He is holy. Would you also agree that we serve a merciful God, One who knew that in ourselves we could never be holy, and in spite of our sin provided atonement for our sin through the shed blood of His Son? I like that; it encourages my heart. God is holy; we serve a pure and righteous Lord. He is merciful. Had I received what I deserved, I would be in hell today, eternally separated from His grace!

God is holy and merciful, but He is also just. His holiness demands justice. He does and will judge sin. He could not be just if He refused to deal with sin. We like to see our elected officials tough on crime. We expect that of them, desiring justice to be served, but we don't like the idea of God being tough on sin.

God's judgment is little mentioned from the average pulpit. We like to hear about His blessings and His grace, but we shy away from righteous judgment. The prophets of old preached more about judgment than blessings. We may not like to deal with the holiness of God that demands justice, but if we are to live as God expects, we must. I want to consider the [principles](#) revealed in the text as we think on the thought: [Judgment is Certain](#).

I. The Proclamation for Judgment (17a) – [For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God](#): Here Peter proclaims that judgment is certain. We discover it isn't a question of if regarding judgment, but when. Let's take a moment to consider this proclamation. We see first:

A. The Chastening of Judgment – Peter isn't shy or deceptive in his proclamation. He reveals that judgment will come. To fully understand and appreciate what we have read, we need a proper understanding of judgment. We typically associate judgment with affliction and pain. Often it involves suffering or retribution for the wrongs one has committed. Clearly those attributes would be in view, and in this context it deals with "*a means of approval (chastening) of the righteous and condemnation of the wicked.*" Judgment often comes to purge the church and society.

- You will have to agree that we live in a society that bears little regard for the judgment of God. Most assume they can live as they please with little, if any, consequence for their actions. Our society has created a generation that feels as if they are accountable to no one. Sadly this attitude has even entered the church. Many show little regard for the righteous standard of God. We may understand the holiness of God, but few live as if they really appreciate His holiness and desire for us to live in light of that holiness. This is undeniable when you consider the lives many live throughout the week, and then attend church on Sunday as if all is well in their lives.

B. The Certainty of Judgment (17a) – [For the time is come that judgment must begin](#). Peter revealed that God's judgment was imminent. He had beheld the state of affairs upon the earth, and among the church, and the time for judgment had come. God in His holiness would not allow sin to remain. If sin wasn't confessed and repentance sought, judgment would come.

- Take a moment to consider the sentiment and attitude of our day. We live in a world, as a whole, that has little or no regard for a holy God. The name of our precious Savior and God the Father is often only spoken while cursing and swearing. There seems to be no end to the blasphemous attacks on the deity of Christ. Jesus is mocked and disgraced throughout much of society. A nation that was founded and built upon the word of God has turned its back on the One who blessed and prospered our land.
- Many in the religious community seem to follow the same path. There is a growing trend to abandon the Lord's Day, catering to the dictates of society rather than biblical instruction. Sunday is the day Jesus rose, the Spirit fell at Pentecost, the apostles met on Sunday, and John received the Revelation. Churches have become social clubs and entertainment centers, where the Gospel is rarely preached or shared. Many are preaching a doctrine that a God of love wouldn't bring judgment on His people. They teach that life's problems are due to a lack of faith. Surely you would agree that our day is very similar to that of Peter's and that we are dangerously close to the judgment of God being poured out upon us.

C. The Context of Judgment (17a) – [For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God](#): Peter offers a sobering proclamation: judgment is coming to the house of God. He is not speaking of judgment reserved for the rebellious and unrighteous, but chastening judgment due to corruption within the church.

- I am not a prophet of doom, but this is serious! I cannot emphasize the importance enough. The modern church is in real danger of facing the chastening judgment of God. We cannot continue to ignore His holy standard, living as we please, and refusing to engage in the work He left us to do without experiencing God's judgment.
- You might argue that it would never happen to us, but I am convinced you would be mistaken. Consider Moses: he wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land because of disobedience. God judged the sin of David. Ananias and Sapphira faced the judgment of God for their deception. Take just a moment to consider how Jesus spoke to 5 of the 7 churches in Revelation. He offered stern warnings of judgment for their sin. What exactly were they guilty of? You will be surprised to discover that every area Jesus addressed among them is prevalent in the church today.

- **Ephesus – Left their first love.**
- **Pergamos – Embraced false doctrine.**
- **Thyatira – Guilty of unchallenged immorality; an “anything goes” mentality.**
- **Sardis – Guilty of apathy and complacency.**
- **Laodicea – The lukewarm church.**

I. The Proclamation for Judgment (17a)

II. The Anticipation of Judgment (17b-18) – In this portion of our text, Peter deals with our anticipation of judgment and the repercussions it will have. He speaks of the undesirable position of those who do not know Christ is salvation. Notice:

A. The Undeniable Evidence (17c, 18b) – *what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?...where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?* We discover the undeniable evidence of their guilt. Peter speaks of those who have chosen to reject the Gospel; they are described as ungodly and sinners. There is no concern in their hearts for the holiness of God or their accountability to His righteous standard. They have heard the good news of the Gospel, but have chosen to deny it. They surely have experienced the conviction of the Spirit, but chose a path of rebellion and sin.

- We don't have to look very far in our own communities to find such evidence among many today. Our world is filled with those who have heard the truth, they have been exposed to the Gospel message, and yet they have chosen to reject it and live life as it pleases them. There is no desire for the things of God or His ways. There is no consideration for the consequences of sin or the fact that they too will one day give account of their lives to a holy and righteous God. Surely we understand that we live in the midst of a sinful and ungodly culture.

B. The Inescapable Expectation (17b, 18) – *and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? [18] And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* Here we find a troubling expectation regarding judgment. If God's righteous judgment begins at the house of God, what will the end be for those who have rejected His mercies? If the righteous barely escape such judgment, how will the ungodly and sinner endure? We must understand that God will not wink at sin. He will never turn a deaf ear or blind eye to sinful indulgence. If God's righteousness requires judgment among the church, and it does, it surely requires judgment among those who have denied Him and have no desire for Him. We have the hope of His abundant mercy and grace. The lost do not enjoy such privilege.

- Have you given this truth any thought? I am certainly not down on the church, but we must admit there is much that needs improvement. If God brings judgment upon the church for her lack and disobedience, how much more severe the punishment of the lost must be. That alone ought to compel us to repent of sin and seek genuine revival. Turning to God and away from sin is America's only hope. We cannot expect society to do so if the church is unwilling.

C. The Unconditional Expectation (17b, 18) – *and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? [18] And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* I want to emphasize the importance of what we have read. Take a moment to consider the questions Peter posed in these verses. What shall be the end of those who do not obey the gospel? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? That ought to stir our hearts and compel us to action.

- As we consider the sincerity of these words we ought to be *moved with compassion* toward those who are without Christ. We ought to love them as He loved them, doing all we can to reach them before it is eternally too late. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* Aren't you glad someone loved you enough to share the Gospel with you? Aren't you glad for the relationship you have with Christ and the provision it affords? Consider those around us who do not enjoy such a relationship, those who do not have the assurance of salvation!

- I also realize we ought to be *motivated by conviction*. It is evident to see that the majority of our world lives and behaves contrary to God's will and His Word. We are not to judge, but we must be willing to warn others of the judgment to come. We have become so indoctrinated with political correctness that most are afraid to speak truth. Most are afraid to confront sin. Society doesn't want to offend anyone. I had rather offend them, and even make them mad, if that is what it takes to reach them for Christ. We must be willing to stand for truth and proclaim the Gospel even when it isn't popular or accepted to do so. Someone needs to warn those who are perishing in sin of the judgment to come!

I. The Proclamation for Judgment (17a)

II. The Anticipation of Judgment (17b-18)

III. The Consolation in Judgment (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.* The closing section of this chapter has dealt much with the suffering of the believer. I fear that we may experience the judgment of God in our generation due to rebellion and disobedience. If in fact we face God's judgment, it won't be enjoyable, but there is a measure of consolation for the believer. Consider:

A. The Sovereignty in Suffering – I am well aware that much of the suffering endured in this life is the result of sin. That isn't always the case, but many times people must face the consequences of their actions. All suffering is not sent to chastise, but much of it is. There is a bit of comfort in whatever suffering we face. When we are called upon to endure hardship and adversity we can rest in the sovereignty of God. He is in control of every aspect of our lives. Often God uses trials and testing to strengthen our faith and draw us closer to Him.

- I will admit that I have wondered about what awaits the United States. I am convinced that we cannot continue our current course and avoid the judgment of God. When judgment comes, we will have to endure some suffering along with everyone else. When that time comes, believers can take comfort knowing that God is sovereign in our lives and He will work all things for our good and His glory. Moses, Joshua, and Caleb endured the wilderness wandering along with the rebellious, but God was faithful. The early church faced much persecution, but they were never forsaken. God will see us through, even if the way gets rough and hard to bear.

B. The Security in Suffering (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.** The saved have been bought with a price. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. He loved us enough to die for us and He is more than able to keep us. Times may get hard, and they likely will. I believe that perilous times will come; in fact, we appear to be in the midst of them now. It will likely get more difficult to maintain our witness for Christ apart from persecution. If America doesn't soon turn to God, we will likely experience His judgment in ways our land has never known. That may very well be a reality in our lifetime, but even if it comes we can trust in the Lord. We must look to Him for strength, wisdom, and comfort. He did not pay such a high price to abandon us in the midst of the journey!

- Quickly we need to see the attitude that God expects of us even in the midst of trying times. We must commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well doing. If judgment comes, we cannot blame God or abandon the faith. We must press on, remaining faithful to our calling. Judgment will weed out the mere professors, but those who are genuinely saved will maintain their commitment regardless of the difficulty.

Conclusion: I truly believe that judgment will come, and it may be much closer than we think. God is merciful, but He is also righteous. This passage ought to compel us to search our hearts and seek the Lord in repentance. Is there anything in your life that needs confessing? It also ought to challenge us to do all we can to reach the lost before it is too late. Someone needs the boldness to proclaim Jesus to a lost and dying world. If you are here today and unsaved, you stand in danger of judgment. You may not face it in this life, but one day you will meet God. You don't have to face judgment for your sin. Come to Jesus and receive forgiveness and salvation!