



The Miracle of Judgement Past, Present and Future

By Mike Petzer

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Past Judgment:

The single most liberating truth in the believer's life is this — judgment has already been passed on him. For the believer, the judgment that is past is the source of his confidence before God; judgment future is his consolation; judgement present is his security. *Mercy triumphs over judgment.* ^{Jas.2:13} *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment.* ^{1Jn.4:18}

God's mercy and love are both founded on His holiness and justice. He does not ignore or even suspend one part of His being in order to exercise the other part. He does not override justice nor violate His holiness in order to show mercy. It is because God has already punished all sin in Jesus' perfect sacrifice that He can be merciful toward "sinners" and still be perfectly just, loving, yet still holy.

The believer's confidence springs from this fact, not that he has escaped judgment, but that judgment has been fully executed upon him and that his acquittal is firmly founded on judgment satisfied and not because it has been avoided. Just like the father who came home and found his son standing next to a broken vase that lay shattered all over the floor. He promptly informed the boy that he was going to spank him for the crime, but the little boy boldly responded, "*You cannot Daddy, Mommy has already spanked me!*" He who has been judged, found guilty and punished, cannot legally be made to pay twice for the same crime.

The desire to have judgment over and done with — a thing of the past, is founded on the desire for fellowship.

When judgment is deferred, fellowship is strained. Insecurity and fear thrive. Judgment passed brings security and peace which are the essential foundations of a lasting, flourishing relationship.

I remember when I was a child that my father would ask me to do certain tasks from time to time. As any other child, for one reason or another, I would neglect to complete them as was required of me. When I would see my father returning after the day's work, I

would suddenly realize that the "*time of judgment*" for neglecting his instructions was imminent. I was filled with a sense of guilt and an overwhelming desire to place as much distance between myself and him as possible. The only problem was that, in the process of avoiding judgment, I had lost my sense of peace. The low-level-stress of no peace finally became more unbearable than the prospect of a spanking. I faced up to the consequences, was punished and immediately was flooded with relief and at peace again with my father, with our fellowship restored.

God's judgement is essentially redemptive. Unquestionably the greatest judgment that has ever been upon any man, is that judgment which fell upon Jesus as being the representative of the whole human race and all its sin. It is through this judgment that God established for all men, "*Such a great salvation*". Through this judgment we see that the ultimate purpose of every judgment is not to write us off but to redeem us. Not to destroy man, but to deliver him. Not to hurt men, but to heal them. Not to crush but to change. This is also illustrated throughout the Old Testament book of Judges. The judges were men who "*judged Israel*". Their judgment was characterized by acts of deliverance for Israel from all their oppressors. With the result that Israel was made prosperous again as a nation after a period of great, albeit self inflicted, hardship. The judges' judgments were against the people's enemies and they ensured that the promises of God remained Israel's experience.

In the New Testament, Paul writes, *I have been crucified with Christ.*^{Gal.2:20} This is in fact true for all believers just as it says, *One died for all, therefore all have died.*^{2Cor.5:14} Since Jesus' death was the penalty for all of mankind's sin, and we died with him, then we are already effectively punished for all our sins. He, by the grace of God, did *taste death for everyone.*^{Heb.2:9}

He died for all sin. Sins we have committed, do commit and even those that we may yet commit. When the Father placed all sin on

his Son and punished him in our stead, he did so with absolute knowledge. "*All sin*" for the Father is every sin whether they were past, present or future. He died once and for all. There is no sin that will require him to die a second time. Jesus' final cry from the cross of, "*It is finished!*" proclaimed that man's outstanding debt of sin was cancelled once and for all. There is nothing that we can do as believers that will catch God by surprise. There is no sin that we could do that he has not already paid for. He has settled the sin issue so thoroughly in the believer's life, that, when he comes a second time, it will be just as the scripture says, *without reference to sin.*^{Heb.9:28} There is no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus. Neither now, nor in the future. Jesus put it this way, *He who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*^{Jn.5:24} We are now living in the realm of life. And this life does not come into judgment, because we are partakers of His own spotless life the moment we believed. We are joined to Him. We were one with Him when he was put to death, crucified, punished, raised and ascended to the Father's right hand.^{Eph.2:1-6} We are now one with Him in His blameless life. *For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*^{Rom.6:5} No present or future judgment can ignore this past judgment. It is the very foundation of our salvation and confidence before God.

Present Judgment:

Judgment And Punishment

We have established that the believer has been judged, found guilty and punished in Jesus' death. His punishment was Jesus' death. It is for this reason alone that we are not judged for our sins. *He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already.*^{Jn.3:18} The Gospel of John then goes on to say that

this judgment is one that the unbeliever has passed on himself. They have chosen darkness rather than the light.^{Jn.3:19}

Therefore the unbeliever's judgment is self imposed. It is a true statement that, "*God sends no man to hell, they choose to go there of their own free will.*" The unbeliever has rejected real life and is therefore, by default, condemned to an inferior, base existence in this life and a fearful punishment in eternity. All of this is the result of his own choice just as Paul said to the unbelieving Jews: *It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.*^{Acts .13:46} Hell is not the result of a wrong life, but of the ultimate bad choice — the rejection of Jesus.

Wrath, As Understood In The New Testament

We are in the habit of viewing wrath as something that only happens in the future, but the New Testament speaks of it as the present tense experience of all unbelievers. *He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*^{Jn.3:36} This same concept is expanded on in Romans chapter one. Paul tells us here that since they *did not honour Him as God*^{Rom.1:21} and because, *they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, birds, four-footed animals and crawling creatures,*^{Rom.1:23} that God withdrew his restraining hand from them and allowed them to pursue their own course of self-degradation, self-denigration and self-destruction. These verses are a commentary on the truth stated in verse 18, *For the wrath of God is revealed [not, will be revealed] from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*

The use of the words "*God gave them over*" in verses 24, 26 and 28 clearly illustrate the point that wrath is not that God is actively punishing sinful men, but that he is allowing them to experience the resultant fruit of their own errors without intervening to stop them. Paul says they are *receiving in their own persons the due penalty of*

their error. ^{Rom.1:27} **Effectively this wrath is the by-product of their errors** and not the action of an "*angry God*".

There is of course, a wrath yet to come, but we are dealing with present judgment. **Man, not God, is the cause of the present suffering and hardship in this world.** He is experiencing the moral, social and personal confusion that is the effect of a lost identity and greed.

Neglecting or rejecting the revelation of God produces terrible results. If we look at the effects of false religion on the peoples of India and the other eastern countries, where children die of malnutrition in the streets while people feed slick, fat cattle as gods, we see this clearly illustrated.

They have no room for pity or compassion in such a belief. To help someone in a poor condition is to ensure that they come back and live in the same condition again, because to help them is to short circuit the process of their punishment for bad "*karma*" because, as the Hindu believes, their current condition is a reward for their deeds in a supposed "*former life*." So why bother? Even killing someone is not considered a bad thing by the Hindu. For the Christian we pass through this world but once but according to the Hindu, this is but one of many lives that he is living. So why should sending someone on his way to the next life earlier than what he expected be such a terrible thing to him after all?

Discipline - The Chastening Of The Believer

But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. ^{1Cor.11:31-32}

The believer can escape all judgment by simply obeying the clearly revealed will of God for his life in the Word. Much of what people term "*learning from experience*" is learning under judgment. It is far better for you to experience God's promise than to experience the fruit of your neglect of His of word.

It is for discipline that you endure, God is treating you as sons.^{Heb.12:7} The son the Father does not discipline, is the son the Father does not love. God will not let you do your own thing. When God puts a bit in your mouth and turns your head the way you ought to go - that is not hurtful to you. Just as the Psalmist says, *Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.*^{P.s.32:9} Only when we choose to operate without insight or ignore the clear revelation of God does it become necessary to use drastic measures.

It would be harmful to you if he let you get your own way when it is opposite to his will for your life. This is the action of God's love. We need to settle in our hearts that the best thing for our lives is God's will.

When God judges, he does it to preserve the quality of life he always intended for us to enjoy. God will not pamper your weakness. Sometimes we want to hang onto our weaknesses that are actually killing us and so God has to wrest them violently from us. The rocks on which the ship of our false confidence is wrecked are not dangerous to us. They are a blessing because they expose the fact that our confidence is not completely in God. God's chastisement is seen in those difficult times when our false confidences are permitted to be destroyed. God's present judgment of the believer is essentially revelatory. It unmask our bad decisions. My loss is only apparent — not real. Those things which I thought that I could not live without, I find that I can do without them all and yet enjoy more happiness in my life than ever before. I am permitted by the resultant bad experience to see the true folly of each deception so that I may find my fulfilment in God alone.

Those troublesome times are a blessing. This is not God proving that he is right and we are wrong. It is to our advantage that we are made stronger by the removal of the things we we're deceived

into trusting in. Discipline cuts us off from things that we are dependent on or were enslaved to which are detrimental to our physical, spiritual and emotional well being. All discipline seems not to be joyful at the time, and yet, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.^{Heb.12:11} For the believer there is a great blessing in judgment. For example, the rain that fell during the flood in Noah's days destroyed the world of sin but elevated the believers to the highest place — Ararat. What began as judgment, rainfall, is considered a blessing now and is essential for growth. This should be proof enough that judgment causes growth.

Now, you can grow through obedience to the Word (*that is, confronting yourself with the Word and overcoming your own disobedience*) or through the judgment/discipline that comes through disobedience to the Word (*that is, being confronted by your own disobedience*). This judgment is when God permits us to experience the difficulty inflicted on us by our own wrong choice so that we may come to our senses and see the error of our bad decision. You have a choice! You can avoid being trained by "*discipline*" by **believing the Word and by acting on it**. However, if we are not trained by the Word, then we must eat the fruit of our unbelief. I have told our congregation that there are two ways to grow. One way is by listening to the Word and putting it into practice and the other is by going through a hard time and then listening to the Word and putting it into practice. A good idea is to avoid the hard time bit and just put the Word into practice first time around. God wants us to live. He hates death and death is anything outside his will for our lives. God is out to kill death. In whatever shape it appears.

To clarify, God is not the source of these problems, our bad choices are. Yes, he has the power to stop them, but he will not override the human will. Man's freedom of choice is a sacred thing to God and he will not violate it. God does not force his will on any man. God will not force you to be blessed. You are

free to live outside of and with less than what He has promised. It was because of this freedom to exercise his free will that Adam is rightfully regarded as being solely responsible for the fall. God had nothing to do with it. Yes He had the power to stop it, but he would not interfere with Adam's choice even though the fall of man was not his will. Once again, it is wrong to think that everything that happens to us is God's will. You cannot escape discipline if you are disobedient to the Word. There will always be a negative result for living outside of the will of God as it is revealed in the Word of God. Peter tells us that *they stumble because they are disobedient to the word.*^{1Pet.2:8} We cannot escape the law of cause and effect. Peter calls this, *Suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.*^{2Pet.2:13} " He also speaks of those who through destructive heresies and by denial of the truth *Bring swift destruction upon themselves.*^{2Pet.2:1} Remember, God lets us see the error of our ways so that we can correct them. God would be doing us great harm by permitting us to continue in disobedience under the illusion that it is not harmful to us.

When we are judged, we are disciplined so that we are not condemned together with the rest of the world.^{1Cor.11:32} Judgment for the believer is not condemnation. The scripture is clear that there is no condemnation for the believer - *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*^{Rom.8:1} It is far better for us to experience God's judgment, i.e. his discipline, now than to wake up at the end of the age and find ourselves condemned. Condemnation, as far as discipline is concerned, is when we are not judged.

What are we to endure then?

Some have held, mistakenly, to the opinion that to "*endure hardship as discipline*" or "*chastening*" includes the idea of sickness.

Firstly, is the discipline from God? If the discipline is the result of God's dealing with us, surely we should respond to it and correct the problem rather than "*endure*" it. "*Enduring God*" or any of

God's actions does not conjure up a positive image and cannot be considered as a godly thing that the Word of God would encourage us to do. But we are told to endure discipline, so how should we understand this verse?

The believer is not told to endure sickness, sin or temptation. Concerning sin and temptation he is told to resist them *After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.*^{Heb.12:4} Sickness is not mentioned anywhere in the book of Hebrews. So what must we endure?

Paul told Timothy to, *Suffer (endure) hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*^{2Tim.2:3} The "hardship" in this instance was Paul's imprisonment, being treated as a criminal for preaching the gospel. The same kind of hardship is in mind when the writer to the Hebrews encourages the recipients of his letter to endure hardship -persecution. Consider the heroes of faith mentioned in chapter 11. Verses 33-37 give us an account of how they suffered terrible persecution and still did not give up on the divine promise. The recipients of this letter are also called upon in to remember the former days when they *endured a great conflict of sufferings... made a public spectacle... reproaches... tribulations... seizure of your property.*^{Heb.10:32-34} These are the kind of hardships they were to endure without giving up on the Perfect Covenant together with the Old Testament saints as their *cloud of witnesses.*^{Heb.12:1} Jesus also is a faithful witness who *endured such hostility by sinners against himself.*^{Heb.12:3} They were, and we are, to endure without giving up on our faith, the inevitable hostility of the unbeliever against us. Persecution is to be endured, temptation is to be resisted and sickness is to be healed.

Persecution

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God.^{1Pet.4:17}

Much has been said about this verse, but any verse out of context can become a pretext for misunderstanding. The preceding verses contain these clauses *do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for testing* ^{1Pet.4:12} and *if you are reviled for the name of Christ* ^{1Pet.4:14} and *if anyone suffers as a Christian.* ^{1Pet.4:16} These show clearly that the judgment that is in mind here is persecution. Paul wrote *And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,* ^{2Tim.3:12} and Jesus assured his disciples that, *In this world you shall have tribulation.* ^{Jn.16:33}

Firstly, nowhere does Peter say that God is the source of this judgment. God is not persecuting his own children! On the contrary, all persecution of believers is not from God but from the devil. He is the spirit that troubles the believer and stirs up persecutions all over the world.

Secondly, these persecutions are not because the believer has done something wrong, instead, they are proof of a godly life. They come upon us to test us and are an opportunity for God to be glorified and the world to see the effect of our testimony. We are encouraged to be *in no way alarmed by (our) opponents which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you.* ^{Phil.1:28} This persecution is always to be an opportunity for rejoicing (see *James 1:2-4; Matthew 5:10-12; 1Peter 3:14*)

So what exactly is this judgment and who is passing it and upon whom is it being passed? This judgment is passed on the believer by the world. Communicating to us that we are considered by them to be *men of whom the world was not worthy,* ^{Heb.11: 38} and that we are unwelcome here. Just as Jesus said, *But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.* ^{Matt.10: 17-18} This is proof for us that we are saved. And in their case, through them passing this judgment on us, they are in fact judging themselves as those who are to be

destroyed. Which destruction they have no power to inflict upon us and so they are not to be feared.

Future Judgment:

Future Judgment Of The Believer

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.^{2Cor.5:10}

The believer will be judged for deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. We must avoid all confusion here. Salvation is not based on what we have done, but on what Jesus did for us. The unsaved are not lost because of their deeds, their deeds merely reflect how lost they are. Man is not unsaved because of what he has done, but because of what he has not done - he has not received Jesus Christ.

This judgment of the believer at the judgment seat of Christ is a judgment of his works and not his sin. The believer's sin has already been effectively and permanently judged in Christ Jesus. God will not dishonour his promise nor insult his Son's finished work by calling into question the guiltlessness of those for whom Jesus died.

The judgment of the believer is a testing of the quality of the work that he has done and not the quantity. It is on the basis of quality that the believer will be rewarded or lose his reward for his good works.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a

reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.^{1Cor.3:10-15}

This reward will not only be for those who are in full time ministry or merely for those who do "*truly spiritual*" things like praying for the sick or leading people to the Lord. The believer will be rewarded even for the seemingly unspiritual, mundane, ordinary, day-to-day things, like how you did your job. *Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.*^{Eph.6:8} Notice that it is "*whatever good thing we do,*" that we shall receive a reward for from the Lord. Slaves in Paul's day were not able to leave home and become involved in the more obvious Christian service of being a missionary. They were owned by their master and had to do his bidding. Paul assures them that this serious restriction will not be a disadvantage to them on judgment day. They will be just as surely rewarded as the most eminent apostles since they did their daily work faithfully. The future judgment of the believer will be a positive judgment. A judgment of reward. True, some will lose their reward but all will be saved.

Calling Jesus Lord, And Yet Still Lost?

Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'^{Matt.7:22-23}

The words "*I never knew you*" are the key to understanding this verse. Notice that it does not say, "*You did not know me,*" but, "*I never knew you.*" Speaking of the Galatians' salvation, Paul makes it clear that, *Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God.*^{Gal.4:9} Salvation is correctly, God knowing us, rather than us knowing God. So when Jesus said, "*I never knew you,*" He is letting us know that these people were never saved. It is not that they once were and then fell away for then He would have said, "*I knew you once...*," but he said, "*I never knew you.*"

Does not the evidence of the miraculous prove that these were saved? No! The seven sons of the high priest, Sceva, in the book of Acts were in the habit of doing certain miracles in the Name of Jesus also. *Some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus.*^{Acts.19:13} The man with the demon that stripped them naked was not the first time they had attempted to cast out a demon using Jesus Name. They had attempted it over a couple as the use of the plural "*those*" in the above verse also indicates. These were unsaved men.

The Future Judgment Of The Unbeliever

Although this booklet was written especially for believers, it would not be complete without dealing with the final condition of unbelievers. *And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*^{Rev.20:11-12}

Every unbeliever will appear before the "*great white throne*" of judgment. These are called the "*dead*" and are part of the "*second resurrection*," and because they are part of this "*second resurrection*" (unlike the believers) they are subject to the second death. The believer is part of the first resurrection, *Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*^{Rev.20:6}

The dead are judged according to their deeds according to what is in the "*books*". But the final criterion for judgment is "*anyone whose name was not written in the Lamb's book of life*" (Eternal life is not a reward but a gift and not because of good deeds, but faith in Jesus Christ.) Those whose names are not in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. *And if anyone's name was not found written in*

the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.^{Rev.20:15} Since they have rejected Jesus as their saviour they are subject to the second death. This death was never intended for man, but for the devil and his angels just as the scripture says, *Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'*^{Matt.25:41}

The scripture also teaches that this is a punishment of eternal, conscious, torment without any break, day or night. *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*^{Rev.20:10}

The believer has nothing to fear concerning this judgment of eternal punishment because *God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*^{1Thess.5:9} On the contrary, it is because of Jesus that we are *saved from the wrath of God through him. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*^{Rom.5:9} *Wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.*^{1Thess.1:10}

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Mike was born and raised in South Africa and is a naturalized citizen of the United States. Born again at the age of 14, he has been active in serving the Lord for the past 30 years. First as a youth leader, associate pastor and as a short term missionaries trainer. He has a passion for the Word and for reaching the lost. Pastor Mike has been a conference speaker and has authored several books, including: *Such A Great Salvation, Where The Word Of A King Is There Is Power, and God Has Judged America.*

The Miracle of
Judgement
Past, Present and Future

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