

PROMISES FOR THOSE WHO WANT JUSTICE

*How To Use Injustice To Your
Spiritual Advantage*

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For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

GOD DELIGHTS IN JUSTICE

A couple in our church who run a successful family business were feeling especially discouraged because a customer was trying to take advantage of them, claiming they did something wrong, which was simply not true. They were obviously trying to get something out of them, thinking they were successful enough to absorb it. I began to itemize all the verses I could find about how God relates to injustice, so they had some promises to stand on. There have been some other cases of injustice among our members, making us realize that in this life there is little justice, it seems. Sometimes it looks like evil is winning, or bad people have their own way, but there is a Day coming when perfect justice will be dispensed. One thing we need to know about the Lord is that He longs for justice.

Solomon believed this as well. He said it looks like injustice and corruption have taken over, but he also believed that there would be time when God would judge everything:

Moreover, I notice that throughout the earth justice is giving way to crime, and even the police courts are corrupt. I said to myself, "In due season God will judge everything man does, both good and bad." (Ecclesiastes 3:16-17, TLB)

Isaiah said that it displeased the Lord when He looked for justice and could not find any (59:15).

"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 9:23-24, NIV)

There are levels of pleasure. The highest level is called *delight*. God does not just appreciate justice - He delights in it!

He loves it when everything turns around for the good guys.

This largely what the story of Joseph, Esther, and Daniel are all about. The illustrates how God works everything out so that the righteous come out on top.

No matter what someone has done to you, or to someone you love, God will deal with it.

Don't allow yourself to entertain thoughts of vengeance where you extract justice by your own hands. This will never satisfy you and will only give the enemy room to work in your own heart and mind.

It is important that we forgive it. Let it go. Let God decide how He will work it out. Trust in the fact that He sees everything and works on our behalf to see that things turn out right.

There were Christians at Corinth who were using the legal system to sue each other. The apostle Paul advised them to just absorb the loss, rather than fighting for their legal rights.

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. (1 Corinthians 6:7-8)

While we are entitled to use the legal system, Paul didn't think it was right for Christians to sue each other. Instead, he asked them to leave it in the hands of a higher court, which is in Heaven.

THE HIGH COST OF GETTING EVEN

There is something in our fallen nature that longs for revenge. One way to see how universal the desire to get even with those who hurt us is to look at the kind of movies that are popular. There is an age-old theme that is a crowd-pleaser where someone has had some injustice done to him or someone he cares about, and the rest of the movie is spent with him getting even with the perpetrators. People line up for this kind of stuff. It appeals to our flesh. But regardless of what the script tells us, it rarely works out this way in real life. You can find news stories, almost daily, of botched attempts at getting even—like the mother who recently boarded a school bus and beat up the bus bully, only to end up going to jail herself.

Even our jokes tend to be about someone who found a clever way of getting even. Like the man who answered his telephone at 3:00 a.m. "This is your neighbor, Mr. Smith," said the voice. "Your dog is barking and keeping me awake." The man thanked him kindly and hung up. The next morning Mr. Smith's telephone rang at exactly 3:00 a.m. "This is your neighbor," said the caller. "I just wanted you to know that I don't have a dog!" But even in a joke there is a cost involved. The man missed out on a second night's sleep just to get even.

A reaction of our fallen nature is to render evil for evil, but if we listen to our "better angel," we will leave it to the Lord. He promises to deal with it:

"Vengeance is Mine, and I will repay; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them." (Deuteronomy 32:35)

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people." (Deuteronomy 32:43)

"Do not say, 'I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.'" (Proverbs 24:29)

Perhaps, one of the best examples in Scripture of seeking revenge is the story of David. Saul had become envious and spent about ten years trying to kill David. One time David had an opportunity to deal with Saul once and for all, which would have even fulfilled a prophecy that

he had been given about becoming king someday. No doubt, it would have also made his life a lot easier if he removed this threat, but he didn't take it into his own hands.

David happened to be in the same cave as Saul, who was unaware that David was kneeling right beside him. His friends urged him to use the opportunity to kill him, but he could not do it. Instead, he cut off a piece of the king's robes to show that he could have done it. Later, David called to Saul and said,

Why do you listen to the words of men who say, "Indeed David seeks your harm"? Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, "I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed." Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, "Wickedness proceeds from the wicked." But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand. (1 Samuel 24:9-15)

When David had finished speaking these words to the king, Saul lifted up his voice and wept in front of all his men. Then, he said to David:

You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house. (vv. 17-21)

Clearly, David decided to let the Lord do the avenging for him. This is a powerful illustration of something Jesus taught in Matthew 5 through 7 about how to do good to our enemies. None of this was lost on Saul or the men of Israel who would later submit to David's authority.

Another example taken from the life of David is found in the story of Abigail and Nabal. David was on his way to destroy Nabal who had treated him disrespectfully, but he was intercepted by Abigail, Nabal's wife, who reminded him that he needed to rely on the Lord to avenge for him. Listen to what she says about vengeance:

On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him! But

I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant. (1 Samuel 25:24-31)

We can all learn from her wisdom. In the end, David did not need to avenge himself against Nabal, and the Lord took care of it.

THE NEW TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDING OF VENGEANCE

The apostle Paul used this same concept when writing to the Christians at Rome about avenging ourselves:

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:19-21)

Notice how Paul used the promise taken from Deuteronomy 32, which showed that all they needed to do was focus on doing good—not on what their enemies had done.

Paul went on to tell the Romans that God could use those in authority to bring about His vengeance:

For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. (Romans 13:4-5)

Today's Living Bible refers to those who bear the sword as "policemen."

Nothing goes unnoticed by God. He sees how we relate to each other. Paul told the new believers at Thessalonica that the Lord would avenge any ill treatment that occurred between them (and us):

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

The writer of Hebrews reminded Christians of this after they had experienced hardship at the hand of their enemies:

For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. (Hebrews 10:30-35)

We see in Revelation 6:10-11, that even those who had been martyred still needed to trust the Lord to avenge them, even after they were home-free in heaven:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

God can use the legal system to deal with your enemies if He wants to, but He is not limited to it, and neither are we. There is a place for lawsuits in our society, but in many cases, it is just a socially acceptable way to extract vengeance, and it does not come without a price. The emotional roller coaster that you will be climbing into will rarely be worth the price of the ride. In fact, the only one who wins in a lawsuit is the lawyer.

THE LAW OF EXPOSURE

Almost every day we see some people’s sins being exposed in the media. This is not just in the celebrity world, but even in the church. Many pastors have resigned this year because their hidden sins have come to light. There is an aspect of the mercy of God which I call *The Law of*

Exposure, where God works diligently to expose our hidden sins now. As painful as that is, we should rejoice, even getting down on our faces to thank God. If they respond properly to the Law of Exposure, they won't have our sins exposed on the Judgment Day. That's the grace of God. Paul wrote about this, saying,

Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. (1 Timothy 5:24-25)

Some good works will never be seen until the Judgment Day. We have already forgotten so many of the things that we have done, but everyone will see them on that day. Likewise, sometimes the evil works we do in secret remain hidden in this life; however, others cannot be hidden, because God reveals them.

MINI-JUDGMENTS NOW

The book of Revelation begins with mini-Judgment Days of the seven churches. The true condition of these congregations and the secret lives of their members lived were revealed for all to see. These were actual churches, not church ages, as often is taught. Each revelation was done in an open way that everyone could see what Jesus' saw. This is a sample of what will happen on the Day. The book ends with an account of everyone standing before the Great White Throne of Judgment.

Jesus told the apostle John to write seven letters to the seven churches, revealing what was hidden from view. Notice the entire church was judged in a very public way. Things were exposed for everyone to see, both hidden sins and secret deeds. The church's true spiritual condition was exposed, for better or worse. Some things the churches were doing resulted in God's commendation while other things brought His open rebuke. These letters should serve as an example of mini judgments that do occur in this life.

How we respond to life's little exposures down here is very important. As painful as they may be, we should embrace them, knowing God is being merciful in allowing us to see our true condition here and now, so we have time to get things right. As a result, we will be spared an even greater judgment and shame on the Judgment Day.

After writing a stinging letter to the Corinthians about how they were taking communion, doing it for all the wrong reasons, Paul explained how God judges us now so that we are not judged later when the world is judged:

But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:32)

(For a deeper look at what these judgments look like, read my book called *Communion on the Moon.*)

Imagine working diligently to keep a hidden sin a secret only to have it exposed on the Judgement Day when there is no ability to apply the blood of Jesus—with no ability to change it? When people confront us for the things we are doing wrong, and this causes us to do some introspection, we need to thank them, kiss them on the forehead even. We should not count those as enemies who spare us from exposure on that Day where nothing shall be hidden.

Not only will you and I be there, but those who seemingly have gotten away with how they treated us, the wrongs they committed that went unpunished. I have come to believe that everyone who has ever existed will be there. This includes angels and demons, the work of saints and sinners, the unseen works of Jesus, and the hidden work of the devil himself. Jesus said,

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13)

When Jesus said this, I believe He was referring to this one Day:

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. (Matthew 10:26)

Every secret of man will come to light for what it really is. The context for this verse was when Jesus was forewarning the disciples about how they would be persecuted for their faith by those who were pretending to be right with God.

Jesus was essentially saying, *"Don't be afraid of what they do now, because there will be a time when everything will be made known. People will lie about you, but you can stand with confidence knowing that it will be revealed. So, do not be afraid of their secret schemes and their private plots, because nothing will be hidden."*

How reassuring! You don't mind bad things happening to you as much when you know that nothing escapes God's gaze. I can endure things much better knowing that He knows.

Jesus said the same thing in Mark 4:21-22, but the context was different. Here He was not talking about persecution, but how we grow spiritually and how we respond to His Word:

Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light."

This same proverb appears twice in Luke's account, emphasizing its importance. The first time we find it in Luke 8:40, as it pertains to how we handle His Word and the second time, in 12:1-3, about hypocrisy:

He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be

heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.”

The word *hypocrisy* comes from the theater. It was an ancient acting term for hiding behind a mask. Today, we would call it *being two-faced*.

Jesus often exposed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of His day.

When people complain about all the hypocrites in the church, assure them that one Day it will all be exposed, including their own pretending to be righteous.

There will be no physical bodies for any of us to hide behind. Even our inner thoughts will be completely revealed for everyone to see. There will be no ability to hide what is really going on inside us.

Much worse than this, there will be no ability to remove our sins with the precious blood of Jesus. It must be done here, and now, by faith. Perhaps, this is why David was aggressive in inviting the Lord to search his heart. He prayed,

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

Imagine spending a lifetime keeping up a false front, thinking your life of shame was being kept secret, only to have it exposed in front of everyone, with no ability to keep it covered?

THE DAY OF REVELATION

The book of Revelation is just that; it reveals what is and what is yet to come. It also reveals the very heart of God, who wants to reveal what awaits us, telling John to write out everything he heard and saw. Jesus taught that there would be a day when everything anyone ever did would be revealed:

He began to say to His disciples first of all, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.” (Luke 12:1-3)

Remember, this was not just intended just as a threat, but it was given as a promise to the disciples. This reality should cause us to choose to live in light of the Day of final justice. Here are some things that will be judged:

- **The hidden things, including our motives:**

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5, NIV)

- **Whatever we have done, both good and bad:**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

- **Our works:**

And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. (Revelation 20:12)

- **Our words:**

“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” (Matthew 12:36)

- **The world and the angels who work in the world:**

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)

There is a Day coming when we will judge the angels of God. Everyone will see what took place behind the scenes here on earth. Even fallen angels will be judged, giving an account for all their work in the affairs of men.

For that matter, God Himself will be judged in front of everyone. He is often misjudged down here, but on the Day, we will see His righteous works, His secret works, His hidden hand. We will see His great heart, His motives behind everything He said and did. Everything will be revealed in front of everyone.

This is important because for many down here life seems unfair, as if God dealt them a bad hand. There are too many unexplained accidents and losses, which need an explanation.

God has set it up so that while our lives are being fully disclosed, and the work of angels made known for the first time, everyone will see the why behind everything that happened. In the end, we will declare Him faithful, true, wise, and just.

We will all see how good and gracious God really was after all, and how He does all things for our good.

GETTING READY

We are complex beings and have difficulty even discerning ourselves. Paul told the Corinthians not to judge him, as he was having some difficulty judging himself, and that he needed God's help to do it (1 Corinthians 4:3-4).

It is not easy to discern ourselves. It is possible for someone to love Jesus with all our soul, but not with all our heart. I think it is possible to even love the idea of Jesus, but never fully surrender to Him. I think it is possible to love the fact that Jesus loves us, without ever allowing Him to become the Lord of our lives, because if we did that, we would have to stop doing the other things we love. Lots of Christians function in this duality, which causes them to do things that seem unjust or unfair to us. They claim to know Him, but their actions hurt us and treat us wrongfully. We need to rest in the fact that Jesus knows and understands and will make things right when we all stand before Him.

The apostle Paul did not see himself as being home free or being outside of the possibility of being judged by Jesus. Even though he was saved, he was obviously striving for something that kept him motivated. He used the Day to remind himself that everyone, including himself, would one day stand about eighteen inches before Jesus, giving an account for how they lived, and for what they did or didn't do. He expressed this fact in a moving way, telling them how much he longed for it himself and trying to take away the dread of it by making it life's crowning moment. All of this was intended to help them live in light of eternity.

Here is my synopsis of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians about this earthly life, which is not the real life—it is only a test to determine the quality of the life we will live forever, which is the real life. Paul lived knowing that everything down here was being recorded and would be revealed and rewarded accordingly. He fully embraced the idea that whatever he went through down here, could not be compared to the incomparable honor or glory he would receive on *The Day*.

Paul spoke of honor and glory as if they were the greatest riches ever to be had, worth all the rigors of whatever he was going through down here. The more difficult it was, the better it would be for him up there. He believed that the Lord would hand out these rewards Himself, in a public ceremony, for all to see. Paul lived for that moment, not because of the rewards themselves, or to be seen by others out of some deep, latent vanity, but that it might bring glory and honor to the Lord. He knew that his life would be reviewed in front of everyone for what it really was, and that we would each take our turn to stand before the Lord's throne of judgment.

I noted how often Paul referred to *the Day*. I knew this was not referring to a 24-hour period but rather a marked moment in time. I soon discovered it was called *the Day* because there was no other day like it. I also found it could refer to the last day of this present age governed by calendars and clocks; there will be no more time as we move into eternity. But it also seemed to point to the *Judgment Day*, or a *The Day of Reckoning*, when we would all be

required to stand before Jesus and give an account for our life on Earth. Paul called this the *Day of the Lord*, or simply *the Day*. Without a doubt, I figured it would be the Day of Days for us all.

To Paul, this was not seen as a threat, but something held out as our highest promise. He wanted his life, his actions, and his words to spring from a motivation that would honor the Lord when his life would be fully revealed on that *Day*. Paul wanted that moment, and all that would be revealed of his life, to magnify the grace of God.

Living in light of eternity became the focal point of everything Paul did. The very thought of this moment sustained him during his many trials.

The church Paul started at Corinth had begun questioning him about whether he was really an apostle or not. Imagine that! There he was the one leader with sterling motives, living and ministering out of the purest of hearts. So, he wrote them, telling them that for now they should not judge his heart, but there was a *Day* coming when everything would be revealed, including the very motives of our hearts.

Therefore, don't judge anything before the appointed time. Wait until the Lord comes. He will also bring to light what is hidden in the dark and reveal people's motives. Then each person will receive praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5, GW)

Instead of judging each other now, we should wait for the *Day* when we everything will be judged, and everyone will see what kind of minister we are. Paul did not seem threatened by this, but instead, but looked forward to it.

This will happen to all of us. Today, people can prophesy, preach, live on the mission field, even give their bodies to be burned, all with the wrong motives. We are told that only that which is done *in love* will withstand the judgement. Only that which is done *with love* will be rewarded:

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

It is possible to spend your Christian life down here and end up with nothing to show for it in heaven. According to this verse, Paul believed that we could give our body to the flames, yet do it for all the wrong reasons, and have nothing to show for it in eternity. The only thing that lasts throughout eternity comes from the eternal God. God is love, and love is eternal.

It is also possible to be a minister, preach the gospel, abandon your children, ignore your wife, neglect your body, and struggle financially, portraying to others that you are doing it all for the sake of Kingdom. You may be admired by others yet will get to the end of time with nothing to show for it. Let's spend time renouncing these baser motives now:

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Peter, Paul, and Jude all wrote about corrupt Christians who attended the love feast right alongside sincere believers. They called them *spots*, which is an interesting term in light of the fact that Jesus is coming back for a bride who is without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). Picture corrupt a Christian dressed in a white gown, like a wedding gown, with deep grease stains down the back, representing their secret sins. Do you think it is possible to be found standing on the Day of the Lord with a stain on your gown for all to see, no longer concealed by our bodies? This possibility should motivate us to make much of the blood of Jesus now.

What if we will all experience something like this? I think you will see it. I think you will be there. I think you will be you. I don't think there will be any exemptions, no absentees, no way for anyone to back out. Everyone will be there, and our names will be called!

JESUS AS JUDGE

Jesus told the first apostles to preach the reality of a day when everyone would stand before Him, and we are obligated to do the same, yet we rarely hear it being taught today. The apostles told the people that Jesus was ordained to be their Judge:

And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42)

Jesus would be expected to do this because of His role as King. One of the functions of the kings of the Old Testament was to act as a judge for the people. We see this as one of King David's functions. It was this part of the king's responsibility that Absalom used to win the hearts of Israel. He would rise early, waiting outside the king's throne room, where a long line of people would form, coming to have their cases brought before King David. Absalom would call a man over to himself, saying,

"Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you. Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." Absalom acted in this way toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment and in this way Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. (2 Samuel 15:3-6)

Anyone could come before the king for justice, which is why we see two prostitutes were allowed to come before King Solomon's throne, to have their dispute judged. These two women were harlots stood before the king to be judged (see 1 Kings 3:16-28).

Jesus said this responsibility had been given to Him by His Father:

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (John 5:22-23)

That's why, in the last chapters of the book of Revelation, we find Jesus seated on the Great White Throne of Judgment, judging everyone, both small and great. He was made the Judge of all mankind.

There is an amazing scene at the trial of Jesus, where the high priest stood up, after all the false witnesses had failed to get a reaction or response from Jesus, and in exasperation asked Him to tell them plainly, by the authority of the living God, if He was "*the Christ, the Son of God*" (Matthew 26:63).

Jesus simply answered, "*It is as you said*" (v. 64).

Then He added something staggering. Something that must have stunned the Sanhedrin,

Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven. (v. 64)

In other words, "There will be a Day when the tables will be turned, when I am seated in a position of authority. In fact, you will be present at the moment when I am revealed to everyone who has ever lived, both in heaven and Earth."

At this the high priest tore his open his priestly garments and said,

He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think? (v. 65)

The entire tribunal answered, saying,

He is deserving of death. (v. 66)

Then all those in authority lined up to take their turn to spit in His face and to slap Him; and others in attendance got in on it, too, striking Him with the palms of their hands, saying,

Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You? (v. 68)

If Jesus chose to wait for the Day for those who misjudged Him to know the truth about Him, so should we. Perhaps, this was in reference to something Daniel had seen in a vision:

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

Even Pontius Pilate will be seated in the vast audience on that Day, seeing Jesus being presented by the Father as a King in all His glory in front of everyone. What a moment that will be!

If Jesus chose to wait for the Day for those who misjudged Him to know the truth about Him, so should we. Here is the same verse from the *Amplified Bible*:

For we must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive [his pay] according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil [considering what his purpose and motive have been, and what he has achieved, been busy with, and given himself and his attention to accomplishing].

Today, many people are ignorant of this fact or of what God will require of them, but ignorance is no protection:

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30-31)

Everything we have done down here is somehow captured in books or scrolls, which will be revealed for all to see:

“I saw a great white throne and the One seated on it. From before him the earth and the 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 scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. The dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds.” (Revelation 20:11-12)

It is a moment when we will all give an account for what we did during our life on Earth:

So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)

This means we will be required to answer some very specific questions by Jesus about things that we did in His name and in His love, and about our relationships with others:

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10-12)

The idea of *confessing* here is not merely acknowledging wrongdoing, or simply declaring that Jesus is Lord, but I believe we will be expected to *explain* some of the things we have done.

I have come to believe that everyone who has ever existed will be exposed to His light. This includes angels and demons, the work of saints and sinners, the unseen works of Jesus, and the hidden work of the devil himself.

God sent Jesus into the earth as a way for Him to bring about true justice. Here is what was prophesied through His messenger Isaiah:

Listen to me, my people; listen, O Israel, for I will see that right prevails. My mercy and justice are coming soon; your salvation is on the way. I will rule the nations; they shall wait for me and long for me to come. Look high in the skies and watch the earth beneath, for the skies shall disappear like smoke, the earth shall wear out like a garment, and the people of the earth shall die like flies. But my salvation lasts forever; my righteous rule will never die nor end.

We can now think of this verse in terms of His second coming. Here is the same verse in a different translation:

Listen to me, you who know the right from wrong and cherish my laws in your hearts: don't be afraid of people's scorn or their slanderous talk. For the moth shall destroy them like garments; the worm shall eat them like wool; but my justice and mercy shall last forever, and my salvation from generation to generation. (Isaiah 51:4-8, TLB)

Be assured that the Lord's intention is to bring about total justice:

For the Lord is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness. (Psalm 98:9, NIV)

The Lord loves righteousness and justice. His mercy fills the earth. (Psalm 33:5)

The Lord loves justice, and he will not abandon his godly ones. They will be kept safe forever, but the descendants of wicked people will be cut off. (Psalm 37:28)

EVERY PASTOR'S GOAL

The goal is to live in such a way now so that you are not afraid of what might be revealed on the Day. We need to live right this fact, making much of the blood of Jesus, while keeping our hearts in the love of God. We need to teach our people how to live now in light of eternity. This was the goal of the apostle John. He wanted his people to live in such a way that they could stand at ease on the Judgement Day:

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 John 4:17-18)

Here is the same text taken from two other translations:

And as we live with Christ, our love grows more perfect and complete; so we will not be ashamed and embarrassed at the day of judgment, but can face him with confidence and joy because he loves us and we love him too.

We need have no fear of someone who loves us perfectly; his perfect love for us eliminates all dread of what he might do to us. If we are afraid, it is for fear of what he might do to us and shows that we are not fully convinced that he really loves us. (Today's Living Bible)

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. (The Message)

I wish everyone in our churches knew that it is possible to live without fear of the Judgment Day. We need to get people ready for the moment when Jesus returns as Judge. This should be the goal of every pastor. It is possible to live with confidence and die without dread of the Judgment Day. Only a few days before his death, F. B. Meyer, a godly pastor and author, wrote the following words to a friend: "I have just heard, to my great surprise, that I have but a few days to live. It may be that before this reaches you, I shall have entered the palace. Don't trouble to write. We shall meet in the morning."¹

What a way to live, eh! Let's live in light of eternity now! If we live in light of the Judgment Day now, we will find that it is the most freeing place to stand: everything—every word, every hair, and every thought—are being recorded and will be revealed. Everything! Isn't that just what Jesus promised? Let's trust Him to make good on it.

ASSIGNMENTS

We should allow God's Word to judge us each time we expose our hearts to it, either as we read it or listen to it preached:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

To read more about God's justice in the lives of those He loves, read the story of Joseph again, along with the book of Esther. Take time to read the book of Daniel again, in light of this study.

To read more about how to endure injustice, meditate on Psalm 37, which is a Psalm of David about the heritage of the righteous and the constant calamity of the wicked:

Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm.

For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more.

But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth.

The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming.

The wicked have drawn the sword and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous.

The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.

They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

But the wicked shall perish; and the enemies of the Lord, like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away.

The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives.

For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand.

I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed.

Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore.

For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.

The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever.

The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice.

The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him.

The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.

I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more; indeed I sought him, but he could not be found.

Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace.

But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble.

And the Lord shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.

When an injustice happens to you, use it to remind yourself that you will also be judged for any injustices you have committed down here. Seek the Lord's forgiveness for anything you have done to others that they would deem unfair or unjust and make it right.

FORGIVE ME

I have been a local pastor for over forty years. During this time, I have had to make countless decisions that have affected the lives of many. Some people were disciplined, and others were passed over when they felt entitled to certain positions. I have had to make many such judgements in the lives of our people. If anyone reading this has felt that I did this unfairly, please forgive me. While I am not aware of deliberately hurting people, it all feels unjust. You can rest assured that I will have to stand before the Chief Shepherd and give an account to Him for how I pastored His people. If I can rest in this fact, one day we will both see why things happened the way they did, and we will bear the consequences.

PROMISES FOR THOSE WHO WANT JUSTICE

How To Use Injustice To Your Spiritual Advantage

By Penn Clark

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The apostolic grace on Penn's life has opened many doors for him to work among different people groups. These include a persecuted tribe standing for Christ in the mountains of northern India, hearty believers struggling in the remote reaches of the Ukraine, warm-hearted people spread across the cold expanses of Patagonia, the passionate people of Portugal, the exclusive Basque and Gypsy cultures, as well as a variety of Mennonite and Amish that have come into newness of life. It has also enabled him to establish several life-giving churches, as well as a healthy network for pastors. Penn is focused on discipling young leaders and releasing them into their calling. His teaching gift has resulted in the publication of more than 70 books, which make up a unique discipleship curriculum and provide a valuable resource for pastors and leaders. Penn has studied church history extensively and is considered by some to be a leading

expert on the ministry of Charles G. Finney and Daniel Nash. He has written several books about them and the revival they were part of, with hope that we will see the same thing happen again in our generation. Penn and his wife Heather live in the beautiful Finger Lakes region of New York, where they oversee WellSpring Fellowship and Word of Grace Network. To keep up with what Penn is currently doing, go to www.pennclark.net or www.wordsmithpublishing.store.

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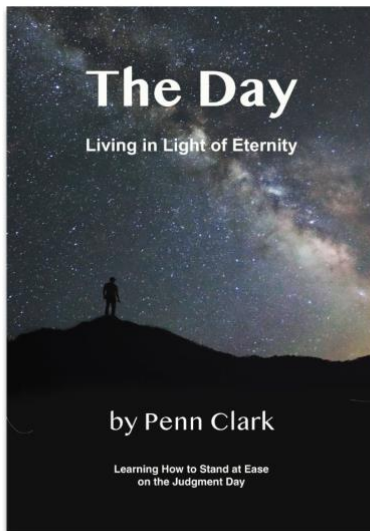
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DISCERNING OURSELVES

THE DAY – WALKING IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY

How to Stand at Ease on the Judgment Day

I have that found most Christians do not think about the Judgment Day very much, or when they do, they think of it as something only reserved for lost sinners. Even fewer believe that we will be judged in an open way, in front of everyone, with all the details of our lives revealed so we can see how we all really lived and how we chose to respond to what life threw at us down here.



Even fewer have considered the wisdom of our needing to be judged alongside of our unsaved loved ones, neighbors, and enemies. Neither do believers give much thought to the reality of rewards being given for a life we have lived down here, which will also be done publicly for all to see. Yet this concept has served as the primary motivator for my life and ministry for almost forty years. It has given me a lot of comfort in times of trouble, and I hope it will do the same for you. In this book, we will:

- choose the quality of the life that we will live forever by the choices we make here and now
- explore why being born-again does not make you home free
- see how we will give an account for all our words, actions, and even the motives behind them
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