

God's Judgment, Heaven and Hell - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince's sermon explores the nature of God's judgment, distinguishing between historical and eternal judgments, and emphasizing personal responsibility and motives in service to God.

Duration: 28:14

Scripture: Jeremiah 32:18

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Eternal Destiny"

Description

This sermon delves into the two main ways God brings judgment: historical judgments affecting generations based on responses to God, and eternal judgments impacting one's destiny in eternity. It emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between these judgments and highlights five principles of God's judgment from Romans 2. The sermon also discusses the scenes of judgment, starting with the judgment seat of Christ for believers, focusing on individual assessment of service without condemnation. Suggestions are given to ensure one's service withstands the test of fire, emphasizing motives for God's glory and obedience to God's Word.

Transcript

Now when we speak about judgment, we need to realize that there are two main ways in which God brings judgment on people. The first is his judgments in history. The second, which is the kind of judgment we're going to talk about, is his eternal judgments.

Those judgments which confront us as we step out of time into eternity. And it's important to be able to distinguish the two types of judgments. Otherwise we might be confused by what seem to be conflicting statements.

The first judgment of God is in history. And it involves bringing blessing or punishment on succeeding generations according to the way the first generation has responded to God. In Exodus chapter 20 verses 4 and 6, 4 through 6. We have a very clear example of God's historical judgments.

Exodus chapter 20 verses 4 through 6, which is part of what we call the Ten Commandments. God says you shall make, not make for yourself any carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them nor worship them.

For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. But showing mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. We see there that the sin of idolatry, which is the greatest of all sins, carries with it a judgment that extends to the succeeding three or four generations.

That's a judgment in history. And there are countless examples of how that judgment has actually worked out in the history of Israel and of other nations that have been involved in idolatry. And then in Jeremiah chapter 32, Jeremiah also deals with this question of God's judgment in history.

And in a prayer that he prayed to the Lord, Jeremiah 32 verse 18, he said you show loving kindness to thousands and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them. The great, the mighty God whose name is the Lord of hosts. So again, Jeremiah says God repays the iniquity of the fathers into the succeeding generations.

Now this is again a judgment in history, in time. This also applies to God's blessing on the righteous. In Psalm 103, David says, verses 17 and 18, But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.

And his righteousness to children's children, to such as keep his covenant and to those who remember his commandments to do them. There is a promise of God's blessing and righteousness to children's children, to succeeding generations. So the way that we conduct ourselves and we relate to God, not only affects us, but it probably affects successive generations.

That's a very significant and important thought that we need to bear in mind. We are in some way answerable for either the blessing or the suffering of succeeding generations. I think this is an obvious fact of experience.

For instance, a child born to alcoholic parents starts, as they say in America, with two strikes against him. It's not his fault, but the judgment of God on that, those parents will naturally filter down through succeeding generations. Now we need to say that, but we need to add there's a different kind of judgment of God.

Which is what the writer of Hebrews calls eternal judgment. Which is judgment that affects our destiny in eternity. And there the principles of judgment are completely different.

These are stated by Ezekiel, or to my God to Ezekiel, in chapter 18 verses 1 through 4. Chapter 18 verses 1 through 4. Ezekiel is speaking, he says the word of the Lord came to me again saying, what do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. You see that's saying the children are suffering for the sins of the fathers. As I lived, says the Lord God, you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel.

Behold all souls are mine, the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine. The soul who sins shall die. Now we're not talking about historical judgments, we're talking about the judgment of every individual soul as it steps out of time into eternity.

And there every soul bears responsibility only for the life that it has led. The soul that sins it shall die. And that is repeated again in verse 20.

And here God is still more emphatic. Ezekiel 18, 20. The soul who sins shall die.

The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. So when we step out of time into eternity, we're not any longer being judged for the sins of, or the blessings of our parents, of forebears.

We are going to answer to God personally, only for what we did in life. The righteousness of the righteous will be upon him, the wickedness of the wicked will be upon him. And it says in the book of Ecclesiastes, where the tree falls, there it will lie.

What condition you are in when you die, will determine your condition throughout eternity. This is eternal judgment. A very, very solemn thought.

Now I want to deal with five principles of God's judgment. All of which are stated in Romans chapter 2. Romans, the second chapter, unfolds five principles of God's judgment. Romans 2, verse 2, we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

That's the first principle. God's judgment is based on real facts. It's not based on hearsay.

I remember when God wanted to find out, the Lord wanted to find out the truth about the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah. He'd heard terrible reports from the angels, from others. But you remember He said to Abraham, I've come down to see for myself.

That really impresses me. God doesn't judge by hearsay. He judges according to truth.

The second principle of God's judgment, in verse 6, is He will render to each one according to his deeds. We will be judged for what we have done. That is a basic principle that runs right throughout the Bible.

And it applies to believers as well as unbelievers. In first Peter chapter 1 and verse 17, first Peter 1 17, Peter unfolds this principle applying it specifically to believers. First Peter 1 17, he's speaking to believers and he says, and if you call on the Father who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear.

That's the kind of statement that isn't publicly disseminated in most churches today. But Peter says to believers, bearing in mind that you're going to be judged according to what you've done, live a reverent, godly life. Don't be rash, don't be proud, don't be presumptuous, because everything you say and do, one day you're going to have to answer to God for.

And remember that is addressed to believers, not to unbelievers. And then in Revelation 20 verse 12, it says all the people that were judged in the final judgment were judged according to what was written in the books. So God keeps a record of every life.

Now you know in the days of the New Testament, books were not like this. But they were much more like tapes. They were scrolls rolled up.

And I think that's a much more clear picture. I'm inclined to think that in the judgment, this is just an opinion. Every one of us will be confronted by something like a videotape.

Which stretches out the entire course of our life before us. So that's a word from 1 Peter. Going back to Romans chapter 2, the next principle of God's judgment is stated in verse 3. Do I mean verse 3? No I don't.

Because the thing is that it's not translated the way I want. Yes it's Romans 2 verse 11. Now I'll explain what I mean in a way.

What I mean just briefly. It says there is no partiality with God. Now all the modern translations say that.

Because it's a modern phrase. I've sometimes asked the question. Can you really put the Bible in modern English.

Without interjecting modern thinking. Because the language you use is very much an expression of the way you think. You see the old King James said there is no respect of persons.

It's much more accurate. Because partiality can be to any kind of person. You may take some weak insignificant little person.

And be very partial to that person. So weak I really want to help them. I really want to do everything for them.

But respect of persons means. We're not impressed by what people are in their natural selves. A man may be a general, a president, a bishop.

But he doesn't get any special judgment from God. He's treated just like everybody else. That's what it means when it says there is no respect of persons.

Particularly aimed at people who occupy positions of prominence in the world today. The next principle of God's judgment, number four, is according to the measure of light. Paul says in Romans 2 verse 12, For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law.

And as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law. If you have the law you'll be judged by it. If you don't have the law you won't be judged by the law.

But you'll still be judged for what you've done. And this principle is illustrated by the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 11. When He speaks to some of the major cities of His day who had not responded to His preaching.

Matthew 11 verses 20 through 24. Then He began to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I say to you it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. Why? Because Tyre and Sidon had less light. Bethsaida and Chorazin had had the greatest light and they would be the most severely judged.

You and I will be judged according to the light that is available to us. And I want to say generally speaking to people in the English-speaking world there is a greater measure of light available to us today than I think has ever been available to any previous generation in history. We have Bibles en masse, we have endless books, we have tapes, we have cassettes, we have preachers.

We're going to be judged by the light that's been made available to us. Let's bear that in mind. God's standards of judgment for this generation will be the most severe because we've had the most light.

And then Jesus goes on in the next verse. You Capernaum who are exalted to heaven will be brought down to Hades for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it should be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.

You see, judgment is according to light. The more light we have the more strict will be our judgment. And as I said before, I say to each one of you including myself there probably never has been a generation of Christians that have had the measure of light available that we have today.

Bear that in mind, that's going to be the standard of our judgment. And finally, the fifth principle of God's judgment in Romans 2 verse 16 it says In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. So God is not merely going to judge our open acts but he's going to judge our secret innermost thoughts and motives and attitudes.

And I think it's correct to say that God is very concerned about our motives. Two people may perform the same outward action but their motives may be entirely different. And when God judges them he will take into account their motives.

Now we're going to go on to the scenes of judgment. And as I understand it there are going to be four major successive scenes of judgment. The first will be before the judgment seat of Christ.

The Greek word bema means a platform on which a Roman official sat to execute judgment. Pontius Pilate sat on his bema when Jesus appeared before him for judgment. And this will be a judgment only of Christians only of believers.

We go again to 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 17. I somehow feel that God wants me to read this verse twice. 1 Peter 1 17 And if you call on the Father who without partiality judges according to each one's work conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear.

That's written to us. We call on the Father. And then in 1 Peter 4 17 it says for the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God.

And if it begins with us first what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel. Where does judgment begin? Always with the house of God. Always with the people who have the most truth.

And so when judgment starts the first people to be judged will be the Christians. And they'll have a special judgment. Romans 14 verses 10 and 12.

10 through 12 says this. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we, Christians, shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The bamer.

For it is written as I live says the Lord every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to me. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. And remember there's only one person that you have to give account of.

That's yourself. You don't have to give account of me or your pastor. And you waste a lot of time judging others.

Some of you when you should be judging yourself. The only person you're going to have to give account for is yourself. And that you're going to have to do.

So Paul says each of us shall give account of himself to God. Now that's each of us Christians. And then in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 he returns to the same theme.

2nd Corinthians chapter 5 verse 10. For we, Christians, must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That each one may receive the things done in his body according to what he has done whether good or bad.

We must all appear it says. But the Greek says we must all be made manifest. There will be no secrets.

Everything will be totally exposed. Nothing will be hidden. And we will be before the judgment seat of Christ.

To receive according to the way we have lived in the body. Now what we have to say is there are five main features of this judgment. I'll just go through them very briefly.

It's individual. Each one will answer for himself. It's for the things done in the body.

The way we have lived while we were in this body. There are only two categories, good or bad. 1st John 5 17 says all unrighteousness is sin.

Anything that is not righteous is sinful. You see this third category has slipped into people's thinking and it deceives so many. There is no neutrality.

The next principle is it is not for condemnation. That's very, very important. We're going to be judged but we are not going to be condemned.

If we are true sincere believers in Jesus. The principle of judgment is for assessment of service. Let me give you three scriptures which maybe will comfort you at this point.

I see some of you looking a little concerned. Which isn't a bad thing to be, believe me. John chapter 3 verse 18.

Jesus says he who believes in him is not condemned. But he who does not believe is condemned already. So, if we are truly believers in Jesus.

We will be judged but we will not be condemned. And then again he says in John 5 verse 24. Most assuredly I say to you, and that's the most emphatic way that Jesus can express himself.

Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but has passed from death unto life. And finally Romans 8 chapter 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So we're not talking about a judgment of condemnation.

We're talking about judgment which will assess the service that you've offered to Jesus during your life. And the clearest place that this is described is 1st Corinthians chapter 3 verses 11 and following. 1st Corinthians chapter 3, 11 and following.

Paul is speaking about building the church. And he says no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw.

Each one's work will become manifest for the day will this declare it. Because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burned he will suffer loss but he himself will be saved yet so as through fire. And the NIV says like one escaping from the flames. So that's the essence of the judgment of Christians.

First of all we have to be built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. There is no other foundation. Then we have to determine what's the value of the service that we've offered.

And things that are easy to acquire can be offered in large quantities. Wood, hay and stubble. But they all be burnt up.

The things that are valuable are not obtained in large quantities. Gold, silver, precious stones. See some people just assess the quantity of their service.

But that's not the way God assesses it. Now I want to offer you some suggestions as to how we can be sure that our service will stand the test of fire. I want to suggest you three ways that you can assess your own service.

First of all what is your motive? The only motive that's acceptable to God is for God's glory. And a whole lot of what is done in the church today is done by men for their own glory. I say personally, and this is simply a personal observation.

I think the greatest problem in the church today is personal ambition on the part of ministers. The largest church, the longest mailing list, the most miracles. That all will be burned up because it's motive is wrong.

In 1 Corinthians 10 verse 31 Paul says therefore whether you eat or drink or whatever you do do all to the glory of God. There's only one acceptable motive for our service and that is the glory of God. Somehow I feel that Lord wants me to pause there.

Just give you an opportunity to consider what has been motivating you in your services. In your service for him. You see Paul said we need to be renewed in our minds in Romans chapter 12 verse 1. And I think the difference between the renewed mind and the unrenewed mind is this.

The unrenewed mind comes to a situation and says what's in this for me? The renewed mind says where will God get glory? It's a total change of motive. I think this applies very much to marriage. I think many marriages are unhappy because the people approach them with an unrenewed mind.

The attitude of each is what will I get out of this? Will it make me happy? That's almost a certain recipe for an unhappy marriage. The right motive is what can I give? Not what can I get, but what can I give? And when two people meet together with the purpose of giving to one another they'll have a happy and successful marriage. It's the whole issue of motivation that's really important.

Secondly, if your work is to stand the test of fire it must be done in obedience to the Word of God. That's the only acceptable basis. In Matthew chapter 7 Jesus spoke about two different kinds of persons.

The one who built on the sand and the one who built on the rock. And He said at the end Matthew 7. I'm in Mark, that's why I'm having trouble. But I'll be there.

Matthew chapter 7 verses 21 and following. These are the words of Jesus. Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my Father in heaven.

So, the only acceptable motive is to do the will of God the Father. And then Jesus goes on with something that offends some people. He says many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in your name cast out demons in your name and done many wonders in your name and then I will declare to you to them I never knew you depart from me you who practice lawlessness.

I have by the grace of God been privileged to cast out many, many demons. I've seen a number of very definite miracles take place. I have frequently prophesied.

I want to tell you I do not base my hope of heaven on any of that. And anybody who does is in danger. There's only one essential requirement for heaven.

It's doing the will of the Father that is in heaven. And Jesus says to these miracle workers depart from me you who practice lawlessness. And you know many of them are a law to themselves.

They do basically whatever they feel like. Take whatever they can get and ignore the great central principles of the Word of God.

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