



## Articles and Sermons :: Where Judgment Must Begin by Richard Owen Roberts

**Where Judgment Must Begin by Richard Owen Roberts - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2014/4/30 0:27**

We live in a unique time, a confusing time. We live in a time when it is almost impossible to tell the true Church from the professing church. There has never been a time in the past when there were literally millions of people who could tell you the day and the hour they accepted Christ, but who live for self and Satan.

There are multitudes of people who honestly believe they are Christians because they've been baptized many of them because of infant baptism, some because of adult baptism. They are depending on baptismal regeneration. Then there is the incredible array of people who are clinging to some decision they have made, and who have been falsely informed by their own leaders that they are indeed children of God. They are hanging their eternal welfare on decisional regeneration.

The Bible portrays regeneration by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8). Those people who truly are children of God have been born of the Spirit, and there is a world of difference between the Spirit's regeneration and baptismal or decisional regeneration. Every time we add another person who knows nothing of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to the ranks of church members and professed Christians, we add to the confusion, and further decline morally and spiritually in the land and in the world.

Let me put this question to you: does Jesus Christ save from hell? Did He come to save from hell? Many of you will remember that when the angel spoke to Joseph, he said to him, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin" (Matt. 1:21). Some of you may be guilty of having encouraged many to believe that it is possible to be saved from hell without ever having been saved from sin. I am regularly encountering substantial numbers of people who, if they speak honestly from their own heart, make it crystal clear, "I don't even want to be saved from sin. I intend to live in sin, but I'm glad I've been saved from hell."

Have you ever considered what a treacherous act against Almighty God it is to pretend that He is so utterly absurd that He saves people from hell but not from sin? Why does hell exist? Without any question, hell exists because there are those who will not repent and believe. To turn around then and suggest that out of a great heart of love and compassion, God saves people from the penalty but leaves them with the problem is an insult against our God.

Jesus Christ came to save people from their sin. I believe many of us need to learn to make a very careful distinction in our own thinking and surely in our presentation of truth to others, between sin as a one-way ticket to hell and sin as a thief of God's glory. There is a common statement that is made within the church that repentance is a change of mind. That statement never seemed quite sufficient to me. I have come to realize something very consequential in that regard. True repentance means an exchanged mind. The unrepentant have the mind-set of the world. But the repentant have the mind-set of the Spirit. When we come to Jesus Christ, having been born of the Spirit of God, in repentance, we receive a new mind. We're not interested any longer in seeing what things we can get away with. We don't want to walk as close to the precipice as possible and just hope we won't fall over the cliff. We have the mind-set of the Spirit.

We need to learn to distinguish in our thinking and in our living, and surely in our presentation of the gospel to others, between sin as a one-way ticket to hell and sin as the thief of God's glory. God did not create man to save man from hell. God created man to glorify Him and then to enjoy Him forever. You can't break the two apart. The notion that you can enjoy God forever and refuse or fail to bring Him glory in this life, is indeed absurd.

With those thoughts in mind, let us turn to First Peter, chapter 4. First we will deal with the greater context found in this passage, verses 1 to 11, and then deal with the context, verses 12 through 16 and 19, and then come to the text, verses 17 and 18.

In verse 1 and verse 2 we have the matter of suffering set in front of us as a declaration of its purpose: "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

Why does God allow His own children to suffer? We are informed in verse 1 that Christ Himself suffered in the flesh. It is perfectly reasonable and understandable that we should suffer as well. I take it as a given that if my Savior suffered, it is my task to arm myself with the same purpose, to realize that God is at work and has a purpose for His people. We are informed in this passage that He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. You may not fully understand that statement or other statements in this passage, but isn't it perfectly clear that there is a purpose in suffering and that at least part of that purpose is to bring us to that place where sin is not a ruling factor in our lives, where a great change has occurred so that we're not concerned about hell? We're not worried about going there. If we could go to hell for the glory of God, we would be happy in doing so. The thing that matters to us is the glory of God. If suffering somehow brings the glory of God, then I'm all for it.

Look now at verse 3: "For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries." You have already wasted a sufficient portion of your life. Time is too short to waste any more. The time is already sufficient for you to have carried out the desires of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. You don't have another second to waste in that direction. Whatever days you have left, many or few, must be devoted to the high calling of God that you have in Christ Jesus. You can't allow some grievous disappointment to push you again into a cycle of moral and spiritual decline. Whatever time you have left must be redeemed for the glory of God. That's why you were created. You've lost countless opportunities already to bring Him glory. Don't lose another opportunity.

Look at verses 4 and 5: "And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you; but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." Is anybody surprised when you won't run with them? Has anybody maligned you? You don't fit in. You don't belong. Part of the sadness of the hour is that Christians fit beautifully into the world. Nobody's troubled by their presence, by their conduct, not even troubled by their witness. Our changed lives should baffle them, and when they do not, we have a reason to be on our faces before God, seeking that repentance which results in the exchanged mind, so the mind of Christ is dominant in our lives.

The next matter: We'll have to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. They will; you will; I will. There is no escaping our responsibilities before God.

#### Five Matters Requiring Attention

There is an important arrangement of truth in verses 7 through 11. "The end of all things is at hand," says the inspired apostle. There are certain things that the believer is required to be. I see five matters in these verses that require our distinct attention.

Verse 8: "Keep fervent in your love for one another."

Verse 9: "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." It is easy at a conference like this. We have time to be kind one to another, but what about at home?

Verse 10: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Some of us think of stewardship in terms of money, and no doubt if you began to write down those things that fall on the list under the manifold grace of God, money would appear on the list, but it would be a minor matter in the whole lot. Money is something that is ordinary. It is something we call a common grace. We must not overlook the manifold grace of God, special graces of the believer that require good stewardship.

Verse 11: "Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God." Preachers, when people hear you, do they say, "That is much more than a pastor speaking to us; that is the voice of God"? Some of you are in trouble in churches and people are always giving you a hard time. Learn to speak the utterances of God, and a lot of people who are bold in your face now will become fearful. Every man when he speaks ought to speak with the fear of God hanging over him and over his auditors.

And the next instruction says, "Whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies." All these things that God might be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the dominion forever and ever.

#### The Immediate Context

Now, the more immediate context, starting at verse 12: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which is coming upon you." What is he referring to? Look at verses 17 and 18: "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? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?"

Verse 13: "to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation." In verse 14 we are called to consider these facts: "If you are reviled for the Name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

It would be foolish to suppose that every Christian suffers the same degree of persecution. Our place in life is going to have some contributing factors in terms of degree of persecution, but we have it plain here that you are blessed when you are reviled for the name of Christ, "because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

Verse 15: But "by no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler." You begin to sense the context. Do you see how verses 17 and 18 fit in? Suffering as a Christian (verse 16) is not something about which we ought to be ashamed. Rather in the name of our dear Lord Jesus, let us bring glory to God.

Verse 19: "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." So no matter how hard it is to be saved, let us get on with the work for which we were called, to the life to which we were born of the Spirit of God.

#### It Is Time for Judgment

Let's take the text now. Verse 17: "It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God." Some of us have a very inadequate understanding of Scripture because we have a very inadequate understanding of judgment. I'm regularly encountering people in the church, who, when the word judgment is used, think usually in terms of the future like the Great White Throne Judgment. This passage is not talking about something in the future. When the Bible speaks about the judgment of God, we need to be certain whether it is talking about something eschatological or something for the moment. In this passage, the judgment that is under consideration is something that occurs on a day by day basis.

"It is time for judgment"

That was written a long time ago, and Peter was sure that it was an appropriate time for judgment then. It is even more appropriate now. There is simply no escaping the fact that part and parcel of being a true believer is the issue of judgment. A major reason why we so desperately need revival is that the biblical subject of judgment has been set aside and treated as a matter of inconsequence for the believer.

read the full article: <http://www.rortrust.org/excerpts-/post/where-judgment-must-begin>

**Re: Where Judgment Must Begin by Richard Owen Roberts - posted by Heydave (), on: 2014/4/30 16:49**

Thanks for this Greg. This is a really good article and worth reading the whole thing. Also on the web site that you linked is an excellent interview with Richard Owen Roberts (life time ministry award).

We are blessed to still have this man with us today. May the Lord preserve and continue to use him.

**Re: , on: 2014/4/30 23:13**

Amen, very powerful...we used this in our family devotions tonight, thanks for posting brother Greg!