

God's Judgment a Good Thing? By Randy Reynolds

"For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin first among God's own children."
1 Peter 4:17

Does the fact that God is love and that He loves us give us a pass on his judgment? What if he is correcting us or bringing judgment and we miss the meaning of God's judgment?

In a Postmodern world judgment is out and tolerance and inclusion are in! I pulled up behind a car the other day and it had a bumper sticker that said something like, "How about that God loves all the people and no one is ever excluded." I thought about asking the driver if he would be open to having one of the sex offenders I work with live with him, but I try not to be too sarcastic in relationships where my humor maybe misinterpreted. There is another bumper sticker that flatly denies sin and the need for salvation. It says, "Born ok the first time." In other words I'm not a sinner who needs a savior to pay the price of my debt, I don't believe in God as a judge, God's judgment or gravity for that matter.

In my generation I can see how God has brought judgment to our sins. We have had consequences to our actions that were pretty much inescapable. Denial of Biblical truth, may just put off the inevitable. I understand that non-believers need to deny because judgment without grace is a very terrible experience. Grace allows us to face the guilt, shame and fear that comes from owning our own sin, with hope of forgiveness, redemption and faith in that redemptive process. **God's judgment is good because it eliminates evil**, but sometimes we are too close to that evil. In a postmodern world people often don't believe they are guilty of sin. Their identities are wrapped or enmeshed in sin. Then sin is normalized or becomes acceptable in their social systems. Sins of omission, like neglecting the poor are acceptable because "they are irresponsible." Things we now criminalize were acceptable in other societies, incest, infanticide, murder of other races and other things before the morality of Christianity came to transform our culture. We now see racism and slavery as bad. Defining what is evil helps us separate ourselves from that which is evil, which is what sanctification is all about. Who needs forgiveness if you are not guilty? I think this is one reason we have not seen revival in the next generation, who needs a savior if you are not a sinner? Has post modernity's world view slipped into the church? Do we also ignore the doctrines of sin and judgment and think we are good people who are not really guilty of sin? Plantinga wrote a book called, "Not the Way It's Supposed to be." His premise was that we in the church have also lost the doctrine of sin or depravity. "To put it mildly, modern consciousness does not encourage moral reproach; in particular, it does not encourage self reproach. Preachers mumble about sin." You are not going to appeal to this culture if you are strongly preaching on sin. However do we need the prophetic? Do we need some healthy, grace based self evaluation of our sinfulness?

One of the New Testament words for judgment is evaluation. "If we judge (evaluate) ourselves rightly we will 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." 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 This is to be part of our practice in our ritual of taking communion, to judge ourselves rightly. To have confessed, owned our sin, repented and worked to make our wrongs right, so the judgment of God that eliminates sin without our cooperation will not fall on us, so this is so important. The Corinthians were ignorant of

the concept of sin and judgment and because of that Paul wrote that “many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep.” In other words the judgment of God had fallen on the church and they were not confessing and repenting and were experiencing harsh judgment in an age of grace. I wrote another article this month as an open letter to President Obama and Governor Romney partly because I believe our nation is suffering the consequences of the sins of our political system. **Judgment means we are sinning and need to confess and repent, so we can receive salvation!** Jonah 101!

God is so committed to the elimination of sin that he is willing to sacrifice his own son to redeem us from sin. However we in a postmodern age need to accept the fact that we are guilty of sin and allow the Holy Spirit to show us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Lord bring us cleansing from our sin and help us to recognize our sin and your judgment so we will truly be saved. Open our ears to hear your voice even if it makes us uncomfortable with our sin!