

## 1 Peter 4:12-19 – Part G

**1Pe 4:17 (NKJV) 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 of God?**

Last week as we approached this passage, I left you with one very simple message - **you better take sin in your life seriously!** This morning I want to add to that spiritual reality with another very simple statement, so listen very carefully. **If you do not take your sin seriously, you can be assured that your sin will take care of you.** Let me say that one more time. **If you do not take your sin seriously, you can be assured that your sin will take care of you.** Sin is never neutral in your life – never. It is always actively, slowly, methodically, aggressively working to overtake any area of your life that it possibly can. All it wants you to do is to just ignore it, dismiss it, and just casually assume that it will not disturb or bother your life. Bad assumption. Bad judgment. Bad decision. Sin is never neutral, never indifferent.

In [Numbers 32:23](#), there is a very interesting verse that Moses spoke to the people of Israel about what God wanted them to do regarding conquering the land of Canaan. This is what Moses said to the people who had previously been very, very rebellious.

**Nu 32:23 (NKJV) But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.**

What does that last phrase actually mean? It means that your sin will catch up with you, that it will track you down and play havoc with your life. It literally means that it will overpower you, capture you, and apprehend you.<sup>1</sup> If you allow sin to persist in your life, it is a spiritual law and a spiritual reality that you simply cannot avoid. It will overtake you and destroy your life. My father never dreamed when he drank his first beer that it would turn him into an adulterous alcoholic and destroy his family. He never saw that coming. In the beginning, personal sin that you commit seems so innocent, almost harmless. You never even really contemplate where it may be leading you. It is like you think that you can ignore it and it will just go away. Not true at all! To the very contrary, it is always working to overtake you, and it is not in a hurry. It wants to destroy your life, destroy your family, destroy your marriage, destroy your morals, and ultimately destroy your convictions about God and what it means to be a Christian. [John 10:10](#) declares this about what the enemy is doing in your life. I want you to take this verse seriously because it is talking about your personal life today, this moment, this service.

**Jn 10:10 (NKJV) The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.**

The thief wants to steal your peace, steal your joy, make you a bitter and angry person. He wants to destroy every vestige of godliness and obedience to Christ that he possibly can – and you are his target. You are not an exception. You have not been overlooked. If you ignore this verse and think that there is nothing in it for you, it only reveals how very deceived you have become. It only reveals how very ignorant you are about sin and its impact on your life. You have already become its victim and do not even know it. Sin is always lurking at your door, lurking in your marriage, lurking around your children – and it never takes a break. The worst part about sin is that it never operates in a vacuum. You never

<sup>1</sup> Harris, *masa*, 521.

sin in a vacuum. Your sin will always have a negative impact on other people, and generally it is the people that are the closest to you. That is how ugly sin really is – it not only destroys you personally, but it hurts and pains and grieves those who care about you the most. So what is the point? Simple. **If you do not take your sin seriously, you can be assured that your sin will take care of you.** You do not get a vote in this.

It is one thing for an unbeliever to live in sin. For them it is actually unavoidable and inescapable. However, for someone who claims to be saved and is living in known sin, living in rebellious sin, and living in indifference to sin, they have some very serious issues to address. The problem that we as Christians too often have is that we simply take sin lightly. We are much too casual in dealing with sin, and that is one reason why Peter declares with no apology or even explanation that **“the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God”**. So, why is this even necessary? It is very simple – the individuals that make up the church are not taking sin in their life seriously. It is almost as if it does not even matter to them. In reality neither you nor me have time to literally waste our life on things that ultimately have no eternal value and that eventually both destroy us and those that love us.

The problem with the modern church is that it has way too many secret disciples, too many silent witnesses, too many goats, and too many indifferent and meaningless members. I was thinking about this and came to the conclusion that the only thing that seems to impact many professing Christians in a negative way is God and His Word. The idea of actually having to trust God, to obey God, and to become a fully devoted follower of Christ is just too much for some believers. It seems to interfere with their life and how they “want” to live, how they “want” to act, what they “want” to do. The institutional church culture in which we currently live has built up a kind of spiritual immunity to real, heartfelt, biblical commitment to its Lord. It is almost like we have been vaccinated with a spiritual antidote so that we do not have to take our Christian life seriously. That is the tragedy of the modern church – a spiritual indifference to a real commitment to Christ. Listen carefully. God is going to discipline His church, chasten His church, and it is not something that we can avoid or casually dismiss or circumvent. That will not happen. This is a spiritual reality that is inevitable – the discipline and chastening of God on sin in our lives.

Now, I want us to think about this for a moment and how some of this is eventually going to work out. There are two aspects of this judgment that Peter is addressing. The first is the immediate chastening by God of His church. I have no idea what the future holds for the modern day church, but it does not look to good to me personally. We have Massachusetts passing a law to allow for polyamorous marriages. We have The Hallmark Channel beginning to produce homosexual and lesbian movies. We have states now considering pedophilia as a legal lifestyle. Are you kidding me? Immorality, lasciviousness, lewdness, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, drunkenness, God haters, Christian haters – that is the cultural climate of the day and many Christians will be swept up into the cultural slime pit without a blink of the eye. Sodom and Gomorrah has arrived. This will be the earthly chastening.

The second aspect of this judgment will be the Judgment Seat of Christ where only true believers will stand. Prophetically, the Rapture is the way the Tribulation revealed in Revelation begins and the Second Coming is the way that the Great Tribulation ends. In the Rapture, Christ comes in the air and believers rise to meet Him and go back to heaven with Him. At His Second Coming, Christ rides triumphantly out of heaven on a white horse with an army following Him – the church, the Bride of Christ, us. He

defeats all of His enemies in swift fashion and sets up His Millennial kingdom and reigns for 1000 years from His throne in Jerusalem. So, the Rapture is that event that removes the church from the earth just prior to the Tribulation and brings a close to what we know as the Church Age.

The next event for those genuine believers who are raptured is known as the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is that time when you as a believer will have your entire life evaluated by Jesus Christ to determine your personal degree of faithfulness to Him while you were on the earth, and the eternal rewards, or lack thereof, that you have earned. [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) says,

**2Co 5:10 (NKJV) 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.**

[1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#) speaks about this time and how it works.

**1Co 3:12 (NKJV) Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,<sup>13</sup> each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.<sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.<sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

It is clear that you will personally give an account of your life and your life alone. Your life will pass through God's fire to reveal its actual quality - good or bad. Lots of women wear what is called costume jewelry. It is jewelry that looks like the real thing, but it is only an imitation and has no real value whatsoever. At this eternal event, your life will not be tested on the basis of what it looks like to me, but rather to what it was really like when no one but God was watching. That is the real test of character – not what we see, but what God sees. V15 says that at the Judgment Seat of Christ that believers will “**suffer loss**”. I have no idea how great that loss actually will be, and I do not want to find out, but my conviction is that it will be much greater than we ever anticipated it to be. We played foot loose and fancy free with God, His Word, and our obedience and He said “You lose, you suffer loss”. It is like eating junk food. It tastes good going down, but it has no nutritional value for your life. When it is melted down, it is nothing more than grease, sugar, calories, salt, and fat. I believe there will be many Christians that have no more than spiritual junk food to bring to Christ – and it will all be burned and they will suffer great loss.

For the lost person, however, their judgment concludes at the Great White Throne Judgment as described in [Revelation 20:11-15](#).

**Rev 20:11 (NKJV) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.<sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.<sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.<sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

So, everyone will stand before either the Judgment Seat of Christ as a believer or before the Great White Throne Judgment as a non-believer. No one gets a vote or has any input into how God is going to conclude the end of this age. None of us have any control whatsoever of these events. So, the purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ is to provide an evaluation for judging the actual quality of our life and of how we lived out our Christian lives as God saw it. You may have fooled me and I may have fooled you, but neither of us have fooled God and on that day at His judgment seat, it will all be revealed.

This is where some believers are deluded simply because they believe that the only thing that matters is just getting into God's kingdom, and the quality of their Christian life has very little value to them. If you are one of those individuals, my heart goes out to you because you are desperately confused. None of us are saved because of our good works, but we will certainly be rewarded based on the sincerity and quality of our life. You can be assured that **if you do not take your sin seriously, that your sin will find you out and take care of you.**

So, the question that Peter is actually addressing in this passage is **not if you are a Christian, but what kind of Christian are you.** Please do not miss that. You may be a Christian, but certainly not living like one. I am constantly amazed at how lightly, how casually, how flippantly, how carelessly, how nonchalantly, and how calmly some Christians treat blatant, obvious, known sin in their life. When I preach and teach on something like this, my mind always races back to [Revelation 3:15-19](#) which speaks of the church of Laodicea – the actual church age in which we live. This is what John wrote,

**Rev 3:15 (NKJV) I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'-- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. <sup>19</sup> As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.**

Jesus only gives one option to this church – “**be zealous and repent**”.

I think about Lot in the Old Testament. He had all the opportunities he needed to be what God wanted him to be, but he just made the wrong choices. He moved to immoral Sodom for economic reasons and before it was all over, he had lost his wife, had been seduced by his daughters, and everything that was of any worldly value to him had been burned up and completely destroyed. He went there with everything and left with nothing. Listen. Lot's story is going to be a repeat story for many believers who refuse to take sin in their life seriously, who just continue day after day living in sin, in indifference, in spiritual shallowness, and who are just resting on the laurel that they made a “decision” 40 years ago. The reality of what kind of Christian life you actually have is not based on some meaningless decision that you made a long time ago that has no real impact on your life today, but how Jesus is actually impacting your life right now, today, this moment, this service. Do not tell me what happened to you in the past. That is not important to me. What I want to know is what is God doing in your life right now, today. Your current life is the only evidence anyone has of the reality of your confession.

You have to make the right choices. Right now, your life is a reflection of the choices that you have made in your life – good, bad, or indifferent. We have way too many worldly playthings that hinder our walk. I am not against a Christian enjoying all that God has blessed them with, not at all, but not at the expense of them overriding what should be our spiritual priorities. If they do, then you need to simply get rid of them. [Hebrews 12:1](#) says,

Heb 12:1 (NKJV) **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

My heart is so grieved for the young people that are growing up in today's world. We live in a culture that doubts everything that has to do with integrity and character. The culture just feeds on distrust of spiritual truth and regards it as oppressive. Our educational system and the mass media that we all are exposed to, are undermining every spiritual value that we have. The church is buried in this cultural quicksand and is making little to no impact whatsoever on lost people. For many young people, their chances of making it spiritually are probably slim to none. For many kids, and adults as well, their god is their I-Phone or their video game.

You might be thinking to yourself "*Gary, you have really messed up my day because if I died today, I don't think that I would have much of real value to offer to Christ*". Well, we all know that you cannot fix yesterday, but you can certainly take care of tomorrow. Paul said it this way in [Philippians 3:13-14](#),

Php 3:13 (NKJV) **Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,<sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

That is good advice, so please pay attention to it. So, what is the point of today's message? Simple, simple, simple - you better take the sin in your life seriously because if you do not, your sin will take care of you.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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