

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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Judgment Begins with the House of God

Today, some quarters of the church no longer talk of judgment or tribulation, unless perhaps it is for those they see toasting in an eternal hell or the world going into great tribulation after the church is "raptured" off the earth. Instead, there is a lot of talk about the latter glory of the church coming in this age (not the age to come) and little to no talk of tribulation coming upon the church in this age in order to shake off all the pride and religious crud that has accumulated and been encrusted in so much of what is being done in the name of the Lord.

Have we grown tired of tribulation as we wait for the Son of God to come out of heaven to deliver us into His Kingdom that comes to the nations of this earth? Have we decided it is time for us to take things into our own hands, to rise up and fight back? May it not be coming to this! I hear a dangerous aggression within the church today.

Have we, as the church that is still made up of mortal flesh, somehow cleaned up ourselves so we are now worthy of the Kingdom in such a way that we have the right and sanction of heaven to rule the nations? Are we no longer in need of the judgment of God? Are our afflictions, sufferings, trials, and tribulations over simply because we want them to be?

"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22 NASB)

(14) If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (15) Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; (16) but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. (17) For it is time for judgment [krima] to begin with the household [house] of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (18) AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? (19) Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (1 Peter 4:14-19 NASB [KJV])

(30) For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. (31) But if we judged [diakrino] ourselves rightly, we would not be judged [krino]. (32) But when we are judged [krino], we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:30-32 NASB)

(3) So that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions [thlipsis]; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. (4) For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 NASB)

(4) Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions [thlipsis] which you endure. (5) This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment [krisis] so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 NASB)

(32) For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. (33) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments [krima] and unfathomable His ways! (Romans 11:32-33 NASB)

The Greek words for *judgment* and *tribulation* have been inserted to highlight the fact that these verses deal with the same thing.

I realize that the Lord's people need encouragement in these days of much confusion and perplexity and fear over what is about to come upon the face of the earth, but we must not treat God's judgment of the church as if it automatically stops because we are tired of it and want to take the world by storm. Consider how Paul and Barnabas encouraged the disciples.

(21) After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, (22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations [thlipsis] we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:21-22 NASB)

The brethren were encouraged to continue in *the* faith as they faced many tribulations, for in this way, they, meaning all of us who believe, enter the Kingdom of God. Has it changed after 2,000 years as the end of our present wicked age comes into sight?

According to Paul, we do not enter the Kingdom by escaping tribulation but by going through it. In God's judgments [krima], we learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9). Further, Jesus does not come for His elect until after the tribulation of those days, meaning the last days of our present age.

(29) "But immediately after the tribulation [thlipsis] of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:29-30 NASB)

(24) "But in those days, after that tribulation [thlipsis].... (27) "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven. (Mark 13:24, 27 NASB)

Answer this question: Do you see any *major* signs that the church of our day has truly turned from its religious pride? I believe that one of the primary results of judgment of the household of God is to humble God's people. How do we know? Because this was on Peter's heart when he wrote that judgment begins with the house of God: **All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE (1 Peter 5:5 NASB).**

In tribulation, let us humble ourselves as we wait for the **Day of Christ** that starts with resurrection and transfiguration. This is the day of the latter glory.