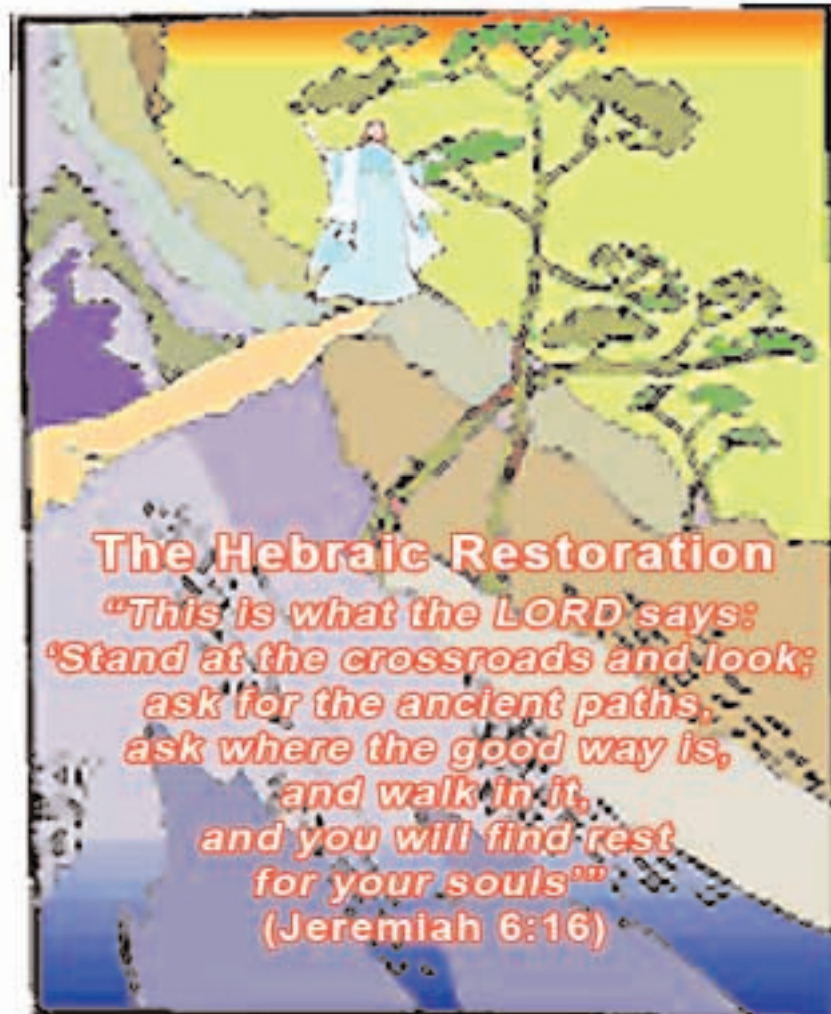


Lifebyte 39:

The Book of Daniel (Chapters 7 -12)

Living Righteously In The Days of Chastisement



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We were stirred to write this Lifebyte after the Holy Spirit prompted Mike to read through both Daniel and Hosea. As you'll see, these two books are foundational for the followers of Jesus to understand the times we are in, and how we should live in response to these days.

Back in Lifebytes 9 and 10 we discussed the first six chapters of the Book of Daniel. The unwavering integrity of these four Jewish captives, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, was proven time and again as they withstood numerous challenges to compromise their faith in the heathen empire of Babylon.

What a galvanizing example for us today in their righteous determination to keep their God's commands and hold faithfully to the One they trusted!

The various ways in which our God responded to the obedient trust of His four "called-out ones" are glorious—and served a particular purpose! By rescuing them from the fire's maw and the lion's jaw, God revealed Himself in awe-inspiring power. Holy fear was implanted in the minds of their captors.

And only God could transform the humble status of 4 young slaves into that of respected government leaders. Their steadfast trust in their Lord and the righteous wisdom with which these faithful men walked day by day produced an incredible impact: a whole series of Babylonian kings acknowledged that no other god could deliver like the Hebrew God (Daniel 3:29; 4:34; 6:16)!

Beginning in chapter seven through the end of the book, God reveals to His servant Daniel significant future events. If you're familiar with these chapters, can you imagine *yourself* receiving the astonishing insights and visions that

God shared? Does *your* lifestyle of righteousness and trust match that of Daniel and his friends so that you're available for however our Lord wants to use you?

It's important for our faith walk that we *do* look to these exemplar individuals from the past and study the facets of their lives that demonstrated daily righteousness. The character and nature of the individuals God chose to reveal Himself to are traits that He calls His Spirit-indwelled children to walk in as well!

His standards haven't changed. That's why our Father is using the "Hebraic Restoration" to restore the call for *obedient trust* that was fleshed out by one of those faithful ones, Abraham:

By hearing with faith Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness... And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you' (Galatians 3:5b,6,8).

God revealed to the righteous patriarch the joyful message of the Good News to come to *all nations* through him. Through the righteousness of one man, God laid the foundation that Abraham's descendants who trusted Jesus would be a blessing to all people groups. This is the "all peoples perspective" we discussed in the previous two Lifebytes.

This is the non-optional assignment given to each of us by our Father's loving heart: to be His blessing to others.

This Lifebyte isn't an attempt to interpret the prophetic images in the Book of Daniel. Rather, we want to share with you the nature of the *character and manner of life* we followers of Jesus must

have to serve Him in His Kingdom.

The last chapters in the Book of Daniel connect so much of what we've been sharing about the need for the saints of God to *live righteously*. The prophetic words given to Daniel also illuminate an even greater need for the followers of Jesus to serve our beloved King and His Kingdom purposes. The warnings to those who abide *outside His Kingdom* can't be more plain as these chapters reveal the nature of wrath that the End Times will bring upon the wicked of the world.

Why are the truths in this Lifebyte important for you and for your family? Because our Lord Jesus "*gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good*" (Titus 2:14). He has called out His people to serve His good purpose *with eagerness!*

That eager willingness is vital, for He forewarned us that the wicked ways and values of the world would conspire to rob us of *our love*: "*Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved*" (Matthew 24:12,13).

This is going to be the great battle ground for many: not allowing your heart to grow cold. Each one of us needs, with the power of His Spirit and the encouragement of those who are our extended spiritual family in the faith, to be a righteous and loving representative of our Lord Jesus. The darker that wickedness becomes, the more that people retreat into self-preservation and self-interest (see Proverbs 28:12,28).

We who lovingly serve our Lord had better not be found protecting ourselves through unwillingness to trust and obey, nor excusing or rationalizing tolerated sin in our lives or our homes:

*The great battle ground for many:
not allowing your heart to grow cold.*

Nevertheless, God's **firm foundation stands**, stamped with these words: 'The Lord **knows His own**,' and, 'Let everyone who claims he belongs to the Lord **stand apart from wrongdoing**' (2 Timothy 2:19).

- **Does your lifestyle of righteousness and trust match that of Daniel and his friends? If not, how do you differ from them?**

- **Has your love for others increased, stayed the same, or diminished since you first became a follower of Jesus? Describe the nature of your love.**

The Book of Daniel: *Prelude to the Book of Revelation*

"I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:9,10)

A magisterial vision of the Final Judgment is set before us, one that is replicated in the Revelation envisioned by John the Apostle. We so desperately need *equal confidence* in the continuum of truth our God reveals in *both* the Older and Newer Testaments!

Our Lord Jesus is the awesome and all-powerful King of Kings. Tragically, the reality of His exalted enthronement as Lord of all the universe has been obscured in much of American Christendom. The Alpha and Omega Who will burst forth in clouds surrounded by glory is regularly depicted more as “Jesus my buddy”, or cherished as the little baby in the manger.

But when you bow before Him at the Throne of His power and His grace, you won’t picture our Lord Jesus in such a limited fashion! His holy righteousness and justice as well as His encompassing love and mercy will overwhelm your very being.

Your heavenly welcome is determined by whether your name is found in His book of Life — if you are truly in covenant union with our Father through the presence of the Spirit of Christ in you. As Daniel is told, *“your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book, will be delivered”* (12:1).

So that you are assured of how crucial it is that you *know* your name is inscribed in the book — that His indwelling Spirit is your guarantee—our Lord revealed to the Apostle John the same image of a specific book of life:

*And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the **book of life**; and the dead were **judged from the things which were written in the books**, according to their deeds.*

*If anyone’s name was **not found written in the book of life**, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

*Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose **names are written in the Lamb’s book of life** (Revelation 20:12,15; 21:27).*

Your *salvation*—your eternal welcome among the “church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23) — will be experienced when you appear before the Judge of all and He finds your name in the Book of Life. At that point He will proclaim your name to the hosts of heaven and you will take up your inheritance in His eternal Kingdom (see Matthew 25:34,46).

Your viable Covenant relationship with our Father in Jesus and your ongoing sanctification into Christ-likeness on your pilgrimage *toward* your salvation is your assurance in the Spirit that your name will be found. So please, don’t be complacent!

It’s important on your journey that you not compare your righteous life choices with those of the people around you. Instead, measure your life against our Lord’s holy standards in the *entire Bible*. Study the lives of those whom God esteemed and revealed Himself to. You’ll be strengthened as you emulate their trusting obedience and readiness to repent because of their devotion to their God!

• **How do you feel about standing in front of Jesus at the Judgment Throne? Do you think about this much? Why or why not?**

The Book of Daniel Preview of Jesus and the Kingdom

Not only was Daniel privileged to see what was going on at the Judgment Throne; he also encountered Jesus:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.

And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13,14).

New converts who embrace the Covenant Gospel and haven't been immersed in the deceit of religious systems often find the concept of Kingdom living far more acceptable than those who have been "churched". The latter struggle as they try to attach Hebraic foundations to a Nicolaitan mindset of formalized services, boxed-in religious practices, and professional clergy.

That struggle is part of the normal human tendency: *to try to paste the unfamiliar onto that which we already have experienced.* That's why Jesus uses the metaphor of the unshrunk cloth and new wineskins to warn us against trying to patch His way of Kingdom life with conventional religious practices and rituals (see Matthew 9:16,17).

Sadly, so many who leave the organized religious system immediately try to find a "house church" so they can implement elements of the "church services"

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to which they've been accustomed. Rather, their first step should be to make sure their own home is founded on righteousness and keeping God's commands in loving, obedient service to Him (see 1 Corinthians 5:7,8).

Then, they should *pray to find others* who uphold righteousness to be extended spiritual family with them. Remember, the first criteria for fellowshiping with others is to uphold communal righteousness out of *loving gratefulness to our Lord* so that your prayers may be answered and our Father may be praised through your testimonies of His response! Biblical extended family in Jesus also pray together with purpose to *reach out* as servants of the King and *seek out* unbelievers whose lives they can share as authentic friends.

You'll discover, as many have, that reaching out to unbelievers, with a desire to see them embrace the Father's Covenant, is far more fruitful than trying to hook up with already "churched" people who will want to get together to "have church" in their home instead of under a steeple. Why?

Because the majority of people who've been raised in organized religious systems are inclined to reproduce the system all over again. This has been the sad testimony of those who've tried to start a house church with others who've been "churched". All they end up doing is establishing another religious form (Isaiah 29:13). Tragically, they fail to experience the relational intimacy our Lord showers on those who live righteously and walk in His Kingdom purposes (Isaiah 40:11).

- Describe the nature of your relationship with Lord Jesus in recent weeks. Is He sufficient for you, or do you need religious services and programs to prop up your faith?

The Book of Daniel Warns Us of The War Against the Saints

Living righteously can impact the course of history. Think of Joseph in ancient Egypt and what his righteousness accomplished to save millions of lives. Picture four captive youths in Babylon of old and what their righteousness brought about.

Now think of the thousands of soldiers currently stationed in Iraq—ancient Babylon. Despite all the advanced weaponry and technology at their disposal, how little has been accomplished to bring lasting peace, never mind prosperity. Without righteousness there is no victory.

If you have a Kingdom heart, don't put your trust in the military power of this nation (see Psalm 20:7). Don't rely on your wealth or ability to gain resources (Matthew 13:22). And don't depend on other people or social systems to meet your needs rather than humbly submitting in trust to God (see Psalm 118:8).

We followers of Jesus *are* under attack, and we *can* be overpowered and overcome!

I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them...

And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time (Daniel 7:21,25; see also Revelation 12:17; 13:7).

There are no "civilians" in the Kingdom of God. Far from it! We are warriors fighting against spiritual forces in the heavenlies (Ephesians 6:10-18). If you haven't done so already, we encourage you to see our video series, **Certain of What We Do Not See**, available for free viewing and download at our website. The foundation for a trust that fights the good fight is "*being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*" (Hebrews 11:1).

Luke warned followers of Jesus in his day to beware the folly of giving way to worldly ways, compromising your walk with Jesus by succumbing to temptation. Satan is sneaky in his attacks. Remember, there's no separation between your physical actions and your spiritual life! Keeping watch is vital if you're to recognize and flee the deceiver's snares:

Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap (Luke 21:34).

If you think it's impossible for you to be overcome by Satan, then you've given him the upper hand already. This is exactly why the devil has produced the myriad of false gospels peddled particularly in the west. As we've shared in previous teachings, the devil convinces people that they're saved at conversion and that little is required of them afterwards.

This deception is widespread and takes many forms. But the deceit discards the truth that permeates all of God's Word. Self-proclaimed "Christians" who think they can enter God's Presence without turning away from their sins and being cleansed "rush past the commitment of the holy place with sin caked all over them and sinful habits deeply embedded in their hearts. [They] walk right in and boast, 'I am the righteousness of God in Christ.'" (David Wilkerson, *A Perfect Heart*)

This counterfeit is entirely opposite the true Gospel, the one that calls you to trust and to endure to the end:

When you are born again, you begin a pilgrimage to your salvation through justification. Along the way, sanctification transforms you into increasing Christ-likeness. At journey's end, salvation culminates in a heavenly welcome at the Throne of Jesus.

Remember, there is only one true Gospel that brings you into Covenant union with our Father through the sacrifice of Jesus. By this Gospel the Holy Spirit takes up His dwelling in you. If the Spirit does *not* abide in you, you have *no life* in Jesus.

But you [who have embraced the true Gospel], you do not identify with your old nature but with the Spirit — provided the Spirit of God is living inside you, for anyone who doesn't have the Spirit of the Messiah doesn't belong to Him (Romans 8:9).

- **Describe the nature and level of spiritual warfare taking place in your life lately.**

The Book of Daniel Warns Us of The Days of Chastisement

"I am going to explain to you what will happen at the end of the period of fury, because [the vision] has to do with the time at the end"
(Daniel 8:19)

We can't assume that the Dark Days of Chastisement about which our Father warned are coming on the United States is the same "period of fury" that Daniel was told about. But we should use the counsel which God reveals to Daniel about these arduous days to come to prepare ourselves to know exactly how our Lord would have us live.

This is why we so often encourage you to make contact with **Voice of the Martyrs** (www.Persecution.com). You need to see what our brothers and sisters are facing in Muslim, Hindu and Communist countries, and how they're responding. Familiarize yourself with the cost for them and their families as they follow in the steps of Jesus in their suffering. You need to know how critical it's going to be for *you* to maintain a ***heart of love and forgiveness in the face of persecution.***

A heart that *forgives* and *refuses to grow cold* is not optional for a follower of Jesus. It's something **He commands**. Heed the warning to not harden your heart (see Hebrews 3:8; 4:7), no matter what confronts you. And don't be

deceived that God exists to make you happy! Those who live according to that false gospel won't find their name in the Book of Life!

- **How do you think you and those with whom you fellowship will respond when God begins to chastise this nation? How do you (and they) respond *now* when you are excluded or mocked for following Jesus?**

You need to see how our brothers and sisters are responding in Muslim and Hindu and Communist countries. You need to know how critical it will be for you to maintain a heart of love and forgiveness in the face of persecution. (Persecution.com)

The Book of Daniel Warns Us of This Age of Deceit

And in the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise insolent and skilled in intrigue. And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power.

And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will; he will destroy mighty men and the holy people.

And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; and he will magnify himself in his heart, and he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, but he will be broken without human agency

(Daniel 8:23-25)

That which weapons and persecution can't accomplish against the saints of God, deceit can. Why? Because deceit is the key characteristic of our *sin nature*, the consequence of the first couple giving way to deceit. And, Christians who tolerate sin in their lives are deceived already.

The first sin of mankind wasn't eating the fruit, but turning away from obedient trust in God to entertain deceit from the instigator of lies: "*The woman said, 'The serpent **deceived** me, and I ate'*" (Genesis 3:13).

We mentioned in an earlier Lifebyte that the principality that rules Washington, D.C. is **Deceit** (which has now become total unabashed **delusion**). And, throughout organized religious systems the spirit of deceit has destroyed:

- **Confidence in the authority of God's Word;**
- **A holy fear of God and the awesome reality of the Judgment Throne;**
- **Obedience to God's commands from a heart of loving trust;**
- **The certainty of many Christians that they'll find their names in the Book of Life.**

If you've put your trust in the teachings of clergy whose lives are steeped in hidden sin, you've been deceived. You haven't been as noble as the Bereans (Acts 17:11) to fully verify ALL teachings through God's Word. You've also failed to exercise the spiritual authority our Lord Jesus gave you to establish biblical life applications with the help of one or two others (see Matthew 16:19; 18:18-20).

Call to mind the clergy in recent years whose sexual misconduct has been exposed. Because of their deceit their teachings were watered down—entertaining but lacking the Spirit-breathed

conviction that leads to repentance. Please, remember this:

A sinful teacher only helps others to stay in sin.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron (1 Timothy 4:1,2).

This verse so tragically pictures numbers of religious system clergy. Any congregation that's chained to a mortgage has a clergyman who's worried about paying the bills—worries that can influence him to appease rather than challenge the congregation.

Instead of confronting the people with exhortation to forsake sin and press on in righteousness, the man himself is deceived that he's responsible as CEO to be successful, and to make sure the bills are paid by the congregants. So sin is rarely if ever addressed, or is mentioned without the Spirit's fire which would bring conviction to those who tolerate sin in their own hearts and homes.

Jesus warned against the *leaven* of the Pharisees which can so readily permeate others. The nature of that leaven—hypocrisy—is the deceit that you can live a double life: have an outward veneer of holiness but seethe inside with sinful coveting and longings. As He promises, this darkness will eventually be revealed! (See Luke 12:1-3.)

Any gathering or congregation that's led by a clergyman (or anyone) who considers himself *above others* in knowledge or character is being taught by a hypocritical teacher. The sanctifying work of

Make this your life practice NOW: Discuss God's Word with others close to you to establish your own faith practices. Live in the will of our loving Father to serve the King so you'll be welcomed at the Throne.

the Spirit brings about humility in genuine servant-leaders, not self-exaltation.

Any clergy person or leader who practices sexual misconduct (or even unforgiveness or habitual anger!) is a liar in his teachings, for he is also practicing *spiritual adultery* against God. That which is tolerated in the heart of leaders will be excused in the lives of the congregation as they follow suit with seared conscience.

The Bible refers to teachers who practice deceit, as well as those who learn from them, "prostitutes". These are the people who harden their hearts to truth: "***Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD***" (Hosea 5:4; see also 4:12).

God grieves over hypocritical teachers today as He did when He lamented through Hosea. Congregational leaders and clergy who focus on a "greasy grace" that allows for sin have dissuaded the flock from pursuing the knowledge of God's holy requirements for righteous living.

Out of love as an eager Bridegroom God the Son sacrificed Himself that those who *repented* from their sin and *received* forgiveness and reconciliation might truly live. He can do no more when people choose instead to follow leaders who feed their sin nature and ignore His holy standards:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge [the holy way of life from both testaments], I also will reject you [hypocritical clergy as well as unfaithful "believers"] from being My priest.

Since you have **forgotten the law of your God** [neglected the commands of Jesus which deepened the commands to the Hebrews], I also will forget your children. The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; **I will change their glory into shame** [how often “Christians” are scorned by unbelievers because of their hypocritical lifestyle].

They [hypocritical clergy/leaders] **feed on the sin** of My people [fail to confront sin], and **direct their desire toward their iniquity** [entertain the flesh through soulish worship and sinner-friendly sermons]. And it will be, **like people, like [deceitful clergy]**; so I will punish them **for their ways**, and repay them **for their deeds** (Hosea 4:6-9).

God’s Word is not short in how He has revealed His unchangeable holy nature, particularly through the warnings of those He called out as His prophets. Yet hear the loving anguish of God for His people as He yearns for them to turn away from sin and return to Him in *authentic love* rather than hypocritical religious practice:

*What can I do with you...? **Your love is like the morning mist**, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces **with My prophets**, I killed you with the words of My mouth; My judgments **flashed like lightning** [unmistakable warning against tolerated sin] upon you.*

*For I desire **mercy** [lives that mirror His character through righteous deeds], not sacrifices [religious forms], and **knowledge of God** [as He really is according to His Word] rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:4-6).*

Again, make sure you’re *discussing and applying God’s Word together* with

those close to you to establish your own faith practices within your family and extended spiritual family. Your “one-anothering” should strengthen each of you to live in the will of our loving Father to serve the King so you’ll be welcomed at the Throne. Therein lies “*richness toward God*” (Luke 12:21)!

There are no free-loaders in the Kingdom. If you have the Holy Spirit within, you WILL bear fruit from a heart of obedient trust! Just remember that the “author of deceit” will use any means to keep you from fruitfulness. Your call is to resist his wily temptation to draw you away from holiness into worldliness:

*With flattery he will **corrupt those who have violated the covenant**, but the people who **know their God will firmly resist him*** (Daniel 11:32).

When you remain repentant and devoted to our Lord and establish your faith practices on His Word, you’ll be able to resist the clever and deceitful schemes of Satan. On the other hand, those who have violated the Covenant in their hearts and in their lives will be corrupted. Don’t be among these! Do you remember what you promised God when you were baptized?

*This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body **but the pledge of a good conscience toward God**. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21; see also Romans, chapter 6).*

A “good conscience” will preserve you from deceit and hypocrisy as you purpose to fulfill the *true meaning* of our God’s grace: the power and the desire to do His will.

(You might want to explore our newsletter, 1997-11 “Judgment Throne”, for the inner heart change that’s behind a good conscience.)

- **Have you ever been deceived by false religious teachings? If yes, what errors did you once embrace? How did you finally discover God’s truth for your life?**

The Book of Daniel *Widespread Repentance Won’t Come During The Days of Chastisement*

“Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to Your truth” (Daniel 9:13).

People aren’t naturally repentant. Turning away from sin and humbly walking God’s pathway has nothing in common with mankind’s pursuit of worldly goals, gratification of the flesh, and the devil’s dark enticement!

During the times when God sends His chastisement, those who have ignored God’s truth harden their hearts even more. Israel certainly personified this when they mingled with the nations, gave way to the seductive Queen of Heaven demon, and turned their back on the One Who had called them apart to be His own treasure. Their delusion that they needed to appease demonic deities only intensified their resistance to God

(see Jeremiah 44:3-5, 15-23).

The Book of Revelation repeats the pattern of obstinate refusal to repent in the face of the massive destruction that has been prophesied to come:

The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands... Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him ...and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done (Revelation 9:20,21;16:9,11).

Our God gets no delight in the destruction of the unrepentant. Nevertheless He doesn’t change His ways of dealing with nations that refuse to repent and live righteously.

In Deuteronomy, chapter 28, He presented the Israelites the choice of blessing or curse. People today have the same choice—to repent and be covered by the blood sacrifice of our Lord Jesus and walk righteously in His Lordship. Or, to go on enslaved to sin and pay the penalty themselves through chastisement in this world, and/or eternal punishment.

Try to understand the pained heart of our *holy* and *loving* God in response to the intentional violation of those who claimed to be His. Notice that rather than humbly repenting before Him, they run away terrified, resistant to the end.

People aren’t naturally repentant. And, in times when God sends His chastisements they harden their hearts even more.

All their evil is at Gilgal; indeed, I came to hate them there! Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house! I will love them no more; all their princes [leaders] are rebels.

Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed; thorn and thistle will grow on their altars; then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" And to the hills, "Fall on us!" (Hosea 9:15;10:8; see Revelation 6:16).

The Book of Daniel Teaches the PATTERN of Repentance

And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land (Daniel 9:4-6).

Daniel, exiled to Babylon from the beloved land of his people, is humbly making confession. Determined to live righteously before God and before men, he didn't personally commit the sins that ultimately incited God to turn Israel over to pagans. DANIEL didn't reject the words of the prophets whom God mercifully sent to warn the people about their unrighteousness. But, he did confess their sins as if they were his own.

He stood in the gap to maintain his

identity as a Hebrew, grieving deeply over the wickedness of his people that brought about such chastisement.

We followers of Jesus have much to learn from the humble-hearted accountability for others we see not only in Daniel but also in Nehemiah (9:32-37), Ezra (9:3-7), and Jeremiah (3:25).

God's children are in no position to finger-point at the sins of others from a position of arrogance. That kind of self-righteous accusation only serves to indicate a very real beam in the eye of the accuser!

Jesus paid the price for the sins of all mankind. And, our loving and merciful God desires that all forsake their bondage to sin and come to salvation. The Body of Christ is composed of a vast array of very unique, redeemed "parts"—brothers and sisters in Jesus who are each other's "keepers". And as we continue to share: God holds those within our fellowship family *communally responsible* to confront the sin in our midst which hinders our prayers from being answered.

Does God hold you accountable for those whom you call your fellowship family but ignore or tolerate their sin? Yes, He does! Now ask yourself this: Are you innocent of the sins the leaders of this nation commit? Read on!

It's important that you not get trapped in the *deceit of self-righteousness* (Luke 18:9-14). As an example for us today, God reveals within the Hebrew Scriptures the chastisement of those who intentionally sinned and thereby brought down many in their midst.

You aren't accountable only for your own sins when you are in spiritual fellowship as family with others. So make sure you know in the Spirit those for whom God holds you accountable!

The *entire nation of Israel* was held responsible for disobedience even though only *one man* defied God's command:

But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the LORD's anger burned against Israel (Joshua 7:1).

If you recall, when the children of Israel set about to conquer and inhabit the land God had promised them, three tribes were granted their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan River, while the remaining nine tribes claimed their land by lots west of the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. When the fighting was over, the three tribes east of the River returned home.

Thinking that in subsequent generations the nine tribes west of them would disavow that they were also among God's chosen, the eastern three set up a replica altar of witness. Enraged and fearful that God would hold them responsible for an unsanctioned and forbidden altar, the nine tribes came prepared to war against their eastern brothers. They realized that without a doubt they were *collectively responsible* for this perceived sin, and that *all* would suffer the penalty:

And it will come about if you rebel against the LORD today, that He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow (Joshua 22:18).

On another occasion the entire nation of Israel did suffer when their monarch sinned against God. The army commander, Joab, painfully recognized that all the people would be held to blame for the presumption of the king:

"Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?" (1 Chronicles 21:3). This is the account:

Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel... This command was also evil in the sight of God; so He punished Israel... So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead (1 Chronicles 21:1,7,14).

Do you think that the decisions of our President and Congress that are contrary to God's Word have an affect on you and your family? Yes, they do! Just study the history of Israel in the Older Testament and see how often multiple generations ended up in dire circumstances because of the sinful choices of their rulers.

In the Body of Christ you don't live in a vacuum. You are called to suffer if one part suffers, and if one part in your fellowship family is intentionally sinning, you are accountable to confront that person in hope that he or she will repent (see Matthew 18:15-17). The willful sin of one has consequences for many others. (If this is a new concept for you, please read our newsletter, 1998-06 "**Repentance, Part 1**".)

Please don't misunderstand! Our Father is NOT intent on chastising every person who slips up in any way! Far from it! Our God is first of all loving, merciful and long-suffering. Through His *kindness* He leads people to repentance (Romans 2:4). Out of *loving mercy* to His treasured Israel He sent numerous prophets to dissuade them from sin and warn them of sin's consequences.

Our Father grants even to those who are "exceedingly wicked" ample time to repent and find forgiveness. At the plea

of Abraham, God would have spared Sodom if He could have found 10 righteous people (see Genesis 18:32).

You may be thinking, "Surely there are enough righteous people in the United States that God wouldn't chastise this nation." Our sovereign God allowed *25 million* to die in Europe's devastating Black Plague. Up to *50 million* perished during Stalin's purges. *Six million* Jews were murdered by the Nazis, including *1 million children*.

Were all of these *unrighteous*? Or did the innocent suffer as well because of the silent isolationism and prayerless non-accountability of those who felt in their heart, "It's not *my* responsibility"?

- **How do you feel about God holding you accountable regarding the sins of others, especially in your fellowship family? Does this affect your own desire to stay repentant so that your sins don't hurt others?**

The Book of Daniel *God Immediately Hears the Prayer of the Righteous*

"As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed" (Daniel 9:23).

The prayer of the righteous is heard by God as it is spoken or breathed out in your spirit. A peaceable assurance fills your heart as you come before our Father with your petitions, resting in the verac-

ity of His Word and His character that He hears and responds when your heart is clean before Him.

Note that there's a vast difference between babbling as the heathens do (see Matthew 6:7) and persevering in prayer that trusts in our faithful Lord. We continue to repeat this vital truth because it's found so often in Scripture:

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil (1 Peter 3:12; see also Proverbs 14:5; 15:8; 15:29; 28:9; Psalms 66:18,19; 33:18; 34:16).

If there's a delay between the time the righteous pray and the time they recognize His answer, there are a number of reasons. He might have an even greater blessing in store that needs time to come together. He might not answer in the way you expected because it would not have been the response of a loving Father Who knows your real need.

And, as Daniel experienced, there might be strong demonic opposition to your answer being received from His ministering angels. We get a snapshot of the nature of this spiritual warfare from the angel sent to Daniel:

*Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was **withstanding me for twenty-one days**; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia (Daniel 10:12-14).*

If your heart is set on a petition or request to God, stay righteous through repentance (1 John 1:9) and keep on praying in humble trust (Luke 18:1-8).

- When you pray, what do you think your heavenly Father is doing while you pray? Describe your prayer life and your level of trust that your prayers will be heard and answered.
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The Book of Daniel *Don't Regret Your Purification Fires*

We've shared in previous teachings that our marriage had been strained to the point of breaking after ten years of retreat ministry. On the flight to Israel Mike put his wedding ring back on, challenging Jesus to save our marriage. Our merciful Lord brought us to wonderful friends there who helped us recognize the connection *between* our marriage covenant and the Covenant we have with our Father in Jesus.

One afternoon outside Jerusalem the Holy Spirit gave Sue an understanding of the fiery purification trials that had afflicted Mike especially during our latter difficult years of ministry:

And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword [betrayal] and by flame [slander], by [spiritual] captivity and by plunder [isolation], for many days.

Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in insincerity. And some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure, until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time...

Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand (Daniel 11:33-35;12:10).

Then we were blessed to attend a Prayer Conference in Jerusalem with over 300 people from all over the world. One of the speakers asked, "How many of you have recently stumbled in ministry?" About 40 men stood up.

Mike: In the days to follow I got together with many of them. We found we all had one thing in common. In our quest to serve God we all thought too highly of ourselves. I was adept at running retreats and counseling church leaders. But the better I was at it, the less I depended on God.

In fact, a year before we went to Israel I was anxiously seeking the depth of intimate relationship I once had with Jesus. The day we were asked to leave the retreat center, I was reading David Wilkerson's book, "*Hungry For More Of Jesus*".

I can look back now with gratefulness at how God used my stumbling experiences to teach me a love and mercy that I wouldn't have ever known in my pride-based ministry. I encourage all of you who have repented of past wrong to *press forward* into all the mercy your Father offers you (Luke 9:62).

You may not realize it, but any *regret* you may have is really nothing more than wounded pride. You're refusing to entrust your future to the God who

holds everything in the palm of His hand. He can bless the repentant in ways you could NEVER imagine. Take it from me: Don't look back! Press on in yieldedness to His Spirit into the sanctification that produces Christ-likeness.

He wants to prepare you to be an effective instrument in His hand to serve His purpose:

Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve Me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be My spokesman' (Jeremiah 15:19).

You must understand that ONLY the absolutely humble and repentant who have tasted God's mercy can guide others in the Hebraic foundations.

His revelation of these truths at this time are His act of mercy to His beloved. And these truths will be shared by those who love Him and are merciful to others.

Keep in mind the great purpose that His preparation and refining of you is accomplishing at this time. As was prophesied to Daniel, many *will* be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. His wisdom at work *in* and *through* you will help others to respond to His Spirit's call!

• Do past wrongs you've committed haunt you? If yes, why do you let them?

• What sanctifying changes have you seen in yourself as a result of the refining fires of purification you've undergone in recent years? How has your family responded during these distressing times?
