

## Judgment Begins at the House of God

Thank you Father for all the blessings that you have laid in store for your servants who walk in your path, follow in your ways and serve you. Bless everyone near and far who are listening and hearing your word over U-tube and telephone-conference connected with us this Sabbath. Father, you are the one who has opened these doors by your power so that the gospel of your coming kingdom and redemption can be made known. We pray for greater love for you and a deeper understanding of your plan of salvation. We pray for a deeper understanding of what you have for each of us to do. Please, bring us safely into your kingdom. All praise, honor, and glory belong to you—the one true God. We come humbly before you and ask these things in the name of your son, and our Savior, Jesus Christ the Messiah. Amen.

Welcome to Bible study on this the first day of Av and the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. Happy *rosh chodesh* (new moon day)! The new moon was sighted last night in Jerusalem at sunset making this the first day of the month of Av. The fixed Jewish calendar (devised in 357-358 A.D.) is a day ahead of the visually sighted new moon this month. From one generation to another, the Sanhedrin (their decision making body) has made changes to God's Torah and added Jewish editions and traditions from their Oral Torah.

The apostle Paul takes Israel to task in **Romans 2:1-6**—"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." God "will repay each person according to what they have done (NIV)."

**Verse 11**—"There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism. All who sin apart from the law (without knowledge of the law) will also perish apart from the law and all who sin under the law (knowing the law) will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey (doers of) the law who will be declared righteous. Those who do by nature those things that are in the law (i.e. they are loving and kind, do not steal, etc...), they are a law unto themselves because they show the works of the law written in their hearts—their conscience bearing witness between themselves and their thoughts in the day when God by Christ Jesus will judge the secrets of men."

Romans 2:17-24—Now those who “call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law. If you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written, ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’ ”

A lot of people today who claim to be Christians are doing these same things today and ridicule the word of God and the church—by their actions, mannerisms and actions—causing people to blaspheme. Verse 28—“A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew (a real spiritual man of God) who is a Jew inwardly (in the heart); and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code (not just in the letter of the law). Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.”

**Romans 3:1**—“What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That you may be justified (proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge) in your words.’ ” It is a blessing that the Jews have the Torah (oracles of God—Genesis through Deuteronomy—first five books written by Moses). Now they need to keep it. It is a blessing that they have been given the calendar to preserve, but they need to preserve it accurately (as given to Moses at Mt. Sinai—not to change it with their own traditions, customs and ideas). **Deuteronomy 4:2**—“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” **Deuteronomy 12:28**—“Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.” **Isaiah 42:5**—“Thus says God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.”

God is calling his people today to return to the faith of our forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and Elijah, Christ and the apostles. It is time we take this seriously! I have been reading some letters about some ministers of different churches who used to be part of the WWCG and then they broke away creating new divisions in the body of Christ. David Hume is one such group which nine ministers have left due to division in doctrines and authority. Satan knows the secret of dividing and conquering. The body of Christ is to be united and it is not happening today. A lot of church members are lamenting the fact. There is so much pride and arrogance in the ministry today and a lack of humility and repentance—really seeking the word of God.

Christ said in **Matthew 4:4**—“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ” **John 10:1-7**—“Truly I tell you,

anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate (door) is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

Christ was warning the church about false ministers, those teachers trying to steal those who are following Christ. The door is Christ. "All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them." **Verses 11-13**—"I am the gate (door) for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hireling (false minister) is not the good shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep." This is what is happening in the churches of God today. These ministers are very good at scattering the sheep. They are not bringing them back to the word of God—the laws of God/the faith once delivered to the saints of God, but only pretending to teach the true doctrines of scripture. It seems that they are not about ready to repent and change to the true doctrines of scripture yet, until God applies more pressure of the Great Tribulation which is coming rapidly.

**Verses 14-18**—"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep." Those who really know Christ recognize his Spirit and his voice when they hear it. "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." There may be many folds with flocks of sheep and they will become one flock when Christ unites them. At this time, they are all divided.

**Jeremiah 23:1-4** —"Woe unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people. Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not attended them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings." The ministers who preach every Sabbath have scattered the flock and divided the people into a market-share type of approach. "I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase."

When is the Lord going to do that? The Lord will do this when Christ returns. What happened to the shepherds that were obviously dismissed? "And I will set up shepherds

over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the Lord.” These shepherds will be ministers who will not scatter the flock and are faithful.

**1 Peter 5:1-4**—Peter wrote to the elders and exhorted the elders among the church brethren as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and also of the glory that shall be revealed. “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither be as lords over God’s heritage, but be as living examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.” He admonished the younger members, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.”

**“All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility:** for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

Certainly this is a message to all the ministers of the church and all the different flocks in the church that are rejecting God’s truth and not loving each other. It is a serious problem today. I have been called many black-hearted names by various ministers who treat the truth of God as nothing and decidedly ignore it. God says to all of us, study the scriptures and prove all things and go by His word and keep the appointed times of Passover and Pentecost when he says to keep them. Be willing to be corrected. **Psalms 25** tells us the attitude we need to have, but I just haven’t seen much of it in the various churches. There is too much complacency, especially the ministry.

**Psalm 25:8**—“Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He instructs sinners in his ways. The humble He guides in what is right and teaches them his way. All the paths of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. For your name’s sake, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, for it is great. Who then are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose. They will spend their days in prosperity and their descendants shall inherit the earth. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him; he makes His covenant known to them.”

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and Christians need to get back to fearing God. **Isaiah 66:1-2**—“The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, says the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is **poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.**” That includes ministers, who are not trembling at God’s word. God says he made the heaven and the earth and all these things exist because He made them.

**Jude 1:1**—“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were long ago marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men (proud and arrogant), turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” They deny him in works, and in what they teach.

We have to fight for our faith earnestly. Verses 5-10—“You once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke thee.’ Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”

**Titus 1:10-16**—“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain (money, power, prestige.” This is especially true of the Jews and I might say of the churches of God who are supposed to be the circumcision of God. Paul said “rebuke these insubordinates, idle talkers and deceivers sharply **that they may be sound in the faith**, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even *their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.*”

A lot of ministers from these churches of God are not returning to God or the truth, and teach what they were taught by ministers before them and see no need to continue to search and prove the truth anymore. But they just teach what they inherited and are listening to the commandments of men who turn people from the true laws of God, when God is calling the church to repentance. They need to be preparing the flock for the hard times that are ahead of us. The Apostle Paul gives us fair warning in advance. **1 Peter 4:17**—“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? Now, ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”

Judgment has begun with the churches of God. We are all going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The apostle Paul talks about this subject of judgment. I think we need to pay attention, because too many of the ministers are judging one another instead of judging themselves. **Romans 14:12-13**—“Each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.” Let’s help our brother to come to repentance, not put a stumbling block in their way. Encourage them to repent, humble themselves to keep the commandments of God.

**Ephesians 5:1-8**—“Be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. No fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them (the people of this world).” Come out of Babylon. Come out of sin and transgression. “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose (reprove) them.” God’s law is light. Keeping the Ten Commandments is light. Darkness is everything that is contrary to the Ten Commandments from the Torah. If we don’t have the calendar right, then we are walking in darkness. If we don’t keep Pentecost and Passover on the right day as God intended, then we are walking in darkness. If we don’t keep Tabernacles with building the sukah (temporary shelter) and waving the *lulav* and rejoicing before the Lord, then we are walking in the darkness. There is a lot of darkness in this world.

**Colossians 4:5**—God says, “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” We are living in evil times and sin is multiplying, transgressions are abounding. What is the will of the Lord? His will is that we obey his commandments. To do that, we need to continually study his word daily and review and study his commandments carefully, so we need to search out and know what he says instead of what some ministers try to tell us.

This problem is facing all the churches today in this end-time generation. **Isaiah 30:8**—God told Isaiah to write it before the people on a tablet, note his message on a scroll that it may be for time to come, forever and ever. “This is a rebellious people—*lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord*. Who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us right things. Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path. Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.’ ” Make us feel good—don’t correct us! Notice that this is a rebellious people. Look around you today. Is the world hearing the Law of God? Is

America hearing the word of God? The answer is no. They are totally ignorant of the laws and knowledge of God is almost zero among the people. People in the church are taking a lot for granted and becoming a social society, not a place to worship and fear God and to fellowship with the Father and his son Jesus Christ the Messiah. The Church has become content and lukewarm. Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: “Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perversity, and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant.”

God said to Moses, “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’ ” So Moses instructed the leaders of God’s people and the entire congregation according to God’s direction.

**Deuteronomy 1:17**—“You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man’s presence, for the judgment is God’s. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.” People today are fearful and afraid to challenge ministers to be fair in judgment. **Leviticus 1:15-16**—“You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and **not bear sin because of him**. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Yes, even those who persecute us and those who put us out of the church. If your neighbor or minister, sins reprove/rebuke them and seek for their repentance. If you go along with their sin, then you will have to answer for it.

It is very important that we learn righteous judgment. God says that he wants us to learn righteous judgment. **John 7:24**—“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment”—judge according to the scripture. Do not just take someone’s position, appearance or word. If you don’t know what the scriptures say, then look it up! Get out your Bible, check a concordance. We are to first judge ourselves, then we can judge others.

This is an exhortation to all of God’s true servants. **2 Timothy 4:2-5**—“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.” This means to preach God’s word correctly. Study the word of God and know that you understand it before you open your mouth about it. We have to read and study the word of God and surrender to God in belief of what Christ said. Then, DO IT! Be ready to preach the truth, even when it is not convenient. “Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Don’t grow weary with well doing. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (sensible teaching), but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” This is happening right before our eyes today.

Paul also says, **2 Timothy 2:15**—“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Are we rightly dividing the word of truth? But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness; their message will spread like cancer.” Christ said, in **Matthew 4:4**—“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” (see Deuteronomy 8:3) How can we do that if we do not read the word of God? To live by his every word, we better be reading it daily and as much as we possibly can. Paul also says in **Timothy 3:15**—“from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are *able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*”

If you do not know the scriptures, you are not going to be wise to salvation and you will fall short and miss out by going astray. **John 5:39**—“Christ said “search the scriptures, they speak of me.” Human beings take many things for granted and get forgetful. Biblical ignorance today is at an all-time high. Biblical knowledge today is at an all-time low. **2 Timothy 3:16**—“All scripture [means the entire Bible: the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament**] is given by **inspiration of God**, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction in righteousness** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Why did God give us this word? Without the word of God we will not be very well equipped and properly armed so we can fight the battle of faith and defeat the enemy. **Ephesians 6:10-13**—“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on **the whole armor of God**. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

**Ephesians 6:11, 14-18** —“Put on the **whole armor of God** that you may be able to stand against the wiles (scheming) of the devil.” “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” **1 Peter 5:8**—“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking **whom he may devour.**” He is plotting to lead ministers and people astray which we have to stand up against. We must stand fast and stand strong in the evil day.

This is the evil day and evil time. We are in it. I have never seen so many things going bad so fast in my life and without any redeeming features. Wicked spirits control the air waves. TV is a tool to ensnare people in sin. God says take up his whole armor and resist temptation and fight. “Thy word is truth” (the Scriptures—John 17:17)), and “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

**Psalms 119: 165; 172**—“Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.” “My tongue shall speak of your word, for all your **commandments are righteousness.**” Righteousness is obedience to God’s law. What does it mean to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? It means to walk in the truth of God which brings peace. Walk according to God’s Law and proclaim the gospel. Few are doing this and witnessing to the truth—proclaiming the good news, the truth of God to whoever will listen to it. We are to be a shining light and share the truth with all those who cross our path—even our friends in church and recalcitrant ministers. **Matthew 10:28**--Christ told his disciples. “Do not fear do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**”

Ministers can *disfellowship* you and may say bad things about you, however, our concern needs to be about what God thinks, not what people think. There was a saying among children that I used to repeat as a young boy, “Sticks and stone may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” There is a lot of truth in that saying. If others turn a deaf ear to the gospel and God’s truth, shake the dust off your feet and move forward to those who are living and are willing to listen. A shield wards off the blows of an enemy and a helmet protects your head, eyes, ears, mind and brain. Your sword is the word of God which cuts like a two-edged sword. **Hebrews 4:12**—“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

**Psalm 149:6**—“Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a **two-edged sword** in their hand.” **Revelation 1:1,7-8**—“the revelation of Jesus Christ sent to his servant John, to the seven churches. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.” Even so, Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” **Rev. 2:12; 16** “These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword, ...out of His mouth went a sharp **two-edged sword**, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”

We have the word of God to conquer the enemy. That is how Christ conquered the devil when the devil sought to tempt him and lead him into sin and destroy him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). **Matthew 4:2**--Christ had fasted 40 days and 40 nights and was hungry. The tempter (the devil) came to and said to Christ, “**If You are the Son of God** command that these stones become bread.” Christ answered him and defeated him by quoting scriptures. He said, “It is written...” Finally, “Satan took him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.” Riches, power, authority, ruler of the world... Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve.’ ” “Then the devil left him.”

Do we know the word of God well enough to quote it in a moment of temptation? Do we know it well enough to quote it before a tribunal in our defense, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the brethren (saints)? Paul asked the brethren to pray for him specifically that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel to the world. Are we willing to put on the whole armor of God and stand fast in the truth of God? God wants us to be men and women of valor and honor, tough-minded Christians strong in the Lord.

**Colossians 1**—Paul writes to the faithful brethren in Colosse: “Thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for you. We do not cease to pray for you since the day we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus that springs from the hope stored up for you in heaven, you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that is growing among you and bearing fruit since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. We ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

God’s power is not limited. It is his own unlimited spiritual power that he imparts to us to strengthen us. If we want to be filled with God’s power, we need to be filled with the knowledge of God’s word and praying without ceasing. His word and his Holy Spirit reveals his will.

**Jeremiah 2:11-13**—“Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But my people have changed their Glory for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid. Be very desolate,” says the Lord. “My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.” **Jeremiah 2:17-19**—“ Have you not brought this on yourself, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God, when he led you in the way? And now why take the road to Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or why take the road to Assyria, to drink the waters of the River? Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the Lord your God, and the fear of me is not in you,” says the Lord God of hosts.

Verses 21-23—“Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, ‘I will not serve you!’ Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a prostitute. I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine? Although you wash yourself with soap and use an abundance of cleansing powder, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Sovereign Lord. How can you say, ‘I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals’?” God is very upset with his people.

I believe many people are in this sad condition today because they have been enticed by society and the wickedness all around them in this world and go with the flow. They allowed themselves to become corrupted and no longer believe in or fear God and see a need to repent. Tradition is strong and clung to while rejecting truth.

**Isaiah 5:11, 18-21**—“Woe those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine. They have harps and lyres at their banquets, pipes and timbrels and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord; no respect for the work of his hands. Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding. Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit, and sin as if with a cart rope; Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight! Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust.” This will happen, **“Because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”**

**Ezekiel 9:4-11**—“ the Lord said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’ ” “To the others He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.’ ” Verses 9-10—“He said to me, ‘The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city full of perversity; for they say, “The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!” And as for me also, my eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head.’”