

Pastors, Preach on the Coming Judgment

What is the greatest moral crisis in America today? Is it sexual anarchy? Abortion? Human trafficking? Substance abuse? Something else?

As serious as these issues are, I believe the greatest moral crisis in America is the lack of the consciousness of God, beginning in the church. It is imperative that we recover the awareness of the awesomeness of God, and that means preaching and teaching on His holiness, His justice and His judgment.

These are major themes of the New Testament, from Jesus to Paul to Peter to John, and we do well to return to those themes in our ministry of the Word.

To be sure, it is crucial that God's people are grounded in the security of the Father's love and that they understand that there is no condemnation in Jesus. And it is crucial when preaching on the fear of the Lord that God's children understand it is not a servile fear or a fear of punishment. Our Father is not a mean-spirited, capricious tyrant.

No, I'm talking about a reverential awe of a holy Creator and Judge, and it is that reverential awe that is so sadly lacking in much of the church today. That's why it is so absent from our society.

Really now, how much fear of God is there in America today?

The attacks of the new atheists have put believers on the defensive, as if we have to apologize for the God of the Bible. The sweet and syrupy gospel that talks only about God's goodness has put millions into a spiritual stupor. Even some of our worship services, calculated to entertain more than bring us into His majestic presence, have contributed to our

lightweight spirituality.

A focus on the coming judgment, on the holiness of God, on the vengeance that belongs to Him, on the coming wrath, would cure our superficial state in a hurry. And soon enough, that awe would begin to spill over from the church into the world.

These biblical truths would bring a greater God consciousness, a deep sobriety, a sense of urgency, a holy burden. And these truths, rightly preached, would not condemn the righteous—to say it again, there is no condemnation in Jesus—but they would stir the righteous and drive them to pray and stand and act.

As a result, those who love the Lord would be moved afresh to share the amazing love of God with a dying world. And those who are living in compromise and sin would be moved to turn away from those sins and receive fresh cleansing by the blood of Jesus.

Maybe you're a pastor and you don't want to get involved in the critical social issues of our day. Well, start preaching on the day when every human being will stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment and those whose names are not written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Something will happen to your people, and before you know it, their backbones will stiffen with holy courage.

Start preaching on Paul's warnings that the wrath of God is coming on rebels and sinners (Eph. 5:1-6; Col. 3:1-6). Start preaching on the day when Jesus will say to those who are not His, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41) These sobering words will have their effect.

We must remember that these verses are in the New Testament for a reason—and there are many, many others just like them—and if we ignore Paul's exhortation to note carefully both the goodness and severity of God, we do it to our own detriment (see Rom. 11:22).

How much time do we spend meditating on these truths? How much time do we spend instructing our families in these realities? Or could it be that we don't even believe these things anymore even though they are written plainly in the Word?

The fact is we have taken our eyes off of God's justice and wrath, however good our intentions might have been in our desire to reach out compassionately and help the hurting and the weak.

What we ought to do is reach out even more to those in need with hearts overflowing with compassion, demonstrating the love of Jesus to a sinning world and grounding every child of God in deep spiritual security, but we must do this as we live soberly before a holy Lord and equip others to live soberly as well.

Recovering the awe of the Lord in the church would produce a revolution in our lifestyles, and that revolution would soon be felt in the world.

Who will join me in recovering these essential biblical truths?

Michael Brown is the author of 25 books, including *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show *"The Line of Fire."* He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience.