

# Warning: Bittersweet Times Ahead

Joseph prepared for seven years of famine during the seven years of prosperity (Gen. 41:47-49, 53-57). And so there is a time of preparation we've been in now for some time. The disciplinary judgments of the Lord have been delayed and held back from on our nation as the praying remnant who are exercising their spiritual authority take their place.

I heard one minister call this the ministry of divine authority. In the times of Elijah, we see this ministry in manifestation in the spirit and power of Elijah as he stood on Mount Carmel and contested with the false prophets of Baal. The fire fell and consumed the sacrifice along with the wood, stones, dust and even the water. This mighty manifestation caused the people to fall on their faces and declare the Lord as God.

"Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!' (1 Kings 18:39b)

We also see this divine authority exercised in the days of Moses as he stretched forth his rod and the Red Sea swallowed up and drowned the Egyptian armies. The results of this ministry are noted in Exodus 14:31:

"When Israel saw the great power which the Lord used upon the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses."

This type of authority administered in the spirit and power of Elijah will be seen again. Its purpose is always redemptive—to bring forth true repentance and cause the hearts of the people to turn to the Lord.

We are in the infantile stages of the release of the spirit and power of Elijah where true servants of God exercise this great authority. This will include a worldwide company of men and women who have been summoned by the Lord to be His messengers, and their ministry will be similar to that of John the Baptist.

“He will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:16-17).

In the times of Moses and Elijah, great severity was necessary to turn the hearts of the people back to the Lord. Often people quote the Scripture in Romans 2:4, properly stating that it is the goodness or kindness of the Lord that leads to repentance, but when the Lord’s goodness does not lead to repentance then He is forced to move us into the realm of His severity.

“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God—severity toward those who fell, but goodness toward you, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

If people would stop taking Romans 2:4 out of context, they would see that the passage is not just focusing on the goodness of God, but also on His severity. It’s in contrast to understanding His severity that we come to greatly appreciate His goodness and not take it for granted. People love to quote this verse, but how often do you hear them quote the verses before and after it? Do people realize this verse is sandwiched between verses about the judgment and wrath of God?

*Do you think, O man, who judges those who do such things, and who does the same thing, that you will escape the judgment of God? Do you despise the riches of His goodness, tolerance,*

*and patience, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

*But because of your hardness and impenitent heart, you are storing up treasures of wrath against yourself on the day of wrath when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed. ...*

*But to those who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, will be tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man who does evil, to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile (Rom. 2:3-5, 8-9).*

The danger of God's judgment and wrath needs to be made known, or people will never realize how good, kind and patient He is. God's goodness is truly manifested toward the disobedient when He graciously allows them more space and time to repent in spite of their rebellion against Him. Lovingly warning others about God's wrath and severity does not mean you are not focusing on the goodness and kindness of God. God's wrath is good, because it is just, and fair, for it reveals His holiness.

Too many people have taken the Lord's goodness to further their pleasurable, worldly and even sinful lifestyles. Therefore, for the sake of their salvation and perseverance of their souls the Lord has to administer His severity.

And so we will see both the manifestation of the goodness and severity of the Lord side by side in the days ahead. Bittersweet times are upon us. We will choose our own medicine. These things will come with great cost and great loss to many as well as great glory and victory to others.