

"Chastisement is designed for our good, to promote our highest interests. Look beyond the rod to the All-wise hand that wields it!"  
—A.W. Pink

15-Dec-17

## Time to Repent (Part Two)

Part One explained that God's general pattern is to allow people [time to repent](#) rather than instantly executing the death penalty. He is [merciful](#), and as Peter says, "[longsuffering](#) toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to [repentance](#)" ([II Peter 3:9](#)). For example, the pre-Flood world received 120 years of warning, but ultimately, [God](#) saved only eight people from cataclysm. In [Acts 17:30](#), Paul declares that all men everywhere have a responsibility to repent, a blunt and unpopular message from which today's Churchianity shies away.

Over the decades, there has been a concerted effort in the Western world to remove God from all vestiges of public life. Ominously, the modern [nations of Israel](#) are demanding that God not be their God. As the years wear on without seeing His hand in events, fewer people fear God. Natural disasters were once called "acts of God," but the idea that God might judge in this way is increasingly foreign in the national discourse. As the famine of hearing the Word of God deepens ([Amos 8:11](#)), people's ability to connect the dots between spiritual cause and physical effect is drying up altogether.

God has given the nations of Israel time to repent, but the carnal mind translates more time into license to carry on. For this reason, God warns His people about settling on their lees ([Zephaniah 1:12](#), KJV), about complacency, about feeling secure in [the world](#), because even though He gives time to repent, His generosity has a drugging effect on our sense of urgency and zeal. After all, we can always become serious about our calling and make those long-put-off changes when the end is a little closer, right?

Even closer to home, consider what has happened in the church in the last half-century. Herbert Armstrong said that he first saw what he identified as [Laodiceanism](#) enter the church in 1969. However, a significant span of time elapsed between that infiltration and God's scattering of the church because of false doctrine. While He allows His people time to repent, He also sets limits, intervening to keep hearts from becoming fully set in the wrong way. Yet, even within the church, it is still uncommon to think of the scattering as an act of God's judgment, brought about by men He knew would bring in destructive [heresies](#). If we have failed to see God's hand in the reorganization of His church, could He be giving us time to repent in yet other areas—ones we have perhaps pushed out of our minds?

In [Romans 2:4-11](#), Paul speaks of God's [goodness](#), [forbearance](#), and longsuffering, with an eye toward repentance:

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who " will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and [peace](#) to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

We can see God's forbearance and longsuffering in His pattern of giving time to repent. He desires children in His image. He wants us to live as He does because it is the very best way to live. He wants us to be of the same heart and perspective so that He can share eternity with us. If He meted out instantaneous death for every infraction, we would never have the chance to complete His process of spiritual maturity. Our Father is not sitting with a stopwatch, waiting until He can smash His magnificent and beloved creation. He is working with us in the way that will accomplish His purpose, and it requires time for His way to become our way.

It is the word "goodness" in verse 4 that we need to consider. In Greek, it is *chr e stotes*, which some versions translate as "[kindness](#)" or "benevolence." Though *chr e stotes* describes a less active facet of God's goodness, it in no way indicates indulgence or enabling. One definition that poignantly illustrates what Paul means is that *chr e stotes* is "what is suitable or fitting to a need." If we are in need of food, clothing, and so forth, God's goodness—His benevolence—will supply what is suitable for our need.

However, it is not simply God's generosity that leads us to repentance, but instead, He leads us to repentance *through* supplying what is suitable or fitting for our needs—and we must keep in mind that He is most concerned about our spiritual needs. As an example, because we need a [sacrifice for our sins](#), He provided a perfect one. We also need [faith](#) to initiate the salvation process, so He provided the faith that is suitable. This supplying of our need is all part of His goodness, His kindness, His benevolence.

But when He sees that we need a different perspective, an upgrade in character, or a better appreciation of the seriousness of [sin](#), He shows the same kindness in providing a trying circumstance to help produce the change He desires. It would not be kind or good for Him to allow us to continue on a destructive path, so in His goodness, He does what He deems necessary to lead us to repentance, if we submit.

At times, He sends calamities to get our attention, but usually, He gives gentler taps on the shoulder or speaks in that "still, small voice"—that voice of a gentle breeze. He gives small nudges to encourage us to consider our ways and make adjustments to our path. In His goodness, He leads us to repentance so we can ultimately have a better, more spiritually abundant life.

Next time, we will see more of what God does during the time He gives to repent.

- David C. Grabbe

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[The Goodness and Severity of God](#)**

by Charles Whitaker (1944-2021)

Modern Israel, instead of expressing righteous indignation at the breaking of God's Covenant, expresses a juvenile anger about the consequences of what their sins brought about. Sighing and crying involves far more than wallowing in worldly sorrow. As God's called-out ones, we must realize that on the heels of destruction will come the forces of reconciliation. The forces of destruction and construction will be virtually simultaneous. The knowledge of the Lord will cover the world as the waters of the seas, bringing physical as well as spiritual refreshment to the parched desert, restoring strength to those returning to the Promised Land. In the Day of the Lord, the haughty pride of man (symbolized by his lofty towers, high hills, or mountains) will be promptly leveled or destroyed. After this massive destruction, streams of crystal, restorative water will quickly heal all the broken lives resulting from man's misrule and his false religions. The curative act of restoration will follow quickly on the act of destruction during the Day of the Lord, unlike the unrelieved distress of the Great Tribulation. God's rod of correction is foundational, instrumental in building character, as every parent knows. The blow that God delivers to the Babylonian system will be foundational, laying the groundwork for a better civilization. The old has to go before the new can come. The destruction of the failed evil system ought to come with rejoicing. God's nature has a balance of goodness and severity.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

**[A Subtle Yet Devastating Curse](#)**

by David C. Grabbe

Amos 8:11 speaks of "a famine . . . of hearing the words of the LORD." Such a spiritual famine is occurring today: The words of God are readily available, but few are hearing them. David Grabbe explains this prophecy and its connection to the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

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