

Righteous Judgment: The 7 Bowls

Revelation 16:1-21

Repentance is a gift. Unregenerate hearts blaspheme God even under judgment and never turn. But those made new in Christ have a desire to confess, turn from sin, and give God glory. Thank Him for that gift today.

Main Points

1. The seven bowls represent the completion of God's wrath, ordained from the beginning, not improvised.
2. The angels' response to the judgments is doxology -- praise affirming that God's judgments are true and righteous.
3. The unregenerate heart, even under severe judgment, refuses to repent and instead blasphemes God. This reveals why repentance must be understood as a gift from God.
4. Eternal punishment is ongoing because rebellion against an eternal God is eternal, and the sinning itself never ceases.
5. Christ's return is certain and unpredictable, demanding constant moral alertness and readiness.
6. Believers are not made righteous -- they are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Scriptures:

- ☐ Revelation 15:1
- ☐ Revelation 15:6
- ☐ Revelation 13:2
- ☐ Revelation 11
- ☐ Matthew 6:9-13
- ☐ Matthew 13:42
- ☐ Ezekiel 5

Opening Question:

Before reading this passage or hearing this sermon, how did you typically think about the wrath of God? Has your understanding shifted at all? If so, how?

Discussion Questions:

Mark noted that "sola Deo gloria" -- glory to God alone -- should be the conclusion of every sentence. In your daily life, how naturally does praising God come to you? What tends to crowd it out?

The angels immediately obeyed the command to pour out the bowls -- no hesitation, no questions. Mark connected this to the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What does instant, wholehearted obedience look like in your own walk with God? Where do you find yourself delaying?

The angel of the waters declares that God's judgments are righteous, affirming that those being punished "deserve it." How do you personally wrestle with the idea of a God who pours out wrath? How does understanding His righteousness help you make sense of His judgment?

The people suffering under the bowls blaspheme God rather than repent. Mark described unregenerate hearts as hard, lifeless, and incapable of giving God glory. Reflecting on your own life before faith, how do you see evidence of that hardness? How does remembering that condition shape your gratitude now?

Mark said repentance is a gift. How does viewing repentance as a gift -- rather than a duty or obligation -- change the way you approach confession and turning from sin? Does this perspective come naturally to you, or is it something you have to remind yourself of?

Eternal punishment is difficult for many people to accept. Mark offered two reasons for its eternality: sin is rebellion against an eternal God, and the sinning itself never stops. How does this passage in Revelation give a concrete picture of that ongoing rebellion? How does this affect your understanding of the urgency of the gospel?

Christ interjects into the narrative of the bowls with a direct warning: he is coming like a thief. Mark said this demands "moral alertness and attention." What does it look like practically to stay awake and keep your garments, as the text describes? What areas of your life most need that kind of vigilance right now?

Mark was transparent about his own struggle with sharing the gospel, saying he does not do it well and is convicted about missed opportunities. Can you relate to that? What specific fears or habits tend to keep you from sharing Christ with others?

Mark made the distinction that God does not simply possess righteousness -- He is righteousness. Why does that distinction matter? How does it change the way you think about His judgments, His grace, and your relationship with Him?

The angels respond to horrific judgment with praise. How can believers today cultivate that same instinct -- to praise God even in the middle of hard or confusing circumstances?

Practical Applications:

1. Confession and repentance as a daily discipline. Mark described a daily rhythm of confessing specific sins one by one, asking God for strength to turn from them, and thanking Him for the gift of repentance. Set aside intentional time this week to practice this.
2. Restructure your prayer life. Use the Lord's Prayer as a template. Begin with praise -- hallowing God's name, acknowledging His kingdom and His will -- before moving to requests. Notice how this reordering affects your posture toward God.
3. Identify one gospel opportunity. Ask God specifically to lead you to a responsive person this week and to give you boldness when that moment comes. Then pay attention. Come back to the group next week and share what happened.
4. Meditate on being clothed in Christ's righteousness. Spend time this week in a passage such as Romans 3 or Philippians 3, reflecting on what it means that your standing before God is based entirely on the work of Christ, not your own merit.
5. Practice doxology. Throughout your day -- in conversation, in prayer, in private moments -- make a conscious effort to end your thoughts and words with praise to God.