

The Government of God: THE TRIUNE GOD in His Administration

by Ron Kangas

In considering the subject of the government of God, especially as it is revealed in 1 and 2 Peter, we need to avoid imbalance, an undue emphasis on one aspect of the truth at the expense of other aspects. We should not fall into the condition of Ephraim described in Hosea 7:8: “Ephraim is a cake / Not turned.” This striking prophetic utterance may be applied to the unbalanced situation of both theologians and theologies today. One side of the “cake” is overdone, and the other side is raw. For example, some emphasize the objective sovereignty of God but ignore the Spirit’s indwelling of the believer. Others stress the power of God but neglect the life of God. It seems that a proclivity toward imbalance is an element of our fallen human disposition, with sad, even tragic, consequences to our understanding of the divine truth in the Scriptures. In this attempt to set forth the truth regarding the government of God, I will endeavor to balance, as the New Testament itself does, the government of God—the Triune God in His administration—with the economy of God—the Triune God in His operation to dispense Himself in Christ as the Spirit into His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people in order to build up a corporate expression of Himself.

The subject of 1 and 2 Peter is the universal government of God carried out by His righteous judgment. If we read through the Epistles of Peter under this light, we will see that many of the details found in these books are related to our Christian living under the government of God. However, even though the government of God is the subject of these Epistles, it is not the focal point. We need to see a governing vision of the divine government as the subject of Peter’s writings, yet this should not distract us or hinder us from realizing that the focal point, the central focus, of 1 and 2 Peter is the divine economy. The economy of God, as seen in these two books, is the operation of the Triune God to build Himself into His redeemed people to make them His corporate expression. For this God has redeemed and regenerated us, and for this we are growing unto salvation to become a spiritual house for

God’s rest. If we have a balanced understanding of the government of God and the economy of God, we can proceed to concentrate, for the purpose of this essay, on the essential truth of God’s government disclosed in 1 and 2 Peter.

A God of Government

Vast numbers of genuine believers in Christ are ignorant of the fact that the true and living God is not only a God of love, a God of grace, and a God of glory but also a God of government. These believers do not realize that God’s government is His way of doing things—His way of carrying out His administration in the universe—according to His will and according to His righteousness and holiness. Furthermore, they do not see that God’s government is universal and that everything and every being—human, demon, and rebellious angel—will receive the appropriate dealing under the righteous government of God. Millions of believers have yet to understand that a crucial principle related to God’s government in the present age is that the righteous judgment of God begins from His own household (1 Pet. 4:17), not with the ungodly and the unbelievers. God first exercises His government upon His own house so that He can have the standing to clear up not only the earth but also the universe, eventually consuming the universe by fire and producing new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:12-13).

The following note on 1 Peter 1:2 is instructive:

Both of Peter’s Epistles (2 Pet. 3:1) are concerned with the government of God. God’s government is universal and deals with all His creatures that He may have a clean and pure universe (2 Pet. 3:13) in order to express Himself. In the New Testament age this dealing begins from His chosen people, His elect, His own household (4:17), and especially from His chosen sojourners who are dispersed and are sojourning among the nations, the

Gentiles, as His testimony. Hence, these two books emphasize the believers' being chosen (2:9; 5:13; 2 Pet. 1:10). As God's chosen race, God's choice, God's particular possession, the dispersed and chosen sojourners need to see that they are under God's governmental dealing for a positive purpose, regardless of the situation and environment they are in. Anything and everything that happens to them, whether persecution or any other kind of suffering (v. 6; 5:9), is just a part of God's precious governmental dealing. Such a vision will perfect, establish, strengthen, and ground them (5:10) that they may grow in grace (2 Pet. 3:18). (Recovery Version, note 1)

Certain vital points require comment. First, God's government is universal and deals with all creatures. Every creature that has ever existed is subject to God's righteous judgment in His government. Second Peter 3:3 and 4 speak of heretical mockers, those who mock the word concerning the Lord's coming, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue in this way from the beginning of creation." Eventually, however, all the mockers, all the revilers, all the ungodly, all the demons, all the disobedient angels, every human being who has ever lived, and even the physical universe itself will be thoroughly and righteously dealt with under God's governmental administration. At present God's governmental judgment is especially exercised upon His chosen sojourners, those who

realize that they are pilgrims on earth and thus are not rooted here but follow the Lamb wherever He may go (Rev. 14:4). If we are enlightened, we will realize that we need God's judgment, for although we have been justified by grace through faith in Christ and His redemptive work and life-imparting resurrection, much remains in us that does not match God's righteousness and holiness. Therefore, the mighty hand of God will come upon us in matters great and small and for periods long and short so that all the hindrances within our being to the growth and development of the divine life would be removed (2 Pet. 1:5-7), with the result that we will be qualified to receive the salvation of our souls at the Lord's coming (1 Pet. 1:9, and note 2). Although our souls will suffer under God's government in this age and we will be made sorrowful at times through God's severe dealing, this is actually precious and positive because it will constitute us righteous as God is righteous, holy as God is holy, and loving as God is loving. This means that as the result of the divine dispensing in the divine economy and the divine judgment in the divine government, we will become the same

as God in life, nature, and expression (but not, of course, in the Godhead nor as an object of worship). Then the Lord will have a base from which to expand His judgment from His own household to all the ungodly. Regarding this, 1 Peter 4:18 says, "If the righteous man is saved only with difficulty, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

As believers, we all need to be awakened and become sober-minded concerning God's governmental dealing. We need the Lord to shine His light upon the entire course of our Christian life so that we would begin to understand why He has dealt with us in certain ways and why His judgment has come upon us at certain times. Because of His faithfulness and steadfastness in fulfilling His purpose and because of His mercy and grace in dealing with His beloved children, God the Father will not allow us to remain as we are and where we are in our Christian life. On the contrary, He will deal with the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution, touching us in His own way and at His own time. Such governmental



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dealings may be painful, but they serve a most positive purpose—the fulfillment of the desire of God's heart to have a corporate expression of Himself through His chosen and redeemed people. To state the obvious, God is neither mean nor capricious. On the contrary, He is a loving Father who disciplines us for the highest purpose. According to Hebrews 12, God disciplines us "for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness," "without which no one will see the Lord" (vv. 10, 14). If we have the proper spiritual understanding of how the government of God serves the economy of God, we will realize that whatever happens to us under His sovereign hand is part of God's precious governmental dealing.

A vision of God's actions in His government, according to 1 Peter 5:10, will perfect us, establish us, strengthen us, and ground us so that we may grow in grace, with grace and peace being multiplied (2 Pet. 3:18; 1:2). To experience this grace is to enjoy the Lord more than ever before, with the result that our growth in the divine life by the operation of the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2)

will progress unhindered from stage to stage until we reach spiritual maturity and are ready to be raptured and reign with Christ in the coming millennial kingdom. This marvelous outcome is the issue of the exercise of God's governmental judgment according to His righteousness. We may experience fiery trials, ordeals, testings, and provings (1 Pet. 4:12). Surely, we all will undergo particular dealings because we have a Father who is holy, who is righteous, and who has the highest standard for His sons. He knows that His life along with His discipline and judgment will make us the same as He is in life, nature, constitution, appearance, and expression. Truly, the government of God goes hand in hand with the economy of God to fulfill the eternal purpose of God.

The Subject of 1 and 2 Peter

The Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter are on the universal government of God. The subject of 1 Peter is the Christian life under the government of God, showing us the government of God especially in His dealings with His chosen people (1:2). First Peter 2:19 says, "This is grace, if anyone, because of a consciousness of God, bears sorrows by suffering unjustly." We should treasure this verse, especially the phrase *consciousness of God*. The government of God increases the consciousness of God within us, and the consciousness of God makes us increasingly aware that we are living under the government of God. We all need such a realization, and then we need to have the proper response, which is to humble ourselves, or to be humbled, under the mighty hand of God (5:6). Otherwise, we will not recognize the operation of God's government over us, and we will not cooperate with Him. Instead, we may expect God to deal with other persons, things, and matters. This would be a serious mistake. The government of God is exercised directly by Him over every one of us; thus, each one of us is responsible to the Lord and to live under God's governmental judgment.

The subject of 2 Peter is the divine provision and the divine government, showing us that as God is governing us, He supplies us with whatever we need (1:1-4; 3:13). While He is exercising His governmental discipline on us, He is dispensing Himself into us in a sweet, endearing way, giving grace to the humble. However, if we resist, rebel, complain, murmur, engage in self-pity, blame others, or compare ourselves to others, we will not receive grace but rather will be resisted by God.

To be sure, as believers in Christ we are children of God, but because we are still in the old creation with things in our being and living that do not match His government, from time to time He will exercise His government over us for our benefit, for our growth in life, for our blessing, and for our usefulness.

The Government of God Carried Out by the Judgment of God

God governs by judging; this means that the judgment of God is for the carrying out of His government (1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17). Because 1 and 2 Peter are concerned with the government of God, in these Epistles the judgment of God and of the Lord is referred to repeatedly as one of the essential items (1 Pet. 2:23; 4:5-6, 17; 2 Pet. 2:3-4, 9; 3:7). The government of God is absolute—it is the government *of God!* There is such an awesome reality in the universe. Through various kinds of judgments, the Lord God will clear up the entire universe and purify it so that He may have a new heaven and a new earth for a new universe filled with His righteousness for His delight (v. 13).

The judgment in 1 Peter 1:17, which is carried out by the Father, is not the future judgment but is the present, daily judgment of God's governmental dealings with His children. The Bible clearly reveals that God has given all future judgment to the Son (John 5:22). First Peter 1:17 says, "If you call as Father the One who without respect of persons judges according to each one's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear." Here the Father is the One judging. This is the present judgment beginning from His household and according to His righteousness.

The Father has regenerated us to produce a holy family—a holy Father with holy children (vv. 3, 15, 17). Notice the adjective *holy*. A holy Father produces holy children. As holy children, we should walk in a holy manner of life (vv. 15-16); otherwise, in His government God the Father will become the Judge and will deal with our unholiness (4:15-17; Heb. 12:9-10).

First Peter 1:15 and 16 say, "According to the Holy One who called you, you yourselves also be holy in all your manner of life; because it is written, 'You shall be holy because I am holy.'" This involves our being. God says, "I am holy, so you shall be holy." This involves our becoming the same as God in life and nature. To be holy is to be the same as God, even to be God, in His attribute of holiness. These verses emphasize our being holy, and in verse 17 we have the government of God exercised through judgment. God's governmental judgment is for our sanctification. Our sanctification, our being made holy, is our deification, which is to become the same as God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. Therefore, the exercise of God's government is for our deification. For this, we must be holy in all our manner of life, even as God is holy.

By the divine birth we have the nature of God, the divine nature. However, we still have unholy, unrighteous things in our being and in our manner of life. Therefore, at a certain point God may decide to change His way of dealing with us in order to address these negative things within us

for our good, in order to purge them and bring them to naught. The result is an acceleration of the process of inner sanctification.

If the unholy and unrighteous things within us are not exposed, judged, and purged, we may become food for the devil. This is not an exaggeration. First Peter 5:6-8 says,

Be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your anxiety on Him because it matters to Him concerning you. Be sober; watch. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking someone to devour.

There are two kinds of persons who are delicious food for this roaring lion—the proud, who will not humble themselves under God’s mighty hand, and the anxious, who are ruled by worry and anxiety. Anxiety may drive us to such an extent that we may pray in a presumptuous manner for God to do certain things for us. In His love and faithfulness, the Lord will not allow us to remain in pride and anxiety but will come in, through governmental judgment, to touch our being. We need to agree with Him regarding this and humble ourselves under His mighty hand. It is an expression of God’s love and faithfulness that He comes in to touch our being, to humble us, to break down our pride, to go to the root of our anxiety, and, ultimately, to bring us into peace.



God’s word about our being holy is matched by His word concerning God’s judging us by exercising His government upon us for the positive purpose that we would become God-saturated, sanctified beings qualified to see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

The Disciplinary Judgment in the Government of God Beginning from the House of God

The disciplinary judgment in the government of God begins from the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). God judges everything that does not match His government; therefore, in this age we, the children of God, are under the daily judgment of God (1:17). God uses fiery ordeals to deal with the believers in the judgment of His governmental administration, which begins from His own house. Verse 12 of chapter 4 says, “Beloved, do not think that the fiery ordeal among you, coming to you for a trial, is strange, as if it were a strange thing happening to you.” As Peter was writing to comfort the suffering, persecuted sojourners, he

encouraged them not to consider suffering a strange thing, for the brotherhood all over the earth was suffering.

From many years of experience Peter learned the significance of being dealt with by God governmentally. Consider the plight of the first apostles. On the day that the Lord was crucified, they all forsook Him and failed the test. That was God’s governmental dealing. The Lord had even told them, “Behold, Satan has asked to have you all to sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). The Lord seemed to be saying, “This is a governmental judgment upon your fallen, natural being. God Himself will not sift you, but He will allow Satan to do this. If you are to be My apostles and to take the lead, you must know what it is to be judged thoroughly by God and to have no confidence in yourselves.” Only such God-judged persons can bear responsibility in the ministry, in the work, and in the church.

According to Galatians 2, Peter was dealt with governmentally in Antioch. Fearing those of the circumcision, Peter, who had been continually eating with the Gentiles,

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withdrew and separated himself. Then Paul, who was a “junior apostle” according to the worldly, human view, stood up and opposed Peter to his face, because he was not walking in a straightforward way in relation to the truth of the gospel (vv. 11-14). Nevertheless, when we read 2 Peter 3, Peter commends Paul with no trace of bitterness, resentment, or self-pity. Rather, he indicates that Paul’s ministry had surpassed his own, saying that Paul’s writings are part of the Scriptures:

Even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (vv. 15-16)

Peter eventually became a person who was thoroughly judged, a man of bronze. (Bronze is a type and a symbol of judgment.) Therefore, he possessed both the standing constitutionally and the position officially to address the

suffering believers and to comfort them with God by shepherding them according to God (1 Pet. 5:2). What he charged the elders to do, he himself was doing in caring for the believers in their affliction. He was shepherding the flock of God according to God, that is, according to his God-constituted being. In effect, Peter was saying, “It is not a strange thing, for judgment first begins with us. Therefore, pass the time of your sojourning in fear. Respect God. Humble yourself under Him, and you will receive the salvation of your souls. There will be a glorious result.” That is how Peter comforted the suffering believers.

The Purpose of God’s Judgment

The purpose of this judgment is that we would live according to God in spirit (4:6). A picture found in the Old Testament will help us to understand this. At the entrance to the tabernacle, there was the altar of burnt offering made of acacia wood overlaid with the bronze taken from the censers of the two hundred fifty rebels who were judged by God (Num. 16:17, 37-38). Those censers were beaten into plates to cover the altar, indicating, in typology, that at this altar we agree with God’s righteous judgment, especially on rebellion. No one could enter the tabernacle without passing through the experience of the bronze altar. Furthermore, in the outer court there was also the laver of bronze (Exo. 30:18), which was made from the mirrors of the serving women who served at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting (38:8), implying that the laver of bronze was a mirror that could reflect and expose. Since in type bronze is a symbol of God’s judgment, this indicates that the judgment suffered by Christ on the cross has the power to expose our uncleanness and our need to be washed.

A particularly striking type of God’s governmental judgment is seen in 1 Kings 7. In building the temple, Solomon erected two bronze pillars—the right pillar he named Jachin, which means “He will establish,” and the left pillar he named Boaz, which means “in Him is strength.”

The temple’s two bronze pillars signify the Christ who was judged by God and who became the supporting strength of God’s dwelling on the earth (cf. Rev. 1:15 and notes 1 and 2). This Christ should be experienced by the believers in the church life and should be wrought into them to constitute them pillars to support God’s building. (Recovery Version, 1 Kings 7:15, note 1)

In typology and in figure, the two bronze pillars in 1 Kings 7 tell us that we must be under God’s judgment as well as under our own self-judgment. We must judge ourselves as being nothing and as being only qualified to be crucified. I say this not only to the brothers, but also to the sisters. None of us is good for anything. We must consider ourselves

as those under God’s judgment. If an elder is not under God’s judgment, he cannot be a good elder, and if a leading sister is not under God’s judgment, she cannot be a proper leading sister. I fully realize and can testify that in order to minister the Word of God, I must always be under self-judgment. While I may spend only a short time praying positively for the meeting, I may spend a long time in self-judgment, judging myself as being poor, unworthy, fleshly, and natural. Sometimes, I even sigh and groan, saying, “O Lord, when will the time come that I can minister Your word apart from my flesh?” Do not think that as I stand here ministering to you, I am so good. No, I am too poor. As long as we are in the natural life and in the old creation, we are pitiful. We must serve under God’s judgment and minister under our own realization of God’s judgment. I am one who has already been judged. My natural being, my flesh, and my self have all been judged by God, and I am still under this judgment. If we have this realization, then we become bronze. (Lee, *Genesis* 1067-1068)

With this in mind, we may consider Revelation 3:12, where the Lord Jesus says, “He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God.” The overcomers have become bronze pillars; they are believers who have been judged by God and who judge themselves according to God’s judgment. As a result, they are constituted with God, the Lord Jesus, and the New Jerusalem.

All genuine churches need unshakeable pillars to establish and strengthen them. Upon these pillars is a weight of responsibility that very few are able to bear. The pillars in the church are those who accept and assent to God’s judgment in Christ on their being and who appreciate, experience, and enjoy Christ as the unique One who could pass through God’s judgment and emerge as bronze to bear responsibility for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose (1:15).

Furthermore, bronze may gleam, but, unlike gold, it does not have any glory. However, when we have been fully saved in life and glorified, we will shine with the golden glory of God. At present, we should seek to bear a gleaming testimony of those who live under God’s judgment in every aspect of the Christian life and the church life, of those who serve God with the consciousness that He is a God of government who judges everyone and everything.

In Mark 9:12 the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “How is it that it is written of the Son of Man that He should suffer many things and be counted as nothing?” This is judgment—to be counted as nothing. God’s governmental judgment reduces everything of the old creation within us to nothing, leaving room only for God, Christ, and the Spirit and for the divine life, the divine nature, and the grace that are mingled with the believers’ redeemed, regenerated, and transformed humanity.

Through our experience of the divine dispensing in the economy of God and the divine judgment in the government of God, the Lord is laboring to produce pillars in the churches. We should not think that this perfecting can be carried out solely by the particular gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4, for the main part of this perfecting work is carried out by God through His governmental dealings with His people. If we understand this, we will have a holy fear of God and a deep respect for His ways. We will also give ourselves to the Lord, committing our souls to Him and trusting Him with our entire tripartite being, confessing that He knows how to deal with us, gain us, purify us, and mature us for the fulfillment of His purpose to make us the corporate expression of Himself in glory.

The Preciousness of Peter's Writings

The preciousness of Peter's writings is that he combines the Christian life and God's government, revealing that the Christian life and the government of God go together as a pair (1 Pet. 1:17; 2:21, 24; 3:15; 4:17; 5:5-8). The Triune God has passed through a long process in Christ and has become the life-giving Spirit to indwell us; this is for our Christian life (John 1:14; 14:17; 1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17), and we rightly emphasize the process that Christ passed through to become the life-giving Spirit. However, because our God is a God of government, we need to have a proper, reverential fear of God, for although He is the processed God who dispenses Himself into us, He remains the sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe. To be sure, we have been born of God to have a spiritual life and to be a new creation, but we are still in the old creation (John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-6; 2 Cor. 5:17). For this reason, we need God's governmental dealings (1 Pet. 1:17). Job experienced God's governmental dealing because he was in the old creation, and sooner or later we will experience such dealings because we, too, are in the old creation. If we receive and cooperate with God's governmental judgment today, we will have the opportunity to reach spiritual maturity, enjoy Him to the uttermost in this age, and have a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11).

God's governmental dealing is actually His grace to us, and this is most precious. His dealing is His operation to give us the spiritual experiences that we need in order to be sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and built up in the Body of Christ. If we would grow normally

in the Christian life, we need the discipline of God's government (1 Pet. 2:2; 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Practical Matters concerning God's Governmental Judgment

At this juncture, we need to consider several practical matters related to living under God's governmental judgment. Hopefully, this will enable us to be properly balanced in our view and spiritual understanding.

First, although we should clearly understand God's governmental judgment, we should not be distracted by it from the focal point of God's economy—His dispensing of Himself into us in His Divine Trinity to make us His expression. Having a clear view of the divine economy will help us to have a balanced view of the divine government in relation to our life with the Lord.

Second, we need to realize that God's governmental judgment, or discipline, is His concern and responsibility and



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that it is carried out by Him, not by us. We should never insert ourselves into this process.

Third, we should not judge others, lest we ourselves fall under the governmental hand and judgment of God. Concerning this, Matthew 7:1 and 2 say, "Do not judge, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you." If we judge others, God's governmental judgment will come upon us.

Fourth, we should never presume to interpret or assign a particular meaning to the sufferings of others. Nevertheless, when a certain believer is suffering, someone may dare to explain that situation as God's punishment for disobedience or rebellion. This is a detestable form of religious cruelty. We are totally unqualified to interpret or explain the significance of the hardships and suffering of fellow believers.

Fifth, we should never rejoice to see God's governmental

judgment, His hand, come upon someone whom we suppose is deserving of it. Proverbs 24:17 says, “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, / And do not let your heart exult when he is overthrown.” Proverbs 17:5 says, “Whoever mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; / He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished.” Obadiah 12 says, “Do not look to the day of your brother, / To the day of his misfortune; / Neither rejoice concerning the children of Judah / In the day of their destruction, / Nor boast / In the day of distress.” To rejoice in this way exposes a pernicious element in our fallen nature.

Sixth, we should not add to the sufferings of others under God’s government but be generous and kind to them. Some like to join God in His governmental judgment by adding to others’ afflictions. On the contrary, we should be merciful toward the suffering ones.

Seventh, we should not be troubled by what might appear to be a delay regarding God’s judgment according to our reckoning of time (2 Pet. 3:8-9). Our sense of time is different from God’s. Let us leave the timing to Him and take care of ourselves and our own situation before Him.

The Living of the Lord Jesus under the Government of God

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He lived a human life that was absolutely under the government of God, and He committed everything related to Him to God’s government (John 6:38). As a man living on earth, the Lord Jesus always recognized God’s government. Peter came to realize this and appreciate it.

To this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you a model so that you may follow in His steps; who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth; who being reviled did not revile in return; suffering, He did not threaten but kept committing all to Him who judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

The Lord Jesus lived a life of being reviled. Some said that He was demon-possessed (Matt. 10:25), and others accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (12:24), but He never reviled in return. When He suffered, He never threatened. Rather, He committed everything to the Father. He seemed to be saying, “Father, You are the Judge. You are righteous. I commit this to You.” He did not vindicate Himself nor did He answer back but instead kept committing all His insults and injuries to Him who judges righteously in His government, the righteous God, to whom He submitted Himself. He put His trust in this righteous One, recognizing His government (1 Pet. 2:23). Those who are one with Him and follow Him in living the life of a God-man must live under God’s government, even as He did (1 Cor. 4:9-13).

When God counseled Christ as a man, Christ’s inward parts were one with God and instructed Him through His contact with God (Psa. 16:7; Isa. 50:4). The inner being of Christ was always one with God; therefore, the Father could inwardly direct Him. In like manner, our inner being needs to be brought under the government of God so that our heart will be under His direction. “The king’s heart is like streams of water in the hand of Jehovah; / He turns it wherever He wishes” (Prov. 21:1). This is the heart of one who is one with God and who lives under the government of God.

Living a Christian Life under the Government of God

As believers in Christ and children of God, we should live a Christian life under the government of God (John 3:15; 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 4:13-19; 5:6-8). To live in this way requires that we receive the grace that enables us to take God’s governmental dealings administered through sufferings (1:6-8; 2:3-4, 19, 21-25; 3:18, 22; 4:1, 15-16; 5:8-9). To live under God’s government is also to pass the time of our sojourning in holy fear, that is, in a healthy, serious caution that leads us to be holy in all our manner of life (1:15, 17).

A believer who lives a Christian life under the government of God will be humbled under the mighty hand of God, which carries out the government of God. First Peter 5:6 says, “Be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time.” In this verse *the mighty hand of God* refers to God’s administrating hand seen especially in His judgment (1:17; 4:17). When the hand of God comes upon us, we should not resist Him. If we resist, God’s hand will press harder upon us. The more we resist Him, the heavier His hand will become. Instead of resisting the government of God, we should, as Peter says, “be humbled.”

To be humbled under the mighty hand of God is an active-passive experience. *Be humbled* indicates that we are willing to be humbled. To be humbled under God’s mighty hand is to be made humble by God; however, we must cooperate with God’s operation and be willing to be made humble, lowly, under His mighty hand. The hand of God will humble us, but we should cooperate by accepting the Lord’s arrangement concerning us. Today there is a desperate need for the believers in Christ to be humbled by God and thereby receive His grace, mercy, provision, and salvation. The more we are humbled under God’s hand, the more He will supply us with the needed grace.

As we are humbled under God’s hand, we should commit our souls to the faithful Creator (4:19), knowing that God can preserve our souls and that His loving and faithful care accompanies His justice in His governmental

administration. As God judges us in His government, He cares for us faithfully in His love. Thus, as we are suffering His disciplinary judgment, we should commit our souls to the faithful care of our Creator (Matt. 10:28; 11:28-29). First Peter 4:19 mentions our souls because God's dealings in His government are for the purification of our souls (1:9, 22). Even if God's discipline touches our body, our finances, our relationships, or our possessions, it is still a discipline of the soul. Because this is our situation, in our experience the Lord Jesus is the Shepherd and the Overseer of our souls (2:25).

Living to Righteousness

In the death of Christ we have died to sins so that in the resurrection of Christ we might live to righteousness under God's government. First Peter 2:24 says, "Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed." The phrase *live to righteousness* expresses a governmental thought, a matter of living righteously under God's government by fulfilling God's governmental requirements. Because God's government is established upon righteousness (Psa. 89:14), as God's people living under His government, we must live a righteous life. We were saved so that we might live rightly under the government of God, that is, in a way that matches the righteous requirements of His government.

Living righteously under the divine government involves at least four aspects of righteousness. First, righteousness is to be right with persons, things, and matters before God according to His righteous and strict requirements (Matt. 5:20). Second, righteousness is the outward expression of the Christ who lives in us as the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:8-9). This is righteousness as God's image (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The ministry of righteousness is the ministry of the Lord's image (2 Cor. 3:9). Verse 8 speaks of the ministry of the Spirit, and verse 9 speaks of the ministry of righteousness. Righteousness is the expression in your being and in your living of the Christ who lives in you as the Spirit. Third, righteousness is a matter of God's kingdom (Matt. 6:33; Psa. 89:14). God's kingdom is righteousness. Righteousness is related to God's government, administration, and rule. We need to pray to be right with God governmentally. Fourth, righteousness is a matter of being right with God in our being (2 Cor. 5:21). To be right with God in our being is to have an inner being that

is transparent and crystal clear, an inner being that is in the mind and will of God. This is a matter of our being the righteousness of God in Christ (v. 21).

The Lord Jesus died for our sins so that we might live to righteousness as He did. In Christ's death we have been separated from sins, and in His resurrection we have been enlivened so that in our Christian life we may live spontaneously to righteousness under the government of God (Rom. 6:8, 10-11, 18; Eph. 2:6; John 14:19; 2 Tim. 2:11). This living matches the righteous requirements of His government.

Becoming a Reproduction of Christ

As believers in Christ, we may become a reproduction of Christ as our model (1 Pet. 2:20-21). The living of the Lord Jesus under the government of God is a model that we may follow in His steps by becoming His reproduction (vv. 21-23; Eph. 4:20-21). The Greek word for *model* in 1 Peter 2:21 denotes a master copy used in the teaching



The living of the Lord Jesus under the government of God is a model that we may follow in His steps by becoming His reproduction by a process that involves the riches of the divine life.

of writing—a writing copy, an underwriting for students to use in tracing letters as they learn to draw them. The Lord Jesus has set His life before us as an underwriting for us to copy by tracing and following in His steps (Matt. 11:28-30). However, it is not God's intention that we try to imitate Christ by our own effort; what we need is not imitation but reproduction (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18). We become Christ's reproduction, copies of Christ, by a process that involves the riches of the divine life; when this process is completed, we will become a reproduction of Christ (John 3:15; Eph. 3:8).

The making of Xerox copies may be used to illustrate what Peter means by Christ being a model for us. As a model, Christ is the original used in spiritual Xeroxing to make us a reproduction of Himself (Rom. 8:29). In this process the Spirit of Christ is the light, and the riches of the divine life are the inking substance. As the "paper" we are put under the light of the Holy Spirit, and we pass through the inking substance to become a reproduction, a living copy of the original, a reproduction of Christ.

In order to become a reproduction of Christ as our model, we need to experience Christ as the One living in us, being formed in us, and making His home in our hearts (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-17). The New Testament reveals that Christ is deeply related to our inner being (Gal. 1:16; Col. 3:10-11). The pneumatic Christ—Christ as the life-giving Spirit—is living in us (1 Cor. 15:45; Gal. 2:20). God's economy is that "I" be crucified with Christ and that Christ live in us in His resurrection (John 14:19). We are one spirit with the Lord, we have one life with Him, and we should now be one person with Him (1 Cor. 6:17; Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:21). Since Christ dwells in us as the Spirit, we need to let Him live in us (John 14:16-19; Gal. 2:20).

To have Christ formed in us is to have Christ fully grown in us (4:19). Christ was born into us at the time we repented and believed in Him, then He lives in us in our Christian life, and finally, He will be formed in us at our maturity (John 1:12-13; 3:15; Gal. 2:20). To have Christ formed in us is to allow the all-inclusive Spirit to occupy every part of our inner being, to have Christ fully grown in us (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16). To have Christ formed in us implies that we are being constituted with Christ organically (Col. 3:10-11). *Formed* in Galatians 4:19 corresponds to *image* in 2 Corinthians 3:18; Christ will be formed in us so that we may express Him in His image.

The Christ who lives in us and who is being formed in us is making His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:16-17). Christ wants to make His home deep down in our being; He desires to spread from our spirit to all the parts of our heart. The more Christ spreads within us, the more He settles down in us and makes His home in our hearts; in this way He occupies every part of our inner being, possessing these parts and saturating them with Himself so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God (v. 19). As Christ lives in us, is formed in us, and makes His home in our hearts, we become a reproduction of Christ for the corporate expression of God (Rom. 8:29; 12:4-5; Rev. 21:2).

Being Holy in All Our Manner of Life

The more we become a reproduction of Christ, the more we will have a manner of life that expresses the Triune God and the more we will be holy in all our manner of life (1 Pet. 1:15; 2:12). The expression of the Triune God from within a believer indicates that such a believer has become a reproduction of Christ (Phil. 1:20). The excellent manner of life—a life beautiful in its virtues—is the holy manner of life and the good manner of life, a life for God and filled and saturated with God (1 Pet. 2:12; 1:15; 3:16). A holy manner of life is a life that expresses the holy nature of God. According to 1:15, we should not merely be holy and live a holy life—we should become holy in all our manner of life. If we would be holy in all our manner of life, we ourselves, the persons, must

become holy; our being, our disposition, our entire person, should become holy. Furthermore, if we would be holy in all our manner of life, we need to be habitually holy; we need to become a certain kind of person, a person who is holy in constitution.

In order to be holy in all our manner of life, we need the impartation of the Father's holy nature into us, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to make us holy, and God's discipline so that we may partake of His holiness (vv. 2-3, 15; Heb. 12:10). When we were regenerated, the Father imparted His holy nature into us as the basic factor for us to be holy in all our manner of life (1 Pet. 1:3, 15). We become holy in all our manner of life through the sanctification of the Spirit; with the Father's holy nature within us as the basis of operation, the Holy Spirit is working on us to make us holy (v. 2). Because we are often disobedient, we need God's discipline; for this reason, Hebrews 12:10 says that God the Father, as He exercises His government, disciplines us so that we may partake of His holiness and become holy even as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Second Peter 3:10, 11, and 14 speak of the kind of persons we ought to be in holy manner of life and godliness. Since all things will be dissolved by burning with intense heat, we need to consider what kind of persons we, the children of God, ought to be in holy manner of life and godliness, that is, what kind of transformation we ought to experience in order to live a life in the manner of life of God's holy nature and godliness to express Him so that we may be qualified to match His government. With this in view, we should be diligent to be found by Him in peace (cf. 1 Pet. 5:14). To be found by the Lord in peace is to be found righteous, right, having no problem in His eyes with either God or man at His coming. Because 2 Peter emphasizes righteousness for God's governmental dealing, it charges the believers, who are walking in the way of righteousness, to pursue a living that is in peace so that they may be prepared for the Lord's coming with judgment.

The Consciousness of God and the Full Knowledge of God

If we would live righteously under the government of God, we need to have the consciousness of God and the full knowledge of God (1 Pet. 2:19; 2 Pet. 1:2, 8; 3:18). The consciousness of God is the consciousness of one's relation to God, indicating that one is living in an intimate fellowship with God, having and keeping a good and pure conscience toward God (1 Pet. 2:19; 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9). Our regenerated spirit has a keen sense toward God, a God-consciousness to deal with God and sense the things of God (Rom. 1:9). To have the consciousness of God is to live in the spirit according to God (1 Pet. 4:6; Rom. 8:2; 1 John 2:27).

The full knowledge of God is an experiential knowledge of God (2 Pet. 1:2, 8). The full knowledge of the Triune God is for our participation in and enjoyment of His divine life and divine nature (vv. 3-4). In 3:18 the knowledge of the Lord is equal to the truth, the reality of all that He is; hence, to grow in the knowledge of the Lord is to grow by the realization of what Christ is, the realization of the truth (John 8:32; 17:17).

Blessing the Operating Triune God

Chapter 1 of 1 Peter, especially verses 2 and 3, reveals the energetic operation of the Triune God to bring God's chosen ones into the participation in the Triune God and into the full enjoyment of Himself. The Triune God passed through a process to do many things for us and become everything to us so that we may partake of Him for our enjoyment (vv. 18-20, 3). The believers were chosen by God the Father before the foundation of the world, in eternity past; this was done according to the Father's foreknowledge and is carried out in time in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (v. 2; Eph. 1:4). God the Spirit's sanctification carries out God the Father's selection. In eternity God chose us, making a decision to gain us; in time the Spirit comes to sanctify us, to set us apart, from the world so that we would obey Christ's redemption. The sanctification of God the Spirit separates us from the world and causes us to come to ourselves, repent, and turn to God so that we may belong to Him and enjoy His full salvation (Luke 15:17; John 16:8-11; Acts 20:21; 26:18, 20; Rom. 5:10).

In 1 Peter 1:2 the sanctification of the Spirit is before the obedience of faith in Christ's redemption, indicating that the believers' obedience unto faith in Christ results from the Spirit's sanctifying work (Rom. 1:5). The issue of the Spirit's sanctification is our participation in the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, which is the application of redemption (1 Pet. 1:2). The sanctification of the Spirit brought us to the blood shed by the Savior on the cross and separated us unto this divine provision (vv. 18-19). The sprinkling of Christ's redeeming blood brings the sprinkled believers into the blessing of the new covenant, that is, into the full enjoyment of the Triune God (Heb. 9:13-14). The first thing in God's salvation is to sprinkle us with the blood of the second of the Trinity; thus, we are washed, forgiven, justified, and reconciled to God (1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 5:10).

In 1 Peter 1:2 *obedience* implies repentance and faith; the sanctification of the Spirit is unto the obedience of repentance and believing; thus, our repentance and believing into Christ result from the Spirit's sanctifying work (Acts 11:18; John 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:8). The Holy One who called us is the Triune God—the choosing Father, the redeeming Son, and the sanctifying Spirit. The Father regenerated us, the Son redeemed us, and the Spirit sanctifies us so that we may be holy in all our manner of life (vv. 3, 15-16, 18-19). This is the operation of the Triune God in the economy of God to bring His chosen and redeemed people into the experience and enjoyment of Himself.

If we live a Christian life under the government of God as the reproduction of Christ, we will bless the operating Triune God, the One whom we experience and enjoy in an inward way. To bless God is to speak well concerning the Triune God and all that He is to us, has done for us, and will do for us (v. 3). To bless God is not merely to praise Him for what He has done for us or given to us objectively but to speak well of what He is to us subjectively.



In order to be holy in all our manner of life, we need the impartation of the Father's holy nature into us, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to make us holy, and God's discipline so that we may partake of His holiness.

To bless God is to speak in a sweet, intimate, and endearing way of what God is to us subjectively in our experiences of Him. Such experiences were the source and ground of Peter's writing in 1:3-12. Although the revelation in these verses is altogether divine, it is something experienced by a human being through the Trinity of the Godhead. Like Peter, our blessing, our well speaking, of the Triune God will come from our experience of Him—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—in His operation to carry out His economy under His government. Those who speak well of the operating Triune God in this way are living a normal Christian life in the dispensing of God and under the government of God. **ATC**

Works Cited

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