

Grace and Knowledge: The Day of the Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, my sabbatical starts in just over a week, which means this is my next to last Sunday with you. And I've been thinking as this has been approaching, we're kind of excited, we're kind of nervous, we're going to be away for about four months, which in D.C. time I think is going to fly by.

I don't know what it's going to be like for us. But I've been thinking, what do we focus on, what do I want to focus on with these last couple of weeks with you?

What would be the best topic to dwell on that would be the most enriching that would, you know, that would really bring life to our congregation? And I think that there's only one topic that could possibly do all that.

I think it's fairly obvious. Judgment Day. We need to talk about Judgment Day. It's interesting that 2 Peter is also a letter that is written by somebody who is fairly certain that he's not going to ever get another chance to write to his people.

This is the last letter Peter writes, and he makes it very clear in the letter that he's fairly certain that at some point soon he's going to be taken away as well, only he's not getting a sabbatical. He's fairly certain that he's going to be arrested and tortured and most likely martyred.

[1 : 18] And so this is his last opportunity to make an impression on the people that he loves and cares about and serves. And he chooses to focus on the topic of Judgment Day, the Day of the Lord.

Of course, you know who talked about this the most? Jesus. Jesus Christ. Especially in the days leading up to his arrest and torture and death, Jesus talked about judgment, the coming judgment of God, the Day of the Lord.

So the question is why? Why would this be a topic to focus on? Because honestly, most people I know, Christians and non-Christians alike, the whole idea of Judgment Day has been so caricatured in pop culture, made light of for so long that most people think of it as a joke.

I know very few people who actually take this idea seriously. Even very mature, long-time Christians really don't have a lot to say about Judgment Day. It's normally a topic of humor.

And yet when you read Peter and what Peter says about the Day of the Lord, the coming judgment, right? This is something that we profess together in the Creed every week, that Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

[2 : 33] When Peter talks about this in the passage that we're about to look at, he actually implies that if we really understand the meaning of Judgment Day, of final judgment, that not only would we not mock it, but we would actually hasten the day, that we would long for it to come, that we would be eager for this day to come.

So we're going to try to understand that this evening. We're going to look at 2 Peter chapter 3, verses 1 through 13. The question is why does final judgment matter so much?

Why is it so integral to the Christian faith? Why is it such an important topic to focus on right now? And we're going to see three reasons in the text for this. The first reason it matters is this.

It shows us, the final judgment shows us that justice is real. Justice is real. Number two, it shows us how to face injustice. And you know there's a lot of that in the world.

And then finally it shows us that God's love is His justice. That God's love is His justice. So let's pray and then we'll open God's Word together.

[3 : 41] Father, we thank You for Your Word and we thank You that in Your great wisdom through Peter and through Peter's disciples, these words were written down so long ago for our edification that we can open them in confidence, knowing that we're not merely hearing from the wisdom and rhetoric of human beings, but rather You promised to speak through Your Word.

You promised that through the power of Your Spirit it can become the living Word, that there are things that only You can speak to our hearts and that You do Your work through Your Word. And so we pray that that would happen tonight because we all desperately need to hear what You have to say.

And it's in the name of Your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen. So 2 Peter 3, why does the final judgment matter? Why is this something that we should care about as Christians?

Number one, the doctrine of the final judgment shows us that justice is real. Here's the issue. And by the way, we're going to take a little stress off our slide, people. That's already, I think, the most stressful job in the church is running the slides on Sunday.

So I have this nifty little device, but we're going to see if we can use this and one less thing for Sarah over there. But the issue that's going on here that Peter's writing about, he's saying, I want to remind you of things that I've already told you, but I need to remind you.

[4 : 57] Why? Because scoffers, verse 3, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

He's talking about the fact that false teachers have come into the community, the community that he's been pastoring, and they're coming and they're looking at this idea that Christians have had, the promise of God that Jesus would one day return.

And they're looking at this and they're saying, well, it's been a long time and a lot of the people that heard Jesus say this are dying off and Jesus hasn't come back yet. And so they're beginning to make fun of and ridicule and mock people who still hold seriously this doctrine.

And they're saying, Jesus is never coming back. And they're beginning to mock this and they're saying, you see, it goes on, verse 4, they will say, where is the promise of his coming?

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. So here's the issue. Their criticism is God created the world and ever since that day so long ago, things have pretty much gone on unchanged.

[6 : 13] And so the whole idea that all of a sudden history and time and space and all of this would just end in a moment, that it would all just come to a crashing halt, that that idea is ridiculous.

It's ludicrous. Nobody believes that. And of course, Peter is saying that this is a way for them to give themselves and others license. Jesus is never coming back. There's no final judgment.

Therefore, we can live and do as we please. And so this is a fairly popular idea and it's beginning to catch on. So what does Peter say in response? Well, that's what we see in verse 5.

Here's what Peter says. He says, for they deliberately overlook or they conveniently overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.

So here's Peter's argument. I want you to follow along here. He's saying, do you believe that God created the world, the heavens and the earth?

[7 : 13] And these teachers would say, yeah, we believe that. So Peter then would say, well, if you believe that God by his word created the heavens and the earth, why would you then not believe that God by his word would one day come back to judge the heavens and the earth?

In other words, why would you just take creation for granted? Yeah, God created the world and yet reject the idea that God might come back, right? If you make something, would you not want to come back and fix it if it got broken?

He's saying, if you believe that God created the world, you have to believe that God will judge the world. There's no logical reason to reject that doctrine. And so what he's really saying is this. You either have to believe in both creation and judgment or you have to reject creation and judgment. But it makes no logical sense to believe in one and not the other. There's no reason to reject the one if you believe in the other. So we ask, okay, well, why does that actually matter? And here's why it actually matters.

Here's the difference that this makes. A created world is a world that has meaning. It's a world that has meaning. An accidental world is meaningless because it has no purpose.

[8 : 27] There's no intention in its existence. It's a cosmic accident, right? Now, I've heard and you've probably heard Christians make this argument. People like Tim Keller, other people make this argument.

But what we need to understand is this is something that great thinkers all throughout history have realized again and again and again. And you have believers and atheists alike. People like Pascal

and Dostoevsky and Sartre have realized this.

I think the best articulation of it comes from the atheist Richard Dawkins. Here's what he says. He's writing assuming that there is no God, that there is no creation, that there is no judgment.

And here's what he says. Humans have always wondered about the meaning of life. Life has no higher purpose than to perpetuate the survival of DNA. Life has no design, no purpose, no evil, and no good.

Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. It's coming from Dawkins. Smart guy. So we ask, okay, well, what about justice? Is justice possible? Is there some foundation for justice?

[9 : 31] Here's what he says. In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are just going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it or any justice.

No justice. There's no foundation for justice if the world is an accident. So the stakes are pretty high. Either you believe in creation, and therefore you accept the idea that God is going to one day come back and judge.

He's going to evaluate and cleanse and renew His world. Or you reject the idea of creation, but you also have to reject judgment, and you have to reject with that the sense that there is any meaning to the world, that there is any meaning to life.

You have to reject any sense of right and wrong. And by the way, if you reject creation and you reject judgment, and you believe that all of this is just an accident, then you have no grounds on which to say that something like racism is wrong, or to say that sexual assault and violence is wrong, or to say that genocide is wrong.

You have no ground to say that. In fact, if there is no creation and no judgment, then those things would actually make sense.

[10 : 54] Because if you understand what Richard Dawkins is saying, here's what he's saying. He's saying if you believe that humans are a cosmic accident, that they're merely the product of selfish genes, then the only ethic that makes sense is the ethic of the survival of the fittest.

It's an ethic built around the idea that the purpose of life is to pass on our genetic code. What that means is the strong should trample the weak.

The powerful should trample the powerless. Right? Those who have power and those who have strength should pass on their DNA, and they should crush the weak. They don't deserve to survive to future generations.

That's what that ethic would say. So to sum all of this up, if you say that judgment is a myth, then you also have to say that justice is a myth.

You can't have one without the other. So this is the first reason that the idea of judgment matters. It shows us that justice is real. It shows us that life has meaning.

[11 : 59] It shows us that ultimately there is a right and there is a wrong, even if we're not sure exactly where that line is drawn. So that's the first point we want to make. The second reason that the final judgment matters so much is that it enables us to face injustice.

It enables us to face injustice. I don't have to spend a lot of time making the case to you that the world is full of atrocities. Many of you work in very challenging environments. We're trying to deal with some of the hardest issues in the world.

And all you have to do is go online at any time. Just pull out your phone and look at the news. And every day, horrible, unimaginable atrocities are occurring. You know, we have core groups at Advent.

And one of the core groups this semester is really exciting. It's a core group focused on race and the gospel. And it's about 20 or so very thoughtful men and women who are really wanting to dig into asking questions about what it means as a Christian to engage issues of race and discrimination, not only at a personal level but also at a systemic level.

And I had a great opportunity to visit this group this past week and just to sit and listen. And a lot of the discussion focused on our willingness and our openness to owning all of the ways that we're complicit.

[13 : 17] And I have to tell you, that conversation was very overwhelming. And when you begin to really dig into all of the historic systemic racism and all of the lack of equality that has resulted from that, all of the injustice, it can overwhelm you.

It can lead you to despair. Right? And so when you look at injustice, there are really two camps. There are two ways that people respond when they start to kind of get overwhelmed by all of the issues that are out there that really need to be addressed.

And you can really group them into two categories. There are those who burn out and those who check out. Right? Okay, so the burnouts, these are people that don't start burned out.

They start very passionately. These are the people that look at the injustice in the world and they say, I'm going to devote my life to ending these problems. I'm going to devote my life to making the world a better place. I'm going to make a difference.

And normally when they're young, they're full of passion. They move to a place either overseas or a place like D.C. where they can get involved and roll up their sleeves and plunge in and start to really make an impact.

[14 : 25] And they've got passion. They've got energy. They've got drive. They'll do just about anything because they want to make a difference. And they want to end the injustice. And it's amazing to see. Right? Maybe a little self-righteousness about people who aren't as enlightened or engaged.

It's all kind of mixed in there, but there's a genuine desire to make an impact. And then you check back in with those people three, five, seven, ten years down the road. And often what you see is that disillusionment and cynicism have really begun to set in.

Right? Because you begin to realize that the issues are just too complex. And the bureaucracy is too thick and too vast. And change is often way too slow.

And so over time you get more and more disillusioned, more and more cynical. And a lot of people eventually burn out. They just become so hardened and so calloused that they burn out. A lot of people change fields.

Which leads us to the second category, those who check out. Right? And maybe people in their 20s get on the path to burnout. And then maybe eventually they check out as a mode of survival by the time they get to their mid to late 30s.

[15 : 31] But the check out approach to injustice is just to build an insulated life where you don't have to think about it. Right? It's people who move to a nice part of the country and they, you know, nice schools and lots of parking and safe neighborhoods.

And they begin to build a life where the topic of injustice really only comes up if they go to church or at dinner parties. But it's not really something that's in your day-to-day awareness outside of that.

Right? And these are really the only two options. Either you plunge in and do what you can, but often that leads to tremendous disillusionment. Or you just check out and just try to make your life the best it can be and hope other people out there solve those problems.

And both are problematic. Both are fraught with issues. And this is another reason why the doctrine of final judgment matters so much.

Because it offers a corrective to both approaches and it actually offers us a third way to think about injustice. Because on the one hand, to all the activists who are out there, who are plunged in with their sleeves rolled up, who are on the road to burnout, the doctrine of the final judgment says this.

[16 : 42] God is the only one who can fix these problems. God is the only one who can bring justice the way the world needs. He's the only one who can deal with the complexity. God is the only one who can save the world, which means we can't save it.

We're not the saviors. Only God who can ultimately bring justice and righteousness. Verse 13 is tremendous. This passage ends with verse 13.

But according to his promise, we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. The great promise of Scripture is that one day God is going to so thoroughly renew the heavens and the earth, cleanse it from all injustice, unrighteousness, wickedness, sin. He's going to so perfectly restore it that it will not just be a place that is better, but it will actually be the place where righteousness dwells.

Everything there, every being, every atom will be perfectly right with God, fully and completely restored. And our job ultimately is to wait.

[17 : 50] I have a laser pointer. Is to wait for the new heavens and the new earth. Right? So for people who are plunged in there and I've got to fix this, I've got to solve it, I've got to make a difference.

No, ultimately our role as human beings is to wait for God to do what human beings cannot do. So to all the activists out there, we cannot save the world.

We're waiting for God to save and restore it. But on the other hand, does that mean that we all move somewhere nice and get a comfortable job and don't think about this anymore and say, well, God will take care of it?

Absolutely not. On the other hand, to all those people who are checked out, the final judgment shows us that God cares about justice and He calls His people to care about justice as well.

If you go back to verse 10, But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved.

[18:47] All of this language of fire and burning up and destruction, if you're writing in the ancient world, you're trying to use metaphorical imagery that conveys the level of disaster that judgment brings.

And so a fiery, disastrous image is going to accomplish that. But what we need to do is to get away from all of the fire imagery, which is more metaphor than anything, and we need to focus on this key word.

And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. This is the essence of what judgment is. Everything will finally be exposed.

It will be revealed for what it truly is. And I think that chilling parable in Matthew 25, where Jesus talks about all these people are brought in, and all these people look alike.

They're all amazing people. They all have similar values. They've all done similarly good things in the world. They've all tried their best. They're all, you know, top 20% good people. They're all, you know, just kind of cream of the crop.

[19:48] They're all great. They're all, all these people, they all look alike, right? There's no way to tell them apart. And then all of a sudden they're separated into two groups. Why? Well, they're being exposed.

The truth of who they are is being revealed. The things that human beings can't see, but God can see, that is being made known, right? And that parable is all about what? It's all about the fact that there is an intimate connection between the way we treat other people, especially the poor, the vulnerable, the oppressed, and the way we treat God himself.

Whatever you did unto the least of these, you did unto me. Whatever you did not do unto the least of these, you did not do to me. Right? It's very chilling. I mean, you cannot read that parable in Matthew 25 without getting goosebumps.

Very chilling. This exposing of the reality. Right? So there's an intimate connection between people's treatment of primarily what is addressed here is issues of injustice.

What it makes very clear is that God profoundly cares for the vulnerable and the oppressed, and he calls us to care for those people as well. And so to all the Christians who check out, this makes it clear that we cannot profess to love God without also loving and caring for the people that God loves.

[21:09] So it offers a corrective to both people who are on the road to burnout and people who are on the road to checking out. So how do we summarize all of that in maybe a pithy or helpful or memorable way before we move on?

Well, there's this saying that gets passed around, and sometimes it's attributed to Ignatius and sometimes to Augustine and probably to C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton as well. I'm not sure who originally said it, but somebody wise said it back in the day, and it's a saying that goes like this, that we should pray like everything depends on God and work like everything depends on us.

And I like that saying, but the more I thought about that, the more I actually realized that as I reflect on this passage, I think it actually should be reversed. I think that it would be better to say, how do we engage issues of injustice?

How do we respond to all the wrong in the world? Well, we should pray like everything depends on us and work like everything depends on God. By that I mean this, that when we pray, we need to pray with a sense of urgency, a sense of desperation, a sense that as we look at all of the atrocities of the world and all the evil that's going on, we need to pray as though all of that, all of the issues in the world, that for God to intervene and to bring restoration and renewal, that that all hinges on me being willing to stop what I'm doing and fall to my knees and cry out, come Lord Jesus.

That that should be the kind of prayer that we pray as God's church, a sense of urgency and excitement and anticipation about what God's going to do. That should be the tone of our prayer.

[22 : 47] Right? And by the way, we have a fantastic prayer to pray just that. You know what it is? The Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is all about this. It's all about praying for the hastening of the day of the Lord.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's the best prayer you can pray in the face of injustice. Thy will be done here. Right? Right here. Come, fix this. That should be the tone of our prayer. Pray like it all depends on us. And then once we've prayed, we get up off our knees and we get to work.

But we work like it all depends on God. We don't work with that sense of futility, a sense of frustration. We don't look around at this massive NGO that we're a part of and wonder how millions and millions and millions of government money can just get chewed up and that we have no measurable outcome to tell us that we're doing anything at all or making any difference.

Right? Because it's not about that. Because we realize that ultimately it all depends on God. That God is the one who's going to fix these issues. And why am I here? Not because I'm a savior. I'm here because I want to care about the people and the issues that God cares about.

[24 : 03] That's why I'm here. But it ultimately all depends on Him, not me. So we pray like it all depends on us, but we work knowing that it all depends on God. So you can have passion, you can have energy, but you know what?

You can also be lighthearted. You can have joy. You can fail. You can face overwhelming inefficiency. And it's okay. It doesn't have to burn you out.

It didn't depend on you anyway. So this is the second reason that the final judgment matters so much. It gives us a way, a vision for meaningfully engaging and facing all of the injustice in the world.

And then the third and the final reason that this doctrine of final judgment matters so much, the reason that it should be very important to us, is that it shows us that God's love is His justice.

That God's love is His justice. This is a point worth making because in our culture, modern thinking, I think most people see love and justice on opposite ends of the spectrum, don't they?

[25 : 05] I mean, at least in the conversations that I have, people say, well, well, love means not judging. Right? Love means not judging. Love and judgment, no, no, no.

They're opposite ends of the spectrum. Right? And so people will say, well, or religious, will say, well, I believe in a God of love. I don't like that Old Testament God with all of the fire and the judgment, the God who's angry and brings plagues and all of that.

I don't like that God. I like the new God. I like the God of love. I believe in a God who doesn't judge me, who doesn't judge anybody. I believe in a God who loves me and accepts me and affirms me and embraces me as I am.

That's a loving God. God. So this is what most people would say. But I would say, well, that's interesting. If you look at all of the injustice in the world, all the things that we've just been focusing on, and then you imagine a God who created the world, set everything up, and then a God who then just sits back as all of these atrocities begin to unfold, and imagine a God just sitting there watching all of this horrible stuff happen and doing nothing.

And just saying, well, you know, I hope they figure that out. That must be really hard for them. Why would you worship a God like that? What kind of God is that?

[26 : 26] You know? A God who is like that is not a God of love, is it? I mean, that's a God of apathy at best. You know, you're talking about a divine sociopath at that point.

But that is not a God of love, and it's certainly not a God that we should waste any time worshipping. Right? A God who would just kind of let all that unfold and just say, well, I hope they kind of take his hands off the wheel and just kind of let everything play out.

With the kind of stuff that's going on in our world, absolutely not. Don't waste your time without God. It's not worth it. So I think what people really mean when they say, I believe in a God who loves and accepts people, is what they really mean is, I believe in a God who loves and accepts me.

It's okay if God judges the really bad people. You know, as long as he doesn't, he shouldn't judge me, little old me. I'm pretty much a good person, right? I pretty much do the right thing.

I care about these things. God wouldn't judge me. So if God's a God of love, he wouldn't judge me. But yeah, certainly there are really bad people out there. You know, and God should judge those people. And if you get in, you start to push in, you begin to realize there's a lot of inconsistency in the way people think.

[27 : 35] But I think one thing that we need to see is that under all of this, human beings are hardwired to think in terms of good and bad. We're just hardwired. You know, and even with all of the shows and all of the film and TV coming out that presents morally ambiguous characters and situations, you know, sort of, you know, Walter White from Breaking Bad, the kind of morally, you know, kind of the anti-hero, you know, even with all of that, people under that are still hardwired to think in terms of good and bad.

There are good people that are bad people. And I think for that reason, if you look at all of the man-made religions of the world, they all essentially revolve around the same framework. That at the end of the day, there are good people and there are bad people. And the good people get rewarded and the bad people get judged and punished. Pretty much every religion says that. The gospel says something completely different. In 2 Peter, people are complaining because it's taken so long for Jesus to come back. And they're beginning to ask questions.

And look what Peter says in verse 8. Here's his response. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day.

[28 : 53] The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. I'm going to use this again.

Repentance. Now that's a very important word because what is he not saying? He's not saying God is withholding judgment because He's hoping that you'll finally get your act together.

God is withholding the day of the Lord because He's hoping that you will pull yourself up by your bootstraps. God is waiting and hoping that finally you'll come to your senses and you'll come to Him and you'll promise from here on out I'm going to do a better job.

He's not saying any of that. What he says is a very different word. He says that all should reach repentance. And the minute we see that word, we should recognize that we're an entirely different framework.

That no longer are we dealing with a scale or a framework that deals in terms of good and bad. That that's off the table. There's an entirely new set of parameters when we begin to talk about repentance.

[29 : 53] In other words, the gospel, God's way of dealing with people operates on a completely different set of parameters. The rules are different. It has nothing to do with good and bad.

Nothing. The Christian faith, the gospel, getting saved, has nothing to do with good and bad. The minute you begin to put it in that framework, you've gone off the rails.

And we know this because of what it says here about repentance. God wants people to repent. And here's where we see the beauty of the gospel and the reason that Christianity is unlike any other religion.

Even the other Abrahamic religions, this is the thing that sets it apart. The people who survive God's judgment will not be the good people. They will not be the good people.

They will be the people who came to repentance. Because the gospel also says that there are two kinds of people. It says that there are people who, when they stand before the throne of God at the day of the Lord, that they will stand on their own merit.

[31 : 02] Here's all I've done. Here's all of the ways that I cared. Here's all of the ways that I poured myself out. Here's all of the good that I tried to sow in the world. Here's all of the kindness that I tried to sow in the world.

Here's all I got, God. There are those kinds of people. And then there are the people who will stand before that same throne and say, I'm not here on my own merit. I'm not here because of anything that I've done.

I'm here purely on the basis and the merit of Jesus Christ. That's the only reason I'm here. The gospel says there are two kinds of people. And the people who stand in their own merit will not see the kingdom of heaven.

It will only be the people who stand in the foundation of Jesus Christ. And this is the essence of what repentance means. Repentance does not mean shape up.

Do better. Try harder. Pull your life together. Start going to church. It doesn't mean any of that.

Repentance means that you abandon your entire project of trying to live apart from God, do good apart from God, make a difference apart from God.

[32 : 06] You abandon all of that. And repentance means that you cling to the mercy of Jesus Christ. That you come to the Lord and you confess to Him, I'm giving up my entire standard of good, bad, right, wrong.

I'm giving all of that up. And from here on out, I'm clinging to you. And I want your identity to be my identity. I want your grace to be my grace. I want your merit to be my merit. I want to be in you. I want you to be in me. That's what repentance is. And so, the implications of this are profound and we need to be reminded of this again and again and again. There are a lot of very bad people who will see the kingdom of God, who will be in the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness dwells.

They will be there precisely because they knew that Jesus was their only hope. And then there are a lot of very good people who did amazing things in the world who will not see the kingdom of heaven, who will not be there precisely because of their goodness, because they never really felt that they needed forgiveness when they looked around.

But if we understand how the gospel completely changes the rules of the game, we begin to see why Christians believe not only in a God of love but in a God of justice.

[33 : 26] Because we actually believe that love and justice converge right here on the cross. That this is the place in all of history where you see perfect love and perfect justice coexist in the same space, in the same time, in the same moment.

So for all of these reasons, the final judgment is extremely important. It's important because it shows us that justice is real, that there is meaning to this life, that there is right and wrong, and that one day things will be put right.

It shows us how to face injustice, not by setting ourselves up for burnout, not by living a life that is checked out, but rather by dropping to our knees and praying like it all depends on us, and then rolling up our sleeves and serving where we can, but knowing that it all depends on God.

And then finally, it shows us that God's love is not separate from His justice or opposed to His justice, but actually God's love is His justice, that the cross is the place where love and justice meet. So this is why the final judgment matters. And here's why I think Peter wanted to talk about it, and here's why I wanted to talk about it to you with these last hours that we have before we leave for the summer.

[34 : 41] Because unless you know the meaning of God's judgment, you will never fully grasp the depth of God's love. Let's pray.