THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD

NO. 1601

A SERMON
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"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?
For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord,
every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.
So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
Romans 14:10-12

NO doubt there is an error in our version, for where in the tenth verse we read, "The judgment seat of Christ," it should be, "The judgment seat *of God*." I suppose the word "Christ" slipped into certain manuscripts because Paul had been speaking of Christ, and it was thought to be natural that he should continue to use the same name.

Paul did not say "Christ," but "God," but by that word he meant the same person. Paul knew that Christ is God, and when he was speaking of Christ it was no deviation from the subject for him to speak concerning Him under the title of "God." It was necessary here for him to use the word "God," because he was about to quote from the Old Testament Scripture a passage which speaks concerning the sovereignty of God, which is to be acknowledged and confessed by all mankind.

The passage runs, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, As I live, saith the LORD, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

I beg you to notice how strongly this passage goes to prove the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, because the whole run of the passage is concerning Christ. "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." And then the apostle immediately, without any break in the sense whatever, speaks of God, because He was speaking of the same person, and he quotes a passage which relates to God Himself, and uses it as relating to Christ. It does, indeed, relate to our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is "very God of very God," and God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

In another place Paul most distinctly declares that it is Christ who is to judge the world. Look at the fifth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, at the ninth verse, "We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him; for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Therefore, though the reading should be God, the sense is "Christ."

It would have been a most important point with Paul to draw a distinction between Christ and God if there had been any doubt as to His divinity. It would have been a most necessary thing to prevent us from idolizing a mere man.

But here, so far from taking any pains to make such distinction between Christ Jesus and God, as would have been needful if He were not God, he interchanges the two words. He speaks of them in the same breath, for they are one. "The *Lord* shall judge his people," and it is "the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2Ti 4:1). "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (Rev 1:7).

This judgment by Christ is, by our apostle, proved from an Old Testament prophecy which certainly refers to JEHOVAH Himself. Read Isaiah 45:23, and learn from it that our Lord Jesus is JEHOVAH, and let us joyfully adore Him as our Savior and God, to whom be glory forever and ever.

The doctrine of eternal judgment, upon which I shall speak this morning, is introduced to us for a certain reason. Paul saw among Christians a much too common habit of judging one another. I suppose if Paul were to come among us now he would not see any remarkable difference upon that point.

Just then the bulk of the converts were Jews, and as such, they brought into the Christian church their former religious habits—those men who had devoutly kept the ceremonial law felt as if they would violate their consciences if they did not continue to keep its more prominent precepts. And though they gave up certain of its observances, which were evidently abolished by the Gospel, they kept up others, such as special days for religious fasts and feasts.

Many true but weak believers were very scrupulous about what they should eat, thinking to keep up the legal distinction between meats clean and unclean. At the same time, the church had in her midst men who said, and said correctly, "The coming of Christ has done away with the old dispensation. These holy days are all types and shadows whose substance is in Christ. Has not the Lord shown to Peter, who is the minister of the circumcision, that henceforth nothing is common or unclean?"

The men of strong faith blamed their weaker brethren for being superstitious, and by their superstition bringing a yoke of bondage upon themselves. "No," replied the weaker sort, "we are not superstitious. We are conscientious, while you go much too far in your liberty, and cause us to stumble."

Thus while the strong looked down upon the weak, almost doubting whether they could have come into the liberty of Christ at all, the weak condemned the strong, almost charging them with turning their liberty into licentiousness. They were both wrong, for they were judging one another.

Paul, who was himself most strongly opposed to the Judaizing party, and in every respect came out clear and straight upon the bold lines of Christian liberty, was, nevertheless, so actuated by the spirit of his Master that he was ready to be all things to all men, and seeing grave peril of dissension where all should be love, he rushed into the breach, and he said, "Do not judge one another: what have ye to do with judging? There is a judgment yet to come."

He mentioned the future judgment on purpose, that by its powerful influence upon their minds they might be taken away from the frivolous amusement, for it does not come to much more—the frivolous amusement, the mischievous meddlesomeness of judging one another, when already the judge is at the door.

Let us linger a minute over this practical point, and see how Paul rebukes the spirit of judging one another. First, he says in effect that it is *unnatural*. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? Why dost thou set at nought thy brother? He whom you judge or despise is your brother. You have called the weak one superstitious, but he is your brother. You have called the strong man licentious, because he enjoys his liberty, but he is your brother."

If we must needs judge, certainly it should not be those who are linked to us by the ties of spiritual relationship. Are not all believers one family in Christ? Wherever the root of the matter is to be found, there exists an overwhelming argument for undying unity. Why, then, will you take your brother by the throat, and drag him before your judgment seat, and make him answer to you, brother to brother, and then condemn him? Shall a brother condemn a brother?

When the outside world censures Christians, we understand it, for they hated our Master, and they will hate us. But inside the charmed circle of Christian communion there should be esteem for one another, a defending of each other—we should be anxious rather to apologize for infirmity than to discover imperfection.

Far be it from us to find flaws where they do not exist. Would to God it were so, that perfect love cast out all suspicion of one another, and that we had confidence in each other, because Christ our Lord will hold up our brethren, even as He has upheld ourselves.

This judging among Christians, then, is, first of all, unnatural. And next, it is *an anticipation of the judgment day*. There is to come a day when men shall be judged—judged after a better fashion than you and I can judge. How dare we, then, travesty God's great assize by ourselves mounting the throne, and pretending to rehearse the solemn transactions of that tremendous hour? Judgment will come soon enough—may the Lord have mercy upon us in that day.

My brother, why need you hurry it on by yourself ascending the throne? Cannot God do His own work? "Vengeance is mine: I will repay," says the Lord. We need not spend our time in perpetually trying to discern between the tares and the wheat. The tares to which the Savior referred in that parable were so like the wheat that men could not tell which was which, and His command was, "Let both grow together until the harvest."

At harvest time He will give the reapers directions for separating between the real wheat and that which was a mockery of it. As for us, the saints shall judge the world, but for the present the order is "judge nothing before the time." We can separate between the outwardly vile and the outwardly pure, by marks which God has given us, such as these—"By their fruits ye shall know them," and "If any man love not the Lord Jesus let him be anathema."

As guardians of the church's honor, we are bound to use these rules. But between a brother and brother, differing on minor points, between Christian and Christian, each one obeying his conscience, we are not to exercise mutual condemnation.

Come hither, brethren! Here is work enough for you all in dragging the great net to shore. What are you at there? Sitting down and trying to put the good into vessels and cast the bad away? That work may be left till later on, but now let us drag the net to shore. Haul away, brethren, with all your might! By and by shall come the time for reckoning up the results of our fishery, and separating between the seeming and the true.

Moreover, we not only anticipate the judgment, but we *impudently intrude ourselves into the office and prerogative of Christ* when we condemn the saints. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"—that is the true throne of judgment.

How many times have I had to appear before the judgment seat of my fellow men! Sometimes one's motives are impugned. Another time one's actions, or mode of speech, or way of managing church affairs. Well, it is a small matter for us to appear before man's judgment seat—we may very well refuse to put in an appearance at all, for man is not our master, and we are not bound to answer to his summons.

Why is it that so many brethren seem to think that they are masters, and have a right to judge the Lord's servants? I know some Christians who not only form judgments, and very severe judgments, upon all that are round them as to the facts that come under their notice, but they also, without any facts whatever, conceive notions concerning persons whom they have never seen, and are full of obstinate prejudices against them.

Many twist words into meanings which they were never intended to mean by the person who used them, and others, even without so much as the excuse of misunderstanding words, sit down and imagine evil against their brethren. They dream that they are slighted, and then hard judgments follow. Once imagine that you are badly treated, and then you will think that everything is done out of spite to you—and the next thing is to think spitefully of others.

There are persons about who are liberally gifted in the line of gossip, who by their talk would make you think that you were living in Sodom and Gomorrah, if not in Tophet. You are made to fear that everyone you have trusted is a vile deceiver, that every man who is zealous is mercenary, that every minister is preaching in public what he secretly disbelieves, that every generous subscriber only gives out of pride, that, in fact, you are living in a place where the race of Judas Iscariot is to be seen, reproduced ten thousand times over.

One goes to bed and cannot sleep after talking to these tale-bearers. The consolation is that there is no truth in their wonderful discoveries. These slanderous statements are a base burlesque of judgment, and nothing more.

Why are they thought so much of? After you and I have done our best to hold our mimic court, and have summoned this man and that man before us, what is it at its best but child's play, and at its worst a violent usurpation of the rights of Christ Jesus, who alone reigns as lawgiver in the midst of His church today, and who will sit as judge on the clouds of heaven by and by to judge the world in righteousness?

The apostle argues strongly against this evil spirit of censoriousness in the Christian church. And to give a knock-down blow to it, he says, "It is all *needless*. You need not judge one another, for both your brother and yourself will stand before the judgment seat of God. There is no need of your condemnation, for if any man is worthless, the Judge will condemn him—you may not interfere with the business of the great Supreme. He will manage the affairs of men far better than you can."

Yet more, your judgment is *unprofitable*. You would spend your time much more profitably if you would recollect that you also who can be so exact and severe in pointing out this fault here, and the other fault there, will be yourselves examined by an unerring eye. Your own account books have to be sent in, and to be examined item by item—therefore look well to your own matters.

If you were watching your own heart, out of which are the issues of life, if you were watching your own tongue and bridling it, and so mastering your whole body, if you were watching your own opportunities for usefulness, if you were observing your Master's eye as a handmaiden looks to her mistress, you would be doing something that would pay you far better than censuring others, something much more to the glory of God, much more to the gain of the church, much more to the comfort of your own soul. So the apostle winds up by saying, according to the most forcible rendering of the original, "We must each one of us give an account of himself to God."

Brothers, sisters, I bring these truths before you because they are meant for brothers in Christ, and not so much for the outside world. It is to those who have faith, and are in the family of love, that the word of warning is given that we do not judge, and to us the argument is addressed that we shall each one give an account for himself to God.

I do not know that you specially need a warning against unkind judgments, but I know that you may need it, even as other churches have done. I am very thankful that we have not been much disturbed with this great evil, but still, it does come up among all Christian people more or less.

I read the other day in an interesting pamphlet about the Apocalypse (*Fulfilment of the Apocalypse*. By the author of "*Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass.*" Elliot Stock), a note which furnishes me with an illustration. The writer endeavors to explain why the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the Book of Revelation as having its chosen twelve thousand. All the other tribes are there, but Dan is missed, and Manasseh is put in his place.

The author says it is because Dan signifies "judgment," or "one that judges." He says—"These 'judges of evil thoughts' have been sad troublers in Israel in all ages, not fearing to judge their brother and set at nought their brother, they have judged everything and everybody but themselves. All who have not pronounced their Shibboleth, nor seen eye to eye with them, have been adjudged as heretics, not to be tolerated, but tabooed to the extent of their ability. In vain for them has it been written, 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts.'

"Like their great ancestor of this tribe, they deal in foxes and firebrands, and too often set on fire their neighbors' standing corn, an act we have never been able to commend even in Samson. This predilection for foxes and firebrands has unhappily developed in the seed of Dan to this day. And so in the place of Dan, *The Judge*, we get Manasseh, *One who forgets*, one who, though cast off by his brethren, forgets and forgives their injuries, and we account it a *good exchange*.

"And in the New Jerusalem home, where failure will be no more, Dan, 'a serpent in the way,' or 'a lion's whelp,' would be as much out of *work* as out of *place*." If any of the Danites hear or read this, let them pray for grace to change their habits and natures.

I. Now I come to the doctrine itself, the solemn doctrine of judgment to come. May God make it impressive to our hearts. Our thoughts are now directed to the future judgment, and we notice concerning it, first, that THE JUDGMENT WILL BE UNIVERSAL.

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, saith the LORD, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." There will come a judgment, then, for all classes of persons—for the strong brother who with his knowledge of Christian liberty went as far as he should, perhaps further than he ought to have gone. He judged himself to be right in the matter, but he must stand before the judgment seat of Christ about it.

There will also be a judgment for the weak brother. He who was so scrupulous and precise ought not to be censuring the other man, who felt free in his conscience, for he will himself stand before the judgment seat of God. No elevation in piety will exclude us from that last solemn test, and no weakness will serve as an excuse.

The man of one and the man of ten talents must alike be reckoned with. Weak Christians are exempted from many trials by the gentleness of God, but not from the ultimate trial, for we shall each one of us give an account of himself unto God—the strong and the weak. The men who bore office in the church will have to answer for it, even as says the apostle Paul in Hebrews 13:17, "They watch for your souls, as they that must give an account."

And again "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful: he that judgeth me is the Lord." I could, on bended knees ask your pity for myself, having to minister to so large a congregation, and with so much larger a congregation outside to whom I weekly minister through the press. Ah me, who is sufficient for these things? Who shall be found faithful in such a position?

I think all ministers might, with tears in their eyes, cry to you, "Brethren, pray for us." It will be the height of my ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. If, like George Fox, I can say in dying, "I am clear, I am clear," that were almost all the heaven I could wish for. Oh to discharge one's ministry aright, and to be able to render an account like that of Paul, who said, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith." This is my soul's longing.

Yes, but not only will ministers, deacons, elders, and persons who had high standing in the church have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but so will the most obscure of the members of the church, and those secret ones who never dared to take up membership at all. You will not be able to hide away forever.

The man with the one talent must be summoned before his Lord as certainly as the man with ten, and of each one a reckoning shall be taken. In our Lord's parables, it is ever the King's own servants that are called before him. "The lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." Our Master will say to each one of His servants, "Give an account of thy stewardship." "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God."

I have not time or space to enter into the differences of that judgment as it regards the righteous and the wicked, but I confine myself to the one fact that all mankind will be judged, according to the Word of the Lord in the second chapter of the epistle to the Romans, at the fifth verse, "The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God."

What a motley throng will gather at that assize of all nations and peoples and tongues! Persons of all ages, too. You boys and girls, and you who have lived through a long life. Kings and princes will be

there to give in their weighty account, and senators and judges to answer to their Judge. And then the multitude of the poor and needy, and those that live neglecting God, and forgetful of their souls—they must all be there. It is a universal judgment.

John says, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Both sheep and goats shall gather before the great dividing Shepherd—the wise and foolish virgins shall both hear the midnight cry. The house on the rock and the house on the sand shall alike be tested by the last tremendous storm. Tares and wheat alike shall ripen. Bad fish and good shall be sorted out from the net, while the multitudes outside—the nations that knew not God—shall all without exception hear with trembling the summons to the dread tribunal.

Saints and sinners too, only on what a different footing, are all to be judged out of the books, and out of the Book of Life. Thus says the Word of the Lord, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

To the saints the judgment of the things done shall be according to righteousness, for these things shall be taken in evidence that they were indeed reconciled to God. The Judge will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world."

And then shall come the evidence, "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink," and so on. These fruits shall be the evidence that they were in Christ—the evidence of their being justified by faith.

While on the other hand, the sour and bitter fruit of the ungodly shall be an evidence that they were not planted of the Lord, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison, and you did not minister unto me."

We need have no fear of the judgment to come when we know that we are in Christ, for who fears to enter a just court when he knows that by the highest authority he has already been cleared? How complete the Christian's safety! There will be no accuser. So bright will be the righteousness of a saint through faith that no accuser will appear.

Hark, the herald gives forth the challenge! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" All through the court it rings. And God is there—the faithful and all-seeing God. Does He lay anything to their charge? Far from it. "It is God that justifieth."

Outside the court the voice demands, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" They hear it in heaven, and angels, who have watched the race of every believer, and seen how he has been running towards the goal, are silent as to any accusation. The challenge is heard in hell, where devils hate the godly, but they dare not forge a lie against them.

Happy he who can say, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the righteous judge shall give me at that day." Mark, He will give it as Judge, and on that day. How say some among you that there is no judgment for the saints? Who, then, need fear to enter the court when every accusation is silenced, and a reward is expected?

But still you say that the believer has sinned. Yes, but that sin has been forgiven, and he has a righteousness with which to answer the law. I will show you ere I have done how the Christian has been judged, condemned, and tried, and in reference to him the essence of the judgment is past already, so that there can be no condemnation.

Hence that second challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" The Judge is the only one who can condemn, and we are sure that He will not, for, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that has risen again, who also maketh intercession for us." Tremble not, therefore, at the doctrine that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but pray that, as John puts it, "We may have boldness in the day of judgment," because as Jude says, the Lord Jesus "is able to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with great joy."

Not a single person shall escape the judgment. There shall be no omission from the calendar. Every being of the race of Adam shall answer for himself. "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the

chief captains and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man" must see the face of Him that sits upon the throne. We shall have to put in an appearance as men do in court when the are subpoenaed to attend.

The word of Jesus is, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Ah, how unwilling will rebels come before that throne! Pharaoh! you must see a greater than Moses. Herod! you must see the young child upon His throne. Judas! you hanged yourself to escape the judgment of your conscience, but by no means can you escape the judgment of your God.

Though four thousand years have elapsed since men died, and their bodies may have melted quite away, yet when the trumpet rings out clear and shrill, their bodies shall live again, and they must all come forth, each one to answer for himself at that grand assize before the Judge of all the earth, who must do right with each of them.

Let us, then, bow before the solemn truth that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained.

II. The second truth, which we must make as prominent as ever we can, is that IT WILL BE A PERSONAL JUDGMENT for each one.

This is the pith of what the apostle is saying—"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." The judgment will not proceed in a rough, indiscriminate manner, as upon a race or tribe, but each man will have to stand apart, and the account reckoned will not be of a family or a band, but of each individually for himself.

Note this carefully, O men—We shall have to give an account, each man for his own actions, for his own thought, for his own words, for his own intention—nay, not only of that, but *of himself*. We shall each man have to give account of the state of his own heart, of the condition of his mind before God, whether he repented, whether he believed, whether he loved God, whether he was zealous, whether he was truthful, whether he was faithful.

If it only dealt with actions, words, and thoughts, the account would be solemn enough. But we must each one give an account *of himself*—of what he *was* as well as what he *did*—of what was in his heart as well as of that which came out of it in his deeds. Oh, what a trial will this be!

We shall then have to give an account of our judgments of others. We shall not have to answer for what they did, but for our daring to judge and condemn them. Did you ever think of this, you that judge others, that you are laying down the standard by which you will have to be judged yourselves? I generally find that those who are most severe towards others need and often expect great leniency towards themselves, but it will not be so at the last, for thus it is written—"With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged."

How easy it will be to judge the fault-finding at the judgment day. The Judge will only have to say, "They have already condemned themselves. They have condemned their own faults as they saw them in others. They have used the sharpest judgments against less faults than their own—out of their own mouths let them take the sentence and depart." You will have to render no account for other people, but you will have to render an account of yourself and how you judged other people. The last account will be wholly personal, therefore see you to it.

That account will, according to my text, have connected with it full *submission*. "As I live, saith the LORD, every knee shall bow to me." You may say today, "I do not care about God." You will have to care about Him. As truly as God lives you will have to bow. You may say, "What matters it to me what Scripture say?" It will matter to you, as certainly as God lives, which is putting it on the most solemn certainty that can be.

God has taken an oath about it, and declares that you shall own His sway. You had better bend at once, for you must either break or bow. God means to have His sovereignty acknowledged by all mankind. Has He not made us? Do we not owe everything to Him? He will not have His crown rights

denied forever. He is Lord of all, and He swears by Himself that every knee shall bow and own it. You will have to come to it, my friend.

Next, you will have to *confess*, so the text says. By this I understand that you will have to acknowledge that God is your Lord and Master, and had a right to your services, that you ought to have kept His law, that in sinning you have done unrighteously, and acted as you ought not to have acted. That confession you will not be able to withhold. Oh how the wicked will bite their tongues when they have to acknowledge their folly and wrong-doing. But it will have to come out of every man's mouth.

When God pronounces sentence, and the ungodly are sent down to hell, they will give their own assent to His righteousness in condemning and punishing them. The verdict of the castaways in hell is that they deserve it, and this is, indeed, the hell of hell—that they cannot deny the justice of those pains which come upon them as the result of their disobedience. God will see to it that we shall justify Him either in life or in death, by confessing that He is righteous.

I appeal to you, my dear hearers, whether you are ready with your account which you will have to render to God. Have you kept one at all? Sometimes when men appear before a court they plead that they have no books, and it is always a bad sign. You know what the judge thinks of him.

Can you dare to examine yourself and answer questions? Can you give an account of your stewardship? Have you kept it correctly, or have you credited yourself with large things where you ought to have debited yourself? Your fraud will be discovered, for the great Accountant will read it through, and will detect an error in a single moment. Is your account kept correctly, and are you ready to render it in at this moment?

Christian brother, you and I might hold back a little before we could say "Ay" to that, and yet I trust we could say it, for we know ourselves to be accepted with God. As for those who have scarcely thought of their God, their Maker, what will they do? What can they do, when each one of them must give an account before God, and they have no account except that which will condemn them for having wasted their Master's goods, for having defrauded the eternal God of that which was justly His due, and having spent upon their lusts that which ought to have been dedicated to their God?

This judgment, then, will be personal. You cannot put your godly mother into the scale with yourself. You cannot associate your dear old father with yourself in judgment. O children, you cannot be judged by your ancestry, but by your acts, for it is written—"The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Oh, see you to it. God help you to do so.

III. Thirdly, THIS JUDGMENT WILL BE DIVINE.

"We shall stand before the judgment seat *of God*." The judgment will be universal, personal, divine—and because it is the judgment seat of God, it will be a judgment *according to truth*. God will make no mistakes. He will not impute any wrong to us undeservedly, and He will not give us credit for right because we bore the appearance of it. He will search to the very core and essence of the matter. Are you ready to be tried as by fire? Trial by fire is but a scant figure of trial by the searching eye of the Most High God.

He will test us *by the supreme standard* of perfect justice. We judge by one another, and if we are as liberal, or as prayerful, or as gracious as others, we consider that it is all right. But the balances of the sanctuary are far more exact. It will not be you in one scale and I in another—and if I am as gracious as you, we shall both be accepted. Ah, no. There is another standard than that—the standard of truth and grace in the heart, and real love to God, and conformity to the image of Christ. Judge you whether you can stand that test.

That judgment will be most *searching*. "The LORD pondereth the hearts." He will not judge after the sight of the eyes, but search out our secrets. Then shall the foundations be tested, then shall all that the man rested on and stayed himself upon be tried—whether it be the Rock of Ages or whether it be the mere sand of presumption.

There will be no such trial day before or after as that day of the assize of God. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

That judgment will be *impartial*. You and I are always partial in weighing ourselves. We generally give the most lenient verdict except when we happen to be despondent in spirit, and then we are morbidly sensitive. But God will judge us without partiality.

Rich friend, that diamond ring will answer no purpose in that day. My ladies, those fine garments will make no impression in that court. My learned friend, that handle to your name will be of no avail. And you, fine sir, with your knighthood, earldom, or dukedom, will be none the better off, for coronets and even imperial crowns all go for nothing before the throne of God, who is no respecter of persons.

This judgment will be *final*. The sentence of the Supreme Court will settle all. Does He say, "Depart ye cursed"? They can do no other. Does He say, "Come ye blessed"? Oh, how blessed to enter into the eternal home. May none of you ever hear Him say, "Depart," for He will never reverse the sentence. You will have to depart and keep on departing, going further, further, and further away from Him who is hope and life and joy. There is no hope held out that He shall ever say, "Come back again, ye cursed." But no, "Depart into everlasting fire in hell." God save us from such an ultimatum as that.

At the last judgment certain sins will prove to be of heavy weight. I will do no more than mention a few of them. There is one that is never treated leniently by any judge—it is contempt of court. God will speedily condemn those who have despised His authority.

Are there any such here who have despised the Lord their God, and set at nought His counsel? They seldom or never think of God or His law, or even regard His day. But they say, "Who is the LORD that we should obey His voice?" Beware, you despisers, and wonder and perish, for the Lord our God is jealous of His great name, and He hears the voices of them that scoff at Him.

Rejection of mercy is also a high crime and misdemeanor. The Judge who shall sit upon the throne has already presented mercy to all of you, and the unconverted among you have refused it. Surely you deserve the deepest hell who slight eternal love. If the Judge can say, "The prisoner at the bar has had the glad tidings of forgiveness presented to him, but has refused to listen to the gracious message, or having listened, and being almost persuaded, he nevertheless put it off to a more convenient time—and here he stands a trampler on the blood of Christ."

This will be the fiercest heat of the eternal burnings. You refused mercy. You put away from you eternal life, and counted yourselves unworthy of salvation. This sin will be a millstone about the soul forever.

Then there is the crime of willful, deliberate sinning, with intent so to do. Have any of you been guilty of this fact, and have you not fled to Christ? Did you choose sin, knowing it to be sin? Are you still choosing sin, and living in it against the voice of conscience? Ah, believe me, sin repeated, sin continued in, will bring swift and sure destruction. These sins go beforehand to judgment, and there lodge solemn plaints against the guilty.

I cannot close amid these clouds. Break forth, O sun! Turn to the passage from which Paul quoted, for there you shall hear a sweet Gospel word which may fitly end my discourse. Paul's mind was at Isaiah 45:23. He did not quote the words literally, but he gave the sense. Here is the passage—"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

Now, what words do you think come before these? You shall look for yourselves. I will wait while you open your Bibles. Do you see the blessed lines? God declares that every man shall bow before Him, and confess His authority. But what word of exhortation stands before that oath of His? I wish I could make it flash out at this moment in letters of light right round the building—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

That mercy-message stands side by side with the judgment prophecy. Come, then, dear hearts, you that are guilty, come and bow before your God ere He ascends the throne of judgment. Come and do willingly what you will have to do by and by unwillingly.

Come, now, and confess that He is judge and ought to be honored. Confess that He is King and ought to be obeyed. Confess that you are His subject and are bound to serve Him. Confess that you have done wrong, grievous wrong, in having broken His law. Come and make out your own indictment. Come and be your own accuser. Come and condemn yourself. Come and bow your head when God's law condemns you. Come and own that you deserve divine wrath, and submit yourself to the Lord's justice.

Then give another look to your God and Savior and say, "My Lord, I know You are my Judge, but You are also my Redeemer—I accept the place of condemnation, but I see that You did stand there in my behalf—the just for the unjust, my substitute, bearing my sin and punishment. Blessed Lord, I accept You as my substitute. I yield myself up to You. I stand now tried, condemned, punished, dead, raised again in You, and therefore pardoned, acquitted, justified, beloved, accepted for Jesus' sake."

Oh, is not this a blessed ending to a solemn sermon?

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through Thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

God bless you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ROMANS 14 AND 15:1-7

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—190, 363, 341

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.