

The Judgment Seat of Christ
Romans 14:1-12

For decades evangelical pastors have motivated their members to do good works or to give more money with threats of appearing before Christ on Judgment Day to give an account of our lives. This modern motivational tool is very similar to the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences that lasted seven centuries prior to the Reformation. But what does the Bible actually teach about a believer's judgment?

I. The Context (vs. 1-9).

Once again, I remind everyone that you can never understand a text - "*so then each one of us will give an account to God*" (v. 12) until you understand the context of the verses around this one. In the first eleven verses, Paul describes the marks of a healthy assembly of believers (the church).

(A). A warm acceptance of others -- "accept the one who is weak in the faith" (v.1).

The one weak in the faith could be the actively religious person or the new Christian with some opinions that are different. In context, the weaker brother is the one who follows strict dietary laws for holiness. KJV says "receive him." NASB says "don't pass judgment." It is an imperative!

"A cold church, like cold butter, never spreads well."

(B). A genuine humility regarding ourselves -- "the one who eats... is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat" (v. 3). "Regard with contempt" is translated 'despise' other places.

The word despise literally means to set aside as nothing. It is to treat with deep contempt.

It is used a 12 times in the N.T. and it is most often the attitude of self-righteous people.

"And Jesus spake this parable unto certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and *despised* (set at naught or counted as nothing) others" (Luke 18:9).

(C). A strong understanding of justification by grace -- "God hath received him" (v.3).

Justification is standing before God "just as if I never sinned" and "just as if I always fully obeyed."

A healthy church will teach you that only God makes you righteous. Paul goes to great lengths to emphasize God's justification of sinners, and not sinners justification of themselves.

"God is able to make him stand . . ." (v.4). "God hath received him" (v.3). "For to this end Christ both died, rose, and revived" (v.9). ***God alone makes sinners acceptable.***

(1). This is the basis for your acceptance of others . . . God accepts them.

A church ought to be theologically conservative and culturally liberal. Some churches are liberal in both areas, some are conservative in both areas. There is a difference in both.

(2). This is the basis for your humility in life . . . the admission of weaknesses and the ability to move forward is built around justification by grace.

(D). A deep gratitude for God's work for us -- "he gives God thanks" (v.6).

A person may observe particular days as "holy" days, or spend a certain amount of time in his quiet time, or may abstain from alcoholic beverages or certain foods, but in all he does (or does not do) he is motivated by a deep sense of gratitude. This is a sign of God's grace in our midst.

"It ought to be as habitual to us to thank as it is to ask" Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

(E). A willing submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ -- "*we are the Lord's*" (v.8)

There is coming a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Church on earth is just a mirror of the Church in Heaven. We bow our knee to the Word and the Will of Jesus Christ. This is the mark of a healthy church. "For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself" (v.7).

II. The Challenge - (vs. 10 - 12).

After giving the characteristics of a strong church... **"But why do you judge your brother?"**

This is an appropriate question to ask ourselves. Why do we judge other Christians? Why do we think a Christian is lazy, unspiritual, or weak and "set them at naught"? Why do you do this when: "God has *accepted* him (v.3). "God is able to make him stand" (v.4). He is justified by grace via faith. "If the best of men had his faults written on his forehead he would pull his cap down to his eyebrows in shame." (An old Irish Proverb). Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

(A). We all stand before Christ.

"We shall all stand before the (judgment) seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10). The word "bema" is translated "judgment seat" but the word **judgment** is not in the Greek word. It literally means "podium" or "throne." It is translated this way in Nehemiah 8:4 where Nehemiah "stood on a pulpit of wood (bema)" to read the Word of God to the people of Israel. It is an elevated position of authority. We will all stand beside Christ. ***The ungodly shall not stand*** (Psalm 1:5).

(B). We shall all stand because of what we confess.

"For it is written..." (v.12). Verse 12 is a direct quotation from **Isaiah 45:22-25**. In this text God swears an oath. "As I live..." (v.12) "I have sworn by myself" (Isaiah 45:22). What does God swear? "That every tongue shall swear" (Isaiah 45:23) this word "swear" is also "confess."

"In the Lord alone there is righteousness and strength."

In other words, when we stand before God on that day to come, those who swear, "I have no righteousness but this" shall stand beside Christ. All those that are "incensed" at him shall be "ashamed" (Isaiah 45:25) and shall fall before him in judgment of their sins.

(C). Every one of us shall give an account (Gr. logos). *"Every one of us shall give account"* (v.12).

The person who has been angry with Christ on earth shall find God angry with him in heaven. This sinner will be judged according to his deeds on earth (Romans 2:6). The word account is the Greek word logos. It is the same word used by John to describe the coming of Christ to earth, "In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word (logos) was with God, and the Word (logos) was God" (John 1:1). It is also used 11 times *in its verb form* in Romans 4 to describe the action of God reckoning or crediting righteousness to the believing sinner. The

III. The Consequences - (vs. 13-23).

For the rest of the chapter Paul tells us "not to judge one another anymore." "The Kingdom of God is 'not a set of rules' (v. 17). "The faith which you have, have as your conviction before God" (v. 22). In Romans 16:25 Paul said, *"Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel . . ."* The Greek word for establish is *sterixai*, from which we get our word steroid, meaning something that makes you strong. God is able to establish you and make you strong in via faith in His amazing grace. The same grace which will cause us to stand when we trust in Christ is the same grace that forgives us when we mess up. A.W.Tozer has written: 'The Devil will taunt you with the fact that you may have stumbled in the faith—and perhaps more than once! The devil wants you to live in a state of discouraged chagrin and remorse. Remember, the Bible does not teach that if a man falls down, he can never rise again. The fact that he falls is not the most important thing—but rather that he is forgiven and by God's grace still stands. (Taken from 'I Talk Back to the Devil,' p. 7)

Psalm 37:24 tells us that though we stumble we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord upholds us with his hand. That which causes me to be free from sin is the knowledge of the fact I am free to sin. By comprehending the love of God, I free myself from fear of God and find myself in love with God.