

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

A SERMON

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“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 has done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5:10

UPON the essential subject of being accepted of God, fatal errors, from age to age, have been run into. We see this in the very beginning. Abel sought acceptance with God in the right way; Cain sought acceptance with God in the wrong way. And so, you will find, all through the Bible, that men were, by Satan and by their own natural tendencies, blinded to the only way in which they could be accepted of God. And the greater the delusion, generally speaking, the greater the confidence that such persons have. Hence the Pharisees of old, in the Savior's day, were very confident that God was their Father. So he was as a Creator, but he was not their Father as a Savior; he was not their Father in and by Christ Jesus, for they were not believers in Christ Jesus; and the apostle said of those who are believers, “You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” We see how the Pharisee sought acceptance with God in the wrong way. We see how the publican sought acceptance with God in the right way. We see how the Jews, as the apostle says, sought righteousness by the law of righteousness, but never attained unto it; but the Gentiles that sought it not by the law of righteousness, but sought it by faith in the righteousness wrought out, in the righteousness brought in, attained unto righteousness. What solemn thoughts, then, does our text bring before us! First, that a large part of the human race does not seek God at all, care nothing for God at all; and then, secondly, that thousands upon thousands shall seek and do seek to enter in, but shall not be able. “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in there at, but strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.” Now, as our text shows, all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. There is no uncertainty about this. The day is appointed, the day is fixed; it is unalterably settled. Not one angel, nor any one of the human race, can escape; all must appear there, in the open presence of all the world, in the open presence of the great God, thus to give an account each for himself according to that he has done while in the body, what his practices were, whether they were good or whether they were bad.

Our text, then, I shall notice this morning under a twofold aspect. First, here is *the day of judgment*; secondly, here is *the order of that judgment*.

First, then, *the day of judgment*. And here we have to deal in the first place with some plain, self-evident truths; so that as far as the people of God are concerned, we could not enter upon a more delightful theme. Let us then look at the people of God in relation to the day of judgment, then let us look at the day itself. Now, as to the people of God, matters stand thus with them; they are quickened by the Holy Spirit, they are born of God, born of an incorruptible seed, that live and abide forever. And where this work is carried on in the heart, it convinces such of what and where they are by the fall; it convinces such of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and whatever remedy or refuges they may try, they shall sooner or later find that nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can take their sins away, and consequently they are led into the reception of that atonement of which it is said that the Savior has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Secondly, they are convinced that there is not anything can justify them before God but that righteousness which Jesus Christ has brought in, which is unto all and upon all them that believe. This is what they are all brought to; for “every one that has heard and learned of the Father comes unto me.” Now, being brought into this faith in the perfection of Christ, they are brought to where there is no sin, they are brought into a region where sin cannot enter; so that their sins may be sought for, but they cannot be found; the iniquities of Judah may be sought for, but there shall be none; “for I will pardon whom I reserve.” Now in this faith in Christ, in this completeness they have in Christ, they die; they die in this faith in the perfection of his atonement, in the perfection of his righteousness, and in the bond of his everlasting covenant. The body yields up its powers, for the Lord has so ordered it that he does not allow the soul to leave the body until the body has given up its powers of action, because the soul is not the life of the body; the animal spirit is the life of the body, but the immortal soul is not the life of the body, because if it were, then the retention of the soul in the body, if such a thing could be, would keep it alive. The animal spirit is the life of the body: but the immortal soul is not the life of the body; but the Lord has so ordered it that when the body dies, gives up its powers, the soul simultaneously with that departs. So said the apostle, “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” The Lord’s presence extends to the dying Christian; there is the Holy Spirit there, there is God the Father there, there is Jesus Christ there, and as the Spirit departs from the body, that very instant, that very moment, it feels itself in possession of a perfection of holiness, of righteousness, a life of liberty, and enters heaven in all the triumphs of the cross; it goes from the body that same instant into the presence of the Lord. Distance has nothing whatever to do with the soul. God’s presence is there. “Yes, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me.” The soul finds itself, as it were, in Abraham’s bosom; in the same sworn covenant, in the same perfection of the same Jesus Christ, whose day Abraham saw; it finds itself in a fulness of joy, and pleasures for ever-more, and can look back and smile at all it has passed through. The soul remains in heaven; as we see of Moses, whose soul had been in heaven, and his body had not been there at all, for his body was buried in the plains of Moab by the Lord himself, so that no man knows the place of his sepulcher unto this day; but his soul was in heaven, and appeared fifteen hundred years afterwards on the mount of transfiguration. The soul remains in heaven in all this perfection; and though I cannot, of course, psychologically explain this fact, that when the soul departs it can hear, and see, and speak, and transit from place to place, yet whenever a spirit has appeared it has always appeared in human form. There is no form God has ever so delighted in as he has the human form; as is clear by a divine Person taking human nature, appearing on the earth in fashion as a man. And the human form will be retained to all eternity, only it will be constituted then, of course, perfect, immortal, and incorruptible. Now by-and-bye, at the resurrection day, the people of God are to be raised up, as described in the 15th

chapter of 1st Corinthians. I need not repeat the description there, because you are all familiar with it. There is no Christian that does not read carefully that chapter, because the apostle there was let into such a revelation of the resurrection at the last day, he so realized the scene, that we can almost see it. The same body, now corruptible, will then be incorruptible; now weak, then strong; now mortal, then immortal; now subject to various weaknesses and diseases, it will then be like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ. All the people of God will thus be presented, at the last day, without blemish, without spot, without fault, without, wrinkle, or any such thing. Where, then, will be the judgment with them? Why, there will be a judgment, and their judgment will be according to what their works were; those works we shall have, presently, carefully to enter into; but there cannot be a fault against them at that day. Thus, then, the regenerated soul, when it departs from the body, is immediately present with the Lord, remains there till the last great day; those that are alive will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead be raised incorruptible, and all presented blameless. So that there is nothing for the Christian to look for in life, as it pertains to godliness, but joy; there is nothing for the Christian to look for in death, as it pertains to religion, but joy; there is nothing for the Christian to look to when he departs from the body, but joy; there is nothing for the Christian to look for at the judgment day but that which is joyful. It will be indeed the wedding day of the Lamb and his bride; it will be indeed the coronation day; it will be indeed the liberation day, when all inferior establishments are broken up, and the whole family of God, for the first time, assembled in all that perfection which the Savior has wrought out. Now we must keep these things in view, or else we shall get the notion that the Christian will at that day have to give some account of his sins. Well, say you, but does not the apostle say every one shall give an account of himself to God? I have presently to show that every real Christian does that now, and therefore shall not have to do it then, for he will appear accepted before the judgment-seat of Christ.

But now let us look at the judgment day itself. It does appear that while there is a positive declaration that there shall be a resurrection of the body both of the just and of the unjust, these two circumstances shall take place on the same day, that one shall immediately follow the other. I am aware that some hold that the saints will be raised up from the dead a thousand years before the wicked. Now it does appear to me that it will be on one and the same day, immediately following the resurrection of the saints; that just as the old world was drowned as soon as ever Noah was secured in the ark, so as soon as ever the saints arise, immediately will come the sentence, "Depart, you cursed," pronounced on the ungodly; that as soon as the Israelites were secured by the paschal lamb, then came the angel of death; so at the last day, just as the saints are placed in the security of sacrificial perfection, then the angel of death will cut the others down. Just as when the Israelites were safe out of the way the sea rolled in upon Pharaoh, and drowned him and all his host, just so it will be at the last day. The saints, before they enter heaven, shall witness the resurrection of the lost, and shall there and then in a confirmatory way execute judgment upon the heathen, execute the judgment written. This honor shall have all the saints. "Know you not that the saints shall judge the world?" And it does not appear that Satan will be at the judgment bar; it does not appear that he will be there. I am inclined, I say it with diffidence, lest I should commit any error, but I am inclined to think that Satan will not be there. He certainly will not be there to annoy the saints, because they will appear entirely free from sin, the blood of Jesus Christ representing them in all its own innocence, purity, and perfection; nor do I think he will be there among the ungodly; I think that Satan will be sent into hell, to be there to receive those that shall come after he is there. I am inclined to think this, and my reason for thinking so is, that in the 20th chapter of the Revelation, when you reach the tenth verse of that chapter, you find

Satan is there cast into the lake that burns, ah, see what sin has done, that hideous monster, sin, that burns with fire and brimstone, and shall be tormented for ever and ever. After this 10th verse of the 20th of Revelation comes the judgment; so that it does appear to me from that 10th verse that Satan is first cast into hell, and that the judgment takes place afterwards. Now I am aware that among the Wesleyans it is a common saying that God prepared hell for fallen angels, but hell was never prepared for man. This is what they say, and they say it because they believe it; I would not for a moment deny them the credit of conscientiousness and sincerity. But at the same time, I am constrained from the same feeling, namely, conscientiousness and sincerity, to differ from them. I think when the Savior said, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" I think that the word "angels" there includes men. Are wicked men ever called angels? I answer, They are. The word "angel" signifies "a messenger," or "a servant." And if wicked men are ever called angels, then why not include the idea of all the lost there as being Satan's messengers, having carried his lies; as being Satan's servants, having served him? But you will want a scripture to prove that wicked men are called angels. You get that scripture in the 12th of the Revelation. "Michael and his angels fought." We take Michael there to mean Jesus Christ, and his angels we take to mean his messengers, his ministers. Hence, in the opening of the book of the Revelation the seven ministers of the seven churches are called angels. Now, then, "Michael and his angels fought;" that is, spiritually so. Christ stood out for his Father's will; and the ministers of the gospel with the people of God, and the people of God with them, stand out in defense of the gospel. "And the dragon and his angels fought." I take the dragon's angels there to mean wicked men. What does the apostle say about it? Why, he says of Satan that he is transformed into an angel of light, and his ministers, his messengers, his angels, as ministers of righteousness. And the truth of God has always been fought against under the guise, the mask, the pretense of superior holiness; under the hypocritical plea of advocating good works, under the hypocritical plea of guarding men against sin. These are the pretensions that have ever been set up by the enemy. So, then, "depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," prepared for the devil and his messengers, prepared for the devil and his servants. I therefore hold that hell was prepared as much for man as it was for devils, for fallen angels; because hell is the penalty of sin, and therefore let a creature belong to what part of the intelligent creation he may, as an accountable being, if he live and die out of the faith to which we have referred, he must come to those gloomy regions. Thus, then, it appears that the saints shall be raised, and appear at the Savior's right hand, that Satan shall be cast into hell, the ungodly raised, and the sentence proportioned to each according to his crimes; for each man's sins, like so many millstones, will be tied round his own neck; each man's sins, like so many fiery serpents, will coil round him, will cling to him, so that he cannot get rid of them; each man's sins shall be the wood, the fuel, that shall be always burning, but never consumed; so that the sufferings of one of the lost will be greater than those of another, just in proportion to the magnitude and weight of their crimes. But there will not be, according to my judgment, degrees in glory; because while each man's sins are the measurement of his punishment, the work of Christ is the measurement of every man's glorification, and if everyone is glorified according to the work of Christ, then there can be no difference there; all shall be like him, and shall see him as he is. Furthermore, it appears, too, that when that shall be accomplished which I am now stating, the globe itself shall be burned up; not, as some, tell us, purified with fire; the word of God says that "the earth and the works therein shall be burned up." Philosophy will show us how easily a divine hand could do this. We all know the globe contains the elements of its own destruction, of its own conflagration, and under the direction of a divine hand that those

elements called into active operation would consume the globe, and that in a few moments at that tremendous day.

You will witness it; I shall witness it. Oh, how little do these great scenes make the things of this life appear! Here, then, is the judgment day. And all must appear there; the saints joyfully, the saints happily. I may just observe that there are several representations of the people of God while travelling through this world being brought to receive that perfection in which they shall appear at that day. We have been told now from century to century, for eighteen hundred years, that Jesus Christ is just coming to reign upon the earth, and they still continue so to tell us. Now I take the thousand years spoken of in the 20th of the Revelation not to mean a thousand years literally, any more than when the Lord said to the church of Smyrna, "You shall have tribulation ten days," I do not take that ten days to mean a literal ten days; but a given period, to show that while the tribulations should be lengthened out to that period, they should not go beyond it. "Hitherto shall you come, but no further: here shall your proud waves be stayed." So, I do not take the thousand years to mean either literally a thousand years, or a day for a year, making it, as some have done in their calculations, three hundred and sixty-five thousand years. I do not take it in that way; I take it as a mystic number, denoting the whole of the Christian dispensation. And now let us look at it, for it will help us out with this question as to whether the wicked shall be raised at the same day, the same time, immediately upon the resurrection of the just. You read in the beginning of the 20th chapter of the Revelation that an angel came down from heaven, that is Christ, of course, "having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit." That is the translation that deludes so many thousands. There is nothing in the original there about the bottomless pit; the original word is, "into the abyss," "the deep," alluding to the sea; and the meaning is the world, that Satan was cast into the world, and has remained the god of this world from that day to this; "And shut him up," that is, within certain limits, "and set a seal upon him," that he might be known. There is a seal upon him, and his seal is, "liar, murderer," because by lies he murders souls. "That he should deceive the nations no more," not as he had done, for it is evidently there to be understood in the comparative sense; and his range has been narrowed ever since Christ rose from the dead in comparison of what it was before; and we hope his range will yet be more narrowed. But this brings me to a point which is very solemn. At the end of the thousand years, just before the end of the world, when the population of the globe will be greater than it ever was, there will be the fewest Christians. There will be very few Christians on earth when the Savior descends to put an end to time. "When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" Satan shall then be let loose for a little season, to sweep the few away that then exist. But in the center thereof the Lord shall descend, cast him into the lake of fire, and then bring about the solemn scenes to which I have thus referred. Now Satan being cast into the abyss in that 20th chapter means precisely the same thing that is meant in the 12th chapter of the same book, where we read that the dragon and his angels were cast out into the earth, and there was no more place found for them in heaven. That is, Satan could destroy the Jewish heaven, because the Jewish heaven consisted of destructible things, an earthly land, an earthly city, an earthly temple, an earthly priesthood, and an earthly royalty. But the Christian's heaven consists of indestructible things, a priesthood into which Satan cannot enter, a royalty that he cannot tarnish, a land he cannot corrupt, a city he cannot touch; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, that he cannot reach. Thus, Satan was cast out, and the saints overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. And then John sees a race of Christians rise, "I saw thrones;" that is,

places of dignity: and is not the Christian's place a place of dignity? raised up to sit together with Christ in the love of God, chosen with the same choice, ordained by the same decree, and to appear in the same perfection, to be filled with the same Spirit, to come into the same destiny, to live in the same heaven, and to share in the same glory, "the glory which you gave me I have given them." Does not every Christian occupy a throne of dignity? "And judgment was given unto them;" that is, given in their favor; "and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded that is, the same kind of men. As John the Baptist was of the same spirit as Elijah, he, because of this spiritual analogy, is called by the same name, Elias. So, John saw a succession of Christian men, though thousands of them should not be martyred, any more than we shall, according to all appearance most of us expect to die pretty quietly, as far as that goes. John saw a race of men that should possess the martyr's spirit, the martyr's faith, the martyr's hope, the martyr's God.

"And they lived", that is, this succession of generations. "and reigned with Christ", not without him, but with him, "a thousand years;" that is, during the whole of the gospel dispensation; not the same persons, but a succession of persons of the same faith, of the same order, and of the same spirit. "But the rest of the dead lived not again," all the ungodly lived in the first Adam, and they died in the first Adam, but they are not regenerated, therefore they do not live again; they lost the only life they had, and there is no other provided for them, and so they do not live again. But the Christian is regenerated. Ah, he says, I died in Adam, but now I am born of God I live again, a better life.

"Fixed my standing more secure
Then 'twas before I fell."

"This is the first resurrection." Blessed is he that is thus born of God; blessed is he that is thus quickened by the Spirit of God; "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection;" such purify their souls in obeying the truth; "on such the second death has no power." Thus, then, the saints will all appear accepted, and the ungodly will appear in their sins; Satan will not be there; the globe will be burned, and all the people of God are partakers of this first resurrection.

But I must hasten to the other part, *the order of the judgment*; "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." First, then, "there is none good, no, not one; there is none righteous, no, not one; they are all become filthy and abominable;" all are rejected, all are cast off, there is not one that does good. And yet it says that "they that are in their graves shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of eternal life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." All have done evil, there is no exception. Now if this be the case, then, just hear me a few moments. What is the good essential to be done to make that eternal distinction, seeing all are evil-doers, there is no exception; God himself said it? I will just name three good things you must do, and if you do those three good things, all your bad ones are gone; and if you do not do the three good things I am about to state, you will be found not at the right, but at the left hand of the Savior. The first good thing you must do is to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the Mediator of the everlasting covenant. Now mind how you receive him. You are not to receive him in mere name: Oh, well, I believe in Christ. What kind of a Jesus Christ do you believe in? that is the question; and, with what spirit do you believe, and after what order? The Pharisees of old believed every letter of God's word, and yet the Savior declared them unbelievers; and they did not believe Moses, because they did not believe in the

meaning of Moses. First, then, you must receive Jesus Christ as the Mediator of the everlasting covenant, just in that order as set forth in the 110th Psalm, and a great many other parts of the word of God, "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Now can you say this morning in the sight of God, O God, you are a heart-searching God; I know that what a man sows, that shall he also reap; I know that he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap everlasting corruption. O God, you see that I see myself that poor, lost, ruined, helpless creature, that without the eternal perfection of the sacrifice of your dear Son, backed up by your own immutability, I have no hope; for it is to be backed up by something good in me, if it is to be backed up by any regularity of doing or feeling in me, then, Lord, I will give it up at once, for I am a poor, fickle, changeable creature, cannot trust myself two minutes. But, Lord, you know that I see and feel my need of the eternal perfection of the sacrifice of your dear Son, backed up by your immutability, for you hast sworn, and will not repent; you will never change from having set his righteousness to my account, you will never change from having set his eternal atonement to my account, can you say and feel this, understand this and receive this? If so, then that is the best thing you ever did in your life. Though you may give up all your goods to feed the poor, and your body to be burned at last, it will profit you nothing; you must receive Christ Jesus the Lord; it must be the true Christ, not a false Christ, not a Christ of human devising, but you must receive him in what he is, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Thus, you will receive according to what you have done; you have received Jesus Christ. What have you done, poor sinner? Received your dear Son in his eternal perfection, and he was precious to me, and I loved him, and thereby, while I was by nature an Assyrian, and ready to perish, I was brought out of destruction, brought out of the law, out of the curse, out of the powers of darkness, and by his precious blood made near to thyself. That is one good work. The second good thing you must do is, when you have thus received the truth, to abide by it. At all hazards you must abide by it, never give it up, never shrink, never compromise, never yield. I respect those that differ from me; but if that respect leads me to compromise, to lower the standard, or make light of these blessed truths, that would betray a hollowness in my experience, that would betray a want of tenderness in my conscience. "If any man brings any other gospel, let him be accursed!" "He that shall," having thus received the truth, "endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." What a model of perfection was David in this! When he came to die he said (and if you were going to die today, are you just where he was?), "He has made with me", that is, brought me into the bond of and understanding of, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire, though he make it not to grow." Yet what Christian has ever been the subject of worse sins, or greater family troubles and mysterious circumstances, recorded not for our imitation, but for our admonition? But see where he was at last. He died full of days, riches, and honor. This is my ambition; the highest ambition I have is to abide firmly by the truth. That is a good work. If you do this, then wherever you go you will carry the heavenly salt with you. But if you give up the truth, then you lose your savor, and you are fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill. God's truth is the salt that he will sprinkle upon every sacrifice, and there is the savor that shall distinguish you from all other people. "I will put my laws," the laws of the new covenant, "into their hearts, and write them in their minds; their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." We are thus prepared then for the day of judgment; yes, we long for the day when the world shall be on fire; we shall stand in all the strength of God's eternal truth, for truth is the strongest thing in the world.

The next thing I want is your practical devotion to God, your separation from ungodly men and an ungodly world; your separation from error, and your devotedness to God. Your devotedness to the poor, and your devotedness to God's cause, and your kindness to your humble servant, and to many other ministers as well, have been so great, that if I were to give way to my feelings I should rather stop and gratulate you here than speak in more solemn tones. I view you as the apostle viewed the Philippians; he does not, in writing to them, deal out one reproof, nor can I. If I were going to remove from you tomorrow, never to see you again, and were to write an epistle to you, I should be constrained, from what I have experienced, to write in the same spirit and in the same strain which the apostle does in writing to the Philippians. He might well write in all that affection, depth of feeling, and love of God in which he does; for they had followed him up with their kindnesses, they had never lost sight of him. And therefore I need scarcely say here that as a people you are brought, I am sure you are, if there be any exceptions those exceptions are exceedingly few among us, you are brought and have so walked that the Savior can say to you (and he would not say it if it were not true), not only, "Come, you blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," that you would feel a sweet sympathy with, the doctrine of the kingdom being prepared from the foundation of the world; but also, "I was hungry, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came unto me." Wherever you saw me in trouble you sympathized with me. Well but, Lord, when have we done these things? Why, you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, and it did not strike you at the time you were doing it unto me, but you were, for what you have done to them was done to me; and now not a cup of cold water shall lose its reward. Oh, if there be any exceptions here this morning, if you cannot tremble for yourselves, I tremble for you. Oh, what an awful thing if a covetous heart should keep you from practical sympathy towards the cause of Christ, and at that tremendous day it should come to light that your religion has been after all but as sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal; that you have had the doctrines in your head, but the devil in your heart; that you have had the doctrines on your lips, but the world, and the world only, rampant in your soul; that Christ never took possession of your soul, that brotherly love was never felt by you, that you never practically and truly wept with them that did weep! Oh, what an awful scene will then come to light! There may be some few exceptions, then, but there are very few, I wish I could say there were none at all. I tremble for them. I have no end in view in thus speaking but your own good at that day when I meet you all, happy for me if I could conclude with safety, I should meet you all at the Savior's right hand.

Thus, then, there must be these three-good works: first, to receive the Christ of God; second, to abide earnestly and honestly by the truth of God; and third, practically, as the Lord shall enable you, to sympathize with the cause of God. Then, if this be the case, the judgment-seat of Christ will be to you a judgment of justification, a judgment of gratulation, a judgment of consolation, a judgment of exaltation, a judgment of glorification forever, for ever and ever.