

UPON RESPONSIBILITY Sermon 3

A SERMON

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“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Romans 14:12

OUR discourse last Lord's day morning ended with the doctrine that the right of private judgment is that that the New Testament gives to every man; for the apostle says, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” But if I am tied down to a human Establishment, such as the Church of England or the Church of Rome, or any other, how then am I to be fully persuaded in my own mind when I am under human authority and law? And I am sure you must see how absurd, unscriptural, and unchristian are those disputations that are now going on in the law courts, and its being there decided by human laws how Jesus Christ is to be set forth, and whether they are to put the collection plate on a table or on a stool: whether the candles are to be two or three in number, and whether lighted or not. Can anything be more unscriptural than this? Is there any standard to judge of eternal things but that which God himself has given? If “no man knows the things of man save the spirit of man that is in him,” how much less does any man know the mind, thoughts, purposes, and counsels of God if the Lord is not pleased to reveal the same? But he has revealed the same. And, as I have said, the matter of individual concern with everyone is to judge for himself. All stand upon equal ground in this respect. People have said that this doctrine of individual right produces so many sects and parties, and they lament that as a great evil. Well, if an evil exists under one order of things, we should contrast it with another evil, and we then may in that matter, as we are obliged to do in many things in human life, choose that which appears to us to be the less of the two. If it be an evil, and I have yet to learn that it is so very great an evil, to have so many sects, is it not a very much greater evil to have a forced uniformity; to have the cannon's mouth, bayonet, and musketry, to drive people into an external uniformity in religion? This is something infinitely worse than death itself. So, I hope the time will come in England when it will not matter a straw whether the monarch of this realm be a Catholic or a Protestant, a Wesleyan or a Calvinist; that the time will come when no man shall fill any civil post or appointment of honor belonging to the government of the nation by their own notions of religion, but by universal law established. And once establish the doctrine that no one has a right to usurp over another, what is the result? Why, the result is that the Wesleyans and the Calvinists agree to differ, and that the Catholics and the Protestants agree to differ; and so, with all the different sects.

The Church of England is dying; there is no question about that, the symptoms are too clear to be mistaken; though I do not expect to live to see it. I believe she will live another hundred years or so yet. All sects will find out at last that they must agree to differ, and cease to carry their religious prejudices and animosities into the affairs of common life; and not in choosing servants, inquire what their religion is, but whether they are conscientious and upright, and fit for their position, let the position be what it may. Of course, once establish this doctrine, then if any one sect attempted to gain the mastery, all the other sects would rush in and put it down. So that this doctrine of individual right is a doctrine the most advantageous to all nations; it produces the best friendship, the greatest harmony; and it is the only way in which people can go on peaceably and comfortably. "If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men." Of course, you all have your liberty, you can join any sect, that is my doctrine. You can join the Church of England, I shall not persecute you for it; or if you like to be a Jumper, you have heard of the ancient Jumpers, only do not jump among us; or a Pillarite, to live on a pillar, like old Simeon, the Pillarite, who lived a great part of his life on a pillar, and which seemed to agree remarkably well with his health, for he died when he was a hundred and twelve years old. Be what you like, so that you do not interfere with the rights of others. I do not believe that the Catholics are all demons, and I do not believe that the Protestants are all angels. I look upon my fellow-citizens as fellow-citizens, my fellow-creatures as fellow creatures; and if I am made savingly to differ, I attribute that difference not to anything I have done, but to the Lord himself. Therefore, high doctrine people are the last in the world that ought to encourage persecution. The Lord knows I have no antipathy against the people of the Church of England, its ministers, its advocates, or its bishops. I have no antipathy to the poor old gentleman at Rome; I pity him, standing in such a position as he does. But the systems, that delude men, I do not think I commit any sin in heartily hating them, and stating the reasons why I believe them to be delusive. I shall not probably trouble you with these kinds of remarks again for a long time; they are more fit for a lecture. I think I could give four or five lectures upon the union of Church and State; I think I have enough in my mind to last as long as that; but I suppose I shall never do it. We will therefore come now to that which most solemnly and vitally concerns us. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

In closing this subject, we have first to point out *who those characters are that cannot and will not be able to give other than a bad account of themselves to God*. Secondly, *the reasons why such persons cannot do otherwise than give a bad account of themselves to God*. Thirdly and lastly, *the final judgment that will be passed upon them*.

First then, *who those characters are that cannot and will not be able to give other than a bad account of themselves to God*. The word "lost," is very awful when we think of what it is to be lost; when we look at the judgment that awaits those that shall not be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. I will range the lost, then, for the sake of being clearer upon matters so solemn, into three classes. First, the deceived professor of religion; secondly those that have no profession at all; and thirdly the persecutors of the people of God. First the deceived professor, taking, of course the word of God for our guide. First, there are the murmurers at God's sovereignty. It is an awful thing to be a murmurer at God's sovereignty, as a great many are. If you go to Matthew 20 you will there find some who murmured at the good man of the house, and the answer was, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is your eye evil because I am good?" They complained and would have interfered with others. I should have thought almost they were Roman Catholics or Church of England people, governed by some system that the master ought not to have dealt with

the others otherwise than they thought proper. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Let us ask, are we brought to submit to the sovereignty of God. Can we say that eternal election was only a legitimate exercise of the high and independent prerogative which our God by virtue of what he possesses? Are we brought to see the good of his chosen, that it is an infinite and eternal good? "Is your eye evil because I am good?" Because I have been so good to these men, your eye is evil. Is it so with us? Because the Lord saves sinners, as represented by the prodigal, the thief on the cross, and Saul of Tarsus, and all others do we look with an evil eye on it? Are we thus murmurers against, his sovereignty? Do we think that his grace goes too far, and that it ought not to be the case that where sin abounded grace did much more abound? If we are thus murmurers at his sovereignty, and have an evil eye because he is good, then let us read the end of that wonderful testimony: "Many be called, but few chosen." Many are called; that is, they make a profession. These men professed to want work, and they were called to work; representing those who profess to wish to work for God, to wish to engage in his service. Very well, the Lord says, go into my vineyard; go to work if you wish to do so. They became murmurers. Now "many may be called," by virtue of what they profess, "but few chosen." So, then these murmurers at his sovereignty, and those whose eye was evil because he was good, they were not chosen. I am sure you will at once see a striking analogy here between these murmurers and the elder brother. The elder brother did not think that the father was at liberty exactly to do what he would with his own, and the eye of the elder brother was evil, because to the prodigal the father was good. These are they, then, that are not chosen, and they can give at last only an evil account. That is one way in which some are deceived. Oh, what a weighty matter is this; especially when we remember that through the blindness of the human mind, and the original, native antipathy it has, by the influence of the prince of darkness to the sovereignty of God, are not many in this way deceived. Again, here is another deceived man, one who has not on the wedding garment, who and what does he represent? Well, I will show you what he does not represent, and in showing the negative, perhaps we may get at the positive. This man not having on the wedding garment, he had never been where Isaiah was when he said, "Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among people of unclean lips; woe is me; I am undone"; brought down to feel his need of the sacrificial altar, and the righteousness of Christ. Then one of the seraphim flew with a live coal from off the altar, expressive of the living promises or testimonies of God by Jesus Christ, and touched his lips, and said "Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." The man that had not the garment had never been here. And he had not been where the Church of old was, as you read in Isaiah 64, "We are all as an unclean thing." See what a mercy to be convinced of our state before God! When so convinced, you will see the reason why ever where in the Holy Scriptures the poor, the needy, the downcast, the prisoner, the wretched and the miserable are spoken of as the objects of God's everlasting love and mercy. "And all our righteousness's" the man that had not the wedding garment had not been there, "are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Have we been here? Your humble servant can say that he has been there, and is there now as far as the mere creature and the sinner are concerned. Again, the man that had not the wedding garment had never been where Joshua, the high priest was when he stood before the angel of the Lord, clothed with the filthy garments, Satan standing at his right hand to resist him; and there he stood till the Lord clothed him with change of raiment, showed him his way of reconciliation to and acceptance with God. Now, all that have been where Isaiah was and where Joshua the high priest was, are brought to renounce all confidence in the flesh, to receive Christ Jesus, his atonement, his righteousness. How many are deceived in this. We live in a day when morality is extensively preached. If they can but moralize a man, they set that down for

saving conversion. If a man walks pretty straight and consistent morally, he is set down for a very great and valuable Christian. And yet when you come into close quarters with such, you cannot read out that they ever had any real soul trouble; you cannot read out that they are convinced of their real condition; you cannot see any of that hungering and thirsting after mercy by which the saved man obtains the wedding garment by faith, becomes justified by faith, puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, and joins with David in saying, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours only." Again, another deceived man is the man that does not know what it is to buy the truth; the man whose lamp must go out, and whose hope must give up the ghost. "Give us of your oil; our lamps are gone out." Now, these had never known what it was to buy the truth, and therefore did not know the value of it. The Lord causes every one of his people to buy the truth; that is, they get it at the price of certain experiences. I know I look back at my own experience, and see how hard I struggled to get holiness, peace, pardon, and indeed to get heaven, partly by my own doings. What did I suffer, then, from time to time in my own soul! But by and by the truth came in, the truth that the people among whom I was then hated, and despised, and called me a downright fool to fall in with such dreadful doctrines, as they called them; and they would have cast me out, but I did not stop, for I ran out, and I am sure I shall never return. So, then, having thus bought the truth, and knowing the value of it, I felt it is something that cannot be parted with; so that my lamp will go out when God's promise shall fail, when the Savior himself shall be extinguished, for he is my life; my lamp will go out when the Lord shall reverse this declaration, "My grace is sufficient for you." Then will my hope give up the ghost, then will my lamp go out, and not till then. But if you have not thus bought the truth, your lamp must go out. In this way many are deceived.

Again, a man receives one talent. I apprehend the talents in Matthew 25 do not represent what we call talents, personal abilities, but that they represent property, and that that property is God's truth. The five talents given to one show that the Holy Spirit reveals the truth in larger abundance to one than he does to another even of his own people: for he gives to ever one severally as he will. To another were given two talents: so, the Holy Spirit gives to another the same kind of property, the truth, but not in so large a measure. Hence every minister, every Christian has that, even while here, which is allotted to him. But there was one man that professed to be a servant of the Lord, and to him was given one talent: this one talent, I apprehend, meaning the letter of God's truth. Ah, he says, that doctrine of election is all very well, but I must not trade with it, it is not safe. Salvation from first to last by grace, according all the sovereign will and effectual working of the everlasting God, is all very well, but I must not trade with that, I shall get a bad name if I do, I shall belong to that sect that is everywhere spoken against. And so, he lays it aside; he does not profit by it himself, and he would not allow anyone else to profit by it if he could help it. And yet he professes to be set up in business by the Lord, and to be a free-grace trader. When he is called to account, he says, Here is your talent; I have hidden it; I did not like to trade with it, so I have hidden it. Then it has done no one any good? No. Well, then, that being the case, it must be taken from you, and given to him that has the ten talents. But the man that had the five talents, and he that had the two talents, could rejoice that one truth had brought them another, that one part of gospel truth had brought them another. Each could say, It has cheered me, comforted me, and been of the greatest use to me. Well, then, I will take no interest; you shall keep all you get. But "he which had received the one talent said, Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not strawed." Oh yes, say they, if you do not do your part, he will damn you. Well, if you did not know me better than that, if you had such views of me as that, why did

you not put my money into the bank, and have done some good with it? But you have not traded with it at all. Therefore “cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Are there not many deceived thus? But time would fail to show the reasons why judgment must begin at the house of God; and if the righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? This, then, is one class, deceived professors.

The second class is composed of those that make no profession at all. What does the Bible say concerning them? Why, that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Am I speaking to any that pride themselves upon making no profession? You do not know what you are priding yourselves in. You are priding yourselves in the fact that you do not care for your Maker; that you do not care for his holiness, nor for his justice, nor for his power, nor for his law, nor for his gospel, nor for his cause, nor for anything belonging to him. And yet he makes his sun daily to shine upon you; he sends the genial shower, and you share from time to time in the covenant of his providence; for he has promised that seedtime and harvest shall continue. You share in all it is, and you go on walking in the ways of your own heart, and think the eye of the Judge of all is not upon you, that he does not record your every sin, that he will pass by your sins as lightly you yourself pass by them. But “the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God.” Make no profession at all! which means that you are under Satan's dominion, under sin's dominion, under self's dominion, and these you mean to serve. These that make no profession at all are in reality despisers. “Behold, you despisers, wonder and perish.” This is another and large class that are on their way to hell. Ah, what an infinite blessing to be stopped, and to be blessed with a spirit of grace and an supplication, to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him when he is near, and to know that those who are favored to do so, he will have mercy upon them, and abundantly pardon!

And then the third class are the persecutors of the people of God. I am utterly at a loss to set forth the awfulness of their condition. They who when in power showed no mercy shall have at the last no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy. Oh, what an awful final judgment must await thousands and tens of thousands of the Jews for their persecuting and slaying the prophets, and then culminating the whole of their demonical cruelty crucifying the Son of God! “From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple; verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.” “How can you escape the damnation of hell?” Oh, what judgments await these murderers of the saints of God! I do not wonder at the apostle Paul standing so overwhelmed with amazement at the mercy that brought such a murderer of the saints as he had been, to be himself a saint. He might well say, and there is a truth in the words that perhaps we sometimes fail to realize, “I am the chief of sinners.” Perhaps never a viler creature was saved than Saul of Tarsus (if we except perhaps Manasseh, son of Hezekiah). Only think of it, haling men and women to prison, and holding the men's clothes when they were stoning Stephen to death; gloating over the misery of the saints, delighting to see their blood flow; delighted to see them torn to pieces; delighted to see them subjected to all the tortures that hell and earth could inflict. And yet, wonder, O heavens! and be astonished O earth! even this wolf, this vile monster, is included among the number of God's elect, and almighty mercy shall take hold of him and set him forth as a pattern of what God can do, so that in after ages none should despair; though by nature all are alike, yet the salvation of such practical persecutors is by no means common. This murderous enmity generally turns out to be a mark of eternal reprobation. Then if we come to the New Testament, and look to Rome pagan, would twenty million be equal to the number of martyrs

whom that power put to death? I question it. Then if we come to the Church of Rome, that old harlot, that mother of harlots, that mystic whore of Babylon, see how the Revelation speaks of her in her final judgment, drunken with the blood of the saints. Ah, when we look abroad on the Continent, at the several European countries, we feel as though we could hear almost at this moment the voice of the blood of our brethren crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Happy shall he be that serves these as they have served us. And when we come to modern times, and look at that murderous fellow, Henry the Eighth, see the many he put to death, the Six Articles of religion that he framed, and you must swallow them or die. And Elizabeth herself, she was a regular old Jezebel, she was a monster. There is a great deal said against Queen Mary. Queen Mary was bad enough, but she was a Catholic, taught to be bad. And then when you come down to modern times, you see the dear old Covenanters in Scotland, and the Church of England persecuting them, till the moors, and valleys, and mountains of Scotland were stained with the blood of thousands that would not bow to that Church. That system has put thousands of saints to death, and would begin again tomorrow if it had it in its power, no question about it. The Church of England is one of the daughters of Rome; she is a harlot; it is a harlot system, and she has an awful judgment hanging over her head, though that judgment will be upon the individuals who have joined in the dreadful persecutions that she has exercised. Ah, what a scene will it be at the last day! There will be the thousands of professors crying, "We have prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works;" but the answer will be, "Depart from me; I never knew you." You belong to the mystery of iniquity; you are sons and daughters of perdition, and that is where you will now go. Then come the ungodly, that made no profession at all. "Depart from me, you cursed;" your sentence is written; hell is your portion. Then come the persecutors, everlasting torment; no mitigation. Oh, what an awful judgment is that which is to come!

Secondly, I notice *the reasons why such persons cannot do otherwise than give a bad account of themselves to God*. The first reason includes all, that they are all of them under God's law. For though the apostle says, "They that have sinned without the law shall perish without the law," he does not mean that they were under no law; he simply means that they were not under the law of Ten Commandments; because the law of ten commandments was not given until thousands of years after the world was created; but, nevertheless, the law of divine supremacy existed from the beginning. To sum up all the reasons, then, it is because they are under God's law; and that is spiritual, and they are carnal, and "he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole," and "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Being under the law, they are where sin is in its full force, for the law is the strength of sin, and they have nothing but sin of their own. Now the question is, Are we still under the law? Well, but, say you, many of these were under the gospel. Only professedly. The gospel will never condemn any man. It will appear in court, and be a witness against its enemies; it will not pass the sentence. "This gospel shall be preached for a witness."

And the very apostles were to shake off the dust from their feet, but not to pass sentence, only to bear testimony that these were enemies. Now we that are here this morning are either under God's law or we are not. None of the lost know that they are under the law; they do not know that they are in the hands of the Judge; they do not feel it. None of us by nature know that we are under the law. There must be two things to bring you from under the law, and if you do not experience them, you will be lost. First, you must know enough of the sinfulness of your heart and nature to feel that by the law there is not the slightest hope for you whatever; so that this conviction leads you to

renounce all confidence in the flesh, all confidence in the doings of the creature; and you become thus experimentally dead to the law. Secondly, you must receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in eternal righteousness. There is no condemnation to them that are thus brought into the faith of Christ. Now you stand where sin has lost its strength, where death has lost its sting, where the adversary shall be trodden under your feet, where you can join with the saved, and say, "Thanks be to God, that gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ." Now the others have never experienced these things; they carry a legal twang with them, they are always contending for doing, but have they themselves done the one thing needful, namely, received God's eternal truth in the love thereof? For all must be damned who receive not the love of the truth. So, then, what an awful thing it is to be deceived! We do read of the enemy deceiving the whole world. Now the reason they can give nothing but an evil account is because they are under God's law. They have no sacrifice to bring before him that he can accept, no righteousness to bring before him that he can receive, there is not anything to say a single word in their favor. There must be a transition from the one state to the other, there must be a deliverance from the power of darkness, a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son, where there is redemption and forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God, to make the soul meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Lastly, *the final judgment that will be passed upon them*. In the final judgment every lost man will be condemned with a greater or a lesser condemnation in proportion to the magnitude of his guilt, in proportion to his willful wickedness, and in proportion to the kind of wickedness which he has followed. I hold, therefore, that while there are no degrees in glory, because we are all brought to glory by one Mediator, and there is no ground or room for degrees there, God is a righteous Judge, and he will not lay that to the charge of the lost which they have not done; and, on the other hand, he will not pardon that which they have done. He will judge righteously and the greater the sin, the greater the condemnation. That is the way in which I view it; so that the persecutors, as already observed, shall have judgment without mercy. We pray in our closets, as well as in our pulpits and our pews, "Your kingdom come," we pray for the prosperity of Zion; we pray for the ingathering of souls. And hitherto I trust we have been enabled, in some humble measure, to follow up practically our prayer; for if prayer be real, there will be on the part of those who pray a corresponding practical pursuit. When the Lord is pleased to invite the prayer, it is sure to become practical; there will be an interest in the progress of his truth and the glory of his great name. And as for you here, what people in the whole world have been more favored than we have been for many years? How the Lord has gone before us! how he has blessed us with men of grace, and truth, and prudence, and wisdom, as deacons! How he has blessed us with members! How very few of our members have caused us any pain worth speaking of! And how he has blessed us with an earnest congregation! for there are hundreds of you here who do not see your way to conform to the ordinance of baptism, who nevertheless love to join with us in worship, and to do all you can for the cause of God. The Lord has been indeed with us, and I trust that he will yet be with us.

Then, again, I say cease in these matters from man, and let the sure word of prophecy, the word of the all-wise God, be your guide; also remember there is no such thing in existence as apostolic succession, and remember, also, that it is written in the last chapter of the New Testament, that if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book

and, on the other hand, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book. Thus, we see that false doctrine and human tradition are damnable, and must be eternal damnation to the soul that shall live and die in them. All human establishments, grafted upon the gospel dispensation, are the work of man and of Satan, who comes with all ecclesiastical and worldly power, and false signs, and lying wonders. And one of their false signs and lying wonders is their *numerical* success, whereas “strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and *few* there be that find it.” And as these followers of delusion love delusion, God shall let them have their own way. And they shall believe a *lie*, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in the unrighteous systems of human and Satanic device; and even if an angel from heaven could reveal any of these systems, he must be accursed forever. Listen, then, to the twofold advice: “Take heed, (Mark 4:24), what you hear;” and Luke 8:18, “Take heed how you hear.” Thus, we see a man's name may be in the book of life, and in the holy city, but at last it turns out that his name was there only in profession, and so that is taken from him which he *seemed* to have.

We must yet have another sermon, not upon this text, but upon the great question of the final judgment.