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DAY OF JUDGMENT

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THE DAY FOR WHICH ALL OTHER DAYS WERE MADE

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

GOD has not concealed His intention of bringing every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. From the earliest ages, inspired men have spoken freely and clearly of the Day of Judgment. Enoch, who was the seventh from Adam—all of whose life on earth except the last twenty-two years was cotemporaneous¹ with that of Adam—prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14-15). Three thousand years after Enoch, Jude found no fitter words by which to warn daring sinners of their coming doom than those just quoted from the antediluvian² prophet. The doctrine of a judgment is a familiar theme among inspired writers of both testaments. It is taught in the Law, in the Prophets, in the Psalms, in the Gospels, and in the Epistles. It was so well understood in the days of Christ and of Paul that they simply call it “that day,” thus designating it as the Day of days, “the day for which all other days were made,” and in comparison of which all other days are as nothing.

The Day of Judgment will be the Great Day—so inspired writers often and properly style it. It will exceed all other days for the brightness of its beginning. Other days had their dim twilight, but this will begin in ineffable effulgence.³ Their light was from the sun; the light of this shall be from Him Who made all things. Other days dawn with general quiet, but this shall begin with great and unusual noises. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people” (Psa 50:3-4). Jesus shall come in like manner as He went up on high: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1Th 4:16). On that day, men will see sights and hear sounds unlike all that ever struck their senses before. The brightness of Immanuel’s coming will extinguish the light of the heavenly bodies; and the sounds that shall be heard shall make the earth reel and stagger like a drunken man! This day will be crowded full of wonders. It will be begun, carried on, and closed with such displays of miracles as the world has never seen before. The results accomplished by it will be as wonderful⁴ as the progress of its events. Every way of God to man shall then be justified. All wickedness shall be put down. All cavil⁵ shall be forever silenced. All judgment shall then be executed...

The Day of Judgment is a day fixed. The time for it is set by God Himself: “He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained” (Act 17:31). To God that day is known; to us it is unknown. To Him it is certain; to us it is doubtful. “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Mat 24:36). It will come as a thief in the night, as the flood came on the old world, as the tempest of wrath came on the cities of the plain. Yet it is unchangeably determined by God. Men may not be looking for it, but God sees it afar off. As nothing can hasten it, so that it shall come before God’s purposes respecting the world are accomplished, so nothing can delay it one moment beyond the time fixed in God’s eternal counsels for its coming.

Frequently the Day of Judgment is called “the day of the Lord.” It will be the day when the Lord Christ shall appear in glory, display the wonders of His mediation⁶ and the perfection of His government, and will publicly be owned and crowned as Lord of all. There will be no disputes concerning the divinity of Christ, on or after the Day

¹ cotemporaneous – living at the same time.

² antediluvian – before the Biblical flood.

³ ineffable effulgence – indescribable brightness.

⁴ wonderful – astonishing.

⁵ cavil – petty or trifling objections.

⁶ mediation – Christ’s work as a go-between to reconcile God and man. “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (Second London Baptist Confession, 8.1; available from Chapel Library)

of Judgment, which will be *His* day...“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (Joh 5:22). That day will be the Day of the Lord Jesus.

The Day of Judgment will be above all others a day of convocation.⁷ The heavens and the earth shall furnish the assembly. The char-iots of God, which are twenty thousand, shall roll down the skies, bearing in them ten thousand times ten thousand, an innumerable company of angels. Fallen angels too shall be there, and them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him. All that died in their sins shall be there. All that are alive on the earth shall stand before God. Not one of all God’s rational creatures shall be missing. Prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, saints, sinners, liars, hypocrites, infidels, blasphemers, haters of God shall all be present. The assizes⁸ of the universe shall then be held. Millions on millions shall crowd this greatest of all congregations. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2Co 5:10). This will be the first and the last gathering of all the denizens⁹ of the universe...

The Day of Judgment will also be a day of great surprise, both to saints and sinners. So Christ expressly informs us: “Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” (Mat 25:37-39). In like manner also shall the wicked say unto Him, “Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?” (Mat 25:44). If the sentences of the just and unjust were reversed at the Day of Judgment, the surprise would not be half so great. Jesus said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:22-23). Many will be saved, and many will be lost, contrary to the judgments formed of them by their neighbors. But more will be saved, and more will be lost contrary to the opinions *they had of themselves*...Many doubts, mysteries, and perplexities will be removed fully and forever in that great day. Things, which in this life were full of grievous darkness, will then be satisfactorily cleared up. God’s providence, which is now accompanied by a thousand inexplicable things, will then be made plain. Now the wicked are exalted; then they shall be brought down to hell. Now the righteous are forsaken, afflicted, tormented; then the Lord will bring forth their righteousness as the light and their judgment as the noonday. That Day will wipe off all aspersions¹⁰ from the innocent and fix guilt where it belongs, though never suspected before. God’s truth, wisdom, holiness, justice, and mercy will shine brighter than the sun on that day. The slandered, injured, and abused will then be vindicated. The oppressed will rise up and clank the chains with which tyrants had bound them to the eternal confusion of wrongdoers. Many a righteous man, judicially murdered, will then face his corrupt judge with the suborned¹¹ witnesses and perjured¹² jurors who were at his trial. There will be a wonderful clearing up on that day.

It will also be a day of exposure. “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” (1Ti 5:24). The fraud, cunning, hypocrisy, and deceit of wicked men will then appear. All those dark designs and plots, which meditated ruin to individuals, distress to families, perplexity to nations, or dishonor to God, shall be held up to reprobation.¹³ The light of that day will shine through and through the thickest web of iniquity and show all its foul intricacies...

The Day of Judgment will also be a day of separations. Here, saints and sinners are strangely mixed together; there, it will be very different. Christ says, “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Mat 13:30). “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left” (Mat 25:31-33). This separation shall be final. The righteous and the wicked shall that day part to meet no more.

⁷ **convocation** – a large, formal assembly of people.

⁸ **assizes** – sessions of the court.

⁹ **denizens** – inhabitants; citizens.

¹⁰ **aspersions** – damaging, abusive speech regarding someone’s character.

¹¹ **suborned** – bribed to give false evidence.

¹² **perjured** – having willfully told untruths when giving evidence in a court.

¹³ **reprobation** – condemnation.

To Christ, His saints, and angels, the Day of Judgment will be a day of triumph. The Lord will then make a show of His enemies openly. They that would not kiss the Son shall be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. In His triumph, all His saints and angels shall share and glory!

To the wicked, the same day will be full of despair. They will cry to the rocks and to the mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev 6:16-17). Was more dreadful despair ever portrayed?...

Reader, are you prepared for your last account? Have you made peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Is all your hope in the precious blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ? Nothing of your own can save you in that day. It will burn as an oven. It will try your works and your hopes as by fire. If you have built on Christ and on Him only, then hold fast your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

But if you are yet in your sins, then be persuaded to flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel (Heb 6:18). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Joh 3:36). Nor can you be in too much haste or too much in earnest in this weighty matter. *It is your life.* "Behold, the judge standeth before the door" (Jam 5:9); and He says, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev 22:12)...

To some minds, the greatest wonder of the Last Day will be the composure and calmness with which that day will be met by the righteous. John says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment" (1Jo 4:17). I never should have thought of boldness at such a time, but there I find it in God's Word. It is attained by love to Him, Who on that day will be our Advocate, the Lord our righteousness (1Jo 2:1).

From *The Grace of Christ*, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, www.sprinklepublications.net.

William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister; known pre-eminently as a preacher of the Gospel; born in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.



What saves me is the "one foundation" than which none other can be laid, "Jesus Christ."
It is the breastplate of righteousness that saves me! So as I think of
myself and my work, and eternity and judgment, the only thing I can
be sure of is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which I have
received by faith.—*D. M. Lloyd-Jones*

WHEAT OR CHAFF

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."—Matthew 3:12

VIEWED with the eye of man, the earth contains many different sorts of inhabitants. Viewed with the eye of God, it only contains two. Man's eye looks at the outward appearance: this is all he thinks of. The eye of God looks at the heart: this is the only part of which He takes any account. And tried by the state of their hearts, there are but two classes into which people can be divided: either they are wheat or they are chaff.

WHO ARE THE WHEAT IN THE WORLD? This is a point that demands special consideration. The wheat means all men and women who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; all who are led by the Holy Spirit; all who have felt themselves sinners and fled for refuge to the salvation [preached] in the Gospel; all who love the Lord Jesus, live to the Lord Jesus, and serve the Lord Jesus; all who have taken Christ for their only confidence and the Bible for

their only guide; [all who] regard sin as their deadliest enemy and look to heaven as their only home. All such—of every church, name, nation, people, and tongue; of every rank, station, condition, and degree—all such are God's "wheat."

Show me people of this kind anywhere and I know what they are. I know not that they and I may agree in all particulars, but I see in them the handiwork of the King of kings, and I ask no more. I know not whence they came and where they found their religion. But I know where they are going, and that is enough for me. They are the children of my Father in heaven. They are part of His "wheat."

All such, though sinful, vile, and unworthy in their own eyes, are the precious part of mankind. They are the sons and daughters of God the Father. They are the delight of God the Son. They are the habitation of God the Spirit. The Father beholds no iniquity in them. They are the members of His dear Son's mystical body: in Him He sees them and is well pleased. The Lord Jesus discerns in them the fruit of His own travail and work upon the cross and is well satisfied. The Holy Ghost regards them as spiritual temples that He Himself has reared and rejoices over them. In a word, they are the "wheat" of the earth.

WHO ARE THE CHAFF IN THE WORLD? This again is a point that demands special attention. The chaff means all men and women who have no saving faith in Christ and no sanctification of the Spirit, whosoever they may be. Some of them perhaps are infidels, and some are formal Christians. Some are sneering Sadducees, and some self-righteous Pharisees. Some of them make a point of keeping up a kind of Sunday religion, and others are utterly careless of everything except their own pleasure and the world. But all alike, who have the two great marks already mentioned—no faith and no sanctification—all such are "chaff"... They bring no glory to God the Father. They honor not the Son, and so do not honor the Father that sent Him (Joh 5:23.) They neglect that mighty salvation that countless millions of angels admire. They disobey that Word that was graciously written for their learning. They listen not to the voice of Him Who condescended to leave heaven and die for [sinners]. They pay no tribute of service and affection to Him Who gave them "life, and breath, and all things" (Act 17:25).

Therefore, God takes no pleasure in them. He pities them, but He reckons them no better than "chaff." Yes, you may have rare intellectual gifts and high mental attainments. You may sway kingdoms by your counsel, move millions by your pen, or keep crowds in breathless attention by your tongue; but if you have never submitted yourself to the yoke of Christ and never honored His Gospel by heartfelt reception of it, you are nothing in His sight... The meanest insect that crawls is a nobler being than you are: it fills its place in creation and glorifies its Maker with all its power—you *do not*. You do not honor God with heart, will, intellect, and members, which are all His. You invert His order and arrangement and live as if time was of more importance than eternity and body better than soul. You dare to neglect God's greatest gift—His own incarnate Son. You are cold about that subject that fills all heaven with hallelujahs. And so long as this is the case, you belong to the worthless part of mankind. You are the "chaff" of the earth.

Let this thought be graven deeply in the mind of every reader of this paper, whatever else he forgets. Remember there are only two sorts of people in the world. There are wheat, and there are chaff.

There are many nations in Europe. Each differs from the rest. Each has its own language, its own laws, its own peculiar customs. But God's eye divides Europe into two great parties—the wheat and the chaff. There are many classes in England. There are peers and commoners, farmers and shopkeepers, masters and servants, rich and poor. But God's eye only takes account of two orders—the wheat and the chaff. There are many and various minds in every congregation that meets for religious worship. There are some who attend for a mere form, and some who really desire to meet Christ; some who come there to please others, and some who come to please God; some who bring their hearts with them and are not soon tired, and some who leave their hearts behind them and reckon the whole service weary work. But the eye of the Lord Jesus only sees two divisions in the congregation—the wheat and the chaff.

I know well the world dislikes this way of dividing professing Christians. The world tries hard to fancy there are three sorts of people and not two. To be very good and very strict does not suit the world: they cannot, *will* not be saints. To have no religion at all does not suit the world: it would not be respectable. "Thank God," they will say, "we are not as bad as that." But to have religion enough to be saved, and yet not go into extremes; to be sufficiently good, and yet not be peculiar; to have a quiet, easy-going, moderate kind of Christianity and go comfortably to

heaven after all—this is the world’s favorite idea. There is a third class, the world fancies—a safe middle class—and in this middle class, the majority of men persuade themselves they will be found.

I denounce this notion of a middle class as an immense and soul-ruining delusion...It is a refuge of lies, a castle in the air, a vast unreality, an empty dream. This middle class is a class of Christians nowhere spoken of in the Bible.

There were two classes in the day of Noah’s flood: those who were inside the ark, and those who were without; two in the parable of the Gospel net: those who are called the good fish, and those who are called the bad; two in the parable of the ten virgins: those who are described as wise, and those who are described as foolish; two in the account of the Judgment Day: the sheep and the goats; two sides of the throne: the right hand and the left; two abodes when the last sentence has been passed: heaven and hell.

And just so, there are only two classes in the [churches] on earth: those who are in the state of grace, and those who are in the state of nature; those who are in the narrow way, and those who are in the broad; those who have faith, and those who have not faith; those who have been converted, and those who have not been converted; those who are with Christ, and those who are against Him; those who gather with Him, and those who scatter abroad; those who are “wheat,” and those who are “chaff”...Beside these two classes, there is *none*.

See now what cause there is for self-inquiry. Are you among the wheat or among the chaff? Neutrality is impossible. Either you are in one class or in the other. Which is it of the two?

You attend church, perhaps. You go to the Lord’s Table. You like good people. You can distinguish between good preaching and bad...You subscribe to religious societies. You attend religious meetings. You sometimes read religious books. It is well: it is very well. It is good: it is all very good. It is more than can be said of many. Still, this is not a straightforward answer to my question. Are you wheat or are you chaff?

Have you been born again? Are you a new creature? Have you put off the old man and put on the new? Have you ever felt your sins and repented of them? Are you looking simply to Christ for pardon and life eternal? Do you love Christ? Do you serve Christ? Do you loathe heart-sins and fight against them? Do you long for perfect holiness and follow hard after it? Have you come out from the world? Do you delight in the Bible? Do you wrestle in prayer? Do you love Christ’s people? Do you try to do good to the world? Are you vile in your own eyes and willing to take the lowest place? Are you a Christian in business, on weekdays, and by your own fireside? Oh, think, think, *think* on these things, and then perhaps you will be better able to tell the state of your soul.

I beseech you not to turn away from my question, however unpleas-ant it may be. Answer it, though it may prick your conscience and cut you to the heart. Answer it, though it may prove you in the wrong and expose your fearful danger. Rest not, rest not until you know how it is between you and God. Better a thousand times find out that you are in an evil case and repent betimes,¹⁴ than live on in uncertainty and be lost eternally.

From “The Great Separation” in *Practical Religion* reprinted by
The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church; author of *Holiness*, *Knots Untied*, and many others; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.

JESUS CHRIST THE JUDGE

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“He will judge the world...by that man whom he hath ordained.”—Acts 17:31

¹⁴ **betimes** – while there is yet time.

THE Person by whom God will judge the world is Jesus Christ, [the] God-man. The second Person in the Trinity, that same Person of Whom we read in our Bibles—Who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Galilee and Judea, and was at last crucified without the gates of Jerusalem—will come to judge the world both in His divine and human nature in the same human body that was crucified, rose again, and ascended up into heaven. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Act 1:11). It will be His human nature that will then be seen by the bodily eyes of men. However, His divine nature, which is united to the human, will then also be present: it will be by the wisdom of that divine nature that Christ will see and judge.

THAT GOD SEETH FIT THAT HE WHO IS IN THE HUMAN NATURE SHOULD BE THE JUDGE OF THOSE WHO ARE OF THE HUMAN NATURE. “And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (Joh 5:27). Seeing there is one of the Persons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God chooses in all His transactions with mankind to transact by Him. He did so of old, in His discoveries of Himself to the patriarchs, in giving the Law, in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and in the manifestations He made of Himself in the tabernacle and temple: when—although Christ was not actually incarnate, yet He was so in design—it was ordained and agreed in the covenant of redemption¹⁵ that He should become incarnate. And since the incarnation of Christ, God governs both the Church and the world by Christ. So He will also at the end judge the world by Him. All men shall be judged by God, and yet at the same time by One invested with their own nature.

God seeth fit that those who have bodies, as all mankind will have at the Day of Judgment, should see their Judge with their bodily eyes, and hear Him with their bodily ears...One of the Persons of the Trinity is actually incarnate, so that God by Him may appear to bodily eyes without any miraculous visionary appearance.

CHRIST HATH THIS HONOR OF BEING THE JUDGE OF THE WORLD GIVEN HIM AS A SUITABLE REWARD FOR HIS SUFFERINGS. This is a part of Christ’s exaltation. The exaltation of Christ is given Him in reward for His humiliation and sufferings. This was stipulated in the covenant of redemption. We are expressly told [that] it was given Him in reward for His sufferings: “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phi 2:8–11).

God seeth meet that He Who appeared in such a low estate amongst mankind without form or comeliness, having His divine glory veiled, should appear amongst men a second time in His own proper majesty and glory without a veil. [God’s purpose is] that those who saw Him here at the first as a poor, frail man not having where to lay His head, subject to much hardship and affliction, may see Him the second time in power and great glory, invested with the glory and dignity of the absolute Lord of heaven and earth; and that He Who once tabernacled with men and was despised and rejected of them may have the honor of arraigning¹⁶ all men before His throne and judging them with respect to their eternal state! (*see* Joh 5:21–24).

God seeth meet that He Who was once arraigned before the judgment seat of men and was there most vilely treated—being mocked, spat upon, condemned, and Who was at last crucified—should be rewarded by having those very persons brought to His tribunal that they may see Him in glory and be confounded; and that He may have the disposal of them for all eternity. As Christ said to the High Priest while arraigned before him, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heav-en” (Mat 26:64).

IT IS NEEDFUL THAT CHRIST SHOULD BE THE JUDGE OF THE WORLD IN ORDER THAT HE MAY FINISH THE WORK OF REDEMPTION. It is the will of God that He Who is the Redeemer of the world should be a complete Redeemer and that therefore He should have the whole work of redemption left in His hands. Now, the redemption of fallen man consists not merely in the impetration of¹⁷ redemption, by obeying the divine Law and making atonement for sinners, or in preparing the way for their salvation. It consists in a great measure and is actually fulfilled in

¹⁵ **covenant of redemption** – the agreement between the members of the Godhead, especially between the Father and the Son, regarding the plan of redemption: God the Father purposed 1) the accomplishment of salvation through the Person and work of God the Son and 2) the application of salvation through the regenerating power of the Spirit.

¹⁶ **arraigning** – calling before a court to answer for a criminal charge.

¹⁷ **impetration of** – obtaining by request, especially prayer.

converting sinners to the knowledge and love of the truth, in carrying them on in the way of grace and true holiness through life, and in finally raising their bodies to life, in glorifying them, in pronouncing the blessed sentence upon them, in crowning them with honor and glory in the sight of men and angels, and in completing and perfecting their reward. Now, it is necessary that Christ should do this in order to His finishing the work that He hath begun. Raising the saints from the dead, judging them, and fulfilling the sentence are part of their salvation. Therefore, it was necessary that Christ should be appointed Judge of the world, in order that He might finish His work (Joh 6:39-40; 5:25-31). The redemption of the bodies of the saints is part of the work of redemption: the resurrection to life is called a redemption of their bodies (Rom 8:23).

It is the will of God that Christ Himself should have the fulfilling of that for which He died and for which He suffered so much. Now, the end for which He suffered and died was the complete salvation of His people. This shall be obtained at the Last Judgment and not before. Therefore, it was necessary that Christ be appointed Judge, in order that He Himself might fully accomplish the end for which He had both suffered and died. When Christ had finished His appointed sufferings, God did, as it were, put the purchased inheritance into His hands to be kept for believers and [to] be bestowed upon them at the Day of Judgment.

IT WAS PROPER THAT HE WHO IS APPOINTED KING OF THE CHURCH SHOULD RULE UNTIL HE SHOULD HAVE PUT ALL HIS ENEMIES UNDER HIS FEET—in order to which, He must be the Judge of His enemies, as well as of His people. One of the offices of Christ as Redeemer is that of a king. He is appointed King of the Church and Head over all things to the Church. In order that His kingdom be complete and the design of His reign be accomplished, He must conquer all His enemies; and then He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” (1Co 15:24-25). Now, when Christ shall have brought His enemies, who had denied, opposed, and rebelled against Him, to His Judgment Seat and shall have passed and executed sentence upon them, this will be a final and complete victory over them—a victory that shall put an end to the war. It is proper that He Who at present reigns and is carrying on the war against those who are of the opposite kingdom should have the honor of obtaining the victory and finishing the war.

IT IS FOR THE ABUNDANT COMFORT OF THE SAINTS THAT CHRIST IS APPOINTED THEIR JUDGE. The covenant of grace,¹⁸ with all its circumstances and all those events to which it hath relation, is every way so contrived of God as to give strong consolation to believers. For God designed the Gospel for a glorious manifestation of His grace to them! Therefore, everything in it is so ordered as to manifest the most grace and mercy. Now, it is for the abundant consolation of the saints that their own Redeemer is appointed to be their Judge; that the same Person Who spilled His blood for them hath the determination of their state left with Him, so that they need not doubt but that they shall have what He was at so much cost to procure.

What matter of joy to them will it be at the Last Day to lift up their eyes and behold the Person in Whom they have trusted for salvation, to Whom they have fled for refuge, upon Whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and Whose voice they have often heard inviting them to Himself for protection and safety, coming to judge them!

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Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American Congregational preacher, known for preaching in the Great Awakening; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.



“Well,” saith one, “who then can be saved?” Ah! indeed, who then can be saved? Let me tell you who. There will come forward those who have believed in Jesus, and albeit they have many sins to which they might well plead guilty, they will be able to say, “Great God, Thou didst provide for us a substitute, and Thou didst say that if we would [believe on] Him, He should be a substitute for us and take our sins upon Himself. We did [believe on] Him, our sins were laid on Him, and we have now no sins. They have been transferred from us to the great Savior, Substitute, and Sacrifice.”—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

¹⁸ **covenant of grace** – God’s gracious, eternal purpose of redemption, conceived before the creation of the world, first announced in Genesis 3:15, progressively revealed in history, accomplished in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and appropriated by faith in Him.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION

Samuel Davies (1723-1761)

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”—John 5:28-29

EVER since sin entered into the world and death by sin, this earth has been a vast graveyard or burying place for her children. In every age and in every country, that sentence has been executing, “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return” (Gen 3:19). The earth has been arched with graves, the last lodgings of mortals, and the bottom of the ocean paved with the bones of men. Human nature was at first confined to one pair, but how soon and how wide did it spread! How inconceivably numerous are the sons of Adam! How many different nations on our globe contain many millions of men even in one generation! And how many generations have succeeded one another in the long run of nearly six thousand years!

LET IMAGINATION CALL UP THIS VAST ARMY: Children that just light upon our globe and then wing their flight into an unknown world; the gray-headed that have had a long journey through life; the blooming youth and the middle-aged—let them pass in review before us from all countries and from all ages. How vast and astonishing the multitude! If the posterity of one man (Abraham) by one son was, according to the divine promise, as the stars of heaven or as the sand by the seashore innumerable, what numbers can compute the multitudes that have sprung from all the patriarchs, the sons of Adam and Noah? But what is become of them all? Alas! They are turned into earth, their original element. They are all imprisoned in the grave, except the present generation, and we are dropping one after another in quick succession into that place appointed for all living. There has not been perhaps a moment of time for five thousand years, but what someone or other has sunk into the mansions of the dead. In some fatal hours, by the sword of war or the devouring jaws of earthquakes, thousands have been cut off, swept away at once, and left in one huge promiscuous carnage.¹⁹ The greatest number of mankind beyond comparison is sleeping under ground. There lies beauty moldering into dust, rotting into stench and loathsomeness, and feeding the vilest worms. There lies the head that once wore a crown, as low and contemptible as the meanest beggar. There lie the mighty giants, the heroes and conquerors, the Samsons, the Ajaxes, the Alexanders, and the Caesars of the world! There they lie—stupid,²⁰ senseless, inactive, and unable to drive off the worms that riot on their marrow and make their houses in those sockets where the eyes sparkled with living luster. There lie the wise and the learned, as rotten, as helpless as the fool does. There lie some that we once conversed with, some that were our friends, our companions. There lie our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters.

And shall they lie there always? Shall this body, this curious workmanship of heaven so wonderfully and fearfully made, always lie in ruins and never be repaired? Shall the wide-extended valleys of dry bones never more live? This we know, that *it is not a thing impossible with God to raise the dead* (Act 26:8). He that could first form our bodies out of nothing is certainly able to form them anew and repair the wastes of time and death. But what is His declared will in this case? On this the matter turns, and this is fully revealed in my text. “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves,” all that are dead, without exception, “shall hear his voice, And shall come forth” (Joh 5:28-29). And for what end shall they come forth? Oh! For very different purposes: some to the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of damnation...“All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

THEY THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE. The voice of the Son of God here probably means the sound of the archangel’s trumpet, which is called His “voice” because [it is] sounded by His orders and attended with His all-quickenning power. This all-wakening call to the tenants of the grave we frequently find foretold in

¹⁹ **promiscuous carnage** – mixed and disorderly heap of dead bodies.

²⁰ **stupid** – entirely lacking sensation, consciousness, thought, or feeling.

Scripture. I shall refer you to two plain passages. “Behold,” says St. Paul, “I show you a mystery,” an important and astonishing secret, “we shall not all sleep” (1Co 15:51); that is, mankind will not all be sleeping in death when that Day comes. There will be a generation then alive upon the earth. Though they cannot have a proper resurrection, yet they shall pass through a change equivalent to it. “We shall all be changed,” says he, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound” (1Co 15:52). It shall give the alarm! No sooner is the awful clangor²¹ heard than all the living shall be transformed into immortals, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. We, who are then alive, shall be changed (1Co 15:52). This is all the difference: they shall be raised, and we shall be changed. This awful prelude of the trumpet is also mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16: “We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep,” that is, we shall not be beforehand with them in meeting our descending Lord. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,” that is, with a godlike trump, such as it becomes His majesty to sound. The dead in Christ shall rise first, that is, before the living shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. When they are risen and the living transformed, *they shall ascend together to the place of judgment.*

My brethren, realize the majesty and terror of this universal alarm. When the dead are sleeping in the silent grave; when the living are thoughtless and unapprehensive of the grand event or intent on other pursuits—some of them asleep in the dead of night, some of them dissolved in sensual pleasures: eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, some of them planning or executing schemes for riches or honors, some in the very act of sin—the generality stupid and careless about the concerns of eternity and the dreadful Day just at hand, and a few here and there conversing with their God and “looking for the glorious appearance of their Lord and Saviour” (Ti 2:14); when the course of nature runs on uniform and regular as usual and infidel scoffers are taking umbrage²² from thence to ask, “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2Pe 3:4)—in short, when there are no more visible appearances of this approaching Day than of the destruction of Sodom on that fine clear morning in which Lot fled away, or of the deluge, when Noah entered into the ark—*then* in that hour of unapprehensive security, *then* suddenly shall the heavens open over the astonished world; *then* shall the all alarming clangor break over their heads like a clap of thunder in a clear sky! Immediately the living turn their gazing eyes upon the amazing phenomenon: a few hear the long-expected sound with rapture and lift up their heads with joy, assured that *the day of their redemption is come*, while the thoughtless world is struck with the wildest horror and consternation.²³

In the same instant, the sound reaches all the mansions of the dead. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they are raised and the living are changed! This call will be as animating to all the sons of men as that call to a single person, “Lazarus, come forth” (Joh 11:43). Oh, what a surprise will this be to a thoughtless world! Should this alarm burst over our heads this moment, into what a terror would it strike many!...Such will be the terror, such the consternation, when it actually comes to pass. Sinners will be the same timorous,²⁴ self-condemned creatures then as they are now. Then, they who are deaf to all the gentler calls of the Gospel now will not be able to stop their ears. Then, the trump of God will constrain the—to whom the ministers of Christ now preach in vain—to hear and fear. Then they must all hear, for

MY TEXT TELLS YOU: ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES, ALL WITHOUT EXCEPTION, SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE. Now the voice of mercy calls, reason pleads, conscience warns—*but multitudes will not hear*. But this is a voice that shall, that must reach every one of the millions of mankind, and not one of them will be able to stop his ears. Infants and giants, kings and subjects, all ranks, all ages of mankind shall hear the call. The living shall start²⁵ and be changed, and the dead rise at the sound! The dust that was once alive and formed a human body, whether it flies in the air, floats in [the] ocean, or vegetates on earth, shall hear the new-creating fiat.²⁶ Wherever the fragments of the human frame are scattered, this all-penetrating call shall reach and speak them into life. We may consider this voice as a summons, not only to dead bodies to rise, but to the souls that once animated them to appear and be reunited to them, whether in heaven or hell. To the *grave*, the call will be, “Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!” To *heaven*,

²¹ **clangor** – loud, ringing sound.

²² **umbrage** – offense.

²³ **consternation** – amazement and terror that overcomes one’s faculties; paralyzing dread.

²⁴ **timorous** – fearful.

²⁵ **start** – rise suddenly.

²⁶ **fiat** – formal or solemn command.

“Ye spirits of just men made perfect, descend to the world whence you originally came, and assume your new-formed bodies!” To *hell*, “Come forth and appear, ye damned ghosts,²⁷ ye prisoners of darkness, and be again united to the bodies in which you once sinned, that in them ye may now suffer!” Thus will this summons spread through every corner of the universe. Heaven, earth, hell, and all their inhabitants shall hear and obey. Devils, as well as sinners of our race, will tremble at the sound: for now they know they can plead no more as they once did, “Torment us not before the time” (*cf.* Mat 8:29). For the time is come, and they must mingle with the prisoners at the bar. Now when all that are in the graves hear this all-quickening voice,

THEY SHALL COME FORTH. Now [I think] I see, I hear the earth heaving, charnel houses²⁸ rattling, tombs bursting, graves opening. Now the nations underground begin to stir. There is a noise and a shaking among the dry bones. The dust is all alive and in motion, and the globe breaks and trembles as with an earthquake, while this vast army is working its way through and bursting into life! The ruins of human bodies are scattered far and wide and have passed through many and surprising transformations...Multitudes have sunk in a watery grave, been swallowed up by the monsters of the deep, and transformed into a part of their flesh. Multitudes have been eaten by beasts and birds of prey and incorporated with them; and some have been devoured by their fellow men in the rage of a desperate hunger, or of unnatural cannibal appetite, and digested into a part of them.

Multitudes have moldered into dust, and this dust has been blown about by winds, washed away with water, or it has petrified into stone. [Or it has] been burnt into brick to form dwellings for their posterity. Or it has grown up in grain, trees, plants, and other vegetables, which are the support of man and beast and are transformed into their flesh and blood. But through all these various transformations and changes, not a particle that was essential to one human body has been lost or incorporated with another human body as to become an essential part of it...The omniscient God knows how to collect, distinguish, and compound all those scattered and mingled seeds of our mortal bodies!

Now at the sound of the trumpet, they shall all be collected, wher-ever they were scattered: all properly sorted and united, however they were confused; atom to its fellow-atom, bone to its fellow-bone...Then, my brethren, your dust and mine shall be reanimated and organized. Though after our skin worms destroy these bodies,²⁹ yet in our flesh shall we see God (Job 19:26).

And what a vast improvement will the frail nature of man then receive! Our bodies will then be substantially the same: but how different in qualities, in strength, in agility, in capacities for pleasure or pain, in beauty or deformity, in glory or terror according to the moral character of the person to whom they belong! Matter, we know, is capable of prodigious³⁰ alterations and refinements: there it will appear in the highest perfection.

The bodies of the saints will be formed glorious, incorruptible, without the seeds of sickness and death. The glorified body of Christ, which undoubtedly is carried to the highest perfection that matter is capable of, will be the pattern after which they shall be formed. He will “change our vile body,” says St. Paul, “that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phi 3:21). “Flesh and blood,” in their present state of grossness and frailty, “cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption...For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1Co 15:50, 53). And how vast the change, how high the improvement from this present state! “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power” (15:42-43). Then will the body be able to bear up under the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory! It will no longer be a clog or an encumbrance³¹ to the soul, but a proper instrument and assistant in all the exalted services and enjoyments of the heavenly state.

The bodies of the wicked will also be improved, but their improvements will all be terrible and vindictive. Their capacities will be thoroughly enlarged, but then it will be that they may be made capable of greater misery. They will be strengthened, but it will be that they may bear the heavier load of torment. Their sensations will be more quick and strong, but it will be that they may feel the more exquisite pain. They will be raised immortal that they may not be consumed by everlasting fire or escape punishment by dissolution³² or annihilation. In short, their

²⁷ **damned ghosts** – condemned souls of the lost.

²⁸ **charnel houses** – a vault or building where corpses or bone are deposited.

²⁹ **after...bodies** – after our skin has been thus destroyed.

³⁰ **prodigious** – amazing.

³¹ **clog...encumbrance** – that which hinders progress or is a troublesome burden.

³² **dissolution** – destruction or disintegration of the existing condition.

augmented strength, their enlarged capacities, and their immortality will be their eternal curse. They would willingly exchange them for the fleeting duration of a fading flower or the faint sensations of an infant. The only power they would rejoice in is that of self-annihilation.

Now when the bodies are completely formed and fit to be inhabited, the souls that once animated them, being collected from heaven and hell, re-enter and take possession of their old mansions. They are united in bonds that shall never more be dissolved, and the moldering tabernacles are now become everlasting habitations.

With what joy will the spirits of the righteous welcome their old companions from their long sleep in the dust and congratulate their glorious resurrection! How they will rejoice to re-enter their old habitations, now so completely repaired and highly improved! To find those bodies that were once their encumbrance, once frail and mortal in which they were imprisoned and languished, once their temptation, tainted with the seeds of sin, now their assistants and co-partners in the business of heaven, now vigorous, incorruptible, and immortal, now free from all corrupt mixtures and shining in all the beauties of perfect holiness! In these bodies, they once served their God with honest though feeble efforts, conflicted with sin and temptation, and passed through all the united trials and hardships of mortality and the Christian life. Now, they are united to them for more exalted and blissful purposes! The lungs that were wont³³ to heave with penitential sighs and groans shall now shout forth their joys and the praises of their God and Savior. The heart that was once broken with sorrows shall now be bound up forever and overflow with immortal pleasures. Those very eyes that were wont to run down with tears and to behold many a tragic sight shall now behold *the King in His beauty*, shall behold the Savior, Whom though unseen they loved, and all the glories of heaven! *God shall wipe away all their tears*. All the senses, which were once avenues of pain, shall now be inlets of the most exalted pleasure. In short, every organ, every member shall be employed in the most noble services and enjoyments, instead of the sordid and laborious drudgery and the painful sufferings of the present state. Blessed change indeed! Rejoice, ye children of God, in the prospect of it.

But how shall I glance a thought upon the dreadful case of the wicked in that tremendous Day! While their bodies burst from their graves, the miserable spectacles of horror and deformity, see the millions of gloomy [souls] that once animated them rise like pillars of smoke from the bottomless pit! With what reluctance and anguish do they re-enter their old habitations! Oh, what a dreadful meeting! What shocking salutations! “And must I be chained to thee again?” may the guilty soul say. “Oh, thou accursed, polluted body, thou system of deformity and terror! In thee I once sinned, by thee I was once ensnared, debased, and ruined: to gratify thy vile lusts and appetites, I neglected my own immortal interests, degraded my native dignity, and made myself miserable forever. Hast thou now met me to torment me forever? Oh, that thou hadst still slept in the dust and never been repaired again! Let me rather be condemned to animate a...ser-pent than that odious body once defiled with sin, and the instrument of my guilty pleasures, now made strong and immortal to torment me with strong and immortal pains. Once indeed, I received sensations of pleasure from thee; but now thou art transformed into an engine of torture. No more shall I through thine eyes behold the cheerful light of the day and the beautiful prospects of nature, but the thick glooms of hell, grim and ghastly [spirits], heaven at an impassable distance, and all the horrid sights of woe in the infernal regions! No more shall thine ears charm me with the harmony of sounds, but terrify and distress me with the echo of eternal groans and the thunder of almighty vengeance! No more shall the gratification of thine appetites afford me pleasure, but thine appetites—forever hungry, forever unsatisfied—shall eternally torment me with their eager, importunate³⁴ cravings. No more shall thy tongue be employed in mirth, jest, and song, but [shall] complain, groan, blaspheme, and roar forever. Thy feet that once walked in the flowery, enchanted paths of sin must now walk on the dismal burning soil of hell. *O my wretched companion!* I parted with thee with pain and reluctance in the struggles of death, but now I meet thee with greater terror and agony. Return to thy bed in the dust to sleep and rot! Let me never see thy shocking visage³⁵ more.”

In vain the petition! The reluctant soul must enter its prison from whence it shall never more be dismissed. If we might indulge imagination so far, we might suppose the body begins to recriminate³⁶ in such language as this: “Come, guilty soul, enter thy old mansion. If it be horrible and shocking, it is owing to thyself. Was not the animal

³³ **wont** – accustomed.

³⁴ **importunate** – persistent.

³⁵ **visage** – appearance; face.

³⁶ **recriminate** – to return one accusation with another.

frame,³⁷ the brutal³⁸ nature, subjected to *thy* government, who art a rational principle?³⁹ Instead of being debased⁴⁰ by me, it became⁴¹ thee to have not only retained the dignity of thy nature, but to have exalted mine by nobler employments and gratifications worthy an earthly body united to an immortal spirit! Thou mightest have restrained my members from being the instruments of sin and made them the instruments of righteousness! My knees would have bowed at the throne of grace, but thou didst not affect that posture. Mine eyes would have read and mine ears heard the Word of Life! But thou wouldest not set them to that employ or wouldest not attend to it. Now it is but just the body thou didst prostitute to sin [that will] be the instrument of thy punishment. Indeed, fain⁴² would I relapse into senseless earth as I was and continue in that insensibility forever! But didst thou not hear the all-rousing trumpet just now? Did it not even shake the foundations of thy infernal prison? It was that call that awakened me and summoned me to meet thee, and I could not resist it. Therefore, come, miserable soul! Take possession of this frame, and let us prepare for everlasting burning. O that it were now possible to die! O that we could be again separated and never be united more! Vain wish! The weight of mountains, the pangs of hell, the flames of unquenchable fire can never dissolve these chains that now bind us together!”

O sirs! What a shocking interview⁴³ is this! O the glorious, dreadful morning of the resurrection! What scenes of unknown joy and terror will then open! [I think] we must always have it in prospect.⁴⁴ It must even now engage our thoughts, fill us with trembling solicitude, and make it the great object of our labor and pursuit to share in the resurrection of the just.

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Samuel Davies (1723-1761): Presbyterian minister; preached during the Great Awakening; born near Summit Ridge, New Castle County, Delaware.

Oh, you who have no faith in Christ, no faith in Jesus the Substitute—that terrible negative, that treacherous unbelief of yours will be a condemning sin against you! It will be proof positive that you hated God! For a man must hate God indeed who will spurn His counsels, give no heed to His reproof, scorn His grace, and dare the vengeance of Him Who points out the way of escape and the path that leadeth to life.—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

THE BOOKS OPENED, THE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED AND EXECUTED

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.”—Acts 17:31

CHRIST Jesus will descend in a most magnificent manner from heaven with all the holy angels. The man Christ Jesus is now in the heaven of heavens, or as the Apostle expresses it, “far above all heavens” (Eph 4:10). There He hath been ever since His ascension, being there enthroned in glory in the midst of millions of angels and blessed spirits. But when the time appointed for the Day of Judgment shall have come, notice of it will be given in those happy regions. Christ will descend to the earth, attended with all those heav-enly hosts, in a

³⁷ **animal frame** – a mental and emotional state of human nature.

³⁸ **brutal** – sensual; the senses as distinct from the mind.

³⁹ **rational principle** – a nature endowed with reason and judgment.

⁴⁰ **debased** – morally corrupted.

⁴¹ **became** – was appropriate for; was fitting for.

⁴² **fain** – gladly.

⁴³ **interview** – face-to-face meeting.

⁴⁴ **prospect** – a mental picture of a future or anticipated event.

most solemn, awful, and glorious manner. Christ will come with divine majesty: He will come in the glory of the Father, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels” (Mat 16:27).

We can now conceive but little of the holy and awful magnificence in which Christ will appear, as He shall come in the clouds of heaven, or of the glory of His retinue. How mean and despicable, in comparison with it, is the most splendid appearance that earthly princes can make! A glorious, visible light will shine round about Him, and the earth with all nature will tremble at His presence. How vast and innumerable will that host be that will appear with Him...Christ will make this appearance suddenly and to the great surprise of the inhabitants of the earth! It is therefore compared to a cry at midnight by which men are wakened in a great surprise.

At the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall rise and the living shall be changed. As soon as Christ is descended, the last trumpet shall sound as a notification to all mankind to appear. At [this] mighty sound shall the dead be immediately raised and the living changed: “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1Co 15:52)...Upon this, all the dead shall rise from their graves: all both small and great, who shall have lived upon earth since the foundation of the world...Of this vast multitude, some shall rise to life and others to condemnation (Joh 5:28-29).

When the bodies are prepared, the departed souls shall again enter into their bodies and be reunited to them, never more to be separated. The souls of the wicked shall be brought up out of hell, though not out of misery, and shall very unwillingly enter into their bodies, which will be but eternal prisons to them...The souls of the righteous shall descend from heaven together with Christ and His angels: “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Th 4:14). They also shall be reunited to their bodies that they may be glorified with them. They shall receive their bodies prepared by God to be mansions of pleasure to all eternity. They shall be every way fitted for the uses, the exercises, and delights of perfectly holy and glorified souls. They shall be clothed with a superlative⁴⁵ beauty, similar to that of Christ’s glorious body. “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phi 3:21). Their bodies shall rise incorruptible—no more liable to pain or disease—and with an extraordinary vigor and vivacity⁴⁶ like that of those spirits that are as a flame of fire. “It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1Co 15:43-44). With what joy will the souls and bodies of the saints meet! With what joy will they lift up their heads out of their graves to behold the glorious sight of the appearing of Christ! It will be a glorious sight to see those saints arising out of their graves, putting off their corruption, and putting on incorruption and glory!

At the same time, those that shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changed. Their bodies shall pass through a great change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1Co 15:51-52).

THEY SHALL ALL BE BROUGHT TO APPEAR BEFORE CHRIST—the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left (Mat 25:31-33). The wicked, however unwilling, however full of fear and horror, shall be brought or driven before the Judgment Seat. However they may try to hide themselves—and for this purpose creep into dens and caves of the mountains and cry to the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb—yet there shall not one escape. To the Judge they must come and stand on the left hand with devils. On the contrary, the righteous will be joyfully conducted to Jesus Christ, probably by the angels. Their joy will give them wings, as it were, to carry them thither. They will with ecstasies and raptures of delight meet their Friend and Savior, come into His presence and stand at His right hand...What a vast congregation will there be of all the men, women, and children that shall have lived upon earth from the beginning to the end of the world!

THE NEXT THING WILL BE THAT THE BOOKS SHALL BE OPENED: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened” (Rev 20:12). Which books seem to be these two: the Book of God’s remembrance and the Book of Scripture: the former as the evidence of their deeds that are to be judged, the latter as the rule of judgment. The works, both of the righteous and of the wicked, will be brought forth that they may be judged according to them. Those works will be tried according to the appointed and written rule.

⁴⁵ **superlative** – of the highest degree.

⁴⁶ **vivacity** – energy; liveliness.

(1) The works of both righteous and wicked will be rehearsed. The book of God's remembrance will be first opened. The various works of the children of men are written, as it were, by God in a Book of remembrance. "A book of remembrance was written before him" (Mal 3:16). However ready ungodly men may be to make light of their own sins and to forget them, God never forgetteth any of them. Neither doth God forget any of the good works of the saints. If they give but a cup of cold water with a spirit of charity, God remembers it.

The evil works of the wicked shall then be brought forth to light. They must then hear of all their profaneness, their impenitence, their obstinate unbelief, their abuse of ordinances, and various other sins. The various aggravations of their sins will also be brought to view, as how this man sinned after such and such warnings, [and] that after the receipt of such and such mercies; one after being so and so favored with outward light, another after having been the subject of inward conviction, excited by the immediate agency of God. Concerning these sins, they shall be called to account to see what answer they can make for themselves: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Mat 12:36). "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom 14:12).

The good works of the saints will also be brought forth as evidences of their sincerity and of their interest in the righteousness of Christ. As to their evil works...the account of them will appear to have been cancelled before that time. The account that will be found in God's book will not be of debt, but of credit. God cancels their debts, sets down their good works, and is pleased, as it were, to make Himself a debtor for them by His own gracious act.

Both good and bad will be judged according to their works: "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev 20:12). And verse 13, "And they were judged every man according to their works." Though the righteous are justified by faith and not by their works, yet they shall be judged according to their works. Works shall be brought forth *as the evidence of their faith*. Their faith on that Great Day shall be tried by its fruits...But by works, we are to understand all voluntary exercises of the faculties of the soul. For instance, the words and conversation of men, as well as what is done with their hands: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Mat 12:37). Nor are we to understand only outward acts or the thoughts outwardly expressed, but also the thoughts themselves and all the inward workings of the heart. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart: "I am he which search-eth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev 2:23). Nor will only positive sins be brought into judgment, but also omissions of duty, as is manifest by "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink" (Mat 25:42-45).

On that Day, secret and hidden wickedness will be brought to light. All the uncleanness, injustice, and violence of which men have been guilty in secret shall be manifest both to angels and to men. Then it will be made to appear how this and that man have indulged themselves in wicked imaginations, in lascivious,⁴⁷ covetous, malicious, or impious⁴⁸ desires and wishes; and how others have harbored in their hearts enmity against God and His Law; also impenitency⁴⁹ and unbelief, notwithstanding all the means used with them and motives set before them to induce them to repent, return, and live.

The good works of the saints also, which were done in secret, shall then be made public, and even the pious and benevolent affections and designs of their hearts; so that the real and secret characters of both saints and sinners shall then be most clearly and publicly displayed.

(2) The book of Scripture will be opened, and the works of men will be tried by that touchstone. Their works will be compared with the Word of God. That which God gave men for the rule of their action while in this life shall then be made the rule of their judgment. God hath told us beforehand what will be the rule of judgment. We are told in the Scriptures upon what terms we shall be justified and upon what terms we shall be condemned. That which God hath given us to be our rule in our lives, He will make His own rule in judgment.

The rule of judgment will be twofold. The primary rule of judgment will be the Law. The Law ever hath stood and ever will stand in force as a rule of judgment for those to whom the Law was given: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Mat 5:18). The Law will so far be made the rule of judgment that not one person at that day shall by any means be justified or

⁴⁷ **lascivious** – the quality of being inclined to lust or sexual desires.

⁴⁸ **impious** – self-confidently godless, wicked, or profane.

⁴⁹ **impenitency** – not feeling shame about one's actions or attitudes and not repenting.

condemned in a way inconsistent with that which is established by the Law. As to the wicked, the Law will be so far the rule of judgment respecting them that the sentence denounced against them will be the sentence of the Law. The righteous will be so far judged by the Law. Although their sentence will not be the sentence of the Law, yet it will by no means be such a sentence as shall be inconsistent with the Law, but such as it allows; for it will be by the righteousness of the Law that they shall be justified.

It will be inquired concerning every one, both righteous and wicked, whether the Law stands against him or whether he hath a fulfillment of the Law to show. As to the righteous, they will have fulfillment to show: they will have it to plead that the Judge Himself hath fulfilled the Law for them; that He hath both satisfied for their sins and fulfilled the righteousness of the Law for them: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4). But as to the wicked, when it shall be found by the Book of God’s remembrance that they have broken the Law and have no fulfillment of it to plead, the sentence of the Law shall be pronounced upon them.

A secondary⁵⁰ rule of judgment will be the Gospel, or the covenant of grace. It is said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom 2:16). By the Gospel, or covenant of grace, eternal blessedness will be adjudged to believers. When it shall be found that the Law hinders not, and that the curse and condemnation of the Law stands not against them, the reward of eternal life shall be given them according to the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

THE SENTENCE WILL BE PRONOUNCED. Christ will say to the wicked on the left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41). How dreadful will these words of the Judge be to the poor, miserable, despairing wretches on the left hand! How amazing will every syllable of them be! How they will pierce them to the soul! These words show the greatest wrath and abhorrence. Christ will bid them depart. He will send them away from His presence, will remove them forever far out of His sight into an everlasting separation from God, as being most loathsome and unfit to dwell in His presence and enjoy communion with Him.

Christ will call them cursed: “Depart, ye cursed, to whom everlasting wrath and ruin belong; who are by your own wickedness prepared for nothing else, but to be firebrands of hell; who are the fit objects and vessels of the vengeance and fury of the Almighty.” *Into fire:* He will not send them away merely into a loathsome prison, the receptacle of the filth and rubbish of the universe, but into a furnace of fire. *That must be their dwelling place.* There they must be tormented with the most racking pain and anguish. It is everlasting fire. There is eternity in the sentence, which infinitely aggravates the doom and will make every word of it immensely more dreadful, sinking, and amazing to the souls that receive it. *Prepared for the devil and his angels:* This sets forth the greatness and intenseness of the torments, as the preceding part of the sentence does the duration. It shows the dreadfulness of that fire to which they shall be condemned: it is the same that is prepared for the devils—those foul spirits and great enemies of God! Their condition will be the same as that of the devils in many respects, particularly as they must burn in the fire forever.

This sentence will doubtless be pronounced in such an awful manner as shall be a terrible manifestation of the wrath of the Judge. There will be divine, holy, and almighty wrath manifested in the countenance and voice of the Judge. We know not what other manifestations of anger will accompany the sentence. Perhaps it will be accompanied with thunders and lightnings, far more dreadful than were on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law. Correspondent to these exhibitions of divine wrath will be the appearances of terror and most horrible amazement in the condemned. How pale will all their faces look! Death will sit upon their countenances when those words shall be heard! What dolorous⁵¹ cries, shrieks, and groans! What trembling, wringing of hands, and gnashing of teeth will there then be!

But with the most benign⁵² aspect, in the most endearing manner, and with the sweetest expressions of love, Christ will invite His saints on His right hand to glory, saying, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the

⁵⁰ **secondary** – in the second place in a list [*Oxford English Dictionary*]; Edwards is not implying that the Gospel is in some sense inferior to the Law.

⁵¹ **dolorous** – sorrowful; distressful; painful.

⁵² **benign** – kind.

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34). He will not bid them to go from Him, but to come with Him to go where He goes, to dwell where He dwells, to enjoy Him, and to partake with Him. He will call them blessed—blessed of His Father, blessed by Him whose blessing is infinitely the most desirable, namely, God. *Inherit the kingdom*: they are not only invited to go with Christ and to dwell with Him, but to inherit a kingdom with Him, to sit down with Him on His throne and to receive the honor and happiness of a heavenly kingdom. “Prepared for you from the foundation of the world”: this denotes the sovereign and eternal love of God as the source of their blessedness. He puts them in mind that God was pleased to set His love upon them long before they had a being, even from eternity; that therefore God made heaven on purpose for them and fitted it for their delight and happiness...The righteous...shall enter with Christ into that glorious and blessed world, which had for the time been empty of its creature inhabitants. Christ, having given His Church that perfect beauty and crowned it with that glory, honor, and happiness, which were stipulated in the covenant of redemption before the world was and which He died to procure for them, having made it a truly glorious Church, every way complete, will present it before the Father without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Thus shall the saints be instated in everlasting glory to dwell there with Christ, Who shall feed them and lead them to living fountains of water, to the full enjoyment of God, and to an eternity of the most holy, glorious, and joyful employments.

From “The Final Judgment,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2,
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No born-again soul shall ever suffer the eternal judgment of God, for he has
forever passed beyond the reach of penal death or the curse of the Law,
Christ having suffered the curse on his behalf.—*A. W. Pink*

IN THY PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF JOY

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

FOR Christ and the saints meeting at the Judgment Day: No sooner are the saints lifted up and set before the Judge, but these things follow,

1. THEY LOOK, GAZE, DART THEIR BEAMS,⁵³ AND REFLECT THEIR GLORIES ON EACH OTHER. Oh, the communications! Oh, the dartings of beams between Christ and His saints! When two admirable persons, two lovers meet together, their eyes sparkle! They look on as if they would look through one another. So Christ and His saints at first meeting: they look on as if they would look through one another. Such is the effect of these looks that they give a luster to each other...Did not Moses’ face shine when he had been with God? And shall not the faces of the elect glitter and shine when Christ also looks on them?...As they shine by Christ, so shall *their* shine reflect on Christ and give all glory to Christ! This I take to be the meaning of the Apostle [Paul], “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints” (2Th 1:10). Not only in Himself, but in His saints also, whose glory, as it comes *from* Him, redounds⁵⁴ also *to* Him. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (Rom 11:36).

2. THEY ADMIRE THE INFINITE GLORY, BEAUTY, DIGNITY, AND EXCELLENCE THAT IS IN CHRIST. The glory they reflect *on* Him is nothing to the glory that is *in* Him. Oh! When these stars—the saints—shall but look upon Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, they exceedingly admire [Him]. So the Apostle: “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2Th 1:10). All that believe shall break out into admiration of Jesus Christ. At the first sight, they shall observe such excellence in Jesus Christ that they shall be infinitely taken with it. Here [on earth] we speak of Christ, and in speaking, we admire. But how they will admire [Him] when they shall not only speak or hear, but also *see* and *behold* Him, Who is the express image of God, and the brightness of his Father’s glory (Heb 1:3)! O the luster that He casts forth each way! Is not His very body more

⁵³ **dart their beams** – emit their rays of light.

⁵⁴ **redounds** – returns.

sparkling than the diamond before the sun? Yea, more than the sun itself now shining at noonday? How should the saints but wonder at this sight? Oh! *There is more beauty and glory in Jesus Christ than ever their thoughts or imaginations could possibly reach!* There is more weight of sweetness, joy, and delight in Jesus Christ than either the seeing eye, hearing ear, or the vast understanding heart (which can multiply and add still to any former thoughts) can possibly conceive (1Co 2: 9)! Every soul will cry out then, “I believed [I would] see much glory in Jesus Christ when I saw Him. I had some twilight or moonlight glances of Christ on earth: but—O blind I! O narrow I!—[I] could never have faith, opinion, thought, or imagination to fathom the thousand thousandth part of the worth and incomparable excellence that I now see in Him!”

Why, when we see more than ever we could expect, this causeth admiration. The saints shall then cry out and say, “I see more, ten thousand times more than ever I expected! I see all the beauty of God put forth in Christ, I see the substantial reflection of the Father’s light and glory in Jesus Christ, I see thousands of excellencies in Jesus Christ that never were revealed to me before!”... The glory of Christ will then exceed all former apprehension. O they admire to see the King in such a beauty! They admire to see the Judge in such a glittering and glorious robe of majesty! They admire, and they cannot *but* admire.

3. THEY ADORE AND MAGNIFY THE GRACE AND GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST. As it is said of the twenty-four elders that they fell down “before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev 4:10-11). So all the saints, [who have] now advanced to come up to Christ and to stand before the throne, fall down before Christ. They worship Him that lives forever, shouting and singing about Jesus Christ, setting out His glory, grace, and goodness! “After this I beheld,” saith John, “and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 7:9-12). Saints and angels will both give glory to Jesus Christ that day. Every elect man will then acknowledge, “Here is Christ that shed His blood for me! Here is the Savior that laid down His life for me! Here is the sacrifice that gave Himself a propitiation⁵⁵ for me! Here is the Person that mediated, interceded, and made peace for me! Here is the Redeemer that delivered and redeemed me from the wrath to come!” Then they begin those hallelujahs that never, never shall have an end: “Hallelujah!” And again, “Hallelujah! Amen, Hallelujah!”—“for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Rev 19: 7).

4. CHRIST WELCOMES THEM INTO HIS GLORIOUS PRESENCE. If the father could receive his prodigal but repenting son with hugs and kisses, how will Christ now receive His saints, when they come as a bride to the solemnization of the marriage? His very heart springs (as I may say) at the sight of His Bride! No sooner [does] He see her and salute her, but He welcomes her with such words as these: “O my love, my dove, my fair one—come now and enjoy thy Husband! Many a thought I have had of thee: before I made the world, I spent my infinite eternal thoughts on thy salvation. When the world began, I gave thee a promise that I would betroth thee unto me in righteousness, in judgment, in loving kindness, in mercy, and in faithfulness (Hos 2:19-20). [For thy sake I] was incarnate, lived, died, rose again, and ascended. And since My ascension, [I] have been interceding for thee and making ready the bride-chamber, where thou and I must live forever and ever. Now I come hither into the clouds to meet thee more than half the way. My meaning is to take thee by the hand and to bring thee to My Father. Now do I take thee for My own—O My sister, My spouse, thou art as dear to Me as My own dear heart! Come, see into My bosom, and see here love written in the golden letters of free grace. Come near, for I must have thee with Me... Sometimes thy sins have made a wall of partition between Me and thee. Sometimes I withdrew and was gone; I hid Myself beyond the curtains. And for a time, thou hast lain hid in the closet of the grave. But now we will never part more: Anon,⁵⁶ I will bring thee to My Father, and I will say to Him, ‘Father, behold! Here [is] My spouse that I have carried unto Myself.’ In the meantime, welcome to thy Jesus. I have purchased thee with My blood, I have paid dear for thee, and now I will wear thee as a crown and ornament forever.”

⁵⁵ **propitiation** – appeasement; a sin offering that turns away wrath.

⁵⁶ **anon** – at once; soon.

5. **CHRIST SETS THEM ON HIS RIGHT HAND...**This is the sign of Christ's love and respect to His saints: when He Himself ascended up into heaven, then said the Father to Him, "Son, sit Thou down at My right hand." No sooner are the saints ascended up to Christ, but He speaks the same to them, "Sit thou down at My right hand." Christ entertains them, as God the Father entertained Him—He at the right hand of God, and they at the right hand of Christ. And herein is set forth the great exaltation of the saints: Christ being set at God's right hand, God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name. So now are the saints highly exalted by Jesus Christ, now are they filled with unmatched perfection, now is the fullness of perfection, [the] fullness of honor and glory conferred upon them. "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir" (Psa 45:9), i.e., in the best, richest, finest gold. The Lord now puts upon His saints heaven's glory. He adorns them with all His ornaments fit for the marriage day...All the glory of this day is for nothing else but to set out the solemnity of the marriage. As the bridegroom on the day of nuptials comes forth in his glory; as the bride on the marriage day comes forth in her best array; and as the servants, parents, friends, and all appear on the marriage day in as much glory as they can, so Christ on this day comes forth in His glory with all His angels in their glory and the saints, the Lamb's wife! The King's daughter is all glorious without and within (Psa 45:13). Though stars may lose their shining when the sun ariseth, yet the glory of the saints shall be no less because of the Sun of Righteousness, but rather more.

This is the day that Christ shall honor His saints before all the world. "Come," He will say, "and sit you down at my right hand. As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, so will I separate you from wicked reprobates.⁵⁷ Why, you are they for whom the eternal counsels of My Father did work. You are they in whom I am now to be glorified forever. Therefore, now will I exalt, advance, and honor *you*! Sit here or stand here on My right hand. O come! Come hither to the right hand of your Savior!"

6. **HEREUPON CHRIST FULLY AND ACTUALLY JOYS IN THEM AND THEY IN HIM.** He joys in them because now He sees of the travail of His soul (Isa 53:11). He sees the issue of all His doings and sufferings here on earth. He sees now the great work He hath brought about, to wit,⁵⁸ the glory of His saints; and He cannot but rejoice therein. As a man that makes a work that is very curious and glorious, He takes abundance of delight to look upon it. When God made the world, He looked upon what He had made, He saw it was good, and He delighted in it. So Christ looks on His saints, and when He sees what He hath done in raising so poor a worm to so high an excellence, *He takes infinite delight therein*. Now He sees that He hath attained His end in the great design and deepest counsels that He had before the world! He was then resolved to save a number of sinners and to bring them at last to Himself that they might behold Him in His glory and manifest the riches of His grace. To that purpose hath He still been carrying on the great work of souls' salvation...and now that He sees it accomplished and fulfilled in them, He must needs delight: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zep 3:16-17).

And as He joys in them, so they cannot but rejoice in Him; as He delights in their glory, so they cannot but delight in His glory. Are they not at Christ's right hand? Is not that the place of pleasure, the Paradise of God? "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa 16:11). The very setting of them on Christ's right hand is the beginning of heaven's joy. The presence of Christ makes joy, "exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Oh! But what joy? What fullness of joy? What exceeding joy will it be to be set at Christ's right hand? Now begins that joy that never, never shall have an end! O the complacency⁵⁹ that the blessed feel in their seeing, knowing, loving, and being loved of Jesus Christ! "O my Christ! Let me have tribulation here, let me here spend my days in sorrow, and my breath in sighings; punish me here, cut me in pieces here, burn me here, so that I might there be placed at Thy right hand." For then will joy come and sorrow will vanish; sorrow is but for a night, this night of life. But joy will come in this morning of the resurrection, and it never shall be night again.

From *Looking unto Jesus*, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, www.sprinklepublications.net.

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664): Anglican, then Presbyterian minister; known for his exceptionally holy life; born in Ormskirk, Lancashire, England.

⁵⁷ **reprobates** – those rejected by God.

⁵⁸ **to wit** – namely.

⁵⁹ **complacency** – pleasure; delight; satisfaction.

COME YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER

Abraham Booth (1734-1806)

ANOTHER thing that will add to the blessedness of saints at that day is their public acquittal by Jesus the Judge, when standing before His tribunal. Behold He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him! Infinitely grand and awfully amiable⁶⁰ He now appears. Innumerable angels attend His approach, and pour around His chariot. The brightness of ten thousand suns is lost in the blaze of His glory and in the luster of His countenance.

Behold! A great white throne is erected, clear as light and fiery as flame. The Judge, inflexibly just and immensely glorious, ascends the tribunal. Before His presence, the heavens and the earth flee away. Those innumerable millions of rational creatures that people the uni-verse are now assembled.

The books are opened. Myriads of adoring seraphs and countless multitudes of anxious spectators await the grand result. The wicked, with trembling hands and throbbing hearts, with horror in their aspect⁶¹ and damnation in view, would be glad to lose their being. But the righteous are bold and intrepid,⁶² for the Judge is their Friend and their Savior. The righteousness in which they appear was performed by Him. The plea that they make He cannot reject: For it is the blood that He shed to atone for their sins and the promise He made to comfort their souls under the expectation of this important event.

They there stand—not to have any fresh indictment brought against them nor to have anything laid to their charge by Satan, the Law, or justice, but to be honorably acquitted in the presence of angels and of the whole assembled world. The sentence of justification, long before pronounced in the court of heaven and in the court of conscience at the time of their conversion, is now recognized in the most solemn and public manner. The works of faith and labors of love, performed by them toward their needy fellow Christians in the time of their pilgrimage here below, are now produced by the omniscient Judge. [These are the] fruits and evidences of their union with Him, of their faith in Him, and of their love to Him. The nature and quality of their works, the principle from which they proceed, and the end for which they were done, together with the character of those that were benefited by them, will afford sufficient evidence to whom the performers of them belong.

These expressions of love and fruits of holiness being remembered by Christ though forgotten by the saints—He will avow them for His own. He will number them among His jewels. He will confess them before His Father and all the holy angels. Then shall their characters, which in the time of their sojourning here below were aspersed⁶³ with every foul reproach, be fully vindicated to their everlasting honor and to the eternal confusion of all their adversaries. For with a smile of Divine complacency,⁶⁴ the Judge will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34).

Reviving words! Having long desired to be near the Lord, they are invited to come and to be with Him forever. Now the painful fears that they once had are eternally removed, for they are pronounced *blessed* of the Father by a voice that the whole assembled world shall hear. They were all poor in spirit and the generality of them poor in temporals.⁶⁵ How agreeably, then, must they be surprised to hear that they are called to possess a Kingdom, called to inherit it as princes of the blood royal who are born to thrones and crowns! Lost, they will be in pleasing astonishment to find that before they had a being or the foundations of the world were laid, the eternal God had prepared this Kingdom for them! Every reflection upon the way in which they came to possess it must heighten

⁶⁰ **awfully amiable** – majestically inspiring love.

⁶¹ **aspect** – gaze.

⁶² **intrepid** – without fear.

⁶³ **aspersed** – slandered; falsely accused.

⁶⁴ **complacency** – satisfaction; pleasure.

⁶⁵ **temporals** – possessions.

their amazement and joy. Then shall they be admitted in their whole persons into the fullness of bliss, into a nearer and more perfect fruition of God than they ever before enjoyed.

Their blessedness thus heightened shall be eternal. Eternity stamped on their enjoyments gives them their infinite worth. For could they, who are so high in bliss, be apprehensive of an end of their happiness, however remote, “that ghastly thought would drink up all [their] joy.”⁶⁶ But their inheritance is unalienable,⁶⁷ their crown unfading, and their Kingdom everlasting. Jehovah Himself is their light, and the Most High their glory. Yes, the infinite God is their portion and their exceeding great reward. Their felicity,⁶⁸ therefore, is permanent as the Divine perfections they adore and enjoy; and [it is] made certain to their own comprehensive minds beyond the possibility of a doubt. This makes their state supremely glorious. This constitutes it heaven indeed. Nay, what if the limits of their capacities should be forever enlarging and forever receiving greater measures of glory? For the Deity is an infinite source of blessedness, and finite vessels may be forever expanding and forever filling in that ocean of All-sufficiency. What an amazing state of ever-growing pleasure! What an astonishing scale of bliss! Jehovah shall open inexhaustible stores of blessings, as yet unknown to angels, and feast their souls with joys that are ever new. Nothing equal to this can be conceived by mortals! Nothing superior can be enjoyed by mere creatures.

Yet this—hear it, O ye nations! And listen, ye isles from afar (Jer 31:10)! While the millions of beatified⁶⁹ saints dwell on the stupendous truth!—this is the END⁷⁰ of the victorious reign of grace. Grace reigned in the eternal counsels, when contriving the way to this glorious end. Grace reigned in providing the means and in bestowing the blessings that were necessary to its accomplishment. Grace reigned to the complete execution of the noble, the astonishing design, from first to last. Surely, then, reigning grace should have the unrivalled honor of all the blessings enjoyed by believers on earth or by saints in light. Yes, and it shall have the glory in all the churches of Christ below and in all the triumphant hosts above. For when the last stone of the spiritual temple shall be laid, it will be with shoutings, “GRACE, GRACE UNTO IT!”

From *The Reign of Grace, from Its Rise to Its Consummation*, reprinted by
The Baptist Standard Bearer, www.standardbearer.org.

Abraham Booth (1734-1806): English Baptist preacher; considered one of the most learned men of his day; author of *The Reign of Grace, A Defense for the Baptists*, and others; born in Blackwell, Derbyshire, England.

The wicked may now pride themselves that in the Day of Judgment, they will placate God by their tears. But they will then find that not only His justice, but His outraged mercy also calls aloud for His vengeance upon them.—*A. W. Pink*

JUDGMENT AND THE SINS OF BELIEVERS

John Newton (1725-1807)

A letter to a friend, on the question, whether the sins of believers shall be publicly declared at the great Day?

MY DEAR SIR, My heart congratulates you...Your pilgrimage is nearly finished. You stand upon the river's brink with the city full in view, waiting and wishing for the appointed hour. You need not be anxious concerning your passage, for every circumstance attending it is already adjusted by Infinite Wisdom and Love. The King Himself will be ready to receive you. While you continue here, I am glad to hear from you and

⁶⁶ Edward Young (1683–1765), *The Complaint: or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death & Immortality*.

⁶⁷ **unalienable** – incapable of being transferred to another.

⁶⁸ **felicity** – happiness.

⁶⁹ **beatified** – blissfully, supremely happy.

⁷⁰ **end** – goal.

[am] glad to contribute in any way or degree to your satisfaction or even to shew my *willingness*, if I can do no more. I can propose little more than the latter by offering my thoughts on the subject you propose from 2 Corinthians 5:10, and the apparent difficulty of understanding that passage in full harmony with the many texts that seem expressly to assert that the sins of believers are so forgiven as to be remembered no more.

There is doubtless (as you observe) a perfect consistence in every part of the Word of God. The difficulties we meet with are wholly owing to the narrowness of our faculties and the ignorance that in some degree is inseparable from our present state of imperfection. And we may, in general, rest satisfied with the thought that there is a bright moment approaching when the veil shall be wholly taken away. It is the part of faith to rest upon the plain declarations of Scripture without indulging a blamable curiosity of knowing more than is clearly revealed. Yet while we humbly depend upon Divine teaching, it is right to aim at as enlarged a sense of what is revealed as we can attain to. Every acquisition of this kind is more valuable than gold, especially respecting those points that have an immediate tendency to comfort and support us under the view of an approaching dissolution: *the question you have proposed is undoubtedly of this nature.*

May the Lord direct my thoughts and pen that I may not “darken counsel by words without knowledge” (Job 38:2)! I have been looking over the passage you refer to in Dr. Ridgley,⁷¹ and think I might be well excused from saying anything further on the subject, as he hath briefly and fully stated all the arguments that have occurred to me on either side of the question. [He] closes with a proper caution not to be peremptory⁷² in determining, lest by attempting to be wise above what is written, I should betray my own folly. Yet as you desire to have my thoughts, I must say something. I wish I may not give you reason to think that this caution has been lost upon me.

I think all the great truths in which we are concerned are clearly and expressly laid down, not only in one, but also in many places of Scripture. But it sometimes happens that here and there we meet with a text, which, in the first and obvious sound of the words, seems to speak differently from what is asserted more largely elsewhere. [These] texts, singly taken, afford some men their only ground for the hypothesis they maintain...But their true interpretation is to be sought according to the analogy of faith. They are capable of a sense agreeable to the others, though the others are not intelligible in the sense they would fix upon these. In like manner I would say, whatever may be the precise meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:10, we are sure it cannot be designed to *weaken* what we are taught in almost every page of the free, absolute, and unalterable nature of a believer’s *justification*. The benefit of [this doctrine], as to the forgiveness of sin, is signified by the phrases of “blotting out,” “not remembering,” “casting behind the back,” and “into the depths of the sea.” The sins of a believer are so effectually removed that even when

⁷¹ **Thomas Ridgley** (c. 1667-1734) – “But there is a difficult question proposed by some, namely, Whether shall the sins of God’s people be published in the Great Day; though it is certain they shall not be alleged against them to their condemnation? This is one of the secret things that belong to God, which He has not so fully or clearly revealed to us in His Word; so that we can say little more about it than what is matter of conjecture. Some have thought that the sins of the godly, though forgiven shall be made manifest, so that the glory of that grace that has pardoned them may appear more illustrious, and their obligation to God farther enhanced. They also think that the justice of the proceedings of that Day requires it; since it is presumed and known by the whole world that they were prone to sin as well as others—that, before conversion, they were as great sinners as any—and that after it their sins had a peculiar aggravation. Why, then, they ask, should not their sins be made public, as a glory due to the justice and holiness of God, as being infinitely opposite to all sin? This they farther suppose to be necessary: that the impartiality of divine justice may appear. Moreover, if God, by recording the sins of his saints in Scripture, has perpetuated the knowledge of them, and if it is to their honor that the sins there mentioned were repented of as well as forgiven, why may it not be supposed that the sins of believers shall be made known in the Great Day? Besides, that they shall be made known seems agreeable to those Scriptures that state that every word and every action shall be brought into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be bad.—On the other hand, it is supposed by others, that though the making known of sin which is subdued and forgiven, tends to the advancement of divine grace; yet it is sufficient to answer this end—as far as God designs it shall be answered—that the sins that have been subdued and forgiven should be known to those who committed them, who, in consequence of having received pardon, have matter of praise to God. Again, the expressions of Scripture whereby forgiveness of sin is set forth are such as seem to argue that those sins that were forgiven shall not be made manifest. Thus they are said to be ‘blotted out,’ ‘covered,’ ‘subdued,’ ‘cast into the depths of the sea,’ and ‘remembered no more,’ etc. Besides, Christ’s being a Judge does not divest Him of the character of an Advocate, Whose part is rather to conceal the crimes of those whose cause He pleads than to divulge them. We may add, that the Law, which requires duty and forbids the contrary sins, is not the rule by which they who are in Christ are to be proceeded against, for if it were, they could not stand in Judgment; but they are dealt with according to the tenor of the Gospel, which forgives and covers all sins. Furthermore, it is argued that the public declaring of all their sins before the whole world, notwithstanding their interest in forgiving grace, would fill them with such shame as is hardly consistent with a state of perfect blessedness. Lastly, the principal argument insisted on is that our Savior, in Matthew 25, in which He gives a particular account of the proceedings of that day, makes no mention of the sins, but only commends the graces of His saints. Such arguments as these are alleged to prove that it is probable the sins of the saints shall not be exposed to public view in the Great Day. But after all that has been said, it is safest for us not to be too peremptory² in determining this matter, lest, by pretending to be wise beyond what is clearly revealed in Scripture, we betray our own folly and too bold presumption or assert that which is not right of this glorious Judge. Thus concerning the method in which Christ shall proceed in judging the world.” (Commentary on the Larger Catechism)

⁷² **peremptory** – self-assured; dogmatic.

or if they are sought for, they cannot be found. For Jesus has borne them away. Believers are complete in Him and clothed in His righteousness. They shall stand before God without spot or wrinkle. Who shall lay anything to their charge?

But it is probable that those stray expressions, chiefly, if not entirely, respect the guilt, imputation, and deserved *consequences* of sin. None can suppose that the Lord will or *can* forget the sins of His people, or that they can be ever hid from His all-comprehending view. Neither can I think they themselves will forget them. Their song is founded upon a recollection of their sins and their circum-stances in this life (Rev 5:9). Their love, and consequently their happiness, seems inseparably connected with the consciousness of what they were and what they had done (Luk 7:47). And I think those are the sweetest moments in this life, when we have the clearest sense of our own sins, *provided the sense of our acceptance in the Beloved is proportionately clear*, and we feel the consolations of His love, notwithstanding all our transgressions. When we arrive in glory, unbelief and fear will cease forever: our nearness to God and communion with Him will be unspeakably beyond what we can now conceive. Therefore, the remembrance of our sins will be no abatement of our bliss, but rather the contrary. When Pharaoh and his host were alive and pursuing them, the Israelites were terrified: but afterwards, when they saw their enemies dead upon the shore, their joy and triumph were not abated, but heightened by the consideration of their number.

With respect to our sins being made known to others, I acknowledge with you that I could not now bear to have any of my fellow creatures made acquainted with what passes in my heart for a single day. But I apprehend it is a part and a proof of my present depravity that I feel myself disposed to pay so great a regard to the judgment of *men*, while I am so little affected with what I am in the sight of the pure and holy *God*. But I believe that hereafter, when self shall be entirely rooted out and my will perfectly united to the Divine will, I should feel no reluctance—*supposing it for the manifestation of His glorious grace*—that men, angels, and devils should know the very worst of me.

Whether it will be so or no, I dare not determine. Perhaps the difficulty chiefly lies in the necessity of our being taught at present heav-enly things by earthly. In the descriptions we have of the Great Day, allusion is made to what is most solemn in human transactions. The ideas of the Judgment Seat, the great trumpet, of the books being opened, and the pleadings (Mat 25:37-44) seem to be borrowed from the customs that obtain amongst men to help our weak conceptions, rather than justly and fully to describe what will be the real process. Now, when we attempt to look into the unseen world, we carry our ideas of time, place, and sensible objects along with us. We cannot divest ourselves of them or provide ourselves with better. Yet perhaps they have as little relation to the objects we aim at, as the ideas that a man born blind acquires from what he hears and feels have to the true nature of light and colors...In a word, my dear Sir, if I have not given you satisfaction—I *am sure I have not satisfied myself*—accept my apology in the words of a much wiser and an inspired man: “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psa 139:6). Ere long, we shall know: in the meanwhile, our cause is in sure hands. We have a Shepherd Who will guide us below; an Advocate Who will receive and present us before the Throne above. I trust we meet daily before the Throne of Grace; hereafter we shall meet in glory.

From “Letter 3” in *The Works of John Newton*, Vol. 1, reprinted by
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John Newton (1725-1807): Anglican minister; evangelical preacher and author of many hymns including *Amazing Grace*; born in Wapping, London, England.

FREE FROM THE FEAR OF JUDGMENT

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

*“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.
He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”—1 John 4:18*

THE Christian should be free from the fear of judgment. The natural man *should* fear it; the Christian should be *free* from such fear. Is there anything that is more glorious about the Gospel than just that? But there are people who dispute this. There are poor Christian people who believe that it is their duty to be miserable. There are those who say that it is presumptuous for people in this life and world, who know the darkness of their own heart and who know something of the justice and righteousness and holiness of God...to be free from that fear. In the words of Milton, they “scorn delights and live laborious days,” afraid to say they have the joy of the Lord or the assurance of salvation.

Yet surely, it is unscriptural to do so. It is the universal teaching of Scripture that we should be delivered from this fear of the Day of Judgment. Take Hebrews 2:15, where we are told that one of the main purposes of our Lord’s coming and one of the main effects of His death upon the cross and of His resurrection is to deliver “them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” It is not death but what comes after it that frightens me. But, says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that was the whole purpose of Christ’s coming—that He might deliver us from this torment of death that holds us captive. Or take 2 Peter 3:12, “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” This is the very Day of which I am speaking, and this is the teaching that is to be found everywhere.

“Ye,” says the Apostle Paul in Romans, “have not received the spir-it of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father...[We] ourselves also,” he goes on to say, “which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for”—that is it—“waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:15, 23–24). This is everywhere in Scripture, so that to assume that this is something to which the Christian is not entitled and to consider it as a kind of presumption is to be thoroughly unscriptural.

But the Apostle John has a particular argument to drive this point home. He says that love and fear are utterly incompatible: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.”

Now this is something that can be easily elaborated upon. Love and fear are indeed opposites: the spirit of fear is the antithesis⁷³ to the true spirit of love. Think of the endless illustrations that come rushing into the mind...Take, for instance, the example given by our Lord Himself when He was sending out His disciples to preach and to cast out devils. He warned them they would certainly be in danger. There would be many people who would dislike them, but this was His advice: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28). The way to get rid of this fear, says our Lord to these people, is, in a sense, to have this greater fear, which ultimately is the love of God: the greater drives out the lesser.

That, then, is the first proposition, and John then goes on to say that because Christians are those in whom love has been made perfect, it follows of necessity that they should not dwell in a fearful condition. This is so because of the love of God that is in their hearts. If men and women are fearful, it means they are afraid of punishment; and there is something defective in their whole conception of love. They are not loving and abiding in this state of love. So John argues that the Christian must be entirely free. Do you see the steps? Love and fear are incompatible: love drives out fear. Love comes into the heart of the Christian and drives out fear, so we have no right to be fearful in this sense.

But what about the argument and the exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews about approaching God “with reverence and godly fear”? What about the statement that “our God is a consuming fire”? (Heb 12:28–29). What about the statement that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1Jo1:5)? How do you reconcile these things? Surely, the answer is provided by the quotations themselves. What John is here speaking about is a craven⁷⁴ fear, which is a very different thing from reverence and holy awe. There is, I suggest, always a sense of reverence in connection with love...if men and women love God, there is a sense of awe, holiness about it—there is true reverence in it. “Reverence and godly fear” is a very different thing from this “fear [that] hath torment,” a fear that cringes and trembles. That is the thing that perfect love drives out. So the natural man should have fear of the Day of Judgment, and the Christian should be free from that fear.

⁷³ **antithesis** – direct opposite.

⁷⁴ **craven** – cowardly.

How then...does the Christian become free? There are two main answers to this. The first is that Christians realize the love of God that comes to them in Jesus Christ and the work of Christ for them. John has been elaborating on that from verse 9 in this particular chapter. To quote it once more: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” That is the great thing!

The first way to get rid of this fear is to understand the doctrine of justification⁷⁵ by faith only. That is why the Protestant Fathers emphasized it, and that is why only an utterly superficial idea of Christianity dislikes this doctrine. The first way for us to get rid of this fear of the Day of Judgment is to realize what God has done for us in the Person and the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let me put this practically. As I contemplate myself standing before God on the Day of Judgment, I know perfectly well I am a sinner. I have offended God, have broken His Law, and have forgotten Him. I have not loved Him with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength. I have been guilty of sins against His people and against myself. I am a sinner. How can I stand there? There is only one way in which I can stand: that is to know and *believe* that He sent forth His Son to bear my sins in His own body on the tree. Hiding in Christ—nothing else can give me peace at that point. I may say that I have done a lot of good, but what is the value of good to counteract the evil I have done? There is only one thing, and it is Christ. I am hiding in Him.

I have no other hope as I contemplate the holiness of God and the holiness of heaven. My only hope is that there is a cloak of righteousness woven by the Son of God Himself that will cover me, that will cover the darkness of my sins and my sinful life, so that I shall stand clothed, robed, and perfected in my Lord and Savior. That is the first thing to realize—the love of God and what He has done for me. Justification by faith only!

The second thing, that which John has been emphasizing right through this passage, is to realize that I am a partaker of the divine nature, that God Himself has come to dwell in me, and that therefore I am like God. This is the very argument that we had at the end of the previous verse: “Because as he is, so are we in this world” (4:17). The second ground of my being able to stand with boldness is that as I contemplate the Day of Judgment I can say to myself, “Well, as the result of applying the various tests I find in that first epistle of John, I believe that in spite of my unworthiness I am a child of God. I want to know God better. I want to love Him more. This concerns me. I do love the brethren; I like to be with them. I like reading the Scriptures. I like praying. Those are not things that are true of the natural man, so I must be a child of God. He has given me His own nature, or I would not be like that. I know something of this love of the brethren. So as I contemplate facing Him, I am a child of His! Can the Father reject His child? No! He has promised He will not do so.”

So, you see, in addition to my justification, my sanctification⁷⁶ helps me. “Herein is our love made perfect...because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.” If we are still fearful, we are not made perfect in love. We must always take those two things together. If I do not always take justification and sanctification together, I shall be misleading myself. I shall fall into antinomianism.⁷⁷ I shall say that if I am justified by Christ, it does not matter what I do. But John does not argue like that: it is a superficial argument. God knows I have tried it, and I know what an utter failure it is. No! Divide justification and sanctification at your peril; they are *always* together. Christ “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30).

What is the relationship of these two? It is most important and interesting. I put it like this to you: There is the immediate and the mediate way of getting rid of the fear of the Day of Judgment; or if you prefer, there is a direct and an indirect way, and you need both. The immediate or the direct way is to understand the doctrine of justification by faith only. When I feel utterly condemned, hopeless, and sinful, there is only one thing to do: I can rely upon nothing but the work of Christ for me. I cannot rely upon my acts: they are the cause of my misery. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God...” (Rom 5:1). Thank God for that! So if you find yourself on your deathbed with the memory of an old sin, or if you have done something or thought something you

⁷⁵ **justification** – “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” (Spurgeon’s Catechism, Q. 32; available from Chapel Library)

⁷⁶ **sanctification** – “Sanctification is the work of God’s Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin, and live to righteousness.” (Spurgeon’s Catechism, Q. 34; available from Chapel Library)

⁷⁷ **antinomianism** – the belief of those who reject God’s Moral Law or any external laws on individual behavior.

know to be wrong and you do not have time to start living a better life, I say, just hide yourself in Christ! You are all right—you are justified by faith only.

But do remember the other side—the indirect or the mediate method, which works like this: If I am not living the Christian life, and love is not perfected in me, I will have a constant sense of condemnation and of fearfulness. I will spend the whole of my life in this world in condemnation. My whole life will be lived in misery, and I am not meant for that. I am meant to live a life of joy and of peace and happiness! I am meant to have boldness as I contemplate the Day of Judgment.

So how do I do that? Here is the answer: Live a life of love; let love be perfected in you. Love the brethren, and as you do so, you will say to yourself, “In spite of what I am, I find that as He is, so am I in this world.” You will find yourself loving someone who is hateful, and you will draw the correct deduction and will say, “It must be that Christ is in me.” You will come to the Day of Judgment without fear or trembling. So sanctification indirectly, mediately, will act with the justification that does it directly and immediately, and that is the prescription that is prescribed by the Apostle at this particular point.

Let us be clear as to the position here. We will not be perfect in this world, but as we dwell in Christ and as we manifest this love, we will know that we are in God and God in us. We will realize that we have nothing but Him, that though we are still imperfect, “He which hath begun a good work in [us] will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). He will perfect us; and so at the end, He will “present [us] faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). The more I am like Christ, the less I will fear the Day of Judgment, and the greater will be my boldness as I think of it and as I contemplate it.

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David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Perhaps the greatest expository preacher of the 20th century; successor to G. Campbell Morgan as minister of Westminster Chapel, London, England, 1938-68; born in Wales.

FLEE NOW TO CHRIST

Edward Payson (1783-1827)

To a mind that looks beyond present appearances to future realities and with the eye of faith sees things that are not as though they were, how solemn, how interesting is the scene before us. In this assembly, we behold an assembly of immortals, an assembly of candidates for eternity—a part of that vast assembly, which will one day stand exulting in triumph or sinking in despair before the tribunal of an avenging God. In every individual here present, we contemplate an heir of glory or a child of perdition, a future inhabitant of heaven or a prisoner of hell...Whatever diversity there may be in other respects, how different soever may be your character, pursuits, and situations in life, to one of these classes, my friends, you all belong. For you must all appear before the Judgment Seat to receive according to the deeds done in the body. And after the irrevocable sentence is pronounced, must each of you depart accursed into everlasting fire or enter blessed into life eternal...Do you consider it a matter of no consequence, my friends, to know which of these will be your lot? You are usually sufficiently fond of looking forward beyond the present hour and anticipating the future scenes of life, especially when any important event is before you. With anxious eagerness and curiosity, you look forward from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to age. Perhaps not a single hour arrives, which has not been the subject of frequent anticipation.

Come then, and exercise for a few moments an employment of which you are so fond...Come and look forward to the final consummation of all things, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who know not God, and who are disobedient to the truth; when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; and

the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth with the works thereof shall be burnt up. Come and look forward to that tremendous day—far more terrible to the self-condemned sinner than all the horrors of dissolving nature and a world on fire—that will unalterably determine our final destinies and bestow on each of us an eternal weight of glory or consign us over to the mansions of despair...

Must we all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ? Then surely it becomes us diligently to inquire whether we are prepared for this all-important event. And suffer me, with the solemnity that such a subject demands, to ask each individual...“If you should this moment be called to the bar of God, what sentence have you reason to suppose He would pass on you?” Pause and reflect, and let conscience answer. And what does she answer? To some, I hope to many of you, she whispers peace and pardon through the blood of Christ and an assurance that you are accepted in the Beloved. Yet even in this case, there is great danger of self-deception...If you are trusting to any works of righteousness that you have done, any external morality and decency of conduct; or if on the other hand, you are pretending to trust in the righteousness of Christ without imitating His example and obeying His commands, your hope is vain, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins. Faith without works or works without faith are [equally] a sandy foundation. Examine then diligently the foundation on which your eternal hope is built. Remember that not those who *say* unto Christ, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of our heavenly Father.

Will you dare offer to your Judge those vain and frivolous excuses with which you now quiet your conscience and deceive yourself? Will you dare come to the bar of God and tell Him that He was a hard master? That His Law was too severe? That His Word was unintelligible? That you could not learn your duty? That you were unable to repent and believe? Consider, O consider well what answer you are prepared to give. See that it be such an one as you dare rest your hopes upon and defend at the bar of a heart-searching Judge. Consider all these things, ye who are now forgetting God, lest He tear you in pieces as a lion, and there be none to deliver! Let this consideration rouse you from your lethargy to lay hold on the hope set before you. Do not stand lingering and delaying as did Lot in Sodom, but suffer me to hasten you as the angels did him. For the wrath of God is upon the state in which you now are, and the fiery storm of divine vengeance is ready every moment to burst upon your heads. O then fly, fly quickly, fly immediately! Escape for your lives; look not behind you, but hasten to the mountains pointed out, even to Christ, the eternal Rock of ages, lest ye die. As sure, O sinner, as thy soul liveth, as sure as God lives, there is but a step between thee and death. But flee now unto Christ, and your soul shall live.

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Edward Payson (1783-1827): American Congregational preacher.

