

# THE GREAT JUDGMENT



CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

# THE GREAT JUDGMENT

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# THE GREAT JUDGMENT

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”—2 Corinthians 5:10*

This morning we preached concerning the resurrection of the dead, and it seems consistent with order to carry forward our thoughts this evening to that which follows immediately after the resurrection, namely, the general judgment—for the dead rise on purpose that they may be judged in their bodies. The resurrection is the immediate prelude to the judgment. There is no need that I try to prove to you from Scripture that there will be a general judgment, for the Word of God abounds with proof-passages.

You have them in the Old Testament. You find David anticipating that great assize<sup>1</sup> in the Psalms (especially in such as the forty-ninth and fiftieth, the ninety-sixth Psalm, and the three that follow it), for most assuredly the Lord cometh: He cometh to judge the earth in righteousness. Very solemnly and very tenderly does Solomon in the Ecclesiastes warn the young man that,

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<sup>1</sup> **assize** – a court session or a circuit of court sessions.

let him rejoice as he may and cheer his heart in the days of his youth, for all these things God will bring him into judgment—for God will judge every secret thing. Daniel in the night visions beholds the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven and drawing near to the Ancient of Days, then He sits upon the throne of judgment and the nations are gathered before Him. It was no new doctrine to the Jews; it was received and accepted by them as a most certain fact that there would be a day in which God would judge the earth in righteousness.

The New Testament is very express.<sup>2</sup> The twenty-fifth of Matthew contains language that could not possibly be more clear and definite from the lips of the Saviour Himself. He is the faithful Witness and cannot lie. You are told that before Him will be gathered all nations; and He shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Other passages there are in abundance, as, for instance, the one that is now before us, which is plain enough. Another we might quote is in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, the first chapter, from the seventh to the tenth verse. Let us read it:

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be

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<sup>2</sup> **express** – expressed, not implied; implicit.

admired in all them that believe [because our testimony among you was believed] in that day.”

The Book of the Revelation is very graphic in its depicting that last general judgment. Turn to the twentieth chapter, at the eleventh and twelfth verses. The seer<sup>3</sup> of Patmos says,

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Time would fail me to refer you to all the Scriptures. It is asserted over and over again by the Holy Spirit, Whose word is truth, that there will be a judgment of the quick and of the dead.

Beside that direct testimony, it should be remembered there is a cogent<sup>4</sup> argument that so it must needs be, from the very fact that *God is just* as the Ruler over men. In all human governments there must be an assize held. Government cannot be conducted without its days of session and of trial, and, inasmuch as there is evidently sin and evil in this world, it might fairly be anticipated that there would be a time when God will go on circuit, and when He will call the pris-

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<sup>3</sup> **seer** – prophet.

<sup>4</sup> **cogent** – forceful and to the point.

oners before Him, and the guilty shall receive their condemnation.

Judge for yourselves: is this present state the conclusion of all things? If so, what evidence would you adduce<sup>5</sup> of the divine justice, in the teeth of the fact that the best of men are often in this world the poorest and the most afflicted: while the worst of men acquire wealth, practice oppression, and receive homage from the crowd? Who are they that ride in the high places of the earth? Are they not those great transgressors who “wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind”? Where are the servants of God? They are in obscurity and suffering full often. Do they not sit like Job among the ashes, subjects of little pity, objects of much upbraiding? And where are the enemies of God? Do not many of them wear purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day? If there be no hereafter, then Dives<sup>6</sup> has the best of it; and the selfish man who fears not God, is, after all, the wisest of men and more to be commended than his fellows.

But it cannot be so. Our common sense revolts against the thought. There must be another state in which these anomalies<sup>7</sup> will all be rectified. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable” (1Co 15:19), says the apostle. The best of men were driven to the worst of straits in those persecuting times for being God’s servants. How say ye then *Finis coronat opus*, “the end crowns the work”? That cannot be the final issue of life, or justice itself

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<sup>5</sup> **adduce** – give as a reason or proof.

<sup>6</sup> **Dives** (dī´-vēz; from the Latin *Vulgate*) – the rich man at whose gate Lazarus lay (Luk 16:19-31).

<sup>7</sup> **anomalies** – abnormalities.

were frustrated. There must be a restitution for those who suffer unjustly; there must be a punishment for the wicked and the oppressor.

Not only may this be affirmed from a general sense of justice, but there is in the conscience of most men, if not of all, an assent to this fact. As an old Puritan says,

“God holds a petty session in every man’s conscience, which is the earnest of the assize that He will hold by and by—for almost all men judge themselves, and their conscience knows this to be wrong and that to be right. I say ‘almost all,’ for there seems to be in this generation a race of men who have so stultified<sup>8</sup> their conscience that the spark appears to have gone out, and they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. The lie they seem to approve, but the truth they do not recognize. But let conscience alone and do not stupefy her, and you shall find her bearing witness that there is a Judge of all the earth who must do right.”

Now this is peculiarly the case when conscience is allowed full play. Men who are busy about their work or entertained with their pleasures, often keep their consciences quiet. As John Bunyan (1628-1688) puts it, they shut up Mr. Conscience: they blind his windows; they barricade his doors; and as for the great bell on the top of the house, which the old gentleman was wont to ring, they cut the rope of it, so that he cannot get at it, for they do not wish him to disturb the town

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<sup>8</sup> **stultified** – made dull and slow.



of Mansoul.<sup>9</sup> But when death comes, it often happens that Mr. Conscience escapes from his prison-house, and then, I warrant you, he will make such a din that there is not a sleeping head in all Mansoul. He will cry out and avenge himself for his constrained silence, and make the man know that there is a something within him not quite dead, which cries out still for justice, and that sin cannot go unchastised.

There must be a judgment, then. Scripture asserts it, that would be enough. But by way of collateral evidence the natural order of things requires it; and conscience attests it.

Now we come to consider what our text says about the judgment. I pray you, brethren, if I should speak coldly tonight on this momentous truth, or fail to excite your attention and stir your deepest emotions, forgive me, sirs. And may God forgive me, for I shall have good reason to ask God's forgiveness, seeing that if ever a topic should arouse the preacher to a zeal for the honor of his Lord and for the welfare of his fellow creatures, and so make him doubly in earnest, it is this. But, then, permit me to say that if ever there was a theme quite independent of the speaker, which on its own account alone should command your thoughtfulness, it is that which I now bring before you. I feel no need of oratory or of speech well selected: the bare mention of the fact that such a judgment is impending, and will ere long occur, might well hold you in breathless silence, still the very throbbings of your pulse, and choke the utterance of my lips. The certainty of it, the

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<sup>9</sup> **Mansoul** – allegorical city from Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1682), in which Diablos deceives the inhabitants to revolt against the king's son Immanuel with disastrous results.

reality of it, the terrors that accompany it, the impossibility of escaping from it, all appeal to us now and demand our vigilance.

## 1. The Judged

Who will appear before the throne of judgment? The answer is plain; it admits of no exemption: "We must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2Co 5:10). This is very decisive, [even] if there were no other text. We must all appear; that is to say, every one of the human race. We must *all* appear.

And that the godly will not be exempted from this appearance is very clear, for the apostle here is speaking to Christians. He says, "*We* walk by faith, not by sight. *We* are confident. *We* labour," and so on; and then he puts it, "*We* must *all* appear." So that, beyond all others, it is certain that all Christians must appear there. The text is quite conclusive upon that point. And if we had not that text, we have the passage in Matthew (Mat 25:31-46) in which the sheep are summoned there as certainly as are the goats; and the passage in the Revelation (Rev 20:12) where all the dead are judged according to the things which are written in the books. They are all there.

And if the objection should be raised, "We thought that the sins of the righteous being pardoned, and forever blotted out, they could never come into judgment," we have only to remind you, beloved, that if they are so pardoned and blotted out, as they undoubtedly are, the righteous have no reason to fear coming into judgment. They are the persons who covet the judgment, and will be able to stand there to receive a public acquittal from the mouth of the great Judge.

Who among us wishes, as it were, to be smuggled into heaven unlawfully? Who desires to have it said by the damned in hell, "You were never tried, or else you might have been condemned as we were."

No, brethren, we have a hope that we can stand the trial. The way of righteousness by Christ Jesus enables us to submit ourselves to the most tremendous tests which even that burning day can bring forth. We are not afraid to be put into the balances. We even *desire* that day when our faith in Jesus Christ is strong and firm; for we say, "Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom 8:34). We can challenge the day of judgment. Who is he that shall lay anything to our charge in that day, or at any other, since Christ hath died and hath risen again (Rom 8:34)? It is needful that the righteous should be there, that there may not be any partiality in the matter whatever; that the thing may be all clear and straight, and that the rewards of the righteous may be seen to be, though of grace, yet without any violation of the most rigorous justice.

Dear brethren, what a day it will be for the righteous! For some of them were, perhaps some here present are, lying under some very terrible accusation of which they are perfectly guiltless. All will be cleared up then, and that will be one great blessing of that day. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies. Men [now] call the righteous "fools": [but] then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They hounded them to death, as not being fit to live. In early ages they laid to the Christians charges of the most terrible character, which I should count it shame to mention. But then they will all be clear; and those of whom the world was not worthy,

who were driven and hunted about and made to dwell in the caves of the earth, they shall come forth as worthy ones, and the world shall know her true aristocracy; earth shall own her true nobility. The men whose names she cast out as evil shall then be held in great repute, for they shall stand out clear and transparent without spot or blemish. It is well that there should be a trial for the righteous, for the clearing of them, the vindication of them, and that it should be public, defying the cavil<sup>10</sup> and criticism of all mankind.

“We must *all* appear.” What a vast assembly, what a prodigious<sup>11</sup> gathering, that of the entire human race! It struck me as I was meditating upon this subject, what would be the thoughts of Father Adam, as he stood there with Mother Eve and looked upon his offspring. It will be the first time in which he has ever had the opportunity of seeing all his children met together. What a sight will he then behold—far stretching, covering all the globe which they inhabit, enough not only to people all earth’s plains, but crown her hilltops, and cover even the waves of the sea—so numberless must the human race have been, if all the generations that have ever lived, or shall ever live, shall at once rise from the dead! Oh, what a sight will that be!

Is it too marvelous for our imagination to picture? Yet it is quite certain that the assemblage will be mustered, and the spectacle will be beheld. Every one from before the Flood, from the days of the Patriarchs, from the times of David, from the Babylonian kingdom, all the legions of Assyria, all the hosts of Persia, all the

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<sup>10</sup> **cavil** – trivial faultfinding.

<sup>11</sup> **prodigious** – of great size; enormous; huge.

phalanx<sup>12</sup> of the Greeks, all the vast armies and legions of Rome, the barbarian, the Scythian, the bond, the free, men of every colour and of every tongue—they shall all stand in that great day before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

There come the kings—no greater than the men they call their slaves. There come the princes—but they have doffed their coronets, for they must stand like common flesh and blood. Here come the judges, to be judged themselves; and the advocates and barristers, needing an advocate on their own account. Here come those that thought themselves too good and kept the street to themselves. There are the Pharisees, hustled by the Publicans on either side and sunk down to the natural level with them. Mark the peasants rising from the soil; see the teeming myriads from outside the great cities streaming in, countless hosts such as no Alexander or Napoleon ever beheld! See how the servant is as great as his master! “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” are now proclaimed. No kings, no princes, no nobles, can shelter themselves behind their order, assert a privilege or claim an immunity. Alike on one common level they stand together, to be tried before the last tremendous tribunal.<sup>13</sup>

There shall come the wicked of every sort. Proud Pharaoh shall be there; Senacherib, the haughty; Herod, that would have slain the young child; Judas, that betrayed his master; Demas, that sold him for gold; and Pilate, who would fain have washed his hands in inno-

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<sup>12</sup> **phalanx** – an ancient military formation of infantry soldiers.

<sup>13</sup> **tribunal** – a court of justice.

cency. There shall come the long list of infallibles,<sup>14</sup> the whole line of popes, to receive their damnation at the Almighty's hands, and the priests that trod upon the necks of nations, and the tyrants that used the priests as their tools—they shall come to receive the thunderbolts of God, which they so richly deserve. Oh, what a scene will it be! These little companies, which look to us so large when they are gathered together beneath this roof, how do they shrink into the drop of a bucket as compared with the ocean of life that shall swell around the throne at the last great Judgment day. They shall all be there.

Now, the most important thought connected with this to *me*, is that I shall be there; to *you* young men, that *you* will be there; to *you*, ye aged of every sort, that *you*, *in propria personē*<sup>15</sup>—*each* one shall be there. Are you rich? Your dainty dress shall be put off. Are you poor? Your rags shall not exempt you from attendance at that court. None shall say, "I am too obscure." You must come up from that hiding place. None shall say, "I am too public." You must come down from that pedestal. Everyone must be there. Note the word "we." "*We* must *all* appear."

And still further note the word, "appear." "We must all *appear*." No disguise will be possible. Ye cannot come there dressed in masquerade of profession or attired in robes of state, but we must *appear*; we must be seen through, must be displayed, must be revealed; off will come your garments, and your spirit will be judged of God—not after appearance, but according to

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<sup>14</sup> **infallibles** – those who consider themselves incapable of error and never wrong.

<sup>15</sup> ***in propria personē*** – in one's own person or right.

the inward heart. Oh, what a day that will be when every man shall see himself, and every man shall see his fellow, and the eyes of angels and the eyes of devils, and the eyes of God upon the throne, shall see us through and through. Let these thoughts dwell upon your minds, while you take this for the answer to our first enquiry: who is to be judged?

## 2. The Judge

Who will be the judge? “We must all appear before the judgment seat *of Christ*.” That Christ should be appointed judge of all mankind is most proper and fitting. Our British law ordains that a man shall be tried by his peers, and there is justice in the statute. Now the Lord God will judge men, but at the same time it will be in the person of Jesus Christ the man. Men shall be judged by a man. He that was once judged by men shall judge men. Jesus knows what man should be—He has been under the Law Himself in deep humility, Who is ordained to administer the Law in high authority. He can hold the scales of justice evenly, for He has stood in man’s place and borne and braved man’s temptations. He therefore is the most fit judge that could be selected.

I have sometimes heard and read sermons in which the preacher said that a Christian ought to rejoice that his Judge is his friend. There may be no impropriety<sup>16</sup> intended, still it seems to me rather a questionable suggestion. I should not like to put it in that way myself, because any judge that was partial to

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<sup>16</sup> **impropriety** – improper action or behavior.

his friends when he sat on the judgment seat would deserve to come off the seat immediately.

As a judge I expect no favouritism from Christ. I expect when He sits there He will deal out even-handed justice to all. I cannot see how it is right for any minister to hold it forth that we should find encouragement in the Judge being our friend. Friend or no friend, we shall go in for a fair trial every one of us, and Christ will not be a respecter of persons. Of Him Whom God has appointed to judge the world, it shall not be said when the assize is over that He winked at the crimes of some and extenuated<sup>17</sup> them, while He searched out the faults of others and convicted them. He will be fair and upright throughout. He is our friend, I grant you, and He will be our friend and Saviour forever; but, as a judge, we must keep to the thought, and believe and maintain it, that He will be impartial to all the sons of men.

You will have a fair trial, man. He that will judge you will not take sides against you. We have sometimes thought that men have been shielded from the punishment they deserved, because they were of a certain clerical profession, or because they occupied a certain official position. A poor labourer who kills his wife shall be hanged, but when another man of superior station does the like deed of violence, and stains his hands with the blood of her whom he had vowed to love and cherish, the capital sentence shall not be executed upon him. Everywhere we see in the world that with the best intentions justice somehow or other does squint a little. Even in this country there is just the slightest possible turning of the scale, and God grant that may

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<sup>17</sup> **extenuated** – lessened the seriousness of an offense by excuses.



be cured ere long. I do not think it is intentional, and I hope the nation will not long have to complain about it. There ought to be the same justice for the poorest beggar that crawls into a casual ward, as for his lordship that owns the broadest acres in all England. Before the law, at least, all men ought to stand equal. So shall it be with the Judge of all the earth. *Fiat justitilia, ruat caelum!*<sup>18</sup> Christ will by all means hold the scales even. Thou shalt have a fair trial, and a full trial, too. There shall be no concealment of anything in thy favour, and no keeping back of anything against thee. No witnesses shall be borne across the sea to keep them out of the way. They shall all be there, and all testimony shall be there, and all that is wanted to condemn or to acquit shall be produced in full court at that trial.

And hence it will be a final trial. From that court there will be no appeal. If Christ saith “Cursed!”—cursed must they be forever. If Christ saith “Blessed!”—blessed shall they be for aye. Well, this is what we have to expect then, to stand before the throne of the man Christ Jesus the Son of God, and there to be judged.

### 3. The Rule of Judgment

What will be the rule of judgment? The text says “that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Then it would appear that our *actions* will be taken in evidence at the last. Not our profession, not our boastings, but our actions will be taken in evidence at the last, and every man shall receive according to

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<sup>18</sup> *fiat justitilia, ruat caelum* – justice be done though the heavens fall.

what he hath done in the body. That implies that everything done by us in this body will be known. It is all recorded; it will be all brought to light.

Hence, in that day *every secret sin* will be published. What was done in the chamber, what was hidden by the darkness, shall be published as upon the housetop—every secret thing (Luk 8:17). With great care you have concealed it, most dexterously you have covered it up; but it shall be brought out to your own astonishment to form a part of your judgment.

There, *hypocritical actions* as well as secret sins will be laid bare. The Pharisee who devoured the widow's house and made a long prayer, will find that widow's house brought against him and the long prayer too, for the long prayer will then be understood as having been a long lie against God, from beginning to end. Oh, how fine we can make some things look with the aid of paint and varnish and gilt; but at the last day off will come the varnish and veneer—and the true metal, the real substance, will then be seen.

When it is said that everything that is done in the body will be brought up as evidence against us or for us, remember this includes *every omission* as well as every commission; for that which is not done that ought to have been done is as greatly sinful as the doing of that which ought not to be done. Did not you notice in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew how those on the left hand were condemned, not for what they did, but for what they did not do: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink" (v. 42). Where would some of you stand, according to this rule, who have lived in neglect of holiness, and neglect of faith, and neglect of repent-

ance, before God all your days? Bethink<sup>19</sup> yourselves, I pray you.

Recollect, too, that *all our words* will be brought up. For every idle word that man shall speak, he will have to give an account. And all our *thoughts*, too, for these lie at the bottom of our actions and give the true colour to them, good or bad. Our *motives*, our heart sins, especially, our hatred of Christ, our neglect of the gospel, our unbelief—all of these shall be read aloud and published unreservedly.

“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 accept Him He should be a substitute for us and take our sins upon Himself. And we did accept Him, and our sins were laid on Him, and we have now no sins—they have been transferred from us to the great Saviour, Substitute and Sacrifice.” And in that day there will be none who can put in a demurrer<sup>20</sup> to that plea. It will hold good; for God has said, “He that believeth on him (Christ Jesus) is not condemned” (Joh 3:18).

Then will the *actions of the righteous*, the gracious actions, be brought forth to prove that they had faith. For that faith which never evidences itself by good works is a dead faith and a faith that will never save a soul. Now, if the dying thief were brought up, he would say, “My sins were laid on Jesus.” “Ay, but how

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<sup>19</sup> **bethink** – ponder.

<sup>20</sup> **demurrer** – a motion for the dismissal of a legal petition.

about your good works? Thou must have some evidence of thy faith," Satan might reply. Then would the recording angel say, "The dying thief said to his fellow thief who was dying with him, 'Wherefore art thou railing?' In his last moments he did what he could: he rebuked the thief that was dying with him and made a good confession of his Lord. There was the evidence of the sincerity of his faith."

Dear hearer, will there be any evidence of the sincerity of your faith? If your faith has no evidence before the Lord, what will you do? Suppose you thought you had a faith and went on drinking. Suppose you did as I know some have done here, go straight from this place into the public house? Or suppose you joined the Christian church and remained a drunkard? Ay, and women have done that also as well as men. Suppose you professed to have faith in Christ and yet cheated in your weights and measures and common dealings? Do you think that God will never require these things at your hands? Oh, sirs, if ye be no better than other men in your *conduct*, ye are no better than other men in your *character*, and ye will stand no better than other men in the Judgment day. If your actions are not superior to theirs, you may profess what you will about your faith, but you are deceived, and, as deceivers, you will be discovered at the last great day.

If grace does not make us differ from other men, it is not the grace that God gives His elect. We are not perfect, but all God's saints keep their eyes on the great standard of perfection, and, with strong desire, aim to walk worthy of their high calling of God and to bring forth works which prove that they love God; and if we have not these signs following faith, or if they are not

put in as evidence for us, at the last great day we shall not be able to prove our faith.

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. He that will not be saved by God's mercy proves that he hates the God of mercy. If God gives His own Son to die and men will not trust in His Son, will not have Him as their Saviour, that one sin, if they had no other, would at once prove that they were enemies of God and black at heart. But if thy faith be in Jesus, if thou lovest Jesus, if thy heart goes out to Jesus, if thy life be influenced by Jesus, if thou makest Him thy example as well as thy Saviour, there will be evidence—thou canst not see it, but there will be evidence—in thy favour.

For notice those gracious things, when the evidence was brought, and Christ said, "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink" (Mat 25:35), they said, "O Lord, we never knew this." Should any man stand up here and say, "I have plenty of evidence to prove my faith," I should reply, "Hold your tongue, sir! Hold your tongue! I am afraid you have no faith at all, or you would not be talking about your evidence." But if you are saying, "Oh, I am afraid I have not the evidence that will stand me in good stead at the last," yet if all the while you have been feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and doing all you can for Christ, I would tell you not to be

afraid. The Master will find witnesses to say, "That man relieved me when I was in poverty. He knew I was one of Christ's and he came and helped me." And another will come and say (perhaps it will be an angel), "I saw him when he was alone in his chamber and heard him pray for his enemies." And the Lord will say, "I read his heart when I saw how he put up with rebuke, and slander, and persecution, and would not make any answer for My sake. He did it all as evidence that My grace was in his heart." You will not have to fetch up the witnesses: the Judge will call them, for He knows all about your case.

And as He calls up the witnesses, you will be surprised to find how even the ungodly will be obliged to consent to the just salvation of the righteous. Oh, how the secret deeds and the true heart-sincerity of the righteous, when thus unveiled, will make devils bite their tongues in wrath to think that there was so much of grace given to the sons of men, with which to defeat persecution, to overcome temptation, and to follow on in obedience to the Lord. Oh yes, the deeds, the deeds, the deeds of men—not their prating,<sup>21</sup> not their profession, not their talk, but their deeds (though nobody shall be saved by the merits of his deeds)—their deeds shall be the evidence of their grace, or their deeds shall be the evidence of their unbelief. And so, by their works shall they stand before the Lord, or by their works shall they be condemned as evidence and nothing more.

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<sup>21</sup> **prating** – talking much and foolishly; chattering.

## 4. The Object of Judgment

What is the object of this judgment? Will sentence of acquittal and condemnation be given, and then the whole thing be over? Far from it! The judgment is with a view to the thereafter—"That every man may *receive* the things done in his body." The Lord will grant unto His people an abundant reward for all that they have done. Not that they deserve any reward, but that God first gave them grace to do good works, then took their good works as evidence of a renewed heart, and then gave them a reward for what they had done. Oh, what a bliss it will be to hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mat 25:23)—to you that have worked for Christ when nobody knew it, to find that Christ took stock of it all; to you that served the Lord under misrepresentation, to find that the Lord Jesus cleared the chaff away from the wheat, and knew that you were one of His precious ones. For Him, then, to say, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord," oh, what a bliss will it be to you.

But to the ungodly, how terrible! They are to receive the things that they have done; that is to say, the punishment due—not every man alike, but the greater sinner the greater doom; to the man who sinned against light a greater damnation than to the man who had not the same light. Sodom and Gomorrah will have their place, Tyre and Sidon their place, and then to Capernaum and Bethsaida their place of more intolerable torment, because they had the Gospel and rejected it—so the Lord Himself tells us.

And the punishment will not only be meted out in proportion to the transgression, but it will be a development of the evil actions done in the evil consequences

to be endured, as every man shall eat the fruit of his own ways. Sin, after the natural order, ripens into sorrow. This is not a blind fate, but it is the operation of a divine law, wise and invariable. Oh, how dreadful it will be for the malicious man to have forever to gnaw his own envious heart, to find his malice come home to him, as birds come home to roost, to hoot for forever in his own soul; for the lustful man to feel lust burning in every vein, which he can never gratify—for the drunkard to have a thirst, which not even a drop of water can allay;<sup>22</sup> for the glutton who has fared sumptuously every day, to be in hunger perpetually; and the soul that has been wrathful to be forever wrathful, with the fire of wrath forever burning like a volcano in his soul; and the rebel against God forever a rebel, cursing God Whom he cannot touch, and finding his curses come back upon himself. There is no punishment worse than for a man who is sinfully disposed to gratify his lusts, to satiate<sup>23</sup> his bad propensities,<sup>24</sup> and to multiply and fatten his vices.

Only let men grow into what they would be, and then see what they would be like! Take away the policemen in some parts of London, and give the people plenty of money, and let them do just as they like. Last Saturday, it may be, there were half-a-dozen broken heads, and wives and children were in one general skirmish. Keep those people together: let their vigour continue unimpaired by age or decay, while they keep on developing their characters. Why, they would be worse than a herd of tigers. Let them give way to their rage and anger, with nothing to check their passions;

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<sup>22</sup> **allay** – to lessen; relieve.

<sup>23</sup> **satiate** – to satisfy to the full.

<sup>24</sup> **propensities** – natural inclinations; tendencies.



let miserly, greedy people forever go on with their greed. It makes them miserable here, but let these things be indulged in forever, and what worse hell do you want?

Oh, sin is hell and holiness is heaven. Men will receive the things done in their body. If God has made them love Him, they shall go on to love Him; if God has made them trust Him, they shall go on to trust in Him; if God has made them to be like Christ, they shall go on to be like Christ, and they shall receive the things done in their body as a reward. But if a man has lived in sin, "he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev 22:11); he that has been unbelieving shall be unbelieving still. This, then, shall be the worm that never dieth, and the fire which never shall be quenched, to which shall be added the wrath of God forever and forever.

Oh, that we may have grace every one of us to flee to Christ! There is our only safety. Simple faith in Jesus is the basis for the character which will evidence at last that you are chosen of God. A simple belief in the merit of the Lord Jesus, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, is the rocky foundation upon which shall be built up, by the same divine hands, the character which shall evidence that the kingdom was prepared for us from before the foundations of the world. God work in us such a character, for Christ's sake. Amen!

