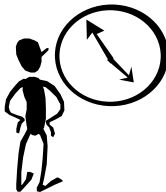


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 7:00 p. m.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

By W. Frank Walton

"Paul...spoke of faith in Christ...discussing righteousness, self-control and judgment to come" (Acts 24:24-25).

Some think they can cleverly escape the consequence of their crimes. For example, the U.S. has only a 61% conviction rate for murders. There are many criminals on death row that file innumerable appeals as a delaying tactic, trying to evade their just end. The rich who are guilty of a crime can buy the best lawyers to try to evade justice.

However, "judgment to come" is a coming day when a higher court will render a final, infallible verdict that cannot be evaded, to which no appeal can be made.

"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 has done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). What do we learn about this inevitable appointment before the judgment bar of Christ?

1. Judgment will be Universal: "All" who have ever lived will be there. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). We may cancel or postpone an appointment with a doctor or get a "continuance" to delay our day in court, but this is one appointment we will all have to keep (Rev. 20:11-15).

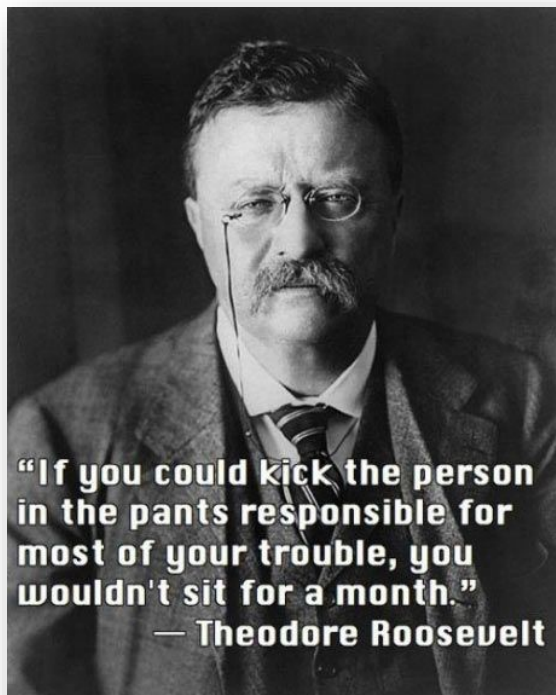
2. Judgment will be Revealing: We must "appear" ("be made manifest," ASV), which translates the Greek word phaneroo: "to make...visible or known what has been hidden or unknown" (Thayer). A man may outwardly appear to be pure and good while inwardly he cherishes and indulges in secret sins which defile his soul and makes him unfit for heaven (1 Tim. 5:24-25). Politicians and public figures are

humiliated and disgraced when their private, nefarious deeds are exposed. Others never get caught. Yet no one will escape the all-seeing eye of God (Heb. 4:12, 13). It is foolish to conceal our pet sins from others, only to have them exposed before the whole universe on the day of judgment!

3. Judgment will be Personal: "...That everyone may receive the things done in his body." We cannot blame anyone else for our fate, because we alone are responsible for ourselves (Rom 14:12). "The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20).
4. Judgment will be Based on our Earthly Life: "...That everyone may receive the things done in his body." There is no second chance after death (Lk. 16:26). How we end this life is what we will forever be in eternity (Jn. 5:28-29, Rev. 22:12). There is a complete and perfect record being kept in heaven of all we think, say and do.
5. Judgment will be Righteous: "...According to what he has done, whether good or bad." God's faithful people can gladly look forward to rewarding rest at the return of Christ, while the disobedient will receive eternal vengeance (2 Thess. 1:7-9). No wonder the Lord is so longsuffering with sinners (2 Pet. 3:9). Those who die lost, by living in disobedience to God, will remain separated from Him for all eternity.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy" (Jude 24), be thanksgiving and glory forever through the Lord Jesus!

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, there will be a day of reward and vindication for the saving grace of the gospel. The justified in Christ, who faithfully trusted and followed Him in absolute devotion, will enter the eternal bliss of fellowship with God and all the redeemed forever!



"If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your trouble, you wouldn't sit for a month."

— Theodore Roosevelt

Freedom Through God's Law

By Charles N. Spence, Jr.

God had always wanted His people to be free. However, most people today have a radically different idea of freedom than God's. Many in the world today look at freedom as the uninhibited right to do what they want to do. We can see this in almost every facet of society today. We see children wanting to do their own thing without any restrictions from parents or any other authority figures. Segments of society want the right to free sexual expression with whomever they chose. Some want to be free to make their own choices about life and death, whether it be their own or that of another person. People over the years have developed a disdain for laws, rules and regulations. They do not want any laws imposed upon them because they believe that law, in any form, is a threat to freedom. The United States was established upon the basis of freedom. This country fought for the right to be free and has ever since celebrated its freedom by declaring its independence. In an effort to protect its freedom, the founding fathers of this country established the Constitution of the United States. This document has long standing as the law that governs this land. It is an instrument that guarantees our freedom. Picture that! Where most people see the law as an instrument of oppression, the founding fathers saw the law as an instrument of freedom. Well, God, our heavenly Father saw His law as an instrument of freedom as well.

When God gave the Israelites the Mosaic law he hoped that all would go well with them ([Deuteronomy 5:29-33](#)). He gave them the law in order to protect their freedom. God saw in the Commandments that he gave a liberating force that helped to govern the lives of His people. The law protected them from bodily harm, theft, false accusation etc. ([Exodus 20:12-17](#)). As long as God's people walked in His law, they would be free (read Deuteronomy 28). With out law there would be no justice. Everyone would be a law unto themselves. If someone hurts you, you would have no recourse but to hurt them. If someone takes from you, you can't seek restoration from a judge. You would have to take from someone else. In such a society only the strong will survive. One of the reasons why God's wrath was poured out upon Israel was because they no longer upheld justice (read Isaiah 59).

Again, God wants his people to be free. Just as He delivered them from Egyptian bondage and gave them the Law to protect their freedom, Jesus brings deliverance to those who do His will and gives them laws to protect their freedom. Jesus said, "*You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*" ([John 8:32](#)). Also, "*If the Son shall make you free you shall surely be free indeed*" ([John 8:36](#)). As long as God's people walk in truth, they will always be free ([John 8:31](#)). When God's people walk and continue in His word, they are being led by the Spirit ([Romans 8:14](#)). It is not a spirit of

bondage ([Romans 8:15](#)) because "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*" ([II Corinthians 3:17](#)). Those who fail to do God's will become slaves of sin ([Romans 6:20-22](#)). You have to serve someone. Law helps us to appreciate freedom, for law is the cornerstone of all freedom. David recognized this fact as he recorded [Psalm 119:32](#) and [45](#). He said, "*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart ... And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.*" Even the gospel of Jesus is recognized as "the perfect law of liberty" ([James 1:25](#)). David said in [Psalm 19:7](#), "*The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.*" The word "restore" embraces the concept of setting free or liberating either people or possessions ([Leviticus 25:10](#)). God did not give law to oppress or make captive, but to set free.

Yet, with freedom comes responsibility and accountability. More and more people refuse to be responsible and accountable. According to the first amendment of the Constitution, I have the right to free speech. However, that freedom must be tempered with responsibility. I am not free to say what ever I want about anyone or speak in such a way as to disrupt order, for example, yelling fire in a crowded theater. The second amendment allows a person the right to bear arms. However, he can't just walk into a store and obtain a gun and shoot it whenever and wherever. Parents give their children certain freedoms. A child wants to go to his friend's house; the parent grants the child the freedom to do so. Yet, the parent establishes a curfew. If the child violates the curfew, the freedom to visit his friend is taken away. In all these realms we understand the relationship between law and freedom. Yet, in the realm of the word of God most people do not understand it. The homosexual wants to be free to engage in immoral behavior, but does not want to deal with the consequences of his actions. The fornicator and adulterer want to be free to engage in their lifestyles, but will not take responsibility for their actions. Much of God's law is designed to protect us from ourselves. When we go against it, we have to take responsibility for our decision to go against God's will. We cannot allow ourselves to be influenced by those who seek to be free without accountability. Peter says of those, "*While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a person is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage*" ([II Peter 2:19](#)).

Let us learn to operate with in the guidelines of God's law. This is the only way we can guarantee our freedom. Jesus has given us His law to live by, after taking out of the way the law that men died by because they would not follow it ([Colossians 2:14](#)). Jesus came that we might have a full and abundant life ([John 10:10](#)). Since Jesus came to give us this life, we can't go any place else to find that life other than His word. As we walk in Jesus' word, we will continue to be united with Him as His disciples. We will know the truth and that truth will set us free. If we look to Jesus' word to guard, guide and direct us, we will be able to claim the promise made by the Savior, "*If the Son shall make you free you shall surely be free indeed*" ([John 8:36](#)).

Fear or Faithfulness?

By Matthew W. Bassford

From an earthly perspective, many of the prophets of the Old Testament got a raw deal. On this list, we certainly must include Jeremiah. He was forbidden to marry and have a family, he couldn't attend parties or funerals, and he prophesied in a time that was utterly hostile to his message. As a result, he was imprisoned, put in stocks, dumped in a cistern, and threatened with death. Even his own extended family plotted to kill him.

This makes for grim reading, and it wasn't a whole lot of fun for Jeremiah to live through, either. Frequently, he complains to God about his lot in life, but God's replies are generally unsympathetic. In such circumstances, it would have been easy for Jeremiah to give up on God, but Jeremiah knew very well that he didn't dare. At the very beginning of his work, God tells him in [Jeremiah 1:17](#), "But you, dress yourself for work, arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them."

In other words, there was exactly one way that Jeremiah could hope to survive the dying convulsions of the kingdom of Judah. He had to stay 100 percent faithful to God. If he wasn't, if he allowed fear to deter him from proclaiming God's word, God would meet his silence with the very woes he hoped to avoid. Even though serving God looked like the riskiest choice, it was actually the safest.

Today, few of us have lives that can compare to Jeremiah's for sheer wretchedness. We enjoy many of the blessings he was not allowed to experience, and we don't have his surfeit of enemies. However, even in much less trying times, we still experience the temptation to disobey God because of fear. We go get drunk with our friends because we're afraid that they won't be our friends any more if we don't. We return evil for evil in our marriages because we're afraid that if we don't, we'll get walked on. We're as touchy as a fresh burn because we're afraid that others won't respect us if we aren't.

And so on. The devil will attempt to use our fears against us in innumerable ways. However, as with Jeremiah, the only way forward is to defy our fears for God's sake. If we allow ourselves to be dismayed before our spiritual enemies, He will dismay us before them.

This is generally not obvious in the moment. In the moment, it seems that only by giving in to our fears can we protect ourselves. We must remember, though that protecting ourselves isn't our job. It's God's. If we are faithful to Him, He will be faithful to us.

Is That What You Meant to Say?

By Steve Klein

An insurance agent was writing a policy for a cowboy. "Have you ever had any accidents?" the agent asked. "No, not really," replied the cowboy. "A horse threw me off and kicked me in the ribs once, and I got bit a couple of times by a rattlesnake, but that's about it." "Don't you call those accidents?" demanded the agent. "Oh no," said the cowboy, "They did them things on purpose!"

It occurs to me that many things that appear to be accidents, or that we pretend are accidents, are actually intended outcomes. Sin is seldom if ever accidental. We may say that we "didn't mean to do it" or "didn't mean to say it," but, most of the time, that isn't really true. And, even if we didn't mean to do it or say it, surely the tempter meant for us to. Righteousness isn't an accident either. Jesus didn't accidentally live a sinless life. It took purpose of heart to resist temptation and do right at every turn.

Barnabas encouraged Christians that "*with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord*" ([Acts 11:23](#)). Paul commended Timothy because he had "*carefully followed*" Paul's "*doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance*" ([II Timothy 3:10](#)). The life of a Christian is truly a purpose-driven life. It is lived with a sense of purpose, by those who choose to do right on purpose.

This applies to every aspect of our lives, including our speech. We will not say the right things accidentally. We must choose to say them. In [Psalm 17:3](#) David wrote, "*You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.*" David was right before God because he had determined to control his mouth. We must also control our speech if we are to be acceptable to God. The Bible says that "*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless*" ([James 1:26](#)).

We are to be thoughtful and purposeful with everything we say. [Proverbs 15:28](#) states that, "*The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*" The righteous man doesn't just say whatever comes into his mind. He "studies how to answer!" The New Testament commands, "*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers*" ([Ephesians 4:29](#)).

Yet how often do we just talk without thinking about the effect of our words? In the Book of Job, Job's three friends had a lot to say to him that was pretty useless. Of them and their words Job says, "*I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are you all! Shall words of wind have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer?*" ([Job 16:2-3](#)). One paraphrased translation of this has, "I've had all I can take of your talk. What a bunch of miserable comforters! Is there no end to your windbag speeches? What's your problem that you go on and on like this?" (MSG). Job's friends, though intelligent men, had not chosen to speak words that would have a positive effect.

Let us all give thought to the impact of our words. Words are powerful, and they will not be a power for good unless we purpose to make them so. Let's do our best to make sure that what we say is what we mean to say, and that what we mean to say is good.