

# We Will All Stand Before the Judgment of God

by John Piper

---

*We will all stand before the judgment seat of God, and our deeds and works will be judged, confirming whether we are saved or not.*

**Duration:** 48:49

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:7, Romans 14:12-13, Philippians 2:10-11, James 2:13, Revelation 20:12-15

**Topics:** "Final Judgment", "Persevering Grace"

---

## Description

In this sermon, John Piper emphasizes the importance of having a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. He explains that it is not the quantity of good or evil deeds that saves a person, but rather the evidence of God's work in their life. Piper refers to the story of the thief on the cross as an example of how God's grace can transform a person's heart in an instant. He then discusses the concept of the final judgment and the doctrine of persevering grace, highlighting the need for believers to trust, love, and obey God.

---

## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org) Romans chapter 14 verses 10 through 13. Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. Let's pray together.

It's good, Father, to know the gospel of Jesus Christ when we hear about the judgment of God. The gospel is all about rescue from the judgment of God. Help us to discern in this message, I pray, how fearful is the judgment and how glorious is the gospel.

And I pray that the effect would be both vertical with a kind of trembling fear, and trust, and horizontal in removing judgmentalism from our hearts and mouths. Oh, that love might abound in this church because of the judgment seat of God. That's what I see in this text.

Help me now to make it plain. In Jesus' name, amen. More is at stake in Romans 14 than simply learning how to love each other when we have disagreements about food, vegetables, days, and wine.

Those are the surface issues, right? We saw them in verses 1 and 2. As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person, we're talking about believers, eats only vegetables. We saw it again in verse 5. One person esteems one day as better than another, while others esteem all the days alike.

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. We saw it in, we will see it in verse 21. It is good not to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

So Paul's burden at one level in this chapter is that we not judge or despise each other because of such disagreements. Verse 3. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats. Now, it all seems a little superficial, doesn't it? Minor, external, unimportant.

I mean, meat, vegetables, days, and wine. What is the big deal? A whole chapter in the massive, mighty pinnacle of Romans. Is Paul just kind of coming in for a landing at the end of the book, and wants to kind of smooth out a few relational bumps in the runway, so that the landing is going to be okay when he gets to Rome? What's the big deal? I mean, a whole chapter for vegetables.

Up until now in this chapter, Paul has dropped a few hints that more is at stake here than you might think. I've pointed this out twice so far. He's elevated the whole thing by introducing the most weighty doctrines about God and Christ and salvation.

Verse 3. Don't judge the weak because God has welcomed him. This is the doctrine of justification by faith apart from vegetables. God has welcomed him.

Verse 4. It is before his own master that he stands or falls. That's the doctrine of the final judgment. He has a judge.

He will stand or fall before his judge. You're not it. He elevates the whole thing into the judgment room of God.

And then he introduces at the end of verse 4 the doctrine of persevering grace. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. And then in verse 8, he relates this issue of meat and vegetables and days and wine to life and death and the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ.

If we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord.

So it looks as though Paul is taking things that seem so inconsequential and dealing with them with doctrines that are massive. None of us lives to himself and none of us dies. He brings life and death into vegetables, wine, meat, days.

That's what we've seen so far. Paul, there's something going on here. It's unsettling to me as I read this chapter.

Why so serious, Paul, about meat and vegetables and days and wine? Why so serious? And I think the answer is shocking and and it will prove to be controversial because I believe the answer is eternal life is

at stake in this chapter. Concerning meat and vegetables, Paul foresees the possibility that some professing believers in the judgment of charity, he calls them brothers, may go to hell because of this issue. Now, I'll only point that out in this message and then deal with it more fully in the next two messages.

But I want you to see where I'm getting it so that you can ponder it with me. Look at verse 20. Do not, for the sake of food.

Destroy the work of God. Destroy the work of God. Verse 23.

Whoever has doubts is condemned is if he eats. Now, those are serious words, destroy and condemn. Those are serious.

So we're going to have to wrestle with this. I'm going to try to show you in the weeks to come that Paul's point is this. If we play fast and loose with each other's conscience.

So that we cause others to act against their conscience and take lightly whether they act with assurance of conviction or not. Then we may lead some to become spiritually calloused and forsake the faith and perish. That's what's at stake in this chapter.

It's the same thing that he says in 1 Timothy 1.19. Listen, I'll read it. He's urging Timothy, he says, go on, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, a good conscience and faith, some have made shipwreck of their faith.

That's the issue here. Hold fast to faith and a good conscience, for some having forsaken a good conscience, which is the liability of this text, this chapter, have made shipwreck of their faith. And I know it brings up the issue of eternal security and the perseverance of the saints.

Which you know, I believe in with all my heart, because it's taught in Romans 8 very clearly. Those whom he justified, he glorified, period. But some of these people are in danger of going to hell.

Call them brothers and say that Christ died for them. So it brings up the issue of the effectiveness of the cross and the glorious doctrine of the definite atonement, which I believe in with all my heart, because it's taught in the Bible. So that's where we're going in the next two weeks, just pointing you to what's at stake in this chapter and why Paul has been elevating these things to the mega level that he has been.

How shall we love each other in regard to non-essential differences is an essential question. Did you get that? How we love each other and deal with each other's consciences in non-essentials is essential. Heaven and hell hang in the balance on how we love each other in dealing with each other's consciences.

Today, we take verses 10 to 13 and watch Paul deal with this huge issue of how to deal with non-huge things. That's what's going on. This huge, essential, heaven and hell issue of how to deal with non-huge things.

There are three steps in this text. One, a command and an exhortation implicit in the questions. Two, an argument, partly from the Old Testament.

And then three, a restatement of the command in a negative and then a very powerful positive form. So that's the order we'll take them. Number one, verse 10, the command.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? Now those are rhetorical questions. He doesn't expect an answer. Like, well because they're stupid or because I don't like them.

He doesn't expect an answer. This is a statement. Don't do that is the point.

Don't pass judgment on your brother. Don't despise your brother. We saw it in verse 3. Same two words, right? Verse 3. Let no one who eats, let not the one who eats despise, there's that word, the one who abstains.

And let not the one who abstains judge the one who eats. So these two words, despise and judge, are coming up here again now in verse 10 from verse 3. So the issue is judging and despising one another about non-essential issues like meat and vegetables and days and wine. Some believe they are free in Christ to eat anything.

He calls them the strong. And others disagree. And Paul calls them the weak.

Let me tell you what I think judgment means here. And I hope this sheds light on your questions about the fighter verse in recent weeks. I know some of you have been asking, what does it mean, judge not, that you be not judged? This is an unpacking of that statement.

This chapter is an exposition of Jesus' statement, judge not, that you be not judged at the judgment day where everybody will give an account. That's what's going on here. So I hope you get light on the fighter verse as I try to explain what judgment means here when he says don't judge each other.

Don't judge somebody. I take judgment, who are you to pass judgment on your brother, to mean two things. One, don't be critical of your fellow believer without manifesting strong affections of brotherly love.

You can see how I'm saying it because I'm leaving room for all the texts that say correct one another, admonish one another, rebuke one another. You've got to pass judgments if you're going to obey the Bible. But this text has got to mean something when he says don't judge.

And the first thing, I'm picking it out from the word brother, see the highlight on the brother. Who are you to judge your brother? In other words, be careful here that when you undertake to do some correcting, some admonishing, some rebuking, let brotherhood be all over it. Not a spirit of condemnation.

We created a word for this bad thing. Tell me what it is. It's built on the word judge.

It's risky for you to say it, isn't it? Judgmental. Where did that word come from? Why was that created in English? This verse, that's why. Or something like this verse.

Everybody knows there's a right time to correct someone and tell them they're doing something a little stupid. And there's a way to do it in a wrong time to do it. And I waited.

Does it puffs you up? Get the log out. First. Then you will see clearly how to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Logs in eyes make poor eye surgeons. You club people to death with the logs hanging out of your eyes. Can you get this picture? Excuse me.

There's a speck in your eye. This is probably they were smiling as Jesus used this. And then they just collapsed with self-condemnation.

So the first meaning, I believe, don't judge the one who eats. Or why you passing judgment on your brother is. Don't be critical of the fellow believer without manifest affirmation of brotherly affection.

And if you don't have it, you've got a problem. A big problem. Here's the second meaning I think it has.

I think it means, in addition, don't treat them as unbelievers. Don't pass final judgment on them. Don't say to a brother because of some meat thing or vegetable thing or day thing or wine thing, you can't be a Christian.

You're not a Christian. Now here's what I think despising means. I take despising, who are you to despise your brother? Why do you despise your brother? To mean, don't treat your brother scornfully without brotherly affection.

You know, you roll your eyes and you cluck your tongue and you turn your head and everything about your body language is despised and scorned and belittled and disdained. And there's nothing brotherly about it. And so I think the word brother in verse 10, repeated those two times, is meant to awaken affection that mellows and softens and sweetens any correcting that we need to do of each other.

So the command is clear. I said we start with the command, we move to an argument, and then we go. The command is clear.

Don't judge, don't despise your fellow believers by treating them as unbelievers or being critical of them without brotherly affection. In other words, when judgment is needed, do it the way Paul said do it in Galatians 6, 1 and 2 and do it the way Jesus said do it in Matthew 7, 5. Let me read those again. You haven't heard Paul's, you've heard Jesus.

Here's Paul's way of interpreting Jesus' command. Brothers, this is Galatians 6, 1. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, so there's reason to correct here, caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, you might think spiritual will puff you up. That's not spiritual to be puffed up.

What's the effect of it? You who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch over yourself, lest you too be tempted. Log, log, log, log, log.

And here's Jesus' words. First, take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. You want to invest some emotional energy in conflict? Deal with yourself 99% of the time.

Save a marriage that way. Let's go to the argument. The argument is in the second half of verse 10, down through verse 12.

I'll read it with you. Why do you pass judgment, I'm starting at the beginning, why do you pass judgment on your brother, or why do you despise your brother, that is, don't do this, because, here's the argument, because, for, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. And then he grounds that in the Old Testament, Isaiah 45, 23.

For it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess. Now he comes back up to state again, verse 12. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

So he says, two times, two times, he says we'll be judged. Verse 10, second half of the verse, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. Then he says it again in verse 12.

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. And in between those two statements comes the basis of them in the Old Testament. Isaiah 45, 23.

For it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess. He's picking up on the every here. So what's he stressing in these three verses? I think he's stressing the words every, each, and all.

Verse 10, second half of the verse. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. No exceptions.

Verse 11, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. And then verse 12 picks another word, say the same thing. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

So you've got the word each, you've got the word every, you've got the word all. That's the stress in these three statements. It means that every single person in the sound of my voice will individually stand before the creator of the universe and give an account of your life.

Think about that. A lot. Think about it when you go to bed at night.

And think about it when you get up in the morning. You are going to stand before the judgment seat of God. You can trace that word judgment seat through Acts, for example.

Just as Paul stood before the judgment seat of Galileo in Corinth. Just as Paul stood before the judgment seat of Festus. Same word.

Festus in Caesarea. So we individually, like Paul, alone before Festus and Galileo will stand before the judge and maker of the universe, God almighty. You are not a statistic.

You were created, every one of you, every one of you were created by God for a purpose on planet Earth. You will give an account of whether you fulfilled it. You're not random.

You don't make up the script. You seek God for why you're here and then you give an account of how you fulfilled it. Every one of you is designed in the womb by God for something.

Something very significant. And you'll give an account. You should be on a quest for that.

The thief on the cross found it. It's not too late. He's done more good in this world than 10,000 people who lived a long life.

I use him over and over in my study with broken hearted people who think they've wasted their lives. I love the thief on the cross. What a service he rendered.

It's never too late to find why you're here. You're going to give an account. Very individually.

You're on planet Earth to trust God. To love Christ. To obey him.

To display his excellence through your gifts and your calling. There are several pictures of the last judgment in the Bible. And I'm going to take you to one of them.

You can go there with me if you'd like in your Bible. It's Revelation 13. I'm sorry, Revelation 20.

Revelation 20 verses 12 to 15. Because this picture, while terrifying, is so filled with gospel hope that I want you to both tremble and feel saved. So here we are.

A picture of the judgment that Paul is talking about, I believe. Revelation 20 verse 12. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne.

And the books, notice plural, the books were opened. Then another book, singular, was opened. So you've got books on one side and a book.

Which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books. According to what they had done.

So what's written in the books is all that you've done and failed to do. It's all there in a book. Lots of books.

A library of books. The sea gave up the dead. I'm at verse 13.

Who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. And they were judged.

Each one of them according to what they had done. Verse 14. Then death and Hades were thrown in the lake of fire.

This is the second death. The lake of fire. If anyone's name is not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

What a remarkable shift from the books to the book. What does that mean? There are books in heaven. In which all the deeds of all human beings are written down.

Recorded. We're all going to be judged according to the books. And everyone whose name is not in the book will be cast into the lake of fire because of their deeds.

What does that mean? I think it means first that no one will be saved on the basis of deeds. Everyone goes to the lake of fire if he's judged on the basis. The basis of the books.

Alone. That's a frightening thing. Because the lake of fire according to chapter 14 burns forever and ever and ever.

And their torment rises to all ages. You don't want to go there. You don't want to be judged on the basis of what's written in the books.

You want to be judged according to the books on the basis of the book. None is righteous. No, not one.

Romans 3, 10. None will be saved by the record of his deeds. None.

Question. Does that mean that the record of your life in the books is irrelevant if you have your name in the book? Answer. No.

When Romans 2, 6 says God will render to each one according to his works. He means just what he says. Everybody.

God will render to every Christian and non-Christian. According to, which is a very big difference then on the basis of, his works. It doesn't mean your works save you.

It does mean your works confirm that you are saved. I'll say that again. When he says God will judge everyone according to their works.

He doesn't mean the works become the ground of their salvation. He means the works are the fruit of their salvation and confirm that they are written there. With the Holy Spirit in their lives, living by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ imputed to them freely.

Fruit does not make a tree good. A good tree bears good fruit. It shows that the tree is good.

For the believer who's name is written in the book of life. The life of the Lamb slain. A believer who's covered by the blood of Christ.

Because they've thrown themselves on the mercy of Christ. They're in the Lamb. They sing Christ who is my righteousness.

And they mean it and they glory in their Redeemer. For them the books are not condemnation but confirmation. One dangerous mistake you could make here.

There's more than one probably. Do you mean, Pastor John, that every believer has more good deeds written in the books than bad deeds? And that's what will confirm that he's in the book. No, absolutely I don't mean that.

And you can think of a lot of reasons why. The thief on the cross would be a good one. Whoa, the balances are not working here for this guy.

He's got a lifetime of murderous thievery in one side of the balance. And about what, an hour of belief and obedience on the other side. And he, today, will be with me in paradise.

Nope, nope, nope. That is not what I mean when I say the books become a confirmation instead of a condemnation. You're thinking in wrong categories if you think that the only way the books can work is quantitatively.

That's not the way they work. I don't mean that. Here's what I do mean.

There will be, for all who are written in the book, covered by the blood, the believers, the desperate thieves on the cross who cast themselves on mercy anytime in their life, in the book, those people will have recorded of them in the books enough to show a real change. That simple? Enough to show something happened in their lives. When they put their faith in Jesus, God moved in on them.

And it's God reckoning them righteous and moving in on them that saves no quantity of deeds, good or evil. But the evidence of His moving in on them, them forsaking and hating their sin, and embracing Christ imperfectly for one hour of their 45 year life. When the books are opened for the thief on the cross, the whole universe will bend over and watch God judge this man.

And he will say, sin, sin, sin. Let's just burn that stuff up real quick. We don't need to talk about that too long.

And here God came down, awakened his heart. He threw himself on my mercy. He welcomed my forgiveness.

And then he spoke in a whole different way to that other thief. And the evidences were plain. He's real.

Let's go home together. That's all you need. You need reality.

You need reality. You don't need quantity. Is there real evidence in a changed, imperfect, stumbling life that you trust Jesus? That you're in the book, that the Holy Spirit is in your life.

So, don't judge your brother because you're going to be judged by whether you showed him mercy or not, as one who had been treated mercifully or not. Is there fruit of having been mercied, forgiven, pitied, loved, flowing out through you? Or have you shut all that down and now you just judge, judge, judge? If so, very likely there's nothing flowing in. Nothing flowing out? Probably nothing flowing in.

It isn't the failure of the outflow. It's the failure of the reception that will send someone to the lake of fire. Ultimately, the works will be the evidence that there was no life.

Listen to James. What do you make of James as he works with Jesus' beatitude? Isn't it remarkable that here we are, basically doing expositions of the Sermon on the Mount? Listen to James 2, verse 13. Judgment is without mercy on the one who has shown no mercy.

Sound like a beatitude? Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. James says judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Then he adds this sentence.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. And I've heard that taken out of context to mean God's mercy triumphs over judgment. It's not what it means.

Blessed are the merciful. They will be shown mercy. Your mercy triumphs over judgment.

The thing that's going to be written in the books will be evidences of a merciful life. Imperfect. Yeah, we fail a thousand times, but he'll pick out the evidences of real mercy flowing out because the mercy that's flowing out is the evidence of mercy received.

Jesus says if you live a merciless, judgmental life, you've got no reason to think you've ever banked on mercy. And not to bank on mercy is to go to the lake of fire. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Listen to this one. Chapter six, the Sermon on the Mount. Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.

Start to make sense. In the book will be written evidences of your forgiving heart. And you may then ask the father who is your judge to forgive you because there's some evidences over there.

Then I really leaned on Jesus. Jesus is my savior. The only reason I could forgive anybody is because I've been so forgiven.

And that's my only hope. Or what about this one? Matthew seven to with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

There'll be some evidences in the books of how you measured out to people mercy or condemnation. And it will be evidence of whether you had embraced mercy, lived on mercy, loved mercy, got up in the morning saying thank you, thank you that I'm saved. I don't deserve to be saved.

How could I step on anybody today? Because I haven't been stepped on this night. We are saved by grace through faith alone apart from works of the law. The books save nobody.

They just show who's in the book and who isn't. When your life extends and channels the forgiving grace of Christ, it's plain you have received the forgiving grace of Christ. Is that simple? I'll say it again.

When your life extends or channels the forgiving grace of Christ, in other words, the opposite of judgment and despising, you give evidence that you have received the forgiving mercy and grace of Christ. It's really dangerous, as many people do in the church, to divide the life and the faith as though Jesus knows nothing of it. Nothing of it.

We're either real or we're not. And the real shows itself horizontally on the basis of what we've experienced vertically. So let us tremble before our judge and let us show brotherly affection.

If you don't have brotherly affection and only have judgment, judgment, judgment, judgment, you need to tremble tonight that your name may not be in the book. And then devote your energy to making your calling and your election sure by faith in Jesus. Getting on your face when you go home tonight and with every appropriate trembling saying, Lord, please, there's just too many evidences of ugliness in my life.

Too many evidences of mean spiritedness and unforgiving. I'm scared after that sermon. Please, I'm just done with it.

I'm casting myself on you for mercy. Have mercy upon me, please. I trust you alone.

I just can't be good enough. I can never be good enough. I just embrace you afresh.

And if you taste that for what it is, God will take you further. He'll take you further in being a kind person, a gentle person, a forgiving person, a non-judgmental, non-despising person. I close with the third step where I said I was going.

I said step one, a command. Don't judge each other. Step two, an argument.

We're going to stand before the judgment seat. Step three, a repetition of the command and a positive statement, which is where I want to end. Verse 13.

Romans 14, 13. Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer. So there's the repetition of verse 10.

Then, I wish we could see this in English the way it works in Greek. You really could if translations wanted to be a little bit rough. Here's what it says in the ESV.

But rather decide. Now, that word is judge. This is a turning of the judgmentalism on its head linguistically.

This is taking the word judge, where we're condemning, condemning, condemning, and he's taken the word judge. We could do this in English. It would work in English like that.

Let me finish reading it and then I'll show you how it would work. But rather decide never to put a stumbling block or a hindrance in the way of a brother. So he's thinking like this.

Stop judging each other with non-brotherly correcting and with putting each other in the lake of fire. And instead, you want to judge something? You want to judge something? Assess all the possible ways you could relate and make this judgment about all of them. This one I will do.

Namely, I will never put any stumbling block or any hindrance in my brother's path on his way to heaven. Now, that's where we're going in the coming weeks. How do you do that? You mean because of something you do, they might not get to heaven? Because of something you do, some stumbling block, some hindrance that you put out there, you entice them to act against their conscience, and over time, that acting against their conscience could so harden them that they make shipwreck of their faith and actually perish? That's exactly what I think he means.

So this is huge when he says, okay, you want to judge something? Judge this. Never do that. Make it your whole goal to get out of people's way and help them.

Help them on their way to heaven. Help them on their way to heaven. Don't make it harder for them to get to heaven.

Don't put any stumbling block, any hindrance in their way. Help them get there. I close with this Bethlehem exhortation.

Bethlehem, you will all stand individually before the judgment seat of God. All of you. No parent is going to cover for you.

No wife, no brother, no sister. Just you there. And you'll give an account for your life.

So my closing exhortation is, so cast yourself on the cross of Christ. So love the gospel. So cherish Christ crucified in your place.

Bearing all your sins and absorbing all God's judgment. We're going to sing that. All God's judgment until you give some faltering evidence that you have become a merciful, forgiving, nonjudgmental person.

Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others, but please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission. We invite you to visit Desiring God online at [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org). There you'll find hundreds of sermons, articles, radio broadcasts, and much more, all available to you at no charge.

Our online store carries all of Pastor John's books, audio, and video resources. You can also stay up to date on what's new at Desiring God. Again, our website is [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org). Or call us toll free at 1-888-346-4700.

Our mailing address is Desiring God, 2601 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406. Desiring God exists to help you make God your treasure, because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12855.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/we-will-all-stand-before-the-judgment-of-god/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**