

The Day of Judgment Asserted

by Thomas Watson

The day of judgment is a day of reckoning when God will execute justice on the wicked and exercise mercy to the godly.

Scripture: Amos 9:9, Matthew 25:34, Matthew 25:41, Acts 17:31, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Ephesians 5:27, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 3:21

Topics: "Final Judgment", "Christian Assurance"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the certainty and importance of the Day of Judgment, emphasizing the need for believers to prepare themselves for this ultimate trial by examining their hearts and ensuring they possess humility, love for others, a penitential spirit, and equity in their dealings. He assures believers of comfort in the face of discouraging fear, weakness of grace, and censures from the world, by pointing to Christ as their Advocate, who will plead their cause, accept even the smallest grain of sincerity, and vindicate them from all injustices at the final judgment.

Transcript

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"Because He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead." Acts 17:31

When Paul perceived the idolatry at Athens, "his spirit was stirred in him," verse 16. His spirit was soured and embittered in him. Paul was a bitter man against sin; (that anger is without sin--which is against sin). Or, the word may signify, he was in a paroxysm, or burning fit of zeal. And zeal is such a passion as cannot be either dissembled or pent up; with this fire he discharged against their idolatry. "You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this description--To the Unknown God," verses 22-23. Nor does the Apostle only declaim against the false God--but declare to them the true God. And he does it from the effect, "That God who made the world and all things therein . . . is Lord of heaven and earth," verse 24. To create is the best demonstration of a Deity. And this God, being everywhere, cannot be locally confined. Acts 17:24, "He dwells not in temples made with hands." And though in former times, when the veil of

ignorance was drawn over the face of the world, God seemed less severe--"The times of this ignorance God winked at"--though He did, as it were, "overlook" them, not taking the extremity of the law--yet "now He commands all men everywhere to repent," verse 30. And if it is asked, "Why now repent? Why may we not take our full sleep?" the reason is because now is the broad daylight of the gospel, which, as it reveals sin more clearly, so it more clearly reveals judgment upon sinners, "He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world."

These words are God's alarm to the world to awaken it out of security. This is a sweet yet dreadful point. When Paul discoursed of judgment to come, Felix trembled, Acts 24:25. He who is not affected with this truth, has a heart of stone.

For the illustration of this, there are six things I shall discuss:

1. There SHALL be a day of judgment.
2. WHY there must be a day of judgment.
3. WHEN the day of judgment shall be.
4. WHO shall be the Judge.
5. The order and the METHOD of the trial.
6. The effect or CONSEQUENCE of it.

1. There SHALL be a day of judgment. There is a twofold day of judgment:

(1) A PARTICULAR judgment. At the day of death, immediately upon the soul's dissolution from the body, it has a judgment passed upon it, Hebrews 9:27. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God that gave it," Ecclesiastes 12:7. As soon as the breath expires, the soul receives its particular sentence and knows how it shall be with it to all eternity.

(2) There is a GENERAL day of judgment, which is the great judgment, when the world shall be gathered together. And of this the text is to be understood, "He has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world." I might give you a whole jury of Scriptures giving their verdict to this--but in the mouth of two or three witnesses the truth will be confirmed. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Ecclesiastes 12:14. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matthew 12:36. Now is the day of acting; then will be the day of account. "For He comes, for He comes to judge the earth," Psalm 96:13. The repetition denotes the certainty and infallibility of His coming.

2. WHY there must be a day of judgment.

(1) That God may execute justice on the wicked. Things seem to be carried on in the world, with an unequal balance. The "candle of God shines upon" the wicked, Job 29:3. "Those who tempt God are delivered," Malachi 3:15. Diogenes, seeing Harpalus, a thief, go on prosperously, said that surely God had cast off the government of the world, and did not mind how things went here below. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Peter 3:3-4. Therefore, God will have a day of judgment to vindicate His justice. He will let sinners know that long forbearance, is no forgiveness.

(2) That God may exercise mercy to the godly. Here piety is the bulls-eye which is shot at. Those who prayed and wept had the hardest measure. Those Christians whose zeal flamed most, met with the fiery trial. "For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter," Romans 8:36. "The saints," said Cyprian, "are put in the winepress, and of the blood of these grapes is pressed out." God will therefore have a day of judgment that He may reward all the tears and sufferings of His people. They shall have their crown and throne and white robes, Revelation 7:9; though they may be losers for Him, they shall lose nothing by Him.

3. WHEN the day of judgment shall be.

It is certain there shall be a judgment; but it is uncertain when that day shall be. The angels do not know the day, nor does Christ either as He was man (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32). And the reason why the time is not known is:

(1) That we may not be curious. There are some things which God would have us be ignorant of. "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority," Acts 1:7. We must not pry into God's ark, or meddle with his secrets of government. As Salvian said, "It is a kind of sacrilege for any man to break into the Holy of Holies and enter into God's secrets."

(2) God has concealed the time of judgment that we may not be careless. We are always to keep sentinel, having our loins girded and our lamps burning, not knowing how soon that day may come upon us. Augustine said, "God would have us live every day as if the last day were approaching."

This is the genuine use which our Savior makes of it. Mark 13:32-33, "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven. Take heed, watch and pray, for you know not when the time is."

But though we cannot know precisely when this day of the Lord shall be--yet in probability the time cannot be far off. Hebrews 10:37, "He who shall come will come, and will not tarry." Chrysostom had a simile, "When we see an old man going on crutches, his joints weak, his vital moisture dried up; though we do not know the just time when he will die--yet it is sure he cannot live long because nature's stock is spent. Just so, the world is decrepit and goes, as it were, upon crutches. Therefore it cannot be long before the world's funeral, and the birthday of judgment."

The age which John wrote in was "the last hour," 1 John 2:18. Then surely the time we now live in may be called "the last minute." Psalm 96:13, "For He is coming to judge the earth." It is not "He shall come," but "He is coming," to show how near the time is. It is almost daybreak and the court is ready to sit. James 5:9, "The Judge stands at the door."

Truly, if security, apostasy, decay of love, inundation of sin, and revelation of Antichrist are made in Scripture the signs and prognostications of the last day, we, having these gray hairs among us, know that the day of judgment cannot be far off.

4. WHO shall be the Judge?

I answer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it is in the text, "He will judge the world by that man whom He has ordained," that man who is God-man. We must take heed of judging others; this is Christ's work. John 5:22, "The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son." He who once had a reed put into His hand, His Father will now put a scepter into His hand. He who had a purple robe put upon Him in derision shall come in His Judge's robes. He who hung upon the cross, shall sit upon the bench. There are two things in

Christ which eminently qualify Him to be a Judge:

(1) Wisdom and KNOWLEDGE to understand all causes that are brought before Him. He is described with seven eyes in Zechariah 3:9, to note His omniscience. He is like Ezekiel's wheels, full of eyes, Ezekiel 10:12. Christ is a heart-searcher. He not only judges the fact but the heart, which no angel can do.

(2) STRENGTH whereby He is able to be avenged upon His enemies. Christ is armed with sovereignty; therefore the seven stones are said to be upon one stone, Zechariah 3:9, to denote the infinite strength of Christ. And He is described with seven horns, Revelation 5:6. As Christ has an eye to see--so He has a horn to push; as He has His balance--so He has His sword; as He has His fan and His sieve--so He has His lake of fire, Revelation 20:10.

5. The order and METHOD of the trial.

Observe, (1) the summons; (2) the Judge's coming to the bench; and (3) the process and trial itself.

(1) The summons to the court, and that is by the sounding of the trumpet. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God." Jerome said that whatever he was doing he thought he heard the noise of the trumpet sounding in his ears. "Arise, you dead, and come to judgment!" Note:

The shrillness of the trumpet. It shall sound so loud that the dead shall hear it!

The efficacy of the trumpet. It shall not only startle the dead--but raise them out of their graves! Matthew 24:31. They who will not hear the trumpet of the ministry sounding but lie dead in sin--shall be sure to hear the trumpet of the archangel sounding.

(2) The manner of the Judge's coming to the bench. Christ's coming to judgment will be glorious, yet dreadful.

It will be glorious to the godly. The Apostle calls it, Titus 2:13, "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

Christ's person shall be glorious. At His first coming in the flesh His glory was veiled over, Isaiah 53:2-3; all who saw the man, did not see the Messiah. But His second coming will be very illustrious and resplendent. He shall "come in the glory of His Father," Mark 8:38. That is, He shall wear the same embroidered robes of majesty as His Father.

Christ's attendants shall be glorious. He "shall come with all His holy angels," Matthew 25:31. These sublime, seraphic spirits, who for their luster are compared to lightning, Matthew 28:3, are Christ's retinue. He who was led to the cross with a band of wicked soldiers, shall be attended to the bench with a guard of holy angels.

Christ's coming to judgment will be dreadful to the wicked. At the coming of this Judge, there will be flaming fire burning round about Him. "The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus," 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. When God gave His law upon the mount, "there were thunders and lightnings; and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire," Exodus 19:16-18. "If God was so dreadful at the giving of the law, O how dreadful will He be, when He

shall come to require His law?" said Augustine.

(3) The process or the trial itself, where observe the universality, the formality, and the circumstances of the trial.

The UNIVERSALITY of the trial. It will be a very great assize; never was the like seen. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:10. Kings and nobles, councils and armies. Those who were above all trial here, will have no charter of exemption granted them. They must all appear before Christ's tribunal and be tried for their lives. Neither power nor policy can be a subterfuge. They who refused to come to the throne of grace shall be forced to come to the throne of justice. And the dead as well as the living must make their appearance. Revelation 20:12, "I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God." We do not usually cite men in our courts when they are dead--but at that day the dead are called to the bar; and not only men but angels. Jude 6, "The angels which kept not their first estate--but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

The FORMALITY of the trial, which consists in the opening of the books. Daniel 7:10 and Revelation 20:12, "The judgment was set, and the books were opened." There are two books which shall be opened:

First, the book of God's omniscience. God not only observes--but registers all our actions. Job 14:16, "You number my steps." The word there "to number" signifies to write a thing into a book. It is as if Job had said, "Lord, You keep Your daybook and enter down all my actions into the book." We read of God's book of remembrance, Malachi 3:16. This book will be produced at the last day.

Second, the book of conscience. Let there ever be so much written in a book--yet, if it is clasped, it is not seen. Men have their sins written in their conscience--but the book is clasped (the searing of the conscience is the clasping of the book); but when this book of conscience shall be unclasped at the great day, then all their hypocrisy, treason, and atheism shall appear to the view of men and angels! Luke 12:3. The sins of men shall be written upon their forehead, as with a pen of iron!

The CIRCUMSTANCES of the trial. Where consider four things, the impartiality, the exactness, the perspicuity, and the supremacy.

The IMPARTIALITY of the trial. Jesus Christ will do every man justice. He will, as the text says, "judge the world in righteousness." It will be a day of equitable judgment; justice holds the scales. The Thebans pictured their judges as being blind, and without hands. Blind, that they might not respect people; and without hands, that they might take no bribes. Christ's scepter is a scepter of righteousness, Hebrews 1:8. He is no respecter of people, Acts 10:34. It is not nearness of blood which prevails; many of Christ's kindred shall be condemned. It is not gloriousness of profession; many shall go to hell with Christ in their mouths. Matthew 7:22, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?" Yet, though they cast out devils--they are cast out to the devil. It is not the varnish of a picture that a judicious eye is taken with--but the quality of the work. It is not the most shining profession which Christ is taken with, unless he sees the special workmanship of grace in the heart drawn by the pencil of the Holy Spirit. Things are not done there by politics--but in a most just balance. Christ has true weights for false hearts. There are no bribes taken in that court. The judge will not be bribed with a hypocritical tear or a Judas kiss.

The EXACTNESS of the trial. It will be very critical. Then will Christ thoroughly purge His floor, Matthew 3:12. Not a grace or a sin--but His winnowing fan will discover. Christ will, at the day of judgment, make a heart anatomy, as the surgeon makes a dissection in the body and evaluates several body parts, or as the goldsmith brings his gold to the balance and touchstone to see if it is right and genuine, and whether there is not a baser metal within. Thus the Lord Jesus, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, Revelation 1:14, will pierce through the hearts of men and see if there is the right metal within, having the image and superscription of God upon it. Paint falls off in the fire. The hypocrite's paint will fall off at the fiery trial. Nothing then will stand us in good stead, but sincerity.

The CLEARNESS of the trial. Sinners shall be so clearly convicted, that they shall hold up their hand at the bar and cry, "Guilty!" Those words of David may be fitly applied here, "That You might be clear when You judge," Psalm 51:4. The sinner himself shall clear God of injustice. The Greek word for vengeance signifies "justice." God's taking vengeance, is doing justice. Sin makes God angry--but it cannot make Him unrighteous. The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath--but not sip one drop of injustice! Christ will say, "Sinner, what defense can you make for yourself? Are not your sins written in the book of conscience? Did you not have that book in your own keeping? Who could have inserted anything into it?" Now the sinner, being self-condemned, shall clear his Judge, "Lord, though I am damned--yet I have no wrong done to me. You are clear when You judge."

The SUPREMACY of the court. This is the highest court of judicature, from whence is no appeal. On earth, men can move their cases from one place to another, from the Common Law to the Court of Chancery--but from Christ's court there is no appeal. He who is once doomed here--finds his condition irreversible!

6. The sixth and last particular, is the effect or CONSEQUENCE of the trial, which consists in three things:

(1) Separation. Christ will separate the godly and the wicked. Matthew 25:32, "He shall separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Then will be the great day of separation. It is a great grief to the godly in this life--that they live among the wicked. Psalm 120:5, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!"

Wicked men blaspheme God, Psalm 74:18, and persecute the saints, 2 Timothy 3:12. They are compared to dogs, Psalm 22:16; to bulls, Psalm 68:30; and to lions, Psalm 57:4. They roar upon the godly and tear them as their prey. Cain kills; Ishmael mocks; Shimei rails. The godly and the wicked are now mingled together, Matthew 13:30, and this is as offensive as tying a dead man to a living man. But Christ will before long make a separation, as the fan separates the wheat from the chaff, as a furnace separates the gold from the dross, or as a fine sieve strains the wine from the dregs. Christ will put the sheep by themselves who have the earmark of election upon them--and the goats by themselves. After which separation there follows:

(2) The sentence, which is twofold:

First, the sentence of absolution pronounced upon the godly. "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" Matthew 25:34. After the pronouncing of this blessed sentence, the godly shall go from the bar--and sit on the bench with Christ. 1 Corinthians 6:2, "the saints shall judge the world." The saints shall be with Christ's assessors; they shall sit with Him in judicature as the justices of peace sit with the judge. They shall vote with Christ and applaud Him in all His judicial proceedings. Here the world judges the saints--but there the saints shall judge the

world.

Second, the sentence of condemnation pronounced upon the wicked. "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41. I may allude to James 3:10, "Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing." Out of the same mouth of Christ proceeds blessing to the godly--and cursing to the wicked." The same wind which brings one ship to the haven, blows another ship upon the rock.

"Depart from Me." The wicked once said to God, "Depart from us!" Job 21:14. And now God will say to them, "Depart from Me!" This will be a heart-rending word. Chrysostom said, "This word 'depart!' is worse than the fire." Psalm 16:11, "Depart from Me--in whose presence is fullness of joy."

(3) The execution. After this sentence, follows the execution. Matthew 13:30, "Bind the tares in bundles to burn them." Christ will say, "Bundle up these sinners. Here are a bundle of hypocrites, there a bundle of apostates, there a bundle of profane people. Bind them up and throw them in the fire." And no cries or entreaties will prevail with the Judge. The sinner and the fire must keep one another company. He who would not weep for his sins--must burn for them!

It is "everlasting fire." The three Hebrew children were thrown into the fire--but they did not stay in long. Daniel 3:26, "Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire." But the fire of the damned, is everlasting fire. This word "forever" breaks the heart! Length of time cannot terminate it! A sea of tears cannot quench it! The wrath of God is the fire, and the breath of God the bellows to blow it up to all eternity! Oh, how dreadfully tormenting will this fire be! To endure it will be intolerable! To avoid it will be impossible!

Use 1. Of PERSUASION.

Let me persuade all Christians to believe this truth--that there shall be a day of judgment. "Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sights of your eyes; but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment!" Ecclesiastes 11:9. This is a great article of our faith--that Christ shall come to judge the living and the dead. Yet how many live--as if this article were blotted out of their creed! We have too many epicures and atheists who drown themselves in sensual delights and live as if they did not believe either in God--or the day of judgment! The Lucianists and Platonists deny the immortality of the soul; the Photinians hold there is no hell. I have read of the Duke of Silesia who was so deluded, that he did not believe either God or the devil. I wish there were not too many of this duke's opinion. Would men dare swear, be unchaste, or live in malice--if they believed in a day of judgment? Oh, mingle this text with faith. "The Lord has appointed a day in which He will judge the world." There must be such a day. Not only does Scripture assert it--but reason confirms it. There is no kingdom or nation in the world but has its sessions and courts of judicature; and shall not God, who sets up all other courts, be allowed His? That there shall be a day of judgment is engrafted by nature in the consciences of men. Peter Martyr tells us that some of the heathen poets have written that there are certain judges appointed (Minos, Rhadamanthus, and others) to examine and punish offenders after this life.

Use 2. Of INFORMATION.

See here the sad and deplorable estate of wicked men. This text is as the handwriting on the wall which may make their "knees to smite one against another," Daniel 5:6. The wicked shall come to judgment--but they "shall not stand in the judgment," Psalm 1:5. In the Hebrew it is "they shall not rise up." God shall be decked with glory and majesty, His face as the appearance of lightning, His eyes as lamps of fire, and a sword of justice in His hand, and shall call the sinner by name and say, "Stand forth! Answer to the charge that is brought against you! What can you say for your pride, oaths, drunkenness? These sins you have been told of, by My ministers; but you persisted in your wickedness with a neck of iron, a brow of brass, and a heart of stone! All the tools which I wrought with--were broken and worn out upon your rocky heart! What can you say for yourself that the sentence should not be passed?"

Oh, how bewildered and confused will the sinner be! He will be found speechless; he will not be able to look his Judge in the face. Job 31:14, "What then shall I do when God rises up? And when He visits, what shall I answer Him?" Oh, wretch, you who can now outface your minister and your godly parents, when they tell you of sin--you shall not be able to outface your Judge. When God rises up, the sinner's countenance will be fallen.

All the world is God's diocese, and shortly He is coming on His visitation and will call men to account. Now, when God shall visit, how shall the impure soul be able to answer Him? 1 Peter 4:18, "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" You who die in your sin are sure to be cast at the bar. John 3:18, "He who believes not, is condemned already." That is, he is as sure to be condemned as if he were condemned already. And once the sentence of damnation is passed, miserable man--what will you do? Where will you go? Will you seek help from God? He is a consuming fire to you. Will you seek help from the world? It will be all on fire about you. From the saints? Those you derided on earth. From the good angels? They defy you as God's enemy. From the bad angels? They are your executioners. From your conscience? There is the worm which gnaws. From mercy? The lease is run out--the day of mercy is forever past. Oh, the horror and hellish despair, which will seize upon sinners at that day! Oh, the sad convulsions! Their heads shall hang down, their cheeks blush, their lips quiver, their hands shake, their conscience roar, and their heart tremble. What stupefying medicine has the devil given to men--that they are insensible of the danger they are in! The cares of the world have so filled their head, and the profits of it have so bewitched their heart, that they mind neither death nor judgment!

Use 3. Of EXHORTATION.

BRANCH 1. Possess yourselves with the thoughts of the day of judgment. Think of the solemnity and impartiality of this court. Feathers swim upon the water; gold sinks into it. Light, feathery spirits float in vanity--but serious Christians sink deep in the thoughts of judgment. If the ship is not well ballasted, it will soon overturn. The reason why so many are overturned with the vanities of the world is that they are not well ballasted with the thoughts of the day of judgment. Were a man to be tried for his life, he would think to himself of all the arguments he could to plead in his own defense. We are all shortly to be tried for our souls. While others are thinking how they may grow rich, let us think to ourselves how we may abide the day of Christ's coming. The serious thoughts of judgment would be:

First, a curbing bit to sin. "Am I stealing the forbidden fruit--and the judgment so near!"

Second, a spur to holiness. 2 Peter 3:10-11, "But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be burned up. Since everything around us is going to melt away, what

holy, godly lives you should be living!"

BRANCH 2. Let us solemnly prepare ourselves for this last and great trial. That is, by setting up a judgment seat in our own souls, let us begin a private session before the assizes. It is wisdom to bring our souls first to trial. Lamentations 3:40, "Let us search and try our ways." Let us judge ourselves according to the rule of the Word and let conscience bring in the verdict. The Word of God gives several characteristics of a man who shall be absolved at the day of judgment and is sure to go to heaven:

Characteristic 1. The first character is HUMILITY. Job 22:29, "The Lord shall save the humble person." Now, let conscience bring in the verdict. Christian, are you humble? Not only humbled--but humble? Do you esteem others better than yourself? Philippians 2:3. Do you cover your duties with the veil of humility, as Moses put a veil on his face when it shone? If conscience brings in this verdict, you are sure to be acquitted at the last day.

Characteristic 2. LOVE to the saints. 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Love makes us like God; it is the root of all the graces. Does conscience witness this for you? Are you perfumed with this sweet spice of love? Do you delight in those who have the image of God? Do you reverence their graces? Do you bear with their infirmities? Do you love to see Christ's picture in a saint, though hung in ever so poor a frame? This is a good sign that you shall pass for currency at the day of judgment.

Characteristic 3. A PENITENTIAL frame of heart. Acts 11:18, "Repentance unto life." Repentance unravels sin and makes it not to be. Jeremiah 50:20, "In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." A great ball of snow is melted and washed away with the rain; great sins are washed away by holy tears. Now, can conscience bring in the evidence for you? Do you tune the penitential string? Ambrose asked, "You who have sinned with Peter--do you weep with Peter?" And do your tears drop from the eye of faith? This is a blessed sign that you are judgment-proof, and that when your iniquities shall be sought at the last day they shall not be found.

Characteristic 4. EQUITY in our dealings. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place?" Psalm 24:3-4. "He who has clean hands." Injustice sullies and defiles the hand. What does conscience say? Is your hand clean? It is a vain thing to hold the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other.

Beloved, if conscience, upon a Scripture trial, gives in the verdict for us, it is a blessed sign that we shall lift up our heads with boldness at the last day. Conscience is God's echo in the soul. The voice of conscience is the voice of God, and if conscience, upon an impartial trial, acquits us, God will acquit us. 1 John 3:21, "If our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God." If we are absolved in the lower court of conscience, we are sure to be absolved at the last day in the high court of justice. It would be a sweet thing for a Christian thus to bring himself to a trial. Seneca tells us of a Roman who every day called himself to account, "What soul-infirmity is healed? How have you grown better?" Then he would lie down at night with these words, "Oh, how sweet and refreshing is my sleep to me!"

Use 4. Of CONSOLATION.

Here is a fountain of consolation opened to a believer, and that in three cases, 1. Discouraging fear; 2. Weakness of grace; and 3. Censures of the world.

Case 1. Here is comfort in case of discouraging fear. "Oh," said a believer, "I fear my grace is not invincible armor. I fear the cause will go against me at the last day." Indeed, so it would--if you were out of Christ. But, as in our law courts the client has his attorney or advocate to plead for him, so every believer, by virtue of the interest he has in Christ, has Christ to plead his cause for him. 1 John 2:1, "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." What if Satan is the accuser if Christ is the Advocate? Christ never lost any cause that He pleaded. Nay, His very pleading alters the nature of the cause. Christ will show the debt book crossed out--with His own blood. And it is no matter what is charged--if all is discharged. Here is a believer's comfort--his Judge will be his Advocate!

Case 2. Here is comfort with regard to weakness of grace. A Christian, seeing his grace is so defective, is ready to be discouraged. But at the day of judgment, if Christ finds but a small coin of sincerity, it shall be accepted. If yours is true gold, though it may be light, Christ will put His merits into the scales and make it sufficient. He who has no sin of allowance shall have grains of allowance. I may allude to that verse in Amos 9:9, "Yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth." He who has but a grain of grace--not the least grain shall fall to hell.

Case 3. It is comfort in case of censures and slanders. The saints go here through hurtful reports, "through evil report and a good report," 2 Corinthians 6:8. John the Baptist's head on a platter is a common dish nowadays. It is ordinary to bring in a saint beheaded of his good name. But at the day of judgment Christ will unload His people, of all their injuries. He will vindicate them from all their calumnies. Christ will be the saint's character witness. He, at that day, will present His Church "without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault!" Ephesians 5:27.

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