

Sermons through

Romans

The Judgment Seat

Romans 14:10-13

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
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The Judgment Seat

Romans 14:10-13

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

11 For it is written:

**“As I live, says the LORD,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God.”**

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way (Romans 14:10-13).

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother (Romans 14:10a)?

Judge and Contempt

We see restated in this verse, the problem from verse three: the stronger Christian despising the weaker and the weaker judging the stronger. There was a dispute over **“doubtful things”**. The doubtful things were the religious implications of eating vegetables, observing certain days and drinking wine. These were not, strictly speaking moral issues, but religious issues.

That is to say, the problem wasn’t whether it was immoral to kill an animal or cause another person to drink alcohol when they have an alcohol problem (not that we shouldn’t be sensitive to the weaknesses of others). These were more along the lines of a religious defilement. Things that would make a person unclean and (what they might consider to be) less acceptable to God.

In this conflict, those who recognized the insignificance of these practices (dietary or days) were holding the others in contempt. They were engaging in a sin which had been set apart as one which the Lord hates, **“a proud (or haughty) look” (Proverbs 6:17)**. Whereas the weaker Christian

was being judgmental toward the one who didn't think they needed to be concerned with those issues.

So here we have a problem in the church. There are two groups of people (at least-there were certainly other looming issue) who were convinced they were right, at each other's throats. One last reminder, we're not talking about heresy or immorality, for those are not doubtful nor would God be honored by the practice thereof.

How does the Spirit (through Paul) address the issue?

For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10b).

Principle of Perspective

We might call this the *principle of perspective*. I once heard the prior to World War I, Freudian therapy was the rage in western Europe. Everyone had a therapist. At dinner parties the topic of discussion was your latest psychological breakthrough. Then the war broke out and somehow everyone was immediately healed.

When surrounded by bullets and bombs, you have little time to reflect upon your *id* and the personality components that make up your unconscious psychic energy. The obsession to prioritize and satisfy basic urges, needs and desires wanes. This might be compared to a controlled explosion, which I've been told (due to shockwaves and the rush of air) can be effective in putting out a fire-like putting out a small candle with a leaf-blower.

Paul addresses our tendency to despise and judge one another by beckoning us to consider a different judgment-the "**judgment seat of God**" (or the judgment seat of Christ-2 Corinthians 5:10). He has already taught that we should understand that we are, in an ultimate sense, answerable to God. If God has received us, do we dare not receive each other? Is our standard higher than God's?

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4).

Here the issue is pushed to a mouth-stopping event. This principle of perspective is employed when we consider standing before the judgment seat of God.

We are all aware of the atrocities of the twentieth century where powerful leaders shed reservoirs of innocent blood with no thought of accountability beyond of their own skin.

The Russian novelist and historian, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, wrote of it:

Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened."

Atheists often react aggressively to these types of assertions. They will hide behind the flimsy armor of privation. That is to say that atheism isn't a belief but the lack thereof.

It's been said:

Communism, at its heart is dependent upon Marxist driven atheism. It was the surgical and intentional extraction of the acknowledgement of the Triune God from the affairs of men that left politically amoral monsters in charge of the 20th century. It is not what these atheists believed that made them the horrifying nightmares that they were; it was what they refused to believe.

You may wonder why I've gone down this massive political road. Perhaps we all agree on the source of these international nightmares. But here is the question: Do we not think that the smaller nightmares within our own churches, our own homes, our own communities flow from the same privation-the same lack of willingness to acknowledge that we all must stand before the judgment seat of God?

There is perhaps no greater picture of this event than the one recorded in the sixth chapter of Isaiah. When beholding the unvarnished holiness of God, Isaiah didn't not automatically become unaware of the sins of others. The sins of the people with whom he dwelled became part of his testimony. But prior to that testimony was his own confession, of his own sins.

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

Isaiah's acknowledge of his own sins and the sins of others became an indictment against all of humanity. Every one of us needs our lips touched with the burning coal of Christ's atoning blood. So we might ask ourselves: in light of the brightness of God's holy judgment, would it make sense for Isaiah to take comfort in the knowledge that maybe he was a little more righteous than his sinful neighbor?

This would be like the pathetic outburst in a courtroom among guilty and convicted murderers seeking to elevate themselves in the eyes of the judge by testifying that their murderous ways are a skosh less appalling than the murderous ways of the others. It is difficult to ponder a greater healing agent for broken churches, damaged families and divided nations than a glimpse of the glory and holiness of God.

Considering the context of Paul's letter, should not this be the aim of every church gathering? Would not a greater sanctification be produced by our own wants, needs and judgments being cast aside, overwhelmed as it were by the Lord, lofty and exalted, sitting on His throne? It is now varnished, veiled. But Paul quotes Isaiah to remind us that it will not always be.

For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11).

We beautifully see in this verse, especially when compared to Philippians 2:10, 11, the deity of Christ.

...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10, 11).

The passage in Isaiah 45 is universally recognized as applying to God, yet it is applied to Jesus. One of many proofs that He is indeed fully God! But Paul's point is this:

So then each of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

In light of the account we must give of ourselves to God, the level of accounting we want to extract from one another is hardly worthy of mention. Or to put it another way, if we truly began to grasp that we are accountable to God, the grace and forbearance we would offer one another would heal our churches, families and nations.

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way (Romans 14:13).

Judge This

He completes the thought with a little play on words not readily seen in English. Roughly stated it would read, **"Let's not judge *krinomen*, but if you must judge ("resolve" being the word *krinate*), let your judgment be to not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."**

Simply put, in doubtful matters, make sure your behavior is not somehow making it difficult for your fellow Christian to worship his or her Savior. And the way for this to be achieved is for you to recognize the

grace we all require from a God who is holy and whose eyes are too pure to look upon sin.

Questions for Study

1. What were the “doubtful things” Paul was addressing in Romans 14? What attitudes was he addressing (pages 2, 3)?
2. What is not included in the “doubtful things” category (page 3)?
3. What is the principle of perspective? How is it achieved and what difference does it make (pages 3-5)?
4. How does Romans 14:11 testify to the deity of Christ? Why is that important (page 6)?
5. What should our judgment be according to verse 13 (page 6)?