

The Cure for Judging

Romans 14:10-13a

The Lord led Paul to address how we are to get along as we have differences.

This aim is a high one. Notice four things in his conclusion:

1. That the greatness of the gospel kingdom rule of Christ would not be mixed in any way – ‘for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, PEACE and joy in the Holy Spirit.’ Divisions harm the cause of Christ.
2. Second, that Christians would with one voice glorify the Father and the Lord Jesus. This is the humble, loving, Trinitarian unity in Ephesians 4:1-6 and elsewhere.
3. Number three, that the people of God might be persevering, encouraged, hope-filled people, abounding through the Holy Spirit – a truly God-filled people.
4. Last, that each in the church would, like Christ, not please themselves, but please his neighbor for good, for the building up of one another, and not destroy each other.

So these are big things. If we dismiss this and say it isn’t a big deal, we harm the cause of Christ. And what a ripple effect does this bring about!

Paul is making three points.

In 1-4 – dare not judge one another since God has received and accepted them. God is presently causing them to stand. God is their Master, not to you!

5-9 moves us to the past. Christ Jesus Himself has bought that weaker brother; shed his blood for that stronger brother. He is Lord of them not just by creation, but by the work of the cross. Since Jesus has written his name on them in his own blood, who are you to step on them?

Can you imagine a better motto of the Christian life than verse 8?

Read. Christ is their Master now; Christ has bought them and is risen and exalted to be their Lord.

And now comes the big gun with something future. Three times – v. 10, ‘for we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ’; v. 11 – ‘I swear as I live, every knee shall bow to me’; v. 12 – each one of us will give an account to God.

Why are we not to judge? The same reason we are not to avenge ourselves in chapter 12. This is God’s job, not ours!

One writer put so well: “Judge not your brother for God will judge him; judge yourself, for God will judge you!” (Frederick Godet)

But take this as Paul intends – not as a threat but a promise.

To the wicked, it is a threat. But to the righteous, it is a promise.

This brings us to our first point that all will be judged, that every knee will bow, as Isaiah said in chapter 45.

But there are knees which bow by the weight of sin and justice and dread; and there are the knees which bow by the weight of glory, grace, and justice fulfilled, the force of love and holy reverence – the knee of a child of God come home.

How will this look?

Summarizing Spurgeon:

Our Master will say to each one of his servants, “Give an account of thy stewardship.” “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked,” “for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.” ...[A]ll mankind will be judged.

What a motley throng will gather at that inquest, of all nations and peoples and tongues! Persons of all ages, too. You boys and girls, and you who have lived through a long life. Kings and princes will be there to give in their weighty account, and senators and judges to answer to their Judge; and then the multitude of the poor and needy, and those that live neglecting God, and forgetful of their souls, — they must all be there. John says, “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.” Both sheep and goats shall gather before the great dividing shepherd. Tares and wheat alike shall ripen; bad fish and good shall be sorted out from the net, while the multitudes outside, the nations that knew not God, shall all without exception hear with trembling the summons to the dread tribunal.

Saints and sinners too, only on what a different footing, are all to be judged out of the Book of Life. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” To the saints the judgment of the things done shall be according to righteousness, for these things shall be taken in

evidence that they were indeed reconciled to God. And then shall come the evidence: “For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink,” and so on. These fruits shall be the evidence that they were in Christ, the evidence of their being justified by faith; while on the other hand the sour and bitter fruit of the ungodly shall be an evidence that they were not planted of the Lord. We need have no fear of the judgment to come when we know that we are in Christ, for who fears to enter a just court when he knows that by the highest authority he has already been cleared? How complete the Christian’s safety! For there will be no accuser. So bright will be the righteousness of a saint through faith that no accuser will appear. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” “It is God that justifieth.”

But still you say that the believer has sinned. Yes, but that sin has been forgiven, and he has a righteousness with which to answer the law. O how the Christian has been judged, condemned, and tried, and in reference to him the essence of the judgment is past already, so that there can be no condemnation! Hence that second challenge, “Who is he that condemneth?” The Judge is the only one who can condemn, and we are sure that he will not. Tremble not, therefore, at the doctrine that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but pray that, as John puts it, “we may have boldness in the day of judgment.”

The judgment of God in Christ, by Christ, of all the world, is a glory to himself in his saints.

It is universal; it is inescapable; it is definitive; it is part of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus.

We go to judgment to be acquitted, not charged. This is part of the gospel gift to you that Jesus is made unto you Lord and Judge, He who is your Redeemer and your Friend; the One who so loved you that He left heaven.

What matter of joy to them it will be at the last day, to lift up their eyes and behold the person in whom they have trusted for salvation, to whom they have fled for refuge, upon whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and whose voice they have often heard, inviting them to himself for protection and safety, coming to judge them. [J. Edwards, The Final Judgment]

For the lowliest believer, the redeemed throne of God is encircled with a rainbow of joy and gladness, welcome and hallelujahs!

How could He who longs for His day of marriage to His bride, who has made all things ready, now stop and give to His own body one last chastening?

It is a day of the full perfecting of the saints and not the imperfections of the saints. The silver, gold and precious stones are revealed; the wood, hay and stubble are burned off and away.

Your awful, dreadful sins will be judged fully by God when his Son takes them on the cross of Calvary. Oh, wait, that already happened! And what Jesus suffered was a more thorough judgment than what men and fallen angels sustain in hell forever.

There will be found in you no blemishes, no spots, no wrinkles, no sin, no guilt, no pollution, no shame!

How does this apply in verse 10? Why do you, the strong, judge your weak brother? Why do you, the weak, hold in contempt, your strong brother? We all will stand! We all will bow! We all confess Jesus as Lord!

How does your having an over-critical spirit or word help this glorious work of God? Pay attention to yourself!

Paul has not brought out the term 'brother' since the beginning of Romans 12. Paul now repeats himself four times (2 in 10; 13, 15) – that person is your brother.

What is the attitude of a stronger, elder brother to a weaker, younger brother? Especially when they are in danger?

What is the attitude of a weaker, younger brother to an older, protective brother? Especially when he is or she is watching out for them?

That's the right spirit. Though different, the differences do not diminish but strengthen the bond.

Does this mean there is no place for criticism?

That is what many mistake and especially those who have little knowledge of the Bible, who love Mt. 7:1 – Thou shalt not Judge. What Jesus forbade, and what Paul is forbidding here, is harshly criticizing, usually because of animosity towards the person.

Criticism is a good thing, if done well. Knowing when and when not to give criticism is a matter of keen wisdom. But giving and taking of criticism is all a part of life. To give criticism graciously is one of the greatest gifts. And taking criticism well is nothing short of a miracle in a world like ours. We all would rather be the hammer than the nail.

But this needs to be the atmosphere of our lives under the canopy of Christ's Lordship.

This should also pour out of us into how we live among those who face the wrath of God outside of Christ.

As children of the King, whose names are written in heaven, we need to stay focused on the true riches of Christ as we live as his people and as we urge the lost to flee from the wrath to come.

How will the world end so soon and we will all be gathered before the seat of Christ. And what will our loved ones, our friends, our family view us if we have not done all to point them to Jesus!?

I remember the story of an unbeliever who rebuked a Christian by saying if I believed your gospel, I would crawl across glass and fire to bring this message to everyone. But you are so tame! And I don't believe it.

What do you believe? What do you endure for Christ? What do you do to bring people to Jesus before the judgment and it is too late?