

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Romans 14:10-13

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Background Notes

Romans 14 is a very practical chapter of Scripture because it deals with questions that confront us every day in our Christian lives. It discusses questions about things that within themselves are neither good nor bad -- they're morally neutral -- but they affect the conscience, and they affect the conscience of different Christians in different ways. Is it OK to work around the house on Sunday, or play sports on Sunday? What kind of music is acceptable for worshiping the Lord? Is it all right to play the football and basketball pools in the office -- as long as you don't put in too much money? Hey, wait a minute, some of you are saying -- isn't that gambling? Well, Christians have different ideas on exactly what constitutes gambling. Some Christians might think it's fine to invest quite a lot of money in the stock market -- and take quite a chance -- but they would never even dream of putting two dollars in that Super Bowl office pool!

On and on we could go. These "scruples" differ in Christian communities around the world and they differ with time. Do you know there was a time in America when many Christians would not use any form of public transportation because, after all, you would be forcing the bus driver or the train conductor to work on the Lord's Day? And I'm sure some of you remember the days when there was no swimming at Christian camps on Sunday! Well, we see in Romans 14 that scruples are not to be a test of fellowship, and we're not to judge or despise Christians who don't "see it our way" in the matters of moral indifference.

In verses 10-13 we see that one reason why we're not to judge one another in these matters is that **we don't have to!** We will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and be judged! So I don't have to function as my brother's conscience in the areas of Christian living where Scripture is silent. He functions by his conscience before the Lord, both now and at the judgment of Christ, and I function by my conscience before the Lord, and answer to the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ.

Doctrinal Points

1. All believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Verses 10-11: *“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.”*

Right now you may be saying: “I thought Christians were saved and didn’t have to face the judgment! Didn’t our Lord Jesus say in John 5, *...he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.* What then is this judgment seat of Christ for believers all about?”

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not the same as the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11 - *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God,^[a] and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”* And verse 15: *“And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”* This Great White Throne judgment is not the same as the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Great White Throne is for **unbelievers**. The Judgment seat of Christ is only for **believers**.

The judgment seat of Christ is not a judgment to determine whether the believer is saved or lost. That judgment took place at the cross when the Lord Jesus died for our sins and suffered the penalty for our sins. The judgment seat of Christ for believers is a **review of our lives** as believers. What have we done with our lives to serve the Lord? Have we wasted our twenty-four-hours-a-day, or used them selfishly, or have we made them count for the Lord Jesus Christ? An old saying tells us, “Only one life – t’will soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.” If we’ve been faithful to the Lord there will be reward at the judgment seat of Christ. If we’ve been unfaithful to the Lord there will be loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. *1 Corinthians 3:14-15 says, “If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”* So at the judgment seat of Christ there will be reward or no reward. The Lord Jesus must be faithful to His principles; He can’t reward us for something that we haven’t done!

However, I think 1 Corinthians 4:5 is very encouraging, *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.”* At the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord will find **something** in each believer’s life that brought glory to God! In fact, the evidence of your salvation is that there’s fruit.

When I was in high school, I played on the high school baseball team. I wasn’t a star, but I did make the team! Well, when it came to the awards banquet at the end of the season, the coach said something about each member of the team.

All the stars were being praised for their good batting averages and pitching efforts, etc., etc. I was wondering what the coach could find to say about me. Well, he remembered that I had stolen second base in a critical game that contributed to an important win in our season. I had forgotten all about it! What an encouragement! I didn't expect any praise, but he was able to pull that out one thing I had done well! I think one aspect of the judgment seat of Christ will be like that.

2 Corinthians 5:10 is another important Scripture on the Judgment Seat of Christ for believers: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."* Again, the "good or bad" here is not to determine our destiny, but our **reward**. Our destiny has already been determined! We're in Christ! But our reward in heaven is determined now by what we do with our lives. Remember, all believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2. All believers will give an account at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Verse 12: *"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."* Do you think that you're just going to stand there at the Judgment Seat of Christ as the Lord reviews your life? Not according to this verse! We will have to give an account of ourselves. Do you have your report ready? It will be an awesome moment!

"Lord, you know how busy I was with my job, and you know how much work was involved in maintaining all my stuff, all my things. And you know all the time I had to spend on the golf course to take a few strokes off my handicap – notice how I didn't mention skiing, by the way?" Well, guess what? No excuse will be valid at the Judgment Seat of Christ -- if we even dare to make one. What an awesome moment! We will stand before the Lord Himself to give an account of ourselves as to what we've done with the time and ability and the money that He has entrusted to us.

I'm so glad for the other aspect of the judgment seat of Christ, when the Lord will find something praiseworthy in each believer's life. But don't forget that all believers will give an account of their lives at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Practical Applications

1. Let's teach the Judgment Seat of Christ to our children.

I think that there's a tendency for many Christian parents to breathe a sigh of relief and relax when they know that their children have trusted the Lord for salvation. Is that true of you? That's understandable -- but we must continue to teach the truths of Scripture. The truth of the Judgment Seat of Christ can be a great motivator for godly living in your children's lives – for us as adults, but even for our children.

Suggestion: Instead of setting down a lot of rules and regulations for your children, especially for these morally neutral areas that we talked about, remind your children that they will answer for their lives before the Lord. **Teach them about the Judgment Seat of Christ!**

A Christian family I know has four children, and all four become model Christian teenagers. So I asked the father, “What’s your secret?” He told me that when questions came up about what movies or videos were OK, or what activities were OK for Sunday afternoon, he would simply remind them that it was their choice, but they would answer for their actions and their choices before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ! It had a great affect on the way those children grew up. Maybe that concept will be helpful for some of you Christian parents. I hope it is! Let’s teach the judgment seat of Christ to our children.

2. Let's not be “grumblers” or “stumblers.”

Verse 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.*”

Weak Christians tend to be “grumblers.” They find fault with anything about fellow-believers or churches that doesn’t **exactly** agree with **their ideas** of correct Christian living! (“I can’t believe that this church has a praise band with drums and bass guitars!”) Weak Christians tend to grumble!

Strong Christians, on the other hand, tend to be “stumblers.” For example, a strong Christian may feel perfectly free to order a glass of wine with his meal at a restaurant. However, another Christian with a tender conscience in the area of alcohol is shocked to see him drinking wine and is “stumbled” or held back in Christian growth as a result!

We **all** need to be careful in these areas. Note the **therefore** of verse 13 – “*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, and not put a stumbling block, or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.*”

Therefore -- because of the judgment seat of Christ, let’s not be grumblers or stumblers!