

YOUR JUDGMENT: PAID FOR OR PENDING?

I. [1 Thessalonians 5:8-11](#) [John 5:24-29](#) [Hebrews 9:27-28](#)

A. [1 Thessalonians 5:8-11](#) (ESV) are words of truth, words of promise, and words of great hope for believers in Christ: *8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

B. [4 Worms](#): A preacher decided to use a visual illustration with his Sunday sermon. The preacher put four worms into four separate Mason jars. The first worm was put into a jar of whiskey. The second worm was put into a jar of cigar smoke. The third worm was put into a jar of chocolate syrup. The fourth worm was put into a jar of good clean soil. At the conclusion of the sermon, the preacher declared the outcome: The first worm in whiskey--dead! The second worm in cigar smoke--dead! The third worm in chocolate syrup--dead! And the fourth worm in good clean soil--Alive! So the preacher asked the congregation, "What can you all learn from this demonstration? Maxine sitting in the back pew shouted out, "*As long as you drink whiskey, smoke cigars and eat chocolate, you won't get worms!*" (**Don't you just love that Maxine!**)

C. As we march towards Easter three weeks from now, we do so with soberness. I've done three funerals already this year; two were Navy Veterans and the third a Marine. All three included military honors during the graveside services. All three included the playing of TAPS. All three included flags being presented to the wife of the deceased. All three were men who served their country with faithfulness and distinction. All three were remembered with tears and painful goodbyes.

D. What I've found at most of the funerals I've done the past 30-some years is there's almost always a Maxine or two present. What the Scriptures meant to be clear and unambiguous, flies straight over top of Maxine's head. So I want you to join with me right now in loving Maxine while at the same time you wrap your minds and hearts around God's Word as I re-read [1 Thessalonians 5:8-11](#) (ESV): *8 But since we belong to the day, (We belong to Christ, we've been transferred from the realm of darkness into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son.) let us be sober, (Think and act clearly and seriously and with deep conviction.) having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. (The Triad of Christianity, Faith, Hope, & Love. Often depicted by a cross, an anchor, and a heart. So we allow our hearts and minds to be steeled and branded with faith, hope, and love, found in Christ and vividly depicted and voiced in God's Word so that we know that we know that we know, what?) 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us (cf. [2 Cor. 5:21](#)) so that whether we are awake (among the living**) or asleep (**among those who've died, gone to heaven, and await resurrection**) we might live with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.***

E. As many have astutely said, "*None of us are getting out of here alive.*" And the Scriptures clearly say that death is not the end. Despite our mortal bodies suffering decay and death, our souls will last forever. But let's be clear, because the Scriptures are, not everyone will spend eternity in the same place.

F. John 5:24-29 (NASB) are Jesus' red letters: **24** *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (I pray that's you!)* **25** *Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (This is liken to **Ephesians 2:4-6** which says: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."* **This is all about being awakened in Christ. Have you had your Great Awakening?)** **26** *For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;* **27** *and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. **28** Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, **29** and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (Of course faith--genuine faith--or the lack thereof, determines our deeds, either good ones or bad ones, and judgment will occur accordingly.)*

G. Hebrews 9:27-28 (NLT) affirms it this way: **27** *And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, **28** so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him.*

H. Standing Where the Fire's Been: The late Harry Ironside told the story of pioneers heading west in a wagon train. The going was slow as the wagons were pulled by oxen. One day they looked west in horror and saw the prairie on fire, driven by wind, and rapidly approaching. Their plight looked hopeless and they seemed doomed to perish. But one man among them ordered the prairie behind them to be set ablaze. As the fire behind them moved away, he ordered the wagons to retreat backwards upon the freshly burned ground. As the wildfire in front grew close, one terrified little girl cried out, *"Are you sure we won't be burned alive?!"* The man replied, *"My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!"* In the same way, because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we who are in Him, are standing where the fire's been.

I. Know this: Either your judgment has already taken place at the cross of Jesus Christ where He absorbed the punishment for your sins OR you will face judgment at the Great White Throne because your debt of sin has not been paid. There's a reason the return of Jesus is often described as the *Great and Terrible Day*. It'll be both, depending on where you stand. So my plea to you is as always, cry out to God to save you and forgive you and make you His own! If you are in ear shot of this message, then consider it an invitation steeped in love, not merely from me, but from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[1 Thessalonians 5:8-11 \(ESV\)](#)

8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. **9** For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

John 5:24-29 (NASB)

24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. **25** Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. **26** For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; **27** and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. **28** Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, **29** and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NLT)

27 And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, **28** so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him.

Bonus Rations for Further Nourishment

Regeneration - Paul Levy (What it Means to be Regenerated/Born Again/Awakened)
<https://ealinglevy.wordpress.com/2021/03/03/regeneration/>

The Meaning of the Cross - R.C. Sproul
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxtPKuGiMul>

The Gospel: The Most Terrifying Truth of Scripture - Paul Washer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXOWyjB7d24>

What is the Gospel? - Tim Keller
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0g-s4Qhtyk>

Sinners In The Hands of an Angry God - Jonathan Edwards (Famous Sermon)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vmvZIAGKJo>

Let Go of Lies About Heaven: Eight Myths Many Believe - Randy Alcorn
<https://www.epm.org/blog/2021/Mar/8/let-go-lies-heaven>

Lassitude - Andrée Seu Peterson
<https://world.wng.org/2021/03/lassitude>

Daniel 12:1-4 (NLT)

1 “At that time Michael, the archangel who stands guard over your nation, will arise. Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence. But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued. **2** Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace. **3** Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever. **4** But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end, when many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase.”

Romans 5:6-11 (ESV)

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- **8** but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

1 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV)

14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

Colossians 1:11-14 (NLT)

11 We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, **12** always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, who live in the light. **13** For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, **14** who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NIV)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 (NLT)

8 And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God. We don't need to tell them about it, **9** for they keep talking about the wonderful welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God. **10** And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven--Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV)

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. **14** For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. **15** According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. **18** Therefore encourage one another with these words.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-12 (ESV)

3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. **4** Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. **5** This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— **6** since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, **7** and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels **8** in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **9** They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, **10** when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. **11** To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power, **12** so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 20:11-15 (ESV)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. **12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. **13** And the sea gave up the dead 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. **14** Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. **15** And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Quote by Stephen Charnock

"Not all the vials of judgment that have or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious demons, nor the groans of the damned creatures – give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin – as the wrath of God let loose upon His Son! Never did divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Savior's countenance was most marred in the midst of His dying groans – when God had turned His smiling face from Him, and thrust His sharp knife into His heart, which forced that terrible cry from Him, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!"

- Stephen Charnock, (1628 - 1680) English Puritan, Presbyterian Pastor, Christian Author.

Quote by John Stott

"Christ's fourth indirect claim was to judge the world. This is perhaps the most fantastic of all His statements. Several of His parables imply that He will come back at the end of the world, and that the final day of reckoning will be postponed until His return. He will Himself arouse the dead, and all the nations will be gathered before Him. He will sit on the throne of His glory, and the judgment will be committed to Him by the Father. He will then separate men from one another as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. Some will be invited to come and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Others will hear the dreadful words, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Not only will Jesus be the judge, but the criterion of judgment will be men's attitude to Him as shown in their treatment of His 'brethren' or their response to His word. Those who have acknowledged Him before men He will acknowledge before His Father: those who have denied Him, He will deny. Indeed, for a man to be excluded from heaven on the last day, it will be enough for Jesus to say, "I never knew you."

- John Stott, *Basic Christianity*.

Quote by Harold Senkbeil

"Most people think that the human dilemma is that our lives are out of adjustment; we don't meet God's expectations. Salvation then becomes a matter of rearranging our priorities and adjusting our life-style to correspond with God's will. In its crassest form, this error leads people to think they earn their own salvation. More often in today's evangelical world, that error has a more subtle disguise: armed with forgiveness through Jesus, people are urged to practice the techniques and principles Christ gave to bring their life-style back into line. It is certainly true that sinful lives are out of adjustment. We are all in need of the Spirit's sanctifying power. But that comes only after our real problem is solved. Sins are just the symptom; our real dilemma is death. God warned Adam and Eve that the knowledge of came with a high price tag: "...when you eat of (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) you will surely die" (Ge. 2:17). Our first parents wanted to be like God and were willing to pay the price. And we are still paying the price: "the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23) "...in Adam we all die" (1 Cor. 15:22); "...you were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1). The real problem we all face is death. Physical death, to be sure. But ultimately and most horribly, spiritual death--being cut off from God forever. And everyone must die. You can either die alone or in Jesus. In His death Jesus Christ swallowed up our death, and rose again

triumphantly to take all of the teeth out of the grave. In the promise of the resurrection, death loses its power. When we die with Jesus, we really live!"

- Harold Senkbeil, *Dying To Live: The Power of Forgiveness*, p 13.

Quote by Jerry Bridges

"God, by the very perfection of His moral nature, cannot but be angry at sin – not only because of its destructiveness to humans, but, more important, because of its assault on His divine majesty. This is not the mere petulance of an offended deity because His commands are not obeyed. It is rather the necessary response of God to uphold His moral authority in His universe. And though God's wrath does not contain the sinful emotions associated with human wrath, it does contain a fierce intensity arising from His settled opposition to sin and His determination to punish it to the utmost."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"God does not love us because we are lovable but rather because He is love... Christ did not die for men because they were intrinsically worth dying for, but because He is intrinsically love, and therefore loves infinitely."

Quote by D.A. Carson

"God's wrath is not an implacable, blind rage. However emotional it may be, it is an entirely reasonable and willed response to offenses against His holiness. But His love... wells up amidst His perfections and is not generated by the loveliness of the loved. Thus there is nothing intrinsically impossible about wrath and love being directed toward the same individual or people at the same time. God in His perfections must be wrathful against His rebel image-breakers, for they have offended Him; God in His perfections must be loving toward His rebel image-bearers, for He is that kind of God."

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"The hearing of the gospel involves the hearer in responsibility. It is a great privilege to hear the gospel. You may smile and think there is nothing very great in it. The damned in hell know. Oh, what would they give if they could hear the gospel now? If they could come back and entertain but the shadow of a hope that they might escape from the wrath to come? The saved in heaven estimate this privilege at a high rate, for, having obtained salvation through the preaching of this gospel, they can never cease to bless their God for calling them by His word of truth. O that you knew it! On your dying beds the listening to a gospel sermon will seem another thing than it seems now."

Settling Accounts

The story is told of a farmer in a Midwestern state who had a strong disdain for "religious" things. As he plowed his field on Sunday morning, he would shake his fist at the church people who passed by on their way to worship. October came and the farmer had his finest crop ever—the best in the entire county. When the harvest was complete, he placed an advertisement in the local paper which belittled the Christians for their faith in God. Near the end of his diatribe he wrote, "*Faith in God must not mean much if someone like me can prosper.*" The response from the Christians in the

community was quiet and polite. In the next edition of the town paper, a small ad appeared. It read simply, *"God doesn't settle His accounts in October."*

- William E. Brown in *Making Sense of Your Faith*.

Judged by A Different Set of Standards

In *Words We Live By*, Brian Burrell tells of an armed robber named Dennis Lee Curtis who was arrested in 1992 in Rapid City, South Dakota. Curtis apparently had scruples about his thievery. In his wallet the police found a sheet of paper on which was written the following code:

I will not kill anyone unless I have to.

I will take cash and food stamps—no checks.

I will rob only at night.

I will not wear a mask.

I will not rob mini-marts or 7-Eleven stores.

If I get chased by cops on foot, I will get away. If chased by vehicle, I will not put the lives of innocent civilians on the line.

I will rob only seven months out of the year.

I will enjoy robbing from the rich to give to the poor.

This thief had a sense of morality, but it was flawed. When he stood before the court, he was not judged by the standards he had set for himself but by the higher law of the state. Likewise when we stand before God, we will not be judged by the code of morality we have written for ourselves but by God's perfect law.

- Taken from [Craig Brian Larson, Choice Contemporary Stories and Illustrations \(Baker, 1998\), p.181.](#)

Standing Where Fire's Been

By H.A. Ironside

One of the first gospel illustrations that ever made a real impression upon my young heart was a simple story which I heard a preacher tell when I was less than nine years old.

It was of pioneers who were making their way across one of the central states to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. They traveled in covered wagons drawn by oxen, and progress was necessarily slow. One day they were horrified to note a long line of smoke in the west, stretching for miles across the prairie, and soon it was evident that the dried grass was burning fiercely and coming toward them rapidly. They had crossed a river the day before but it would be impossible to go back to that before the flames would be upon them. One man only seemed to have understanding as to what could be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when a space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it. As the flames roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, "Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?" The leader replied, "My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!"

What a picture of the believer, who is safe in Christ!

"On Him Almighty vengeance fell,
Which would have sunk a world to hell.
He bore it for a chosen race,
And thus becomes our Hiding Place."

The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him, and all who are in Christ are safe forever, for they are now standing where the fire has been.

- H.A. Ironside, *Illustrations of Bible Truth*, Moody Press, 1945, p.p. 34-35.

Of the State of Men after Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead

- The Westminster Confession of Faith

http://www.covenantofgrace.com/westminster_chapter32.htm

I. "The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none."

II. "At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever."

III. "The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour; the bodies of the just, by His Spirit, unto honour, and be made conformable to His own glorious body."

- The Westminster Confession, (Chapter XXXII), 1646.

The Final Judgment

The Reformation Study Bible - R.C. Sproul - General Editor

The certainty of final judgment is the background against which the New Testament message of saving grace is set. Paul no less than Jesus stresses this certainty. According to Paul, Jesus Christ saves us from "the wrath to come" (1Thess. 1:10) on "the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Rom. 2:5; cf. John 3:36; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; Rev. 6:17; 19:15). Throughout Scripture, God's indignation, "anger," and "fury" are judicial; these words point to the holy Creator as the active Judge of sin. The message of coming judgment for all mankind, with Jesus Christ completing the work of His mediatorial kingdom by acting as Judge on His Father's

behalf, runs throughout the New Testament (Matt. 13:40-43; 25:41-46; John 5:22-30; Acts 10:42; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1; Heb. 9:27; 10:25-31; 12:23; 2 Pet. 3:7; Jude 6, 7; Rev. 20:11-15). When Christ comes again and history is completed, all people of all times will be raised for the judgment and take their place before Christ's throne. The event surpasses imagination, but the human imagination is not the measure of what God will do.

At the judgment every person will give an individual account to God, and God through Christ "will render to each one according to his works" (Rom. 2:6; cf. Ps. 62:12; Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12). The regenerate, who as servants of Christ have learned to love righteousness and desire the glory of heaven, will be acknowledged, and on the basis of Christ's merit on their behalf they will be awarded the righteousness they seek. The rest will go to a destiny commensurate with the godless way of life they have chosen, a place assigned to them on the basis of their own demerit (Rom. 2:6-11). How much they knew of the will of God will determine the severity of their condemnation (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 11:42-48; Rom. 2:12).

The judgment will demonstrate the perfect justice of God. In a world of sinners, where God has "allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16), evil is rampant, and doubts arise about how God, if He is sovereign, can be just, or, if He is just, can be sovereign. But God will be glorified in rendering just judgment, and the Last Judgment will answer every suspicion that He has ceased to care about righteousness (Ps. 50:16-21; Rev. 6:10; 16:5-7; 19:1-5).

For those who profess to belong to Christ, a review of their words and works (Matt. 12:36, 37) will show whether their profession is the fruit of an honest and good heart (Matt. 12:33-35), or a deceptive hypocrisy (Matt. 7:21-23). Everything will be exposed on Judgment Day (1 Cor. 4:5), and each person will receive from God what fairly belongs to them. Those whose professed faith did not express itself in a new life, marked by hatred of sin and love of righteousness, will be lost (Matt. 18:23-35; 25:34-46; James 2:14-26). Yet God has announced the day of judgment before the time commanding everyone to repent and love life rather than death (Deut. 30:19; Luke 13:24).

- Reformation Study Bible, R.C. Sproul - General Editor, Theological Note on Matthew 24-25, p. 1404.