

THE FINAL ACCOUNT

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:12.

There are powerful currents in the modern world that tend to submerge the individual in a sea of collectivism. There are philosophies that say, "The state is everything; the individual is insignificant." There are schools of thought that would sacrifice all sanctities of personality to the supposed good of the community. The tendency of such types of thinking is to destroy a sense of personal responsibility, and to cause people to move as the tides move, and to rise and fall with the waves.

In our country, as we all know, there has been a wider and wider extension of what we may call public services or socialized responsibility. In our day there is a strong tendency to put more and more responsibility upon the state. There was a time when the functions of the government were limited to the protection of life, liberty, and property. But modern socialism wants the government to do everything for us. And, of course, socialism aims at the complete annihilation of personal responsibility. It would remove from every person the obligation to think, choose, act, and provide for himself. Do you want a job? Let the government furnish you one. Do you want to build a home? Let the government make you a loan. Do you want medical and hospital services? Let the government provide them. Do you want sickness and old-age security? Let the government guarantee you that you shall have them. On and on we go. That sort of thing is what the majority of people in our country want today.

The chapter from which the text is taken enunciates the great principle of individual responsibility and personal accountability to God. It tells us that we cannot get lost in the crowd; that we cannot transfer our responsibilities to another person or to any combination of individuals. God's Word repeatedly emphasizes man's personal accountability to God. It plainly says, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Without exception we are responsible and accountable to God.

Men are prone to pass judgment upon one another. It is a tendency against which every person has occasion to be on guard. In this matter of passing judgment it is our custom to be lenient with ourselves and severe with others. A corrective to this tendency to judge is to be found in the fact that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." In verse ten of this chapter God, through Paul, rebukes Christians for judging others by saying in effect that it is unnatural. He said, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." There is coming a day when men shall be judged after a better fashion than you and I can ever judge them. No Christian has any right to intrude into the office and assume the prerogative of Christ by judging His followers.

Why are we accountable? Our accountability rests on a true and substantial basis, namely, our rationality. There must of necessity be responsibility wherever there is rationality. We are accountable because God has made us rational beings.

The very nature of man makes judgment a necessity. We say of man that he is a responsible being. But responsible means answerable. But to whom is man answerable? To himself? Yes, certainly. He must answer at the bar of his own conscience for every choice which he makes. But he is not the only one to whom he is responsible. To society? Yes, assuredly. Society has a perfect right to hold him to a reckoning, to exact payment, and to an accounting for everything in his conduct which has been injurious to his fellow-men. But that is not all. Beyond these tribunals is another, the tribunal of the Lord. Man must give an account to Him, Who refuses to show respect of persons or partiality. That "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" is the inevitable concomitant of life.

Somebody once asked Daniel Webster what was the most important thought that ever occupied his mind. If there were anything trifling in the spirit which prompted the question, the

answer must have effectually removed it. In his slow and solemn way, Mr. Webster replied, "The most important thought that ever occupied my mind was that of my individual responsibility to God." This responsibility is one which cannot be communicated to another person. The great and famous William E. Gladstone once remarked that to him the greatest consideration in life was a sense of his personal responsibility to God. That is the very thought that occupied the mind of Paul when he wrote our text and sought to lay those weighty words upon the minds of all who might read them, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Each of us is responsible to the living Lord, Who sees, knows, and judges. "Every one of us shall give an account of himself."

For what is each of us accountable to the Lord?

1. For The Reception Of Christ As Saviour.

Like Pilate, every one faces life's most important question, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Every one must answer this question for himself. Every one shall give an account for what he does with Christ.

What can one do with Christ? He can receive Him or reject Him, confess Him or deny Him, be His friend or His foe, follow Him or turn away from Him, be for Him or be against Him. You should receive Him as your personal Saviour, and come into right relationship to Him, if you have not done so. If you have not received Christ as your Saviour, do not blame anyone else. If you are not a Christian, it is strictly your own fault. The right thing for you to do with Christ is to receive Him as your Saviour, enthrone Him as the Lord of your heart and life, confess Him before the world, yeild yourself to Him in full surrender, and spend your life in His service. If you refuse to receive Him as your Saviour, you should not expect Him to admit you into heaven. Always remember that you will have to render an account to Him in person for your rejection of Him. You must give an account for what you do with Christ.

2. For The Words Of Our Mouths.

The tongue is a very important member of the human body. For its proper use we are responsible and accountable. There is not anybody who does not sin with his tongue. With their tongues men sin against God, against others, and against themselves. In Psalm 106:33 we read of Moses, "He spake unadvisedly with his lips." Because of this, he was not permitted to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. Who knows how often our lips have caused the Lord to withhold His blessing from us! Just as a doctor looks at the tongue to judge the health of his patient, so the tongue is also a good indication of one's spiritual health. By what he says one proves the condition of his spiritual health. Those whose mouths are full of "cursing and bitterness" furnish testimony against themselves by what they say. The words which they speak show that their hearts are not right with the Lord.

Christ said, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37). What solemn declarations!

3. For The Actions Of Our Lives.

Every one of us must give an account of himself to God for his conduct in life. From the beginning of time until the present men have tried to evade this responsibility and to blame others for their own misdeeds. When Adam disobeyed God and was brought face to face with the reality of his sin, he tried to lay the blame on Eve. And when Eve was confronted with the matter, she tried to shift the responsibility to the serpent. But God held both Adam and Eve responsible for what each of them had done.

Temptations do come to us through other people, but for what we do in the face of temptation, we are responsible ourselves.

The Bible says, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). God is entitled to the adoration of our hearts and the obedience of our lives. One's actions show what he is, just as a tree is known by its fruits. "By their fruits ye shall know them." For every act that we perform we shall be held accountable on the last day. There is no exception.

4. For The Use Of Our Faculties.

Every endowment which you possess has been given to you by the Lord. To some He has given five talents, to others two, and to others one. God has given one or more talents to every person. We vary greatly in the number of talents that we possess. We differ also in our opportunities for the development of our talents. Then we differ vastly in our opportunities for using our talents. Regardless of the number of talents that one possesses, he is responsible for the right use of them.

After all, you are not the proprietor of what you call your own, but you are the steward or trustee of it. You are personally responsible for a careful and constructive use of all your faculties and abilities. If you are inclined to use the resources and faculties which the Lord has given you in trying to please yourself, let me warn you that a day of reckoning is sure to come. In all the enterprises of life, in all the opportunities which present themselves to you, in all the privileges which are yours, in all of the abilities which you possess, and in all the capacities which you may develop and devote to larger uses you must ever remember that "every one of us shall give an account of himself to God."

As a Christian, you have the responsibility of advancing the cause of Christ in keeping with your ability and your opportunities. Regardless of what anybody else may say or do, you will be living your life before God, and then at last you will be answerable to Him. Exercise to the fullest extent the ability which God has given you in the particular field in which He has placed you.

5. For The Influence Of Our Lives.

Influence is the power that one exerts over others by his thoughts, words, and deeds. No one can think, speak, or act without influencing others. In fact, one cannot live without wielding an influence. As one grows in knowledge, spiritual insight, and ripeness of judgment his influence becomes more weighty. Whether one's influence is good or bad, when it has been exerted it cannot be undone or destroyed. God sees, knows, and is recording everything that you think, say, and do. You are certainly responsible for what you think, say, and do, and you are going to have to give an account to Him for these things.

When shall we give the final account of ourselves?

Every Christian must give a final account of himself when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ. Every unsaved person must give a final account of himself when he appears before Christ at the white throne judgment.

Many things that we say would not be said, and many things that we do would not be done, if we would only remember that we will have to give an account for them. You will have to meet the great Judge face to face and give an account of every thought, motive, desire, word, and deed. Every one of us is responsible for what he is, for what he says, for what he does, and for what he purposes to do. Every one must give an account for what he is down deep in his heart, and for what he has said and done. It is of self that every one must give an account.