

# Foundations Lesson #16

## Eternal Judgment

Eternal judgment refers to those decisions rendered by **The Almighty** which determine the destination and standing of each human for all eternity. The Scripture declares:

For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "Every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:10c-12). / ...man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment... (Hebrews 9:27). / Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13).

Since no one will escape God's judgment, it behooves us to prepare well.

Evangelist Bob Salliby tells the story of an encounter he had with God. Bob was praying and God spoke to him and said, "Bob, how long is eternity?" Now when **The Almighty** asks you a question it's not because he's looking for information. He knows all things. So he has another motive for asking questions – usually, as Peter says, to stimulate us to wholesome thinking. So when God asked Bob the question, "Bob, how long is eternity?" Bob wisely answered, "I don't know Lord. How long is eternity?" Great answer. God said, "If you take the number of stars in the sky, and multiply that by the number of grains of sand on the seashore, when you've been there that many years, eternity has barely begun.

As Bob was pondering what God said, God asked him a second question. "Bob, in light of eternity, how long is your life?" and Bob said, "Lord, I suppose it's about **that** long" (and he snapped his fingers when he said '**that** long'. Then God asked him a third and final question, "Bob, will you give me **that**? Will you give me **that**?"

Eternity is a long, long, long, long time. And in the light of that what we're doing for these very, very short and fragile 80 years – give or take – that we have on this planet, **that** determines our destiny for ever, and ever, and ever, and ever.

So, going back to our outline, Roman Numeral One says that there are only two eternal destinations, but there is great variation within each of them. As you can see the diagram: there's Heaven; there's Hell; and there's a gulf or chasm in between the two. And the scene that is set by this diagram, I compare to what Jesus said in Matthew 25,

**Mt. 25:31ff** [Jesus speaking] When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. (and if you'll notice on the diagram, we have one destination on the right and one destination on the left)

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.....

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.....

So there are two destinations. One is a destination of blessing, the other is a destination of having been cursed or damned. But within each destination there is also great variety, great

variation.

So if you'll look at the diagram on our outline, to the very right of the page, you can see where it says, "rich welcome", and then there are all kinds of little lines above that, each line representing millions of people. Peter says this:

**II Pt. 1:10-11** Therefore, my brothers be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things (and in context, Peter had been talking about a whole bunch of godly qualities), if you do these things you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Be encouraged. There are those people who will receive a rich welcome by the Lord into their eternal destination. Now I imagine that out of all the people who have ever walked the earth, the majority of them were hoping to receive a rich welcome. But reality is that very, very few make it. I have tried to describe those elite people who actually end up receiving a rich welcome by the Lord:

**the elite** When they were insulted, they answered kindly. When they were persecuted, they prayed for their persecutors. When they were mistreated, they blessed those who abused them. They were as wise as snakes yet as innocent as doves. They followed the Lamb faithfully with instant obedience wherever he led them, without complaining, grumbling, or any resistance. They loved deeply, and because of their great love they made great sacrifices joyfully for the sake of their God, His kingdom, and His people. They experienced great intimacy with their Lord on a daily basis. They treated even the insignificant and despised people of the earth with honor, dignity, love, and tenderness. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They emptied themselves out in serving their God and the people around them. The book of Hebrews declares that they lived their lives by faith; that they were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – ***the world was not worthy of them.***

Now perhaps you're thinking, "Wow. I've got a long ways to go." But here's something I want you to know: Every single one of us have been called, invited, beckoned, and summoned by ***The Almighty*** to be included in their number. We can make it. It is attainable. All the saints from all ages have been invited, but precious few ever actually make it. Our destiny is in our own hands.

I may not know today how close you are to God, but I do know this: You are every bit as close to God as what you really want to be, and so am I. If you wanted to be closer to God, you could be. If I wanted to be closer to God, I could be. Why? Because He always helps us get closer to Him if that's what we really want.

Going back to our diagram, on the right side of heaven we have those who receive a rich welcome. Now further to the left but still in heaven – notice it's still in heaven – there are those who enter, as it says on the bottom, "escaping through the flames." Here's what Paul says in his first letter to the church in Corinth:

**I Co. 3:13-15** his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

So what's that talking about? It's talking about an individual who shows up at the judgment throne of the Almighty, and there God tests the quality of each man's work. And the way God does that in this Scripture is by passing it through the fire. If that man's work is gold, silver, or precious stones, the fire has no power to destroy it. They built well. But if it consists of wood, hay, or straw, it passes through the fire and it's consumed. As Paul said, "If what he has built survives, he will receive

his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” So Paul is describing a theoretical individual who comes before God with all of his accomplishments while he was on earth, and it was all made of wood, hay, or straw and it was passed through the fire and it all got burned up. Gone. Nothing left. And, fortunately, even though he had done nothing with his earthly life that would gain him any reward, still, he did trust Christ as his Savior. So he gets to enter into the glories of heaven, even though zero reward accompanies him. So you wonder, Why did people get all of their works burned up? One author has said this regarding the lowest in heaven:

**the lowest** For ever and ever, they will bear the reproach of the fact that their lives on earth were wasted, having lived for self. They will remember with horror how they viewed the things of God as unimportant, because they were so focused upon their own amusements, pleasures, cares, worries, or finances.

Why did all their works get burned up? Why was there nothing left when they stood before God's judgment throne? Because their hearts and their minds were set on earthly things. If you'll notice, the issue here is not sinful activities, it's having the right priority. The issue is: what is important to us, what captivates us. There's a preacher who was asked, "Who's going to be taken up to be with the Lord when He comes back?" His answer, without blinking an eye, was: "Those who are taken up with the Lord now." Where are our affections? That's the issue. Where's our heart? If we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, which is the first and greatest commandment, which is the most important thing we will ever do – then we'll be just fine.

So there on our diagram we have the two extremes of heaven – those who will be rewarded richly and those who make it by the skin of their teeth. And then there are millions upon millions of people whose standing is in multiple positions somewhere in between those two extremes. That's heaven.

Moving over a little to our left, in the middle there's a gulf or a chasm. What that means is that no one can cross over from one of these two destinations to the other. Jesus said, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus,

**Lk. 16:25-26** “But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm (some translations use the word “gulf”) has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

So there is a chasm or gulf. If you want to know what it looks like, wait till you get there and check it out. I say that because there's no description given of it, and we don't need details like that. I'm not saying it's wrong to be curious, but God tells us what we need to know. No one can cross over from one destination to the other.

Then on the other side of the chasm, there's a place called hell. You may have heard the description of this place: There's weeping and gnashing of teeth... the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever... their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched... As horrible as hell is, I believe that hell is defined, not primarily by all the torment and pain and suffering, but both heaven and hell are defined by one thing: either the absence or presence of God. Heaven is defined by the presence of God. That's why it's so glorious. Heaven is glorious because of who dwells there. What did Jesus teach us to pray? “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” In heaven, God's will is not resisted. And when you have such a place, made by the One who sits on the throne of the universe, where everyone and everything joyfully submits to His desire, as a by-product of His presence and His will being carried out, it's incredibly glorious. The main attraction of heaven is not the gates made of a single pearl or the streets of gold or the sparkling beauty of the buildings, the main attraction of heaven is the Lord

himself.

Hell, on the other side of the chasm, is also known primarily for one thing: it is known by the absence of God. It is a place that He has turned his back on. And because of that, all that remains is pain, suffering, agony, turmoil, shrieks, horror, and the like. And the worst part of it all may be the hopelessness. When you're there, you know that it's fitting and appropriate for you to be there. You know that justice has been satisfied for you to be there. You know that. You also know that there's no getting out. Ever. This will be your existence for the billions of years to come. Period. That is the ultimate in hopelessness.

By the way, God never prepared hell for humans. What did Jesus say? "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire ***prepared for the devil and his angels.***" That's who hell was created for. So every time a human being drops into hell it's not that God's will has been accomplished, it's that God's will has been resisted. We need to get that straight. Let me read you a couple of passages of Scripture:

**Ez. 18:30** "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. **verse 32:** For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

Do you sense the urgency in that? Do you sense the heart of God and how he's pleading with his people? He's not interested in anyone going to hell. (pause) God is just. So as much as he has personal preference for everyone choosing to enter heaven with him, justice demands that what we have chosen is what we receive. Some may say, "I don't know of anyone who has ever wanted to live in hell forever. Nobody's ever chosen that." But whether they realized it or not, when they chose not to have God in their life, when they chose against welcoming the presence of God into their hearts while they lived on earth, they were also choosing the absence of God for eternity. A few more Scriptures:

**II Pt. 3:9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

**I Tim. 2:3-4** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

What does God **want**? He doesn't want anyone to perish. What does God **want**? He wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. The desire of God is clear.

Scripture also gives us indication that hell will be a lot worse for some than for others.

**Mt. 11:21-24** [Jesus speaking] "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

**Lk. 10:10-12** [Jesus speaking to the 72 he is sending out] But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

What does all that tell us? In hell, it will be more bearable for some than for others, and for that

reason on our diagram, we have on the right side “more bearable” and on the left, “less bearable.” Now I can't define what more or less bearable looks like, but let's just realize that there is a continuum that extends from the highest place in heaven to the lowest place in hell, except that there is a gulf in between that no one can cross. The lowest spot in heaven is still far, far, far better than the most bearable spot in hell, but there is a continuum.

## Foundations Lesson #16

### Eternal Judgment, Part Two

With the groundwork that has been laid in Part One, let's now take a look at Roman Numeral #2 on our outline. God will judge us according to... and then there is a list of eight standards, eight criteria, eight gauges that he will measure us by. It is so wonderful of the Lord to have given us, in His written word, the standards He's going to use at the Judgement Throne. Now if we know what's on a test, we have a much better shot at doing well on the test. And the good news is that in God, every test is an open book test. So He in his goodness and in his grace has decided to show us in advance what's on the test, partially because he wants every one of us to do really well on the test. He is delighted to give us rewards. He rejoices in being able to give lavish gifts to his chosen. He just won't compromise his justice to do it. That would not be right – and the judge of all the earth always does what is right. He is righteous.

So, the first standard: God will judge us according to our actions, according to what we have done. Jesus told us that if someone even gives a cup of cold water to one of his followers that they would not lose their reward. One of the very important factors to come up for evaluation will be how we treated our brothers and sisters. Jesus said that as much as we have done it unto one of the least of these brothers of his, we have done it unto Him. Another factor deals with what we did with our time. Everyone is given 24 hours in a day. What did we do with the precious gift of those 24 hours? And what about our finances? Did we handle our financial resources according to God's desire? Everything we have, we have graciously been given by the Lord himself. How did we use it? What about our giftings? Everyone has been given abilities, talents, giftings, with which they can be a blessing to other people. What have we done with them? Even the things that we didn't do that we should have done will come up for review. A third grader comes up to his teacher and asks, “Should someone get punished for something they didn't do?” And the teacher says, “No, Johnny. No one should get punished for something they didn't do.” So Johnny replies, “Good, because I didn't do my homework.” I think we all realize that there are some things we are supposed to do, and if we don't do them, there are consequences. James 4:17 says, “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” So even those things get evaluated by **The Almighty**. All that gets included in our being judged according to our actions.

**II Co. 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

**Mt. 16:27** [Jesus speaking] For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

**Ro. 2:6-10** God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

**Ez. 33:20** [the LORD speaking to the Israelites] Yet, O house of Israel, you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to his own ways."

**Jer. 17:10** "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."

So the first standard, the first criteria that God will use to judge us is that He will judge us according to our actions. Secondly, God will judge us according to our words.

**Mt. 12:33-37** [Jesus speaking] "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Now, you might be thinking, 'That's a strong standard: every careless word. Who can live up to that standard?' Let me ask you a question. Why do people speak careless words? (pause) Do you know the main reason why I think we speak careless words? We speak careless words because we **care less**. If we took time to weigh our words before we spoke them, we would not be inclined to speak carelessly. Jeremiah 12:11 says, "the whole land will be laid waste because there is no one who cares."

So all our words will come before God, not just the ones we want. Of course, having said that, the things that we repented of while we were on earth, they get wiped out. There's no record of them in heaven. Those things are washed clean by the blood of Christ, they are forgiven; they are wiped out. We can take comfort in that. But we have to understand that "by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

**Lk. 19:22a** [Jesus, giving the Parable of the Ten Minas] "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant!'"

**Ps. 19:14** May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

**Jas. 5:9** Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Grumbling kept the Israelites out of the promised land for 38 years.

**Pr. 21:23** He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.

**Mt. 15:18** [Jesus speaking] But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'

Sometimes we as human beings devise all kinds of methods to, I'll just put it bluntly, deceive people – to make people think we're something that we're not. But sooner or later, what's really in the heart **will** come out. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." Jesus declared that what was whispered in the ear in the inner rooms would be shouted from the housetops. It will all be revealed. It can't be hidden from God. Fortunately, with whatever is rotten on the inside, all we have to do is realize God's not honored by that, in repentance lift it up before God, and ask him to change

us. He'll take care of business. He knows how to transform our ashes into beauty. He'll get it done. We can count on that.

So we will be judged #1 according to our actions, #2 according to our words, and if all that wasn't inclusive enough, #3, we'll be judged according to our motives. In the first 18 verses of Matthew's gospel chapter 6, there are people who were doing three things: they were giving to the needy, they were praying, and they were fasting. I think we would all agree that those three things are good things to be doing. In fact, Jesus himself says, "**when** you give to the needy... **when** you pray... **when** you fast..." He doesn't say "**if**" you do those things, but "**when**". These are all activities we are supposed to be involved in. Yet, interestingly enough, he identifies the people he's talking about who are doing these things as **hypocrites**. That's right, hypocrites. Why? Because they were doing good things for the wrong reasons. They didn't do what they did in order to please God, they did what they did in order to be seen by men. They were far more interested in having a fine reputation than they were in the needy, or in seeking God, or fasting. Hypocrisy is a matter of motive. It's possible for any one of us to do wonderful things, but to have a foul motive for doing those things. So when we stand before God's judgment throne, not only will our actions and our words come up for review, but so will our motives.

**I Co. 4:5** Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

**I Chr. 28:9b** for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.

**Ro. 2:16** This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

**Lk. 12:2-3** [Jesus speaking] There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

So if you're like me and you still have foul motives, take heart. You are a candidate for receiving the cleansing power of **The Almighty**. God can change all of us, and He will be delighted to do that as we ask Him and trust Him to do so. God can purify any motive!

Moving on, God will judge us according to the light we have received. To whom much is given, much is required. The more light, the more revelation, the more grace we have received, the more will be required of us. There have been about a dozen times in my life when as I was preparing the Sunday morning sermon according to what I felt God wanted preached, I had that nagging feeling of "How is brother Smith going to take this?" That's not his real name, by the way. "He's probably going to think that I'm preaching that message just because I want to straighten him out – that I'm using the pulpit to set him straight because I'm too much of a coward to talk to him face to face." Of course, when you have thoughts like that, the only option is to preach the message anyway. We as preachers of the gospel are not called to make up the menu, we just serve the food. God makes up the menu of what truth He is presenting for that Sunday and it's our job to be the delivery boy. But something interesting happened on about 75% to 80% of those occasions: the various "Brothers Smith" never showed up. There was a message that, if they had heard it and if they had taken it to heart, would have powerfully impacted their lives for the better, but they were not present to hear it. I believe that before our greatest breakthroughs we often have to face our greatest obstacles. What difficulties did they have to overcome on those Sunday mornings? I don't know. Those who persevere get the gold. Those who don't, miss out. But when we stand before God's judgment throne, we will be judged according to the light we received, and according to the light we should

have received because it was available, but we didn't show up to hear it. We didn't go after it.

**Mt. 11:20-24** Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Because God performed great miracles, He expected a great response – a great turning to Him in faith and repentance. To whom much is given, much is required.

**Lk. 12:47-48** [Jesus speaking] “That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

**Mt. 10:14-15** [Jesus commissioning his disciples] If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

**Mt. 12:41-42** [Jesus speaking] The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here [more light. Because they only had a prophet who had some attitude issues]. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

On a bookshelf in my office, I have a dozen translations of the Holy Bible into the English language. Twelve. There are tribes in Vanuatu who don't even have John 3:16 translated into their language. In the English speaking world we have received **way, way, way** more light than what they have received in the mountains of Nepal or in the deserts of Mongolia. So we have to realize that before the judgment throne of **The Almighty**, more will be required of us because we have had more available. We should not feel guilty about having more. It has pleased God to bless us. He loves to be abundant in giving grace. But we will be held accountable.

Next, God will judge us according to the way we judge others.

**Mt. 7:1-2** [Jesus speaking] “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

So if we have been harsh in evaluating other people, guess what standard we just presented to the Lord to judge us by? God will use the same harsh standard on us that we spoke over somebody else's life. So if you feel convicted right now, if you feel uncomfortable because you know you have judged others badly, rejoice! Why?? Because you and I still have time to change; we still have opportunity to repent! And our feeling bad is God's grace and kindness to us, letting us know that we need to change. So long as we are in this body, we can still repent – and that's exactly what God wants. He wants us to do better, to rise to the occasion, to realize the error of our ways, to turn, and to have new **life** because of it. And He will help us do that!!



**Lk. 6:37-38** [Jesus speaking] “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

**Mt. 6:14-15** For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

**Ro. 2:1-5** You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

I want to pause here and tell you a quick story. Once in Bible School, there was a student from Africa who was leading worship and – I'll just be honest – I had a terrible, condemning attitude towards him. I felt he was driving the people, not leading them, trying to force them to sing louder or whatever he was doing. A year after graduation, a deacon at the church I was at came to me with a concern about my worship leading. He couldn't put his finger on it but he felt there was a problem. So I listened to a tape of the service. Do you know what I found? The worship leader on the tape – me – was driving the people, not leading them! The very same thing that I had criticized someone else for about two years earlier, I was guilty of. And since then it has occurred to me that we are usually most critical of other people in areas of personal weakness, in areas we have defects. That's where we tend to criticize others. The things that are wrong in us is what we will spot quickly as being wrong in others.

The story has a good ending. I had to make some adjustments and I asked and trusted God to change me and He did a work in my life. About two years after that I was at a service where the worship leader was driving rather than leading the people, and without even thinking about it I started praying for him, “O God, help him.” Because God had dealt with a defect in my life, the resulting attitude was one of compassion and desire to bless, rather than one of condemnation. When we judge others, it's usually because we have a defect in that very area of our own lives!! Again, from the book of Romans:

**Ro. 2:1-5** You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

**Ez. 7:27b** I will deal with them according to their conduct, and by their own standards I will judge them. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

So God will judge us according to the way we judge others. Then, God will judge us according to the truth. People could say about you that you are 3' 7" tall with sandy brown hair. But if you actually are 5' 11" with jet black hair, what people say about you would be untrue. People say all kinds of things that aren't true. But, at the judgement throne of God, it's only the truth that will prevail. No false testimony, no incorrect assumptions, and no lies will be able to stand. They will all bow to the truth. And that's good news because all the wrong things people have said about us will fall off just like dry leaves falling off a tree in October. We can take comfort in that.

**Ro. 2:2** Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

**Rev. 16:7** And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

**Rev. 19:1-2a** After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments.

**Ps. 96:12b-13** Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.

Then, we will be judged according to his own word.

**Jn. 12:47-49** [Jesus speaking] "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

**Jn. 5:45-47** [Jesus speaking] "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

So God will judge us according to his own word. Lastly, God will judge us according to his own impartiality. I have two sons. When they were growing up they had their occasional altercations, and I would have to listen to both sides of the story and then make whatever judgment was appropriate. I found that I had a tendency to side with one of my sons more than the other because in personality I was more like him than his brother. So I had to make a conscious effort to pray and ask God to help me be impartial. To the degree we have similar experiences with people or have a similar makeup as people, to that degree we will tend to show favoritism toward them, even if we don't notice it. The good news is, God's not like that. He has created every one of us, and He has felt what every one of us have felt. So because He is 100% pure and holy, and because He knows all things, He's also 100% impartial.

**I Pt. 1:17** Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

**Ro. 2:11** For God does not show favoritism.

**Ac. 10:34** Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism

**II Chr. 19:6-7** [Jehoshaphat speaking to the judges he had appointed] He told them, "Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for man but for the LORD, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."

**Dt. 10:17** For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

## Foundations Lesson #16

### Eternal Judgment, Part Three

Going on to Roman Numeral #3, “In light of God's eternal judgment, we should...” and then there's application time. Up to this point, we have studied the doctrine of eternal judgment – what does it mean and how does it work – but now we switch to how this should affect us. In other words, in light of these truths, how should we live; in light of these truths that God has revealed to us in His word, how should we conduct ourselves.

The first one, in light of God's eternal judgment, we should better understand and appreciate God's authority. He is the Judge of all the earth! He's the King. He sits on the throne. **All** authority in heaven and on earth belongs to him. Do you remember what Jesus said after he rose from the dead? “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Who was it given to him by? The Father. He is the only one that has it, so He can give it. So when He says something, it will be accomplished! He has the power to accomplish whatever He chooses to do. Now he is of such a nature that He loves to have people involved in the important things that He does. He loves to share. But, all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him.

The wise will bow to that authority. They will agree that He has all authority, and so they will joyfully submit their lives to Him. The foolish will ignore Him and go their own way. But everyone will stand before His throne of judgment.

**Ps. 47:2, 7** How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth!  
For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.

**Jer. 10:10** But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

**Ps. 99:1** The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.

**Heb. 12:23b** You have come to God, the judge of all men,

**Eph. 1:20-22** which he [God the Father] exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything...

Do you remember what Abraham said when he was interceding before God for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? “...Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). Now unless you have the closeness of relationship with God that Abraham had, I wouldn't recommend talking to **The Almighty** like that, but the question remains a very clear and powerful truth: Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? Of course He will! Every single time. Without fail. He is righteous. He always does what is right. His judgments are always just and true. And we can rely on that. The wise acknowledge it joyfully.

**QUOTE** “You cannot know God apart from his authority.” - John Bevere

Secondly, in light of God's eternal judgment, we should fear God. We should fear God. Now some people have a problem with the fear of God. I think I understand a bit of their reservation. When we fear someone on earth, we're usually afraid because they might mistreat us or abuse us or take advantage of us or treat us meanly and overpower us or something that's not nice. And these people reason that we don't have to fear God abusing us, or mistreating us or taking advantage of us. And that's true. He loves us. He's good. He's righteous. He's holy. But over and over Scripture says that we should fear God. So why should we fear God? Because He's way, way, way, way, way more powerful than we are, and He's way, way, way, way, way more holy than we are. And that is a fearsome combination if we understand it properly.

Let me ask you a question: Last year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December at exactly 3:41 in the afternoon, what were you wearing? What were the last 10 words you had spoken? And who were you with? If you're like me, you have no clue what the answers to those questions are. But here's the amazing thing: God could answer each one of those questions correctly without hesitation – not only for December 12<sup>th</sup> but for any other date or time you could pick. He knows you that well. Now consider that He could do that for each one of the roughly 7 billion people living on the planet right now. O, and by the way, He could do that also for every blade of grass, every fish in the sea, every scissor-tailed fly catcher, and every one of the more than 110,000 different species of the common household fly that He created. I think you get my point. Isaiah powerfully declares, “his understanding no one can fathom.” What He knows is so overwhelmingly vast that you and I can't even wrap our heads around it. We can't fathom it. That's the God we are talking about. Please don't ever make the mistake of thinking of Him in terms of mere human abilities. He's way, way, way, beyond that. And it's not even close.

Or have you ever considered that He is the *sustainer* of all things? Hebrews 1:3 tells us that He is. That means He's the glue that holdseverything together, including us. So if He ever decided not to be sustainer any longer, then all of us – and everything else – would simply stop existing; everything – including us – would not be there any more. Poof. Gone. Now He's not going to do that, but He certainly has the power to do it. Do you get just a glimpse of why fearing God might be a good idea?

**Ecc. 12:13-14** Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

**Dt. 5:28-29** [Moses speaking to the Israelites] The LORD heard you when you spoke to me and the LORD said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

**Ex. 20:20** Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

Now some people say that the love of God should be a stronger motivator to keep us free from sin than the fear of God, and their point is well taken. Jesus did say, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.” But if we properly fear God, we will be motivated not to sin.

**Rev. 14:7** He [the angel] said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

**I Pt. 2:17** Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

**Ac. 9:31** Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

**Heb. 12:28-29** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

So, in light of God's eternal judgment, we should better understand and appreciate God's authority; we should fear God; and, thirdly, we should not fear man. One of the natural results of fearing God is that we would be left with no fear of man. If we have a healthy fear of the Lord, there's no reason to fear any human being. When we see how powerful **He** is, and that everything bows before **His** throne, what on earth can man do?? Jesus put it this way:

**Lk. 12:4-5** “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

I believe there's benefit for us to face our fears and bring them to their logical conclusion in the light of God's word. So, with that in mind, what's the absolute worst thing that anybody could do to you? Kill you? If they do, it's only because God has allowed it, and if He allows it that means it must be the absolute best time for your life to end, because He only does what is in the very best interests of His sons and daughters. And, by the way, the Bible says that “to die is gain,” so for you it would be graduation day! Seen properly, it's cause for rejoicing.

Maybe you're thinking that being tortured would be worse. OK, lets examine that. The Bible says in Romans 8:18, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” And again in II Corinthians 4:17, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” What “light and momentary” troubles had the guy faced who wrote those verses? Oh, little things. You know. Small stuff, like beatings, imprisonments, riots, sleepless nights, hunger. He says, “three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.” And he goes on. Many of us have not even come close to dealing with the troubles that guy had. Yet he wrote for us that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us, that the eternal glory they are achieving for us far outweighs those troubles and sufferings. You can picture the scales of justice with two ounces of troubles being added to our life on one side, and God saying, “OK, I'll take care of that.” And so He plops down 15 1/2 pounds of glory on the other side which **far outweighs** the trouble. So every time we suffer, that's heaping more and more glory – beyond comparison – into our account and into our being for all of eternity. So if these things are true, what on earth are we afraid of?? Let's not fear man.

**Pr. 29:25** Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

**Dt. 1:17** [Moses charging newly appointed judges] Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it.

**Mt. 10:25b-26** [Jesus speaking] If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!  
“So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be

disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.

**Heb. 13:5-6** Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Next on our outline, we should excel in being merciful.

**Jas. 2:12-13** Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

**Mt. 5:7** [Jesus speaking] Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

What we sow, we reap.

**Mic. 6:8** He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Do you know what it means to love mercy? Someone said that if you love mercy, you will pray every morning, for a solid week, that God would give you an opportunity that day to be merciful. Now if you do pray that, I suggest you fasten your seat belt. People will treat you so poorly that you have the option of showing them judgment or mercy. But that would give you great opportunity to grow in being merciful. God loves mercy. Aren't you glad?

**Mt. 12:7** [Jesus speaking to some Pharisees] If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

**Eph. 2:4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy...

So we need to excel in being merciful.

Then, we should not judge others. We've already mentioned that, but we need to understand that God is qualified to judge others. He has some characteristics that qualify Him for the job. So let's name a few. First of all, He is creator, and a creator is qualified to judge that which he has created. Also, he is sinless. In his sinless, holy state, He has no favoritism, no bias, no partiality which would hinder Him from making a good, true and just judgment. Thirdly, He knows all things. To say that He has all the information needed to make a right judgment would be an understatement. The reason I mention these characteristics is that the very factors which qualify God to be judge, disqualify us. We have not created any other human being. We are not sinless, far from it. And we don't know all things. So since we are so very, very unqualified, it would be quite arrogant and inappropriate for us to judge others. But Scripture tells us in several places not to judge, probably in part because we are so prone to do it, even though we are not close to being fit for the job.

**Mt. 7:1-5** [Jesus speaking] "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

**Ro. 14:4** Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

**Jas. 4:11-12** Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?

**I Co. 4:3-5b** I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.

**Ro. 14:10-13** You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.  
Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Next, in light of God's eternal judgment, we should carefully judge ourselves. I'm kind of shocked, amazed and perplexed in the body of Christ, generally, how much we tend to excuse ourselves rather than judge ourselves. There's something about us that doesn't want to ask the difficult questions of how we are really doing – we would rather live in a fantasy world of encouragement, thinking everything is good. But, as Scripture says,

**I Co. 11:31** [But] if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

Why? If we allow God in this life to convict us, and we say, "Yes, God, you are right." Then we are judging ourselves. Then we can deal with the faults and errors God is trying to get us free from. And once they're dealt with, they will never show up when we stand before God's judgment throne. The Psalmist cries out to God:

**Ps. 139:23-24** Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

What is the Psalmist doing? He's inviting the King of the universe to reveal to him, the things in his life and heart that need to be cleansed. Every time God corrects us it's good news for us! We can go higher, because we have the opportunity to turn from whatever He is revealing to us – we have the opportunity to cry out to Him and trust Him to transform us from who we are to who we are supposed to be. And, by the way, when we do that, He'll take care of business! He'll do the work. He's faithful. He loves us. He'll get it done. We can count on that. So we should carefully judge ourselves.

Next, in light of God's eternal judgment, we should learn to entrust the injustices of this life into the Lord's hands. Some years ago I was working as a seasonal tax professional. For two years my boss had been very good to me, but in the third year her attitude toward me changed drastically. One of the other employees at the tax office said to me, at the beginning of the season, "Watch out, the boss is out to get you." The injustices, the lies, the favoritism, the double standards kept increasing. At the beginning of April, about two weeks before the end of tax season, she had the district manager come in and the three of us talked for about 45 minutes. Right after that, the district manager handed me a "final written warning," my boss had written, listing six accusations and leaving me a millimeter away from being fired. I was shocked and horrified.

I went home and prepared my seven page single-spaced reply. At the end of my reply I wrote to my boss that I was deeply grieved over the busted relationship between us. Then I added these words, and I quote: "God will judge between you and me." You see, we have the privilege, as sons and daughters of **The Almighty** and citizens of the Kingdom of God, to invoke the name of God and thus release His hand into the situations we find ourselves in. I did absolutely nothing to my boss other than to state my case before the District Manager and to invoke the name of God.

By the time the dust settled, my "final written warning" had been reduced to a single verbal warning, which I will add was totally fair. My boss, on the other hand, was not allowed to come back to the company as an office manager ever again. A few months later, totally unrelated to anything I ever did, my boss got fired. A few months after that, I got a phone call from the manager of a different firm inviting me to prepare tax returns for his company. Changing companies turned out to be the single greatest business blessing I have ever received.

So what am I saying? In light of the fact that God is the Judge of all the earth, in light of the fact that He knows every detail of every motive, and every word that has ever been spoken in the universe, in light of the fact that He takes perfect care of every iota of our existence, we have to realize that there is no point in struggling against man over the injustices of this life. None. We can, as Peter says, commit them into the hands of our faithful Creator and continue to do good. He'll take care of business. God is large and He's in charge.

**I Pt. 2:23** When they hurled their insults at him [Jesus], he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

**Ps. 37:5-6** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

So we should learn to entrust the injustices of this life into the Lord's hands. Lastly, in light of God's eternal judgment, we should have great passion and faithfulness in leading others to Christ. In light of the fact that we're all going to have to stand before **The Almighty**, in light of the fact that there are only two eternal destinations – one is glorious beyond description and the other is horrible beyond description – anything and everything we can do to help people **not** end up in the horrible place is worth it.

**II Co. 5:10-11a** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.

**II Co. 5:20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

**QUOTE** "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for."  
- Charles Spurgeon

I want to close this lesson on eternal judgment with a quote from a tombstone found in an Indian cemetery. It reads:

*Pause, stranger, as you pass me by.  
As you now are, so once was I.  
As I am now, so you will be,  
So prepare for death and follow me.*

Below this inscription, someone had scribbled the following reply:



*To follow you I'm not content,  
Until I know which way you went.*

And with that, we end our lesson on eternal judgment. God bless you all.