

WILL THE SINS OF CHRISTIANS BE REVEALED AT THE FINAL JUDGMENT?

Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Topic 20, Question 6, XVII-XX, by Francis Turretin¹

Abridged, paraphrased, annotated, elaborated by D. Scott Meadows

XVIII. It seems doubtful that the sins of Christians will be revealed at the Final Judgment.

- (1) The Judge is Christ. He paid in full for our sins. Now He prays for us continually. He will come as our Savior, not to shame us but to fulfill His promises and to show us His wonderful grace.

Isaiah 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

- (2) Christ foretells that He will announce the good works of the righteous and the rewards for them, without any mention whatever of our sins.

Matthew 25:31-40 ³¹ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³² And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: ³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty,

and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸ When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹ Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

- (3) God graciously forgives and forgets our sins in this life. Would it be consistent for Him to raise them again?

Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Micah 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

- (4) Publishing our sins would lead to our disgrace and confusion, but we should be free from this. Christ is coming to be glorified and admired in us.

Philippians 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

Psalms 71:1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.

2 Thessalonians 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

XIX. Universal judgment does not imply comparable judgments. Only some will be positively

¹ Francis Turretin (1623-87) was a leading spokesman of the Evangelical Reformed tradition in Switzerland during the period of Reformed Scholasticism known as "High Orthodoxy" (1620-1700). This was the time that produced the greatest Reformed confessions and catechisms (e.g., Canons of Dort, Westminster Confession of Faith, Savoy Declaration, Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689). "Elenctic" means "serving to refute—used of indirect modes of proof" (MW Dict.). Turretin's IET is a masterpiece of Reformed apologetics against all sorts of opponents, especially Roman Catholic.

rewarded (without any punishment) while others will be punished (without any positive reward). God's justice is not properly manifested in believers there, but in Christ crucified for them, who is a propitiation for their sins. Neither does His mercy glorified require their sins to be published, for they boast not in themselves, but alone in God and in Christ their Savior.

Psalm 1:5-6 ⁵ Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Psalm 115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

XX. Scripture insists that in the Final Judgment each one will be repaid "according to his works" as to the quality of them. The consequence of this is that it will go well for the good and be a catastrophe for the wicked. There is a correspondence between good works and reward, as well as between sins and punishment, but the relationship is not the same. Sins fully deserve their punishment, but good works are rewarded graciously and not from any inherent merit in them or those that do them. Their good works are only the fruit of previous blessings of grace that they have unworthily enjoyed in Christ. Christ's commendation of them, therefore, does not identify the cause of their eternal life (which is the grace of God alone), but the quality of the workers and their works (all by grace alone). Therefore, God will render to believers *according to* their works, and not *on account of* them. The true cause of their inheriting the kingdom of God is found in the mercy of their heavenly Father. He gives to His elect ones the kingdom prepared for them from eternity as an inheritance to Christ and all those in Him for His sake, since He purchased it for them. Their justification at the Final Judgment has the nature of a recognition due to them after the fact from the evidences of their works as proof of their sincere and living faith, through which faith alone they were already justified.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and

then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Revelation 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Ecclesiastes 8:12 Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

Ecclesiastes 8:13 But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

Luke 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Isaiah 26:12 LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Jude 24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

Matthew Henry's commentary on Jude 24:

[At Christ's return and the Final Judgment] when believers shall be presented faultless, it will be with exceeding joy. Alas! now our faults fill us with fears, doubts, and sorrows. But be of good cheer; if we be sincere, we shall be, our dear Redeemer has undertaken for it, we shall be presented faultless; where there is no sin there will be no sorrow; where there is the perfection of holiness, there will be the perfection of joy. Ω