

GOSPEL SERMONS

as

Sam P. Jones

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SERMON ELEVEN

CONSCIENCE-RECORD-GOD

Now, brethren, let us all be prayerful Let every man that believes God hears and answers prayer lift his heart continually in prayer to God while I try to teach in the name of my Master. I want to read to you three or four verses in different parts of this book — the Bible. Let us give especial attention to them, because they have much to do with the discussion that follows:

“Rejoice, young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the right of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Ecclesiastes 11: 9).

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

And then we read again: **“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”**

And then again we read: **“And the books were opened and then another book.”**

And now we come to the text: **“What I have written I have written”** (John 19: 22).

AN IMPERISHABLE RECORD

There are two “somethings” and one “Someone” that I had to do with yesterday. I have to do with them to-day. I shall have to do with them forever. **“Conscience”** and **“record”** are the two somethings and God is the Someone. Conscience — Record — God. Conscience and record are like two index fingers pointing right up and into the face of God, and God is the great index finger pointing to the final judgment.

- Conscience — that something running over my life, proving the right, disproving the wrong.
- Conscience when outraged, is that something that will not let me sleep, Be matter how soft my pillow.
- Conscience — that something that will not let me eat, no matter how richly laden the table may be.
- Conscience — that something in me that makes me drop my head in guilt and shame before the world.

- Conscience — where is the man in this audience who never felt the pangs and pains of outraged conscience?

The poet was right when he said:

What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do,
This, teach me more than Hell to shun,
That, more than Heaven pursue.

And I am right in saying upon this occasion that the most fearful sin a man ever committed in this life is to sin directly and to sin persistently against his own conscience.

Do you do that thing which conscience says thou oughtest not to do? Do you not do that thing which conscience says thou oughtest to do? Do you persist in the evil when conscience cries, "Stop! Hold! Murder! Murder! Don't do it!"

Conscience — ah, me, brother! Someone has said that an outraged conscience is the worm that shall never die amid the fires that shall never be quenched.

Conscience! Conscience! Record! Record! My record is as much a part of me as my immortal being is a part of me. "Yes," but you say "the surgeon's knife can soon separate that hand from me."

No, sir. No, sir! Some months ago I sat by the side of a man who had an empty sleeve dangling at his side. All at once he turned to me and said: "These fingers have been hurting me all day."

Said I: "What fingers?"

He replied: "The fingers of my right hand."

Said I: "My friend, there is no right hand there."

He returned: "They tell me this arm is buried on the battle fields of Virginia, but, sir, that hand is as truly there to-day as it ever was, and the pains and the twinges and the pangs of this hour are almost intolerable to me in these fingers."

SUBJECT AND RECORD INSEPARABLE

My record is a part of me. It belongs to me. It is inseparable from me. My record as a man; your record as a man. A man without a record would be an anomaly. A man without a record would be a moral monstrosity in the universe of God. What I have said, what I have done, where I have been, are but so many subjects discussed upon this record of the life of man. Record! Record! And then, with conscience and record pointing up into the face of the great God, and the great God pointing to a judgment seat — a judgment seat!

I tell you, my friend, if there is not to be any final judgment, when man shall be brought to a final bar to give an account of all the deeds done in the body — if there is not to be any judgment hereafter, there are incidents and feelings and aspirations and fears and dreads about my being that cannot be explained in time or eternity. Every bad deed of my life, every wayward act of my life, every wicked word of my life, have been so many fingers pointing me ever and anon to the great day that I shall give an account to God for the way I have lived, for what I have done, for what I have said.

Judgment is a forensic term, and means simply the equitable adjustment of an issue, but in an ecclesiastical sense it means the final sermon in Heaven's chancery, when God will summon men and angels alike around his great white throne and there sift the issue between himself and all created intelligence; and when God once says to you "Ye cursed" there never shall be an after jurisdiction. The record of my guilt, as the glory of my commendation, will blaze forever in full view of my eyes as my vindication in Heaven or my condemnation in Hell is ordered.

ESCAPING JUDGMENT

Judgment! Let us strip this subject of all its mystery. When a man has violated the laws of Missouri there are but three ways by which he can hope to escape. One is by force of law, another by force of testimony, another by pardon, where the governor extends his clemency and pardons the criminal. Now I grant you that justice may be defeated in many ways. A criminal may violate the law of Missouri and fly from justice, and keep out of the way of sheriffs and officers. He may bribe the grand jury so that they will not find a true bill against him. He may bribe the jury that tries him, or the judge that tries him, but when a man is once arraigned before the criminal courts of this country there are but the three ways by which he can hope to escape justice.

One way is by force of law. Now when a criminal is brought into the court house, and one witness after another is introduced, and they prove his guilt beyond reasonable doubt, and when the judge picks up the Code of Missouri and says: "This man is guilty, but the law of Missouri does not make the offense a crime," the man is acquitted by force of law. There is no law that says his conduct is criminal, therefore he is acquitted.

But if the thing charged in the indictment is a crime, then he may be acquitted by force of testimony. When the jury after hearing the evidence says: "There is not sufficient evidence to convict, and we find the prisoner not guilty," then the prisoner is acquitted by force of testimony.

But if he is condemned by law and he is condemned by testimony, then there is but one hope, and that is the pardon of the governor.

ESCAPING DIVINE JUSTICE

Now, up yonder (pointing heavenward) before that tribunal there can be but three ways by which men can hope to escape. You cannot dodge God's ministerial officers and keep out of their way. You will come to the judgment! To the judgment! To the judgment!

When we leave this room this afternoon some will go this way, some that way, but every road you take converges right at the judgment seat of Christ, and if we never see each other's faces again we shall meet at the throne of God at last I cannot dodge God's ministerial officers. And the Bible would quote it:

“Oh, whither shall I go from thy presence? And whither shall I flee from thy spirit? If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, the Lord God is there. If I make my bed in Hell the Lord God is there.”

No, sir! God Almighty will burn this world up and bring us to the judgment seat of Christ. You cannot dodge the ministerial officers already on your track. One of God's sheriffs put his hand on your head one day, and since that it has begun to frost God's sheriff touched your eye one day, and you have been wearing spectacles ever since. God's sheriff touched your leg, and you are now walking with a cane along the streets. Wherever you meet men the touch of God's sheriff is upon them; and that means simply: I have claimed you for my own! I will take you by and by.

And then, again, you cannot bribe God's grand jury. They have already sat upon your case, and the verdict reads:

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die, and he that believeth not shall be damned [condemned].”

AN INCORRUPTIBLE JUDGE

I know in this country sometimes that a criminal sometimes rushes up and defies the court and its authorities; but can you defy the court of God that sits upon the throne? Shall I rush up in the presence of the great God, who in the beginning held a great flaming mass on the anvil of eternal purpose, and pounded it with his own powerful arm, and when every spark that flew from it made a world — shall I rush up into the presence of such a God as that and defy him? No, Sir! Shall I bribe the Judge of all the earth? No Sir! But when I shall be individualized at that final moment, and shall walk out into the presence of that great God, I have but three ways in which I can hope to escape.

One is by force of law. Now, hear me! I shake that little bundle of paper (the Bible) in your face, and if that little bundle of paper is true, it outweighs all this universe. If this book is true, I have in my hand a bundle of paper that does not weigh ten ounces, that outweighs all the start of the universe. If this little book is true — and we have to die whether it is true or not — you and I must meet God and give an account of what we have done in the body.

The law of God. I want to say at this point that God will spring no new law upon you up yonder. Men say: “I do not like to read that Bible, it condemns me.” If this law condemns you down here in Missouri to-day, it will condemn you up yonder at the judgment to-morrow. You will be the same man. This will be the same book.

VIOLATING THE SPIRIT OF LAW

“But,” says that man, “I have never violated many laws in that book.” Well, listen:

“He that breaketh the least commandment is guilty of all.”

How do you understand that? Yonder is a boat chained to the wharf on your levee. That chain has a hundred links, but if I want to cut that boat loose, how many links must I cut? Fifty of the biggest links? Ten of the middle-sized ones! No. I need only cut the smallest link, and that boat is as effectually loosened as if I had cut them all.

And he that breaks the least is as guilty as if he had broken them all. Suppose I want to go to Kansas City. There is one right road to that place, and a thousand leading in other directions. When I take one of the wrong roads I am as effectually out of the way as if I had taken every wrong road in the universe. And, brother, hear me: God looks not upon sin with the least allowance, and can any man stand up before the final bar and say, “I have never violated a precept of that book”? Until you can do that you can never hope to escape by the force of law.

The law condemns. The apostle tells us that:

“No flesh shall be justified by the works of the law.”

The law is but a rule of action that prescribes what is right and prohibits what is wrong. And, brother, hear me! If, in your past life, you have ever violated a precept in this book you cannot hope to escape up yonder by force of law on the final judgment day. “I am guilty before God. I have violated precept after precept I have not only done it repeatedly, but I have done it knowingly and willfully. I cannot hope to be acquitted by force of law.”

THE FORCE OF TESTIMONY

Then I say to you, how about the force of testimony!

Now we have come directly to the text:

“What I have written I have written.”

I just quoted before that:

“So, then, every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.”

Know you that for all these things you shall be brought unto judgment whether these things can be good or bad. Now we stand there before His final throne.

“What I have written I have written.”

I declare to you this evening that it is my belief, and it is founded on Scripture, that every man and every boy of us are now writing testimony by which we shall stand or fall on the last judgment day.

Greenleaf on *Evidence* tells us that the best evidence a case is susceptible of shall be produced. He tells us again that written testimony is better than oral testimony. He tells us again that the evidence produced must correspond with the allegation and be confined to the point at issue.

Now, brother, here is the best testimony (the Bible), and every word of it in God's own handwriting. Written testimony is better than oral testimony.

Lumpkin, one of the grandest jurists that ever sat on the Supreme Bench of Georgia, said: "I would rather trust the smallest slip of paper than the best memory man was ever gifted with." Here is written testimony: Start an engine from New York to San Francisco, and there is attached to its side a little piece of mechanism which indicates the number of miles it has traveled, the stoppages it has made and how long it has stopped at each station, and if you want to know the record of the journey you need not ask the engineer a word. The little piece of mechanism on the side of the engine tells you it's record.

You go to the city of New York and you see the Fifth Avenue Hotel with its 700 rooms. You see that it is lighted up day after day and night after night, some rooms burning 100 jets, some ten, some one. You step to the proprietor and say: "How can you keep an account of this gas? How do you know how much you burn?" and he says: "Come with me." You walk with him down underneath a double stairway. He strikes a match and lights a candle and holds it to the dial plate of the gas-meter. He says: "You see that finger trembling on the face of the dial? That indicates to the one hundredth part of an inch how much gas has passed through this meter during the past three months. There is a record for you!" And every man and every boy this evening can stand up and face this fact. What I have written I have written up to the hour.

A RECORD NOT FOR WIFE'S PERUSAL

Ah, me! The record of some men, the record of some boys who hear my voice this moment! If your wife could read your record just as you have written it down she would spurn you from her presence and drive you ever from her home. There are boys listening to my voice whose mothers would drive them from their presence if they could read the last night's record of those boys. Oh, the record! Boys every oath, every wicked deed, every midnight carousal, every debauched act of your life is written in legible indelible letters, and shall sparkle forever on the tablets of your hearts.

Oh me! Men sometimes say it makes no difference. Brother, it makes no difference whether you approached this hall in this or that spirit, but it makes an eternal difference whether you did right or wrong on your way here. Record! Record! We sometimes say: "as true as the Bible," but every record, every line on the tablet of your heart is just as true as the Bible is true. It is a secret record. God would not suffer an angel of Heaven to touch that record. God would not suffer the worst enemy in the world to touch that record of yours. God would not suffer your precious mother to put her finger on that record. It is a secret record of the soul by which it shall stand or fall at the judgment seat of Christ. True! True! Holy Spirit, shine on our record this evening! Let us read it now in thirty seconds — a record of accumulated guilt that will drive us to some power to save, some power to relieve.

COMPACT RECORDS

Record! Record! Record! What is your record as a Presbyterian? On one side of your record I see recorded vows of eternal constancy to God. On that page I see, "I swear eternal allegiance to God and the right." Brother, what is your record from that day to this?

Brother Methodists with vows upon you that would almost crush an angel, how have you lived since you knowingly and intentionally made these vows to God? Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, what is your record since the day God called you unto his work, and you promised to be faithful to God and to man?

Oh, Holy Spirit shine on these records here this evening. Let us see what we must meet at the final bar of God. I want to say to you that I would frequently preach very differently but for record-making. I want to say to this vast assemblage of fathers, husbands and sons here this evening, that while I preach the gospels to others, I never forget for a moment that I have a soul in my own body. God pity us here this evening, and turn our eyes inward, to see these records as God would have us see them. What is your record, husband? What is your record, father? What is your record, son? There are hundreds of men here this evening, and the only reason you can hold up your heads, the only reason you can move among your fellows is the consciousness that nobody on earth can read your record. It is hidden out of the sight of man.

There are men listening to me now who, if I could tear a page of the record from their heart and stick it there on that wall in legible letters, would shrink from this congregation, rush out of this hall and out of this town and never be seen within its radius again. Oh brother, it is hidden now, but God's word for it, every wicked act, every secret sin shall be proclaimed from the house tops. Oh fearful thought! Record! It was this that made the poet say:

It is not all of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.

A WIFE'S TRICK ON HER HUSBAND

I know that you may drown out this record in a night's spree, but it comes back with all its power to condemn in the morning. I know that in the giddy round of pleasure you may drown its voice for the hour, but ever and anon it shakes, it shakes its horny hand in your face, and says: "Look! Read the record of yesterday, of last week, of last year."

"What I have written, I have written."

What have you written upon the record of your life? What upon yours! And upon yours! I stand here to condemn no man. I ask you, my brother, in all love and kindness, what is the record you have made to this hour? Some months ago a lady slipped a pedometer into her husband's pocket as he went out in the evening. He was a business man in the city, but every night as he left the supper-table he said: "I have to go down to the store." On one occasion she put one of these indicators in his pocket, and when he came back she took it out and consulted it. The faithful little dial told her that her husband had walked seventeen miles that night.

And she said to him: "Husband, where have you been to-night!"

He replied: "I have been posting my books."

She said: "Husband, that won't do. Do you post your books as you walk?"

"No," he said, "I post my books sitting at my desk."

She pulled the little indicator out and put it in his face and said, "There is the record of your work! Seventeen miles to-night. It is half a mile to the store, and half a mile back. Explain yourself."

She made him explain, and it turned out that he had walked miles round a billiard-table playing pool. And I tell you, my congregation, to-night, that within your bosom there is a faithful record being kept every day, and when at last God shall say, "Who art thou and what hast thou done?" the record has passed into the recording angel's hands, and he shall read line after line and page after page of guilt that is enough to damn the universe.

A VARIANCE FROM THE RECORD

Oh, record! Record! Every oath has been recorded. Every wicked act has been recorded. Every unfaithful act has been recorded. Oh, sir, up yonder! Oh, my brother, how about your record? And I have found out another thing: Men talk one way with their tongue and write another way upon the record of their heart. A man stands up there and says, "I do not believe in God." Then he writes down upon the tablet of his heart, "I have just told a lie. I do. I do."

A man out there says, "I don't see any use in revivals. I am as good as anybody in the church." Then he takes up his pen and writes within, "I have told one of the biggest lies I ever told. There is a big use in revivals. The world is going to destruction and I am the meanest man in town." He writes one way and talks another. Brethren, I will know you by and by just as you are.

Oh, record! Record! There are men who hear my voice this afternoon who, if their record were to close with this hour, have sinned enough to damn the universe, and I beg you never add another line to that accumulating record of guilt, which is enough to make the devil when he looks at it hide his black face under his wings! God pity us this evening! May the pen drop from our palsied hands! May we never indite another line that may condemn us here or at the judgment bar of God.

UNEFFACEABLE RECORD

"What I have written, I have written."

And I want to tell you that once you put it down it is down forever. The autobiographies we write on paper can be altered and underlined, but the autobiography you have written on the tablet of your heart can never be altered or erased. It goes down as it is. It abides with you forever.

Record! Record! Record!

At the age of twenty-four I was brought face to face with the fact that I had a record sufficient to damn the universe. Brother, let me turn to Spencer; let me read him through and through, and having done so, I say to Mr. Spencer: "I have been charmed with your theory, but how about my conscience, my record, my God?"

Mr. Spencer says: "I do not treat on those subjects."

I say: "Of all the subjects, those I am most in need of."

Then I turn to brother Darwin, and after reading his evolution theories, I say: "But how about my conscience, my record, my God?"

He says: "I do not treat on those subjects."

I go to Mr. Tyndall and all earthly philosophers and scientists just at the time I need help and enlightenment, but they turn their backs on me and walk off.

Now, with record enough to damn the universe, I stand with no philosopher to help me, and no scientist that can reach me. Brother, hear me! All the tears of my precious mother could never have erased one single line of this record. All the prayers of my father would have been wasted on this record. All the prayers of the church would avail nothing.

All the combined chemicals of earth could not have erased one single word of it. Oh, what shall I do!

And now, brother, I will tell you why I have my highest hope of salvation on this blessed gospel. When every other source had failed me, I took this book in my hands and I sought the cross of Jesus Christ, and there, a poor, guilty, wicked wretch, I fell down under the cross. And the precious Saviour picked me up and pardoned all my sins. He blotted out this record of mine and he took my arms and put them around the neck of God. And I love this religion and this Bible, because it proposes to do with conscience and with record and with God. And there is no other system in the moral universe that proposes to lead a poor man in these dreadful extremities.

GOING TO THE CROSS

Aye, with record enough to condemn all men,
I went to the cross:

I saw one hanging on the tree
In agonies of blood.
He fixed his languid eyes on me
As near his cross I stood.

Sure, never to my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
He seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood had spilt
And helped to nail him there.

A second look He gave, which said:
"I freely all forgive,
My blood is shed to ransom thee,
I die that thou may'st live."

And now I understand that blessed old hymn

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.

BROTHER JONES' HOPE

Bless God for that precious blood that saves a poor, lost, rained sinner! I want to say to you today that my hope of Heaven rests on this point.

Fourteen years ago, a poor, wrecked, ruined sinner, His blood washed away my guilt, and now my record has been washed out in the precious blood of the Son of God. Now take heed to the judgment. Charge me with Sabbath-breaking, charge me with infidelity, charge me with everything, but there is the record, and the precious blood has washed out every page and every line, and I stand acquitted on the final judgment day by the force of testimony and the prerogative of pardon. Blessed be God! Acquitted from that final judgment day.

Brother, brother, the hope of the world is the cross of the Son of God. Let us rush up under that cross this evening, the lost, the wicked and the wayward. Fourteen years ago I was the worst of the worst, and sometimes I think that God suffered me, in spite of my mother's prayers and my father's example, to go down to the gates of Hell, that I might be sent back again to bring back the men closest to the gates of Hell. God help you this evening! I care not who you are, he will not only pardon your sins but he will, separate them as far as the East is from the West He says:

"I will blot them out of the book of my remembrance."

Oh, brethren, let us turn our eyes to the hope of the world. This evening let us in God's own terms of capitulation, run the white flag out of the citadel of our hearts, and God will tell the angels to get their wings and fly down to earth and convey peace and hope to every rebellious heart.

I want every man that would run up the white flag and surrender to God and the right, to try to live for God and make his way to Heaven, to stand on his feet for a moment.

All rose to their feet, and Mr. Jones thanked God for that hopeful demonstration. In conclusion he made a powerful appeal for a liberal collection. The appeal had the desired effect. The collection amounted to upwards of \$800.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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