

The Judgement Seat Of Christ

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Date: 05 December 2010

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back then to 2 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 5 and verses 9 and 10, particularly the subject matter of verse 10, but Paul says in verse 9, therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. The judgment seat of Christ. In the morning we had a visiting preacher, student, Donnie MacKinnon, and in the context of what he was expanding, he asked the question, he said it's important to think about where we're heading, and then he asked where are you heading?

And he gave that an answer of course, and there are different answers he can give to the question, where are you heading? Depends on the context. But with reference to us moving on in this world towards the end of our existence, or the end of the world as we know it, the fact of the matter is we're heading for the judgment seat of Christ. And I admit quite readily that the reality of the judgment seat of Christ is unknown to many people. It is ignored by others who know about it, and it's little thought of by many Christians. That becomes very apparent when you just talk with them. We are influenced so much by the world around us today, it's so easy to be minded for what's here, rather than the judgment seat.

But when you read Paul, you discover, perhaps Paul more than other apostles, you discover that he was committed to serving Christ in the light of the judgment seat of Christ. It is clearly his great motivating element.

He says here, in the verse we're going to look at, We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And then, verse 11, Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

This sense of appearing at the judgment seat impels him forward. For him it is something that is highly personal.

[3 : 10] He just doesn't talk to other people about it. Okay, admittedly, he urges upon other people to think about it for themselves, but for Paul the apostle, it was a personal thing.

We must all, he includes himself, we must all appear. So it had this personal aspect to it. It had an inescapable aspect.

As sure as anything, it's an appointment we'll keep. We'll appear there. And for Paul, the thought of appearing at that judgment seat, under the Spirit's blessing, as it were, gave him a wholesome urgency in calling others to think about that reality.

For him it was so important for people to know God through Jesus Christ, and to be prepared for meeting with the judge on the judgment day.

We must all appear, he says, there. And so he himself was urged on in his service by this motivating factor.

[4 : 22] It's not the only one. Of course, the love of Christ constrains us, he tells us a bit further on. What I'm saying here is this was one that moved him, impelled him, to speak to people, to urge upon them, live in the light of the judgment seat of Christ.

And I think we'll do well to learn even a little more tonight from Paul at this level. We must all appear, he says, at the judgment seat of Christ.

So the first thing we want to think about is simply the judgment seat of Christ. And it's clear that for Paul, as indeed the other apostles, and the Savior himself, the judgment seat of Christ was no figment of the imagination.

It wasn't a little bit of a story to make people afraid. You often hear liberal scholars saying, and philosophers saying, that this fear element, fear of hell, fear of eternal ruin, and so on, all that was just put in by the church to make people afraid to get them to come to church.

That's not at all what Paul is saying here. It's not what the apostles said. More particularly, it's not what the Savior said. For Paul, there was no figment of the imagination, but a solemn reality.

[5 : 49] He had been well taught by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus himself taught the disciples about the reality of the judgment to come, and of his own personal involvement in it.

Matthew 25, read it there. A lengthy passage it is. In Matthew 25, at verse 31, the second part of it, Jesus looks, as it were, in his mind's eye, at the time when the Son of Man, his own name for himself, and the only name he uses for himself, the Son of Man, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, verse 32 of Matthew 25, all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and you know, of course, from your Bible background, that the sheep and the goats in the Middle East are very difficult to distinguish.

You look at them, you see them sometimes, Bedouin shepherds, chasing them along, or them following the shepherd. They're quite difficult to distinguish. But the shepherd, the great shepherd, the Son of Man, will distinguish, and he will separate.

And clearly, when Jesus talked about that in Matthew 25, there was a place of judgment that was a reality in his own thinking. It was a place where there was an assessment by him, a laying bear of everything, and he would be the one to do this.

And as the eternal Son of God, who became man, it was his right, given to him by the Father, to judge the Word.

[7 : 43] Matthew 11, 27. You know, we all know verse 28 of Matthew 11, Come to me, all you who labor, and are heavy laden.

But the verse before that talks about the Father giving authority to the Son. Because he is the Son of Man. And he has authority to judge.

John 5, 27. Same thing. The Father has committed judgment to his Son. It's his by right. Of him alone, though man he was continuing to be, the eternal Son of God, it can be said of him, and of him alone, that he has searched and known us, and knows us through and through.

Peter said, didn't he? Lord, you know all things. And it can be said of Jesus, as it's said in Hebrews 4, 12, of the Word of God.

It's true of the Word of God. The Bible is living and active. And it's sharpening and in two-edged sword. It pierces through. It divides the indivisible. That's the way it is.

[8 : 56] I like to think that there's a little play here in Scripture on the Word of God written and the Word of God incarnate.

In other words, what you can say about the Word of God written is living and active. It penetrates, it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

That can be said of Jesus, the incarnate Word as well. And I'm saying that to you in the context of judgment, you see. Because at the judgment seat of Christ, it's there that He will open up and lay bare everything, the thoughts and the intentions of people.

You get a similar idea in the apocalypse in Revelation chapter 1 verse 16 where that glorious vision of the Son of Man was before John's eyes.

And when you think about the sword sticking out of His mouth and you think about Him described in the way He's described, you've got to get the message from the imagery.

[10 : 04] I suddenly became aware that some of you here may be very into art more than I am, but it doesn't matter because we can always see things in art.

But you have to, when you're looking at Revelation, you have to think about the imagery and what it means. And it will be a gross misunderstanding of the meaning of the sharp two-edged sword sticking out of the Son of Man's mouth in the vision.

It's the point of that. It's the meaning of that. It is that He is the one who penetrates human hearts and lays them bare and investigates them.

There's this notion of judgment. Staying in Revelation for a moment further, Revelation 20 and verse 12 talks about John seeing the vision.

I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon the throne before whose presence the earth fled away. And of course, the one who sat upon the throne is King Jesus.

[11 : 18] So, the first thing we're thinking about is the reality of the judgment seat and it is specifically the judgment seat of Christ.

In Isaiah, you have a passage there that talks about we must all appear before the judgment seat of God. And in the New Testament, that reference becomes the judgment seat of Christ because the Father, the eternal Father, has committed to His eternal Son judgment.

So, Paul then was moved, impelled forward, knowing the terror of the Lord, knowing the reality of judgment to come. He was impelled forward to seek, verse 11, to persuade people of the reality. And I'm not indulging a secret here when I say it, that one of the things that a preacher worth his salt at all says between himself and the Lord is to give me more of a sense of urgency and the reality of judgment.

My image in my mind is of some guys, women wouldn't be so stupid to do it, but some guys are on the mouth of a volcano and it's bubbling up and one of them slips over the edge.

[12:47] Okay, the lab hasn't come up that far yet, but it's on the way. And, and, think about the guys who watch the fellow slide down a bit. He's near enough.

They can't get him if they play it right. They're not going to stand and discuss it casually, are they? There's going to be an urgency that they see the reality of what's in front of them.

They've got to do something and do it quickly and decisively. They've got to do it as those who are urgent. They see, they fear, there's terror there and they want to rescue their friend who has slipped down the slope and could easily be engulfed.

And it's this reality that Paul was moulded by, knowing the fear of the Lord of the judgment seat, we persuade me.

The second thing I want to think about for a wee while is, at the judgment seat of Christ, there'll be no secrets. And this is clear in the passage, you see, he says, that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done.

[14:05] Notice that, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. So, at the judgment seat, obviously, what Paul is saying here is, things, their whole life will be exposed.

The whole book of life will just, as it were, drop before them and the record will be set against them. And the true nature of what they did, what they thought, said and did, will be there.

Remember, Jesus said a curious thing and a somewhat scary thing too, he said, by your words, you will be justified.

That's a very scary thought. Because, obviously, he's not saying literally that justification is by words only.

I'm talking theology here. No, but what he's doing is he's seeking to point out the importance of taking heed to what we say, that it reflects an inner life that has been made alive by the grace of God, that is molded by the grace of God.

[15:20] And therefore, he tells us, watch what you say. And so, at the judgment seat, he's clearly making this point.

There'll be a laying bare, there'll be a public exposing of all the moral and spiritual coverings that we put on. I remember reading years ago a book by, his first name escapes me, Dr. White.

He was a Christian psychiatrist. And the book was entitled Masks of Melancholy. And if you want depression proper, read it.

Guarantee you. You'll get it. In fact, every chapter tells you, that's me, that's me, that's me. And you're looking for a cupboard that you can get into. Not recommended if you're gloomy anyway. But I remember, years ago, a student, a medical student, was, he was at home, belonged to Helms, he was son of the manse, and he had been given the book to read.

[16:27] And he said it scared him, because every page he turned, he was there. But I mention the thing purely because of the title, Masks of Melancholy.

We're masters in our own way of masks. We can mask with our face what's going on inside. We may not set out to deceive directly, but we want to try to cover things.

And what Paul is saying here, today is coming at the great white throne, the judgment seat of Christ, there will be no secrets. And he's saying that in a sense you see, to act as a restraining influence upon us in the here and now.

In actual fact, although we can apply this generally to people, it's not meant for people generally, so we can use it in principle. Primarily, it's to those who profess the Lord.

He's talking, when he talks about the one died for all, therefore all died, he's talking about all those who profess the name of Christ. That's what he's dealing with.

[17 : 43] That's the context. You see, he says, at the beginning, for we know, we, Christians, know, that if our earthly house, this body, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building, we have something, new, in our resurrection body, that is our glorious hope.

In the whole context, in this body, we groan, longing to be clothed upon with that which is from heaven. He's talking to Christians, talking to the people who profess to be Christians, and he's saying to us, firstly, that at the judgment seat of Christ, there will be a laying bed, the masks will come off, and all that went on will come out.

The things that we hid, the schemes we disguised, and all these things, professors of Christ have to recognize that this will happen.

And that's why it's important for us always to think things through about why we do what we do, our motives for doing them, and all that sort of thing, because when the time comes, there will be no secrets at the judgment seat.

Now, I grant you this, I've thought about this a lot, I've read a lot about this too, to me, it's mind boggling how it's all going to work out, because there will be billions there, sheep and goats, and it's all going to happen.

[19 : 20] Now, I don't pretend to know how long it's going to take, because time as we know it will be no more. I don't pretend to know it, but the reality is there, that's the point.

And basically, if you grasp the reality, then how it's all going to work out, don't worry about it, because it will be done. And what we have to concern ourselves with is about our profession of faith in Christ, and how we work that out, and live that out, and speak that out in our lives, whether we have a very long life, or a not so long life, living as those who profess the Lord.

Now, here again, I have to say, when we talk about the Lord's people being judged, it's easy enough to talk about the reality of judgment, we sang in the morning, Psalm 1, and we were singing the words that probably we all know, well, all of us, almost all of us, learned it by heart, when we were young, in judgment therefore shall not stand such as in godly art, nor in the assembly of the just, shall wicked men appear.

And when it says they shall not stand, it doesn't mean they'll not be there, it means they'll not, where to stand is their eyes cool, they'll not be able to plead their cause and win with god, they'll not be their own advocate, they'll not be a Tommy Sheridan and win with god, that's what it means.

Now it's easy to talk about that, solemn, yes, but it's easy to talk about, but we're talking about the Lord's people and judgment as it bears on them. It's a reality, it was a reality for Paul, we must all appear, where the secrets will be out and dead.

[21 : 27] And it's important therefore to remind ourselves that although true Christian believers will be judged, they'll not be judged into condemnation, they'll not be judged so as to be banished forever from his presence.

But judgment has something to do with the reward the Christian will receive, and that is important to you and me. It's important for our enjoyment of blessedness.

You can go to your Westminster Confession of Hingale, list of references, I'm not going to give them to you, have a look for yourselves, and you'll see that on the rewards by grace, freely, yes, we'll come to that.

There's a whole list there, and we talk about why it is not judgment and to condemnation, and why the rewards have reference to the blessedness we enjoy.

It is said somewhere, we will all be blessed, blessed, but not equally blessed, and that's important.

[22 : 41] There will be, just as there are degrees of punishment for those who will pass into condemnation, equally so there are degrees of blessedness, according to the works done in the body, whether good or bad.

This is the business we're on just now, and that's why it's important for us to think about this, and to think, and I'm identifying myself here with this, with you tonight, we have to think more about the things we say, and the actions we take, and so on, as those who really keep before us the judgment seat of Christ.

This is Paul, this is Paul, for we must all appear, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we are moved, we are shaken by the thought, we persuade men.

Now, let me just touch for a moment before we leave it, on this whole business of the Lord's people being rewarded. The writer of the Hebrews tells us that Moses, the son, the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, had everything going for him, and he left it all for the sake of Christ.

He suffered reproach for Christ, esteeming that a far greater reward than all the treasures of Egypt, Hebrews 11, 26, because he looked to the reward.

[24 : 25] See that? That's really what Paul is talking about here. And he's talking about it in the context of the reality of our lives being laid bare at the judgment.

I may be hearing somebody saying, why does God bother when he knows anyway? Well, it's his prerogative and privilege simply to lay it all bare publicly.

that's what he shows him to do. And it's the fact of it that we have to concern ourselves with. In 1 Corinthians 11, chapter 3, verse 11, Paul talks there about preachers and how they build.

We build our foundation, Christ is our foundation, and our life is to be built. And he talks about the difference between gold and silver, wood and stone, hay and stubble.

And clearly what he's thinking about there is the nature and the quality of how we build our life. On Christ, yes. But even on Christ, it matters how we build.

[25 : 43] And that ties in with the whole business of being careful in our thoughts and words and actions. we're not saved by all that, no, but it matters with reference to the judgment where everything will be laid bare.

All that we've said is not intended at all to give the idea that we're adding something, anything, a modicum of anything to Christ's work.

not at all. Have done with the thought, perish the thought. No, no, what we're doing here is reminding ourselves that we are to be zealous in our obedience to him, in thought, word and deed, knowing that there'll be no secrets at the judgment seat of Christ.

Well, the last thing we want to consider is the judgment seat of Christ is where we receive rewards. Now, we touched on that already deliberately just to sort of edge our way into this.

Well, you may be looking at the verse and saying, I'm not seeing the word reward there, minister, but listen and read it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ purpose that each one may receive that's the buzz word receive the things done in the body according to what he has done whether good or bad and you must admit it is pretty clear there, it's certainly implied, we can easily infer it, he's talking about rewards, he's talking about giving us in relation to how our lives have been as professing Christians it matters how we live and it matters that we believe that there will be rewards that have some relation to how we've lived now in the

[28 : 12] Protestant tradition and the Reformed Church tradition the churches of the Reformation we've always been very very sensitive to any notion of rewards because of course the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church emphasises so much meritorious good works that you get your points on the card as it were and therefore the Reformed churches have been very careful to avoid any notion of reward and that's a mistake what we have to think about in terms of the reward that Paul has in mind and the reward that our Saviour had in mind is that which he freely gives unconditionally gives we don't earn these rewards we don't merit them God deals with us according to our works that is to say when you think about according to here it means with reference to what we've thought and said and done with reference to that whereas on account of is a different way of thinking altogether the way to think about on account of our works which is an erroneous way of thinking not a biblical way of thinking when you think about according to our works it is with reference to that but on account of them immediately think about your bank account you're being given something that you're entitled to that you've earned as in a wage and that is out when it comes to the rewards that God will give it's not on account of as if

God himself were bound to pay you your due we must be clear on that this is not playing with words when you always think about judgment to come and the rewards that God gives in his grace it is according to and not on account of there's no idea here of payment as of what we're due God is no man's debtor the Bible's teaching is against God rewarding anyone on account he's not indebted he doesn't have to pay out because you've done this or that or the next thing because the truth of the matter is the very best of our works are tainted and defective they're altogether imperfect and unacceptable to him remember what

Jesus said when he told the parable to his disciples about the man who worked and worked and worked all day long and he served his master and served and served his master and Jesus said is he entitled to anything is he entitled to anything no when you have done all that is in your power to do say we are unprofitable servants and we've only done what is our duty to do in other words God is not to be expected to pay us what he gives us is free it is of sovereign grace it is unconditional and this is an area that is important to be clear on because on the one hand it tears out from our

thinking this whole notion of his meriting payment from God and it helps us to see that we can still talk about the rewards of God's grace the free gift from God according to in keeping with the works we do when God rewards the good works of his people he does it as we've said graciously and he does it because not because he's constrained but he does it quite unconditionally just as salvation is by grace the rewards of God to his people are by grace and it's important to have that clear in our minds so we're saying that Christians will be rewarded and they'll be rewarded with reference both to the nature of their works and the quality of those works and that includes our words too we don't earn them we cannot earn these rewards we're not like I don't know if you were like this but maybe I'm getting old now and I'm remembering the gold star and the silver star and the bronze star in my school days there's a smile or two and it's not like that we're not to think that we can earn the gold star or the silver star or the bronze star no no not like that rewards given are given freely according to Christ's own will but you see we're stirred to think about this in terms of going for the best going for gold yes going for gold simply because Christ has told us to live in the light of judgment to come to live your life to the the fool not the f-o-o-l but the f-u-l live to the fool for Christ live with a view of heaven that will bring you into the enjoyment of a rich reward freely and lovingly given by the gracious Lord himself and so the point must be underscored that as much as the Lord's people are saved from their consequences of their sins the eternal consequences of their sins they are saved from that delivered from the wrath to come brought in to the knowledge of sins forgiven they are brought into that estate that position to live a life that is fruitful and full of good works [35 : 19] Paul says in Ephesians 2 verse 10 we are saved unto good works which God ordained that we should walk in them and so there is much encouragement from the Lord himself to think that whatever we do that we are to do it with heart soul mind and strength as unto the Lord you see what Paul says in verse 9 therefore we make it our aim whether present or absent to be well pleasing to him oh that we might have more of that oh that the church of Christ on earth would have more of that today to live life well pleasing to him so much of what goes into the name of Christian today is selfish and self-centered you can see the decline in desire to go to the mission field these days what's that about it's about self-centeredness nobody wants to take it on you only need to look at our missionary magazine to see all the folk there's

David and all when home because David's health has failed more or less but look at the devotion look at the readiness to go he wasn't a youngster when they weren't youngsters when they went back to the mission field the folk that are there now that soon will be home we need to get back to this view of the thing that there is rewards by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who give themselves wholly to his service knowing that at the judgment seat of Christ there will be rewards given according to his grace and according to in keeping with the work done Paul thought like this aiming to live life in a way that was well pleasing not to self but to the Lord and you only need to look at the life of Paul to see if you ever want a challenge you don't need to of course it's good to read Christian books and Christian ministers writings on all topics but when all is said and done if you listen to and study the apostle Paul as a servant of Christ and the things he endured for Jesus sake you've got a compendium of stuff that shows you how to live your life in this world with the judgment seat of Christ in mind he counted all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord for whom he suffered the loss of all things because for him to win Christ and to be there with him at last and to have the well done of Christ upon him meant more than worlds other need did the doubt was to have bade other people think about this we have one opinion that matters the opinion of the judge on the throne that we're heading to that through and you see then it turns the little things we do it turns the everythings we do for Jesus the cup of tea the cup of coffee at the drop-in the time taken to do these things it puts a it was a different a different perspective on them they may not rate very highly in many ways in in the models for evangelism and all that that's not the issue the issue is that we do it as unto the lord for his glory and Paul has this great motive this great motivating force the glory of God that these things done for him might be well pleasing to him and he looks forward to enjoying the rewards freely given by the Lord Jesus Christ rewards given in the body we are encouraged to think more about why we do what we do in relation to the Lord we're to think about how we can do things better than we do them in our thought life in our words we're to look at things right I'm going to drop that that's finished no more of that because you've got an eye to the judgment seat of Christ where there'll be no secrets and where he will freely bestow his rewards in relation to how we've lived the

life of faith seeking to live as he lived seeking really to be like that seeking to give us as god gave us christ and as christ gave himself seeking to make more of what it means to freely you have received freely give there's a whole raft of ways of looking at this but it's all about our giving of ourselves to him before whom at last we must appear in the body brethren said paul to the romans i i plead with you that to present yourselves a living sacrifice holy and well pleasing to god which is your reasonable service and if we think like that and if we think like that increasingly and prayerfully then we'll be like moises of old and all the others and paul too we'll have a healthy wholesome eye upon the rewards of the grace of the lord jesus christ we'll count that more than words we'll long to hear the well done and the welcome and this is what i've prepared for you therefore we make it our aim whether present or absent to be well pleasing to him for we must all appear before the judgment seat of christ that each one may receive for the things done in the body according to what he has done whether good or bad amen amen Amen.