

Commitment

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[0:00] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

! So that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. When we think of judgment, we usually think of God's judgment on the unrighteous. Now, in this life, where we're sometimes happy to see it, and at the great white throne judgment in Revelation 20, starting in verse 11.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life.

[1:20] And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Now, this judgment is, if we're honest with ourselves, very gratifying. All the wicked people, the Hitlers, and the Pol Pots, and the murderous jihadists, and also the smaller bullies, and the tinpot dictators that make the lives of ordinary people a misery, will, unless they repent of their sins, be judged by God and neatly disposed of in the lake of fire.

Because we have taken part in the first resurrection, which is mentioned earlier in that same chapter, we are blessed and holy, and the second death has no power over us.

What a wonderful state of affairs. We're now with Jesus. We see God face to face, and there is no sin to get in the way. There will be no more tears or sorrow when we will reign with Christ for untold ages.

We will walk in glory and joy forever. It's all perfect and makes us perfectly happy to contemplate.

And I'm not trying to minimize that here either, our happiness, because we should look forward joyfully to the end of evil and perfect communion with God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

[2:50] This is a real hope that has sustained Christians through all their sorrows and suffering for 2,000 years. Yes, it's all wonderful.

Until we recall that little reminder in 2 Corinthians 5, we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Does that give you pause? It should. It certainly makes me think. We shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due, what is fitting and appropriate for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Oh, we might say, there's our out, whether good or evil. And I'm not doing evil. I don't lie or steal or murder or commit adultery.

If I've done those things in the past, I've confessed and I've been forgiven through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. I follow Christ to the best of my ability. I read my Bible and pray and go to church and visit the sick, etc., etc.

[4:07] All very well. But what is God's standard of good and evil? According to the prophet Isaiah, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

This means that whatever we do on our own, apart from the indwelling life of God in us, no matter how good it appears or how well it accords with scriptural injunctions to feed the poor, forgive our enemies, do good to all men, and so on, all of that is worthless.

The apostle Paul spoke of worthless actions in another way in 1 Corinthians 3, starting with verse 11. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now, if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire. And the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

[5:24] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. So as a Christian, it's possible to build, to perform actions that look good, with worthless materials, wood, hay, and straw.

What is built with these materials probably does not look worthless, because it will take fire to reveal what is temporary and what is lasting. It will be revealed by fire.

The building probably looks fine to anyone seeing it, painted and decorated and attractive. Only the fire will show what it is really made of.

So we see that at the judgment seat of Christ, what we Christians have done, whether it is good or bad, will be revealed by fire.

There is no out. No way of avoiding the terrible truth that our actions will be judged, and that some of us, while still saved, will receive no reward.

[6:33] How, then, can we ensure that we are building with gold, silver, and precious stones, instead of with wood, hay, and straw?

How can we know that when we face Christ, at his judgment seat, he will say, well done? The Bible contains ample guidance on this point, but it is not very palatable to most of us, because it strikes at the very root of the sin nature in us.

Galatians 2 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Philippians 3 I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

2 Corinthians 5 He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

[8:13] Matthew 11 Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.

Luke 9 If anyone would come after him, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. How many of us can truly say, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me?

Or, I know him and the power of his resurrection, and I share in his sufferings and have become like him in his death.

Or, I no longer live for myself, but for Christ. Or, I have taken the yoke of Jesus and I have found rest in my soul.

[9:22] Or, I deny myself and take up my cross every day and I have lost my life in Christ. If we're honest, most of us have to admit that we are very spotty Christians.

Sometimes we walk in these truths, and often we don't. Yet, so that we could give up ourselves and live holy for God is the reason Christ died for us.

He knew sin prevented us from doing that on our own, so he went to the cross, and he hung there in unimaginable suffering. He experienced, for the only time in his eternal existence, separation from his Father as he bore the sin of the world.

He did this so that we might receive forgiveness from our sin instead of the eternal death that we deserve. But when he asks us to take upon ourselves his yoke, we submit briefly and then buck and kick and throw it off so that we can do what we want instead of what he wants.

We experience moments of selfless giving and then go right back to our own selfish concerns. We fail to discipline ourselves in the word and prayer and our behavior.

[10:46] We do not yield up our right to ourselves. The very sin that Christ died for, the fundamental, I will, is what we fall back into over and over again.

God, forgive us. I am deeply ashamed that I do not live every moment of my life in the power of God.

my huge thing is time, especially when I'm tired. I don't use that time for him.

I don't even ask him what I ought to be doing. I just fritter it away. Yet absolutely nothing else in life can compare to moving in God's power and life and joy.

All our trials and difficulties are transformed when we keep our eyes on Jesus and wait expectantly to see what he will do. Over and over again, the Bible tells us that the life of faith is what enables us to be happy in Jesus.

[12:00] As the old song says, trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. Those who have seriously done this, training their thoughts to stay on Jesus, cutting out of their lives anything that interferes with the life of Christ in them, listening for and obeying the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, have discovered incredible joy even in the midst of pain and suffering.

Paul and the apostles knew this utter dependence upon and communion with God. So did Brother Lawrence. So did Agnes Sanford. So did and do many Christians we've never heard of whose lives are completely unremarkable except for the fragrance of Jesus Christ that fills them.

This then is how we build with gold, silver, and precious stones instead of wood, hay, and straw.

This is how we will be able to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and receive a reward for the good we have done instead of watching our works burn up in the fire.

By the grace of God we turn from ourselves and train our minds to dwell on Christ. We acknowledge that we have no rights in ourselves and turn them over to Jesus.

[13:31] We look critically at how we spend our time and use our talents and ask him to show us what needs to be dropped from our lives or redirected in keeping with his life and love in us.

We do not excuse ourselves indulging in self-pity or bewailing our lack of self-discipline but confess and repent and trust Jesus to transform us.

We all began our Christian lives every one of us as a mess of a person. Our part is to turn that mess all of it reserving nothing over to Jesus and then let him do the work of transformation.

This is a simple thing but it's not easy and I think most of us know that it's not easy. Yet, Philippians 1.6 And I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Amen, Lord. So be it. my dear Heavenly Father, I just ask you that you would work in each one of us that we might be more and more filled with love for you with gratitude for what you have done for us and that we might turn to you in every small way in our lives the small ways as well as the large ways that we might truly give ourselves up to you and that we might in giving you ourselves know that joy and the power that you want to give us and your transforming life in and through us.

[15:27] In Jesus name. Amen.