

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Are You Ready For Death? (Part 7)

I Samuel 20:3

All that we looked at last month concerned The First Stage of death for the believer. Everyone who is saved enters the presence of the Lord in Heaven at the moment of death. However, they only enter with their soul and spirit. Their body is placed in a grave and will remain there until the rapture. When the rapture takes place, their soul and spirit are reunited with a glorified body as described in I Corinthians 15:51-58 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

After the rapture, we begin *The Second Stage* of death for the believer. However, this event is not just for believers who have died. All believers, both those who die and those who escape death in the rapture, will be at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This event, the Judgment Seat of Christ, is called by name in Romans 14:10 and II Corinthians 5:10. Two other passages, I Corinthians 3:12-15 and Revelation 4:1-11, describe what takes place at the Judgment Seat. Some may argue that these latter two passages do not describe the Judgment Seat and that is fine. I do hold that these describe the events of the Judgment Seat and will treat them as such. With that in mind, let us think about them for a little bit.

Romans 14:10 says, “*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*” Verse 12 continues the thought by saying, “*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*” Paul brings the subject up again in II Corinthians 5:10 when he says, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*”

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Some have tried to take these verses and use them to argue that salvation is based upon works, and we can get to Heaven if we do enough good. But these verses are not talking about salvation—they are talking about rewards for service after salvation. The surrounding verses indicate that Paul is talking to believers about their service for Christ. Also many other verses, such as Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5-6 just to name two passages, make it absolutely plain that salvation has nothing to do with works. Salvation never has been, nor could it ever be, based upon works. These verses, of necessity, must refer to our being rewarded for our service after salvation. This is a wonderful truth—Christ will reward us for how we have labored for Him. We may think that we have it hard down here at times, but we should never despair. Christ knows what we are doing and, if we are faithful to Him, He will reward us. Now let us go a little deeper into this subject of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

About the only thing that we can discern from the verses in Romans 14:10 and II Corinthians 5:10 is the name of this judgment. We do have a little understanding of what takes place because Romans 14:12 talks about a believer giving “*account of himself to God.*” Also II Corinthians 5:10 goes on to talk about receiving things based upon what we have done, whether good or bad. But what does this mean?

I think we can get a better understanding of what takes place at the Judgment Seat when we look at I Corinthians 3:12-15. In this chapter Paul uses analogies to describe the Christian life. The first is planting seeds. In verse 11, he changes the analogy to a building and says that Christ is the foundation. He then describes our labor for Christ after salvation. He puts the believer’s work in two categories: gold, silver, precious stones, and wood, hay, stubble. Just as a builder would use the better material for building something, so Christ uses only the best. We cannot see the material now, but Christ can. We should make sure that what we are doing for Christ is pleasing to Him and thus can be used by Him to build His church. At the Judgment Seat, the true results will be seen.

We may think that we are doing something important for Christ now, but are we really doing it for Christ, or just to be seen of men? Will our work for Christ be gold, silver, and precious stones, or will it be wood, hay, and stubble? As you study these passages out, you will find that Christ is not interested in the quantity of work as much as He is interested in the quality of work. Some people may appear fine to us because they are big and successful, but it is not our opinion that matters. It is Christ that matters and what He judges our work to be. I am convinced that many “successful” works are only that in man’s eyes. Christ’s judgment of success is vastly different than ours.

Notice the language in these passages. Both Romans and II Corinthians say “all” will stand and “all” will appear. It is not just the preacher and his wife and family, but every single believer, individually, will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. That is a very sobering thought. This will not be a time when we can talk our way into success and impress everyone because of who we are and what we have done. We may be able to impress our fellow believers, but this is one time when what we say will not matter. Christ knows our hearts. I am not sure exactly how the judgment will take place because the Bible does not say. We may describe all that we have done, and then it will be evaluated. Or all of our labor may be described for us, and we will simply acknowledge it and have it evaluated. It may be done completely different. I do not know how it will be done, but I do know that our labor for Christ will be evaluated. It will be tested to see if it had any quality whatsoever. Are you ready for the Judgment Seat of Christ? Are you ready for your labor for Christ to stand His test of quality. Is your singing in the choir, or singing specials, or ushering, or witnessing, or anything else you do, for Christ or for others? He knows what you are doing and why you are doing it. You will give an account for your labor for Christ.

I am convinced that for many believers, this Judgment Seat will be a sad time. It will be made known that time and talent that could

and should have been used for Christ was instead wasted on things of this life. I am constantly saying in messages what Christ said in Matthew 6:25-34. To save room, I will summarize what Christ said. He said not to worry about even the essentials of life such as food, clothing, and raiment. That is what Christ said not to do, but what do we do? We spend all of our time thinking and worrying about these essentials. Christ says not to think about them because the Father will provide them for us.

To make matters even worse for the average Christian, we go beyond the essentials and spend all of our time focusing and caring for things that do not really matter. Examine your life. Think about what you spend most of your time on. Are the things that you are consumed with really important to God? If we were to really be honest, we would have to say that they are not.

But getting back to those essentials, I mention many times the effort that we put forth on our houses. We spend much money and time fixing them up. But it does not last. In a few years, we have to do more work on it. After spending a lifetime being consumed with our home, we die and leave it for the children to sell and divide the money. Was it worth all of the effort that we spent on it? I am not saying that we should never care about our house. But I think that everyone of us could spend less time on what we call essentials and more time in our devotion to Christ. After all, when we stand before Christ before the Judgment Seat, the house and food and raiment will not matter one bit. Let alone the things, such as money and possessions, that we spend so much time being consumed with. I am sure that when we stand before Christ, we will wish that we had spent more effort on our service and devotion to Him.

Grace Reese Adkins wrote a song that was copyrighted in 1948. In it she expressed what I have been trying to say concerning what our response will be at the Judgment Seat of Christ. I quote only the first stanza:

“By and by when I look on His face, Beautiful face, thorn-

shadowed face;

By and by when I look on His face, I'll wish I had given Him
more.

More, so much more, More of my life than I e'er gave before—
By and by when I look on His face, I'll wish I had given Him
more.”

She goes on to write about seeing the “nail-riven hands” of Christ and the glories of Heaven. With all that we will see, I am sure that many will say what Grace Adkins wrote, “I'll wish I had given Him more.” What about you? Are you ready for the Judgment Seat of Christ? If you are saved, you will stand before Him and report on your service. Please serve Him now, while you can.

If we are faithful in our service to Christ, what will be our reward? Five crowns are described in I Corinthians 9:24-27, I Thessalonians 2:19-20, II Timothy 4:8, James 1:12, and I Peter 5:1-4. They are given for faithfulness in living the Christian life, witnessing for Christ, loving and expecting the return of Christ, enduring trials and temptations, and teaching and preaching the Word of God, respectively. If we are found faithful, Revelation 4:9-11 describes that we will take the crowns that we have received, cast them at the feet of Jesus and say to Him, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power.” As another songwriter asked, “Must I go, and empty handed?” Will Jesus find you faithful? Are you ready to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ? I pray we will be!