



THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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The Judgment Seat of Christ

SERMON REFERENCE: 1 Corinthians 3:9-17

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #1921

1 Corinthians 3:9 says, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.”

We, as the Church, are the temple of God; we are to be bringing brothers and sisters, as living stones, to build up the temple. How we served Christ on Earth will come under review at the judgment seat of Christ.

First, it will be a time of revelation.

We will be judged according to our attitudes. God is interested in not only what we do, but also why we do it. He sees when we serve Him begrudgingly, with an unwilling spirit. We will also be tested according to the authority of Scripture. God will not call us to serve Him in a way that contradicts His holy Word.

God will also judge according to our own abilities -- not just what we have done, but what we could have done. God made us precisely as He wanted to make us. He will not compare us with someone else’s abilities; He will judge us by how we use whatever talents He has given us.

Adrian Rogers says, “The great danger in life is not that you will fail to do what somebody else can do; it’s that you will fail to do what you can do.” We’ll be judged according to our aspirations, or what we wanted to do. Our dreams and efforts will be on display at the judgment seat of Christ.

Secondly, it will be the time when we will be rewarded according to our works.

1 Corinthians 3:14 says, “If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” God recognizes and rewards what we have done for Him here on earth, no matter how small or tedious the work was.

Finally, it will be a time of regret.

“If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15). The searching eyes of God look at our lives; the things that have not been refined by fire will burn. We cannot lose our salvation, but the things that were not done for the Lord will be of waste.

Life Application

Knowing we are judged according to our attitudes, authority, abilities and aspirations, how are you serving Christ, today? What will your reward be in Heaven?



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Judgment is something that every person born into this world has to face.
- b) There are three judgments:
 - i) The judgment of our sin
 - (1) We are judged as sinners.
 - (2) Our sin has to be judged and paid for.
 - (3) If you are saved, then that judgment has already passed.
 - (a) When Jesus died on the cross, you died with Him.
 - (b) When He was buried, you were buried with Him.
 - (c) When He rose, you arose with Him.
 - (4) If you are a Christian, then this judgment has already taken place, and you'll never again come into condemnation.
 - ii) The judgment of our activity day-by-day as a child of God
 - (1) As sons and daughters of our Lord, He is going to correct us and chastise us.
 - (a) This judgment is chastisement, and is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 11.
 - (b) It takes place day-by-day when God corrects us.
 - (2) This judgment does not consign you to Hell, but don't think that just because you're saved that it makes no difference how you live.
 - (a) If you are a child of God and willingly, knowingly and deliberately sin, then God will chastise you.
 - (i) Hebrews 12:6
 - (3) God is not trying to get even with us.
 - (4) It's not the judgment of His wrath.
 - (a) This is the judgment of His love.
 - iii) The final judgment
 - (1) One day we will be judged as servants.
 - (a) How we have served the Lord will come under review.
 - c) 1 Corinthians 3:9-15
 - i) In verse 13, the phrase "the fire shall try" literally means that the fire shall test every man's work.
 - ii) We are God's building.
 - (1) The church is the temple of God; we are the temple of God.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 3:16
 - (i) It is plural: "You all are" the temple of God.
 - (2) In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people.
 - (3) In the New Testament, He has a people for His temple.



- (4) The Holy Spirit of God lives in us individually, but He also abides in us corporately when we meet together.
 - (a) Matthew 18:20
- iii) We are to be building up that temple.
 - (1) We're to be bringing brothers and sisters, as living stones, into that temple.
- iv) The foundation of the temple is the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 3:11
 - (2) Matthew 16:18
 - (a) The church is not built upon Simon Peter, but upon the Lord Jesus.
 - (b) According to 1 Corinthians 3:11, there can be no other foundation but Jesus.
- v) Our lives are like stones or building materials in that temple.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 3:12
 - (a) There are two kinds of lives represented here:
 - (i) The gold, silver and precious stones category
 - (ii) The wood, hay and stubble category
 - (b) All saved people are in one of those two categories.
 - (i) All Christians are not of the same quality.
 - 1. Some Christians are spiritual.
 - 2. Some Christians are carnal.
 - (2) Heaven will not be the same for everybody.
 - vi) There's coming a time when the spiritual house that you've built will be tested.
 - (1) You have to start with the Lord Jesus.
 - (a) If you don't begin to build upon the Lord Jesus Christ, then you're not saved.
 - (2) Wood, hay and stubble are cheap, but combustible.
 - (3) You have to dig for gold, silver and precious stones because they're precious and permanent.
 - vii) One day, it will be revealed whether we were a gold, silver and precious stone Christian, or whether we were a wood, hay and stubble Christian.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 3:13
 - (a) The fire of God's judgment will pass upon our lives.
 - (i) Even though you may be saved, if your life is a carnal life (wood, hay and stubble), then it will go up in smoke.
- d) Today's message will focus on what this day of judgment will be like.
 - i) This is the day when the Christian will be judged, not as a sinner or a son, but as a servant.
 - (1) As a wise master builder, as a laborer.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 3:9

2) IT WILL BE A TIME OF REVELATION (1 Corinthians 3:13)

- a) Things are going to be revealed.
 - i) 1 Corinthians 3:13
 - (1) This is not the Great White Throne Judgment.
 - (a) That is for unsaved people.



- (2) This is the Bema Judgment, the judgment seat of Christ.
- ii) When we come to the judgment seat of Christ, our lives will pass by in dress parade.
 - (1) Things will look a lot different in the pure light of eternity than they look now.
- iii) Our lives will be revealed by fire.
- b) We will see things, not as we see them now, but as God sees them then.
 - i) 1 Samuel 16:7
 - (1) In the light of eternity, what God sees is going to be far different than what people have seen.
 - ii) Luke 16:15
- c) 1 Corinthians 3:13
 - i) It doesn't say what size but what sort our work is.
 - ii) When God judges, He will not be looking primarily for quantity but for quality.
 - (1) He will be looking for the heart when that day comes.
- d) When this day of revelation comes, God will determine whether our lives were wood, hay and stubble, or gold, silver and precious stones.
 - i) God will judge our lives as servants according to our attitude.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 9:16-17
 - (a) A man who has been called to preach cannot glory or boast in that because God sovereignly selected him to preach the Gospel.
 - (b) Paul is saying that he must have the right attitude in what he does.
 - (2) God is interested, not only in what we do, but in why we do it.
 - (3) If we preach just because we have to, lead worship because that's our job, or teach Sunday school because no one else will do it, but we don't do it willingly, then we will have no reward.
 - (4) Matthew 6:5
 - (a) They are seen of men; that's their reward.
 - (b) They have no reward in Heaven.
 - (5) Do you do what you do as unto the Lord?
 - (a) Do you do it willingly?
 - (b) This will determine what sort your work is.
 - ii) We will be judged according to authority.
 - (1) Do you do what you do with the authority of Almighty God?
 - (a) Do you have Heaven's blessing and mandate?
 - (2) 2 Timothy 2:5
 - (a) A person who breaks the rules will not receive the reward.
 - (b) We must serve according to the Word of God.
 - (i) What does this say, for example, about women preachers?
 - 1. According to Scripture, God does not call women to be preachers.
 - 2. 1 Timothy 3:2
 - (3) Some people will come to the judgment seat of Christ and find that they did not strive lawfully.
 - (a) 1 Samuel 15:22



- (i) Saul disobeyed God in order to make an offering to God.
 - 1. To obey is better than sacrifice.
 - (4) Do you have the authority of the Word of God to do what you do when you serve the Lord?
- iii) We will be judged according to ability.
 - (1) God is going to judge you, not for what you have done, but for what you could have done.
 - (2) The great question is not what can God do with someone else, but what can He do with you?
 - (3) Luke 12:48
 - (4) God has made you exactly as He wants you to be.
 - (a) God is not going to compare you with someone else.
 - (b) God will compare you with whatever talent He has given you.
 - (5) God is not going to judge us by what somebody else does or could have done.
 - (6) God judges us according to our own abilities.
 - (7) Mark 12:41-44
 - (a) Jesus watched what the people put into the offering.
 - (b) The widow gave more than all of them because she gave according to her ability.
 - (i) She gave everything to the Lord.
 - (ii) She will be judged, not according to what a millionaire could give, but according to what she gave.
 - (8) Mark 14:3-8
 - (a) Mary did what she could do.
 - (9) We can all do what we can do.
 - (a) God will not judge us according to what we can't do, but according to what we can do.
 - (10) The great danger in life is not that we will fail to do what somebody else can do, but that we will fail to do what we can do.
- iv) We will be judged according to our aspiration.
 - (1) Not only what we did, but what we aspired to do and wanted to do.
 - (2) 1 Kings 8:17-18
 - (a) David wanted to build a temple for God.
 - (b) The Lord told David that he could not build the temple because he had been a man of war.
 - (i) David's son, Solomon, would build the temple.
 - (c) At the judgment seat of Christ, both Solomon and David will be rewarded for building the temple, though David did not build it.
 - (i) It was in David's heart to build the temple.
 - (3) When we witness to someone about Jesus and that person refuses the Lord, we're not judged by the person's response but by our heart's desire to win souls to Jesus.
 - (a) The worst thing about many of us is not that we don't win souls, but that we don't try.
 - (i) We don't have a soul winner's heart; we don't have that aspiration.

**3) IT WILL BE A TIME OF REWARD (1 Corinthians 3:14)**

- a) 1 Corinthians 3:14
- b) Some people get upset thinking that some will receive more reward in Heaven than others.
 - i) They think perhaps that God is not fair.
- c) The Bible is very clear that there will be degrees of reward in Heaven.
- d) 1 Corinthians 3:8
- e) Works never bring us to Heaven, but they follow us to Heaven.
 - i) Heaven will not be the same for everyone.
 - (1) The rewards in Heaven will be different.
 - ii) Revelation 14:13
 - iii) Revelation 22:12
 - (1) Works do not save us, but we are rewarded according to our works.
 - iv) Matthew 6:20
 - (1) Some will have treasures that others will not have.
 - v) 1 Corinthians 3:8
- f) There are many obscure saints who don't get recognized down here on Earth for their service to Jesus.
 - i) They pray and intercede for others.
 - ii) They write letters to missionaries.
 - iii) They work in the church nursery.
 - iv) No one knows their names or recognizes them, but God will recognize them.
- g) Luke 12:48
- h) Matthew 10:42
- i) We should desire a crown so that we may lay it at Jesus' feet.
 - i) Matthew 25:21

4) IT WILL BE A TIME OF REGRET (1 Corinthians 3:15)

- a) 1 Corinthians 3:15
 - i) "As by fire" may be translated "through fire."
- b) The searching eyes of God, like a flame of fire, will look at our lives.
- c) Gold, silver and precious stones have already been through the fire.
 - i) Those gems were formed by fire.
 - ii) Gold is purified by fire.
- d) A person whose life is found to be wood, hay and stubble is what the Bible calls a carnal Christian.
 - i) This is a worldly person.
 - ii) Their life has not counted for the Lord.
 - iii) They will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and watch all that they have done go up in smoke.
 - (1) This person is saved if their life is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.
 - (a) If you have received Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, then not one sin will ever be brought up against you again.



- (b) God is not going to judge you as a sinner but reward you as a servant.
- iv) 1 Corinthians 3:14-15
- v) It is unclear how that loss will come, but it will be a tragic loss.
- e) The reason the Christian whose life is wood, hay and stubble, makes it to Heaven is because the foundation is Christ.
 - i) When the test of fire comes and the wood, hay and stubble are gone, the foundation of Christ is still there.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 3:11

5) CONCLUSION

- a) If you are not saved, lay that foundation today.
 - i) Receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.
- b) If you are already saved, live your life with the understanding that every day you live without abiding in the Lord Jesus is a day that's lost for eternity.
 - i) John 15:5
- c) If your life is wood, hay and stubble, it will be burned; and you will suffer loss.
 - i) Ask the Lord to search your heart, and commit to live for Him with all of the ability that He has given you.
- d) Let your life count for Christ.
- e) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- f) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you be finding First Corinthians chapter 3. Now let me tell you what the Bible teaches about judgment, because judgment is something that every person has to face who is born into this world.

Actually, there are three judgments. There's the judgment of our sin, and then there's the judgment of our activity day-by-day, and then there's the final judgment. We are judged, first of all, as sinners. And our sin has to be judged and paid for. Well, for us, if we're saved, that judgment has already passed, isn't it? We sing, "Were You There When They Crucified Our Lord?" And if you are saved, you were there. When He died, you died with Him. When He was buried, you were buried with Him. When He rose, you arose with Him. And so, therefore, judgment for you is in the past. It's already taken place, and you'll never again come into condemnation. That's wonderful. So, you have been judged as a sinner.

But you will be judged day-by-day as a son. Now the Bible says that as sons and daughters of our Lord, He's going to correct us and chastise us. This judgment is chastisement and it's spoken of in First Corinthians chapter 11. And it is not to consign us into Hell, but don't ever get the idea that just because you're saved it makes no difference how you live. If you're a child of God and willingly, knowingly, deliberately sin, God'll do for you what my daddy used to do for me. He'll carry you to the woodshed. We didn't have a woodshed; we had a pump house, but it did just as well. "Whom the Father loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives."

So there's your judgment as a sinner. That took place at Calvary. That is already past. Then there's your judgment as a son or as a daughter. That takes place day-by-day when God does this to correct us. Now, He's not trying to get even with us. It's not the kind of a judgment that is going to consign us to Hell. It's not the judgment of His wrath. But, to the contrary, the judgment of His wrath has already passed. This is the judgment of His love. "Whom the Father loves, He chastens."

But now there's a third judgment that we will face, and that's one that many of us are oblivious to and I want to remind you of. Not only have we been judged as sinners, not only are we judged as sons and daughters, but one day we will be judged as servants. How we have served the Lord will come under review. And that's what we're going to be talking about, the judgment seat of Christ.

Now look, if you will, in verse 9, "For we are laborers together with God," you and I work together and God works with us, "ye are God's husbandry," that is, the husbandry, that means a vineyard, "ye are God's building." This building that we're in right now, this edifice, is only a place to hold God's building. We are God's building; not these stones, but this flesh and blood. And then he speaks of God's building. Look, if you will, in verse 10, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest." Now just underscore that because that speaks of you. "Every man's work, every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try," that literally



means that the fire shall test, “every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

Now what’s he saying? He’s saying you are God’s building. The church is a temple of God. It makes it very, very clear that we are the temple of God. As a matter of fact, look down in verse 16, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God.” Do you see that? You are the temple of God. Now he uses the word in the plural, you all are, ye, plural, are the temple of God. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. We are a temple of God. The Holy Spirit of God lives in us individually, but He also abides in us corporately when we meet together. “Where two or three are gathered together to My name, there am I in the midst of them.” So right now you’re looking at the temple of God. “Ye are the temple of God.”

Now Paul says that we’re to be building up that temple. We’re to be bringing brothers and sisters, as living stones, as we preached Wednesday night a week ago, into that temple.

Now what is the foundation of this temple of God? Well, the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation. Look in verse 11, look at it, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Now, if you’re going to build a church, I’m not talking about a church house, but a church, if you’re going to build a church, you start with the foundation. And the foundation is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Upon this rock, upon Myself, I will build My church.” And, by the way, some people think that the church is built upon Simon Peter. The church is not built upon Simon Peter. The church is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the foundation of the church because the Bible clearly says in verse 11 there can’t be any other foundation. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.”

Now are you getting the picture? We are a temple. Christ is the foundation. And now our lives are like stones in that temple or like building material in that temple. So you, you have two kinds of lives that are represented here. Look, if you will, in verse 12 of this thing, “Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones.” That’s one category, obvious. Now look at the other category, “Wood, hay, and stubble.”

Now tonight, let’s just say that everybody in this building is saved. Now that would be a stretch. I don’t believe everybody in this building is saved. But let’s, for the sake of illustration, say that everybody in this building tonight is saved. But, regardless of whether everyone is saved or not, there are two categories of saved people here tonight. There’s the gold and silver and precious stone category, and there’s the wood, hay, and stubble category. All Christians are not of the same quality, would you agree? You agree that some, some Christians are gold and silver and precious stones? Other Christians are wood, hay, and stubble. Some Christians are spiritual. Some Christians are carnal.

Well, is Heaven going to be the same for everybody? Absolutely not! One of these days you’re going to find out whether or not you were a gold and silver and precious stone Christian or whether you were a wood, hay, and stubble Christian. It kind of sounds like the story of the three little pigs, because there’s coming a time when the house that you have built, the spiritual house that you build, is going to be tested. Now you have to start with the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, if you don’t begin to build on the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re not saved at all. But some lives, very frankly, could not be characterized as gold and silver and



precious stones. Wood, hay, and stubble is cheap, but it is combustible. You have to dig for gold and silver and precious stones because they're precious and they're permanent.

Now one of these days the Building Inspector, Almighty God, is going to cause your life to pass by in dress parade. One of these days it will be revealed whether or not you as a Christian are gold, silver, and precious stones Christian or whether you are a wood, hay, and stubble Christian.

Look, if you will, in verse 13, "Every man's work shall be made manifest." Who does that include? Does that include you? Nod your head. Of course, it does. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it," that is, the day of declaration is coming, "because it shall be revealed by fire." Now the fire of God's judgment is going to pass upon your life. And even though you may have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you have built upon that foundation because there is no other foundation. Yet, when the fire of God's searching eyes falls upon you, if your life is a carnal life, if your life has been wood, hay, and stubble, it will go up in smoke. There's a test coming. It is the trial by fire. It is the torch test. One of these days Adrian will face the fire and so will you.

Now I want you to notice, with that in mind, and this applies to you if you're saved, so don't let it just go past. With that in mind, let me tell you what this day is going to be like. He speaks of this day, and that is the day when the Christian will be judged not as a sinner, not as a son, but as a servant, as a wise master builder, as a laborer that he speaks about in verse 9, "For we are laborers together."

Now what is going to be the laborer's reward? Well, it all depends. Now let me, let me give you some factors that are going to take place. First of all, it's going to be **a time of revelation**. Things are going to be revealed. You see, the Bible says in verse 13, "For every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day will declare it." Now I want to say this: that when that day comes, and when you and I come to the judgment seat of Christ, not the Great White Throne Judgment; that's for unsaved people, but when you and I come to the Bema, B-E-M-A, the judgment seat of Christ, we are going to have our life pass by in dress parade. And when we do, things are going to look a lot different in the pure light of eternity than they look now. Our, our life, my life and yours, is going to be revealed by fire. And you're going to see things not as you see them now, but as God sees them then.

Now there's a very interesting passage over there in First Samuel where Samuel was gone to find the next king of Israel. And the sons of Jesse came by. And Eliab came and he looked like a king. He was a handsome, broad-shouldered, intelligent, winsome man. And Samuel thought that surely this must be the next king of Israel. But I want you to notice what God said there in First Samuel 16 verse 7, and he's talking to Samuel concerning Eliab, who was a handsome, good-looking man. He said, "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature," that is, he's handsome, tall, dark and handsome, "for I have refused him. For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." And I tell you, in the, in the light of eternity, what God sees is going to be far different than for people have seen.

Or, again, in the New Testament, in Luke chapter 16 verse 15. Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, and He said, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

So, when this day of revelation comes, how is God going to determine whether Adrian's life or your life is wood, hay, or stubble or whether it is gold and silver and precious stones? Let me tell you some things that



are going to determine. And, by the way, look, if you will, again in verse 13, “The fire shall try every man’s work of what,” notice the next word, “of what sort it is.” It doesn’t say what size it is, but of what sort. And when God judges, God is not going to be looking primarily for quantity; He’s going to be looking for quality.

Which would you rather have, a handful of diamonds or a truckload of hay? You see, here’s what he’s talking about. Wood, hay, and stubble or gold and silver and precious stones. And God is looking for quality. God is going to be looking for the heart when that day comes, that day of revelation.

I want to mention some things, therefore, that will determine what sort of life I will face up to, what sort of life you’re going to face up to. First of all, God, at the judgment seat of Christ, is going to judge my life as a laborer, as a servant, according to my **attitude**, according to my attitude. Do you have it? Write down attitude. And turn, if you will, to First Corinthians 9 for just a moment. And we’re continuing the same theme here. Look, if you will, in verse 16, Paul said, “For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!” And, by the way, no ban, no man ought to be a preacher of the Gospel who can do anything else. I’m not talking about sharing and witnessing. I, Paul is talking here about the call to the ministry.

Now God has called me to the ministry. I’m as sure of my call to preach as I am my salvation; as a matter of fact, maybe more sure. I’ve doubted my salvation early on; I never have doubted my call to preach. It’s an unusual thing. I know that God has called me to preach. But I can’t glory in that because God sovereignly selected me and God called me and ordained me that I should preach the Gospel. So I can’t boast in that. And I’m no better than anybody else just simply because God called me to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, if I refuse God, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.

But now notice in verse 17, “For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me.” Now what is Paul saying? Paul says, “I’ve got to preach the Gospel. I can’t get out of it. God has called me. God has ordained me. I have nothing to glory in. I am what I am by the grace of God.” But he says, “I must have the right attitude in what I do. Only if I do it willingly do I have a reward.”

So God is interested, friend, not only in what you do, but God is interested in why you do it. If you preach because you have to, Brother Jim Whitmire, if you lead the worship here because that’s your job, or Sunday school teacher, if you teach the Sunday school class because you say, “Well, somebody has to, so I’m going to do it,” but you don’t do it willingly, then you have no reward. You have to have the right attitude, the right motivation.

Jesus spoke of some people who pray publicly, and Jesus said, “They stand on the street corners and pray.” And He said, “The reason they do that is that they might be seen of men.” And then Jesus said, “Verily, I say to you, they have their reward.” What did He mean by that? They’re seen of men. That’s the reward. But they have no reward in Heaven. And so, the very first thing you have to ask yourself, not only what you do, but why you do it. Do you do it as unto the Lord? Do you do it willingly? Now that’s going to determine what sort your work is.

Now I’ll tell you something else. Not only attitude, but you’re going to be tested according to **authority**. Do you do what you do with the authority of Almighty God? Do you have Heaven’s blessing? Do you have Heaven’s mandate? Put this Scripture down, Second Timothy 2 verse 5. The Bible says, “If any man strive for the masteries, he’s not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” Now what does that mean? What does that



mean? Well, over here at the Olympics this summer in Atlanta a man will not receive a gold medal in the race if, rather than staying on the tracks, he cuts across the field. He's not going to receive a reward, very obviously. If he breaks the rules, if he doesn't strive lawfully, he cannot receive the reward. And the same thing is true about you. You see, you must serve according to the Word of God.

Now what does this say, for example, about women preachers? Now we have some wonderful ladies who feel that God has called them to preach. But, according to the Scripture, God does not do that. And I know that when you say that today, that's not politically correct. They think that that somehow is a putdown upon women; tis not at all. But it is the Word of God. The Bible says, for example, "A, a pastor is to be the husband of one wife." That's very hard for a woman to do. I'm not trying to say that men are better than women. But, you see, some people are going to come to the judgment seat of Christ and they're going to find out that they did not strive lawfully. Now they're doing things for the Lord sometimes, but what God does not initiate, God does not appreciate.

For example, Saul, in the Old Testament, disobeyed God in order to make an offering to God. And Samuel had to say to Saul, "To obey is better than to sacrifice." Now, "A man is not crowned except he strive lawfully." So you're going to be tested according to attitude. Did you do it willingly? You're going to be tested according to authority. Do you have the authority of the Word of God to do what you did when you serve the Lord?

Another thing that's going to determine what sort your work is, is **ability**. You see, God is going to judge you not for what you have done, but what you could have done. And the great question is not, "What can God do with somebody else, but what can God do with you?"

Now put this verse down, Luke chapter 12 and verse 48, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." And, conversely, he says, "If you've been given little, then God has a smaller expectation of you." Don't go around comparing yourself to Jamie Parker and say, "Well, you know, if I, if I had the, the voice and the personality and the strength of a Jamie Parker, then I could do what he does." You're not Jamie Parker. You're you. And God has made you exactly, precisely as He wants you to be. And God is not going to compare you with somebody else. He's going to compare you with you, with whatever talent God has given you, whether it be one talent, two talents, five talents, whatever that is.

One man said to another man as they were sitting in front of a country store, so I'm told, a little guy, who was very small, said to a big, brawny man, "If I were as big and strong as you are, I would go out in the woods and find the biggest bear there is in the woods and wrestle him to the ground." That's what the little fellow said to the big fellow. The big fellow said to the little fellow, "There are plenty of little bears out in the woods." Now that makes a lot of sense.

You see, God is not going to judge you by what somebody else does. He's going to judge you, or what somebody else could have done, but He's going to judge you according to your own ability.

In the Bible, Jesus told of people who came into the treasury to make an offering to the Lord. And the Bible says that Jesus watched what they put in the offering. Have you ever heard anybody say, "It's nobody else's business what I give?" Well, I want you to know very clearly it's His business what you give. He watched what they put in the offering. And Jesus said there was a woman who put one quarter of a cent, the widow's mite. Now here's what Jesus said about that woman, Jesus said, "That woman," listen now, "that woman



gave more than they all." Not more than any of them; more than all of them, more than all of them, one quarter of a cent. Why? Because she gave according to her ability. As a matter of fact, she gave everything. You can't give more than everything. That's all that she had. And she gave it to the Lord. And so, when she comes to the judgment seat of Christ, then she's going to be judged not according to what some millionaire could have done, but she's going to be judged according to what she did.

Remember reading in the Bible where Mary took an alabaster box of ointment, broke it, and anointed the head and feet of the Lord Jesus? And there were some who began to murmur against Mary. And remember what Jesus said about those people who murmured against her? Jesus said, "You leave her alone." And then He said this, "She hath done what she could." That's very interesting.

Look up here and let me ask you a question: is there anybody here who cannot do what you can? That's a trick question, so be careful. Not really a trick question. It's, it sounds like a silly question, but I want you to listen to it. Is there anybody here who cannot do what you can do? You say, "Of course not. If I can do it, I can do it." That's exactly right.

Now listen, God is not going to judge you according to what you can't do, but according to what you can do. And the great danger in life is not that you will fail to do what somebody else can do; the great danger in life is that you will fail to do what you can do. That's the danger in life.

And so, when you come to stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ, you're going to be judged according to attitude. You're going to be judged, my friend, according to authority. You're going to be judged according to ability.

I heard of some children who had a mother who was in the hospital. And there were three children, as I remember the story, in the family. And they were going to visit the mother in the hospital. The father had taken the children. And they had taken some flowers to their mother. And the other children had beautiful bouquets that they picked and arranged for the mother. And they had a little retarded girl, one of the family members. One of the three children was retarded, a sweet little girl, but she was retarded mentally.

And going up to the hospital, she noticed the other children had flowers and she didn't have any. And so there by the hospital door, she stopped and got a handful of weeds. To her they were pretty. And she carried those into the hospital. And when the other two children presented their flowers to the mother, this precious little girl, who was mentally retarded, took that handful of weeds and brought them and gave them to her mother.

Now I want to ask you mothers here a question. Did that mother appreciate that handful of weeds? You'd better believe she did. Her eyes brimmed with tears. She bought, brought that little girl to her bosom and said, "Thank you, my precious thing. Mother loves your gift so much," and hugged that little girl and held her to her bosom. Of course, she did. You see, that's what God appreciates. God looks on the heart. God judges us according to our ability.

Now let me tell you what else is going to determine whether or not what sort it is. Not only your attitude, your authority, your ability, but your **aspiration**. Not only what you did, but what you aspired to do, what you wanted to do.

You remember when David began to gather materials, remember reading about; you don't remember it, you weren't there. But you remember reading about when David wanted to gather materials, and did



gather materials, to build a temple for God. And God said to David, "David, you can't build the temple. You've been a bloody man, a man of war. Your son, Solomon, is going to build the temple." Now, at first, that brought some disappointment to David. But here's what God said to David in First Kings chapter 8 verses 17 and 18. God said to David, "And it was in the heart of David," now He's saying this through Solomon, "And it was in the heart of David, my father, to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And the Lord said unto David, my father, 'Whereas it was in thine heart to build a house unto My name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.'" Now that's very interesting. When the rewards come and David stands at the judgment seat of Christ, and Solomon is rewarded for building the temple, David will be rewarded also, though he did not build the temple. It was in his heart to build the temple.

Now, suppose two people come down here on Tuesday night in Evangelism Explosion, and they both go out seeking to win souls. One comes back having witnessed, and somebody has received Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior and Lord. Somebody else goes out to witness. Maybe they find nobody home, or maybe they witness and the person they witness to refuses Jesus. Do you think God is going to say to the person who witnessed and, and, no one received Christ, "O, you miserable failure. There's no reward for you?" Of course not. Because it was in their heart to win souls. Do you know the worst thing about many of us, ladies and gentlemen? It is not that we don't win souls; the worst thing about us is, we don't try, we don't try. We don't have the soul winner's heart. We don't have the aspiration.

God said that, "Now, David, you may not build the temple, but I know what your heart is. I know what your desire is." And God sees your desire, God sees your heart, and God says, "It was in your heart."

Five men went down to Ecuador to take the Gospel to the Auca Indians, and they were slain there on the beaches of Ecuador, speared to death by those savage Indians. They went to take the Gospel. Did they take the Gospel? No, they didn't get to preach to them. Did they fail? No! Is God going to say to you, "O, what miserable failures you were? You went to take the Gospel, and you didn't do it. You just died." No, it was in their heart, and God knows that.

Now here's the second thing I want you to notice. Not only is it going to be a time of revelation, but it's going to be **a time of reward**. Look, if you will, in verse 14, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." Now I don't know of anything that blows people out of the water more than to say that some are going to receive more reward in Heaven than others. People get their hackles up ag, against this. It's like God is unfair and God is not an equal opportunity employer or something like that. But the Bible makes it very clear and very plain that there are going to be degrees of reward in Heaven. You can go back up to verse 8 and get the same idea, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Now that's a long, neglected doctrine.

Some of us have preached grace so much that we think that it makes absolutely no difference how we live. We teach that a person comes down the aisle, gives his heart to Jesus Christ, gets baptized, and we think from there on everybody is going to meet the Lord on the same basis. But that is not true. Works never bring us Heaven, but works follow us to Heaven. The Bible teaches that very clearly and very plainly. And, frankly, I don't understand it all, but I will tell you this: that Heaven will not be the same for everyone. That is, the rewards in Heaven will be different anyway.

Revelation chapter 14 verse 13, listen to it, "And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, 'Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea,' saith the Spirit, 'that they may rest from



their labors; and their works do follow them.” Your works never bring you to Heaven, your works follow you to Heaven. Or put down this verse, Revelation chapter 22 and verse 12, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with me, to give to every man according to his works.”

Now works don’t save us, but we are rewarded according to our works. Jesus said clearly and plainly in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven.” That makes absolutely no sense whatsoever if everybody’s going to have the same. How does that make sense to lay up for yourself treasure in Heaven? No, some are going to have treasures that others do not have. Again, First Corinthians 3 verse 8, “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.”

Now, there are a lot of little obscure saints who do not get recognized down here on earth; they don’t get credit for their service for Jesus. While I’m preaching, there are people who are praying for me. There are people, little widows who pray and intercede. There are people who write letters to missionaries. Their names never appear in the church bulletin. Nobody knows about them. Nobody recognizes them. But God will recognize them.

Dr. Billy Graham is going to receive the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor. He’s the only clergyman, pastor, preacher rather, that’s ever received this honor. And he and Mrs. Graham will receive this honor together in the Rotunda there at the Capitol. And it took a joint act of Congress, Senate and, and the Congress to pass this. It had to be signed by the President and both houses. The Senate and the Congress will all be there to honor this wonderful man of God. The first person to receive the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor was George Washington. And only a handful of notables have done that. And I’m so grateful that Billy Graham will receive that honor. I’m grateful that I have the privilege of an invitation to go and to see that. And I, I, I think it’s going to be wonderful.

But I’m going to tell you something, folks. There’s something better than that. And there are some people that nobody knows their name. Billy Graham is a household name. But, you see, the Bible says, “Unto whom much is given, of the much, of the same much shall be required.” But I would not be surprised if, when we get to Heaven, there’s a long, long, long line of people in front of some of those who are well known, including the man who’s standing on this platform, who, nobody has ever heard of their names before, but God knows of them. And some preachers, some of the finest men of God, Brother Jamie, are in little crossroad churches out here somewhere. They are underpaid and they’re overworked and they love God. And God knows who they are. And God has their name. And, again, I want to tell you, folks, that Jesus spoke of that little widow who gave that quarter of a cent. Had Jesus not mentioned her, you would never have known of her. But Jesus mentioned her. But there are a lot of those like that that He knows about that you may not know about. It is a time of reward. Why, Jesus said, “You cannot even give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple and lose your reward.”

I think of those people in the nurseries. We think of that as the lowest form, some, some of us mistakenly do. We say, “Well, maybe you could just work in the nursery. You could change diapers and wipe little, runny noses and give drinks of water.” That may be one of the highest forms of service. And the Lord knows about those people, and He says, “When you receive one of these little ones, you have received Me.” And the Lord says, “When you give to one of these little ones a drink of water, you’ve done it as unto Me.” And there’s coming a time of reward.

Now, very frankly, I want a reward. I want a crown. And I’m not going to digress here and talk about all of



the crowns, but I want a crown because I want something to lay at Jesus' feet. And I want to hear my Lord say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And I hope you do also. I don't want to get the booby prize when I go to Heaven. I know I'm saved. But there's going to be a reward in Heaven.

And not only is it going to be a time of reward, but, finally, I want you to notice it's going to be **a time of regret**. Notice, if you will, also in verse 15, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." "As by fire" may be translated "through fire."

I mean, he is there. The torch comes. The searching eyes of God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, looks at my life and your life. And suppose it is not gold and silver and precious stones, things that have already been through the fire. That's the way those gems are formed; by fire. That's the way the gold is purified; by fire. It's already been through the fire. But now your life is wood, hay, and stubble. You're what the Bible calls a carnal Christian. You're a worldly person. Your life has not counted for the Lord.

Now you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and watch all that you've done go up in smoke. Does that mean that you're not saved? No. If you built upon the Lord Jesus Christ, you're saved. If you receive Christ as your personal Savior, not one sin will ever be brought up against you again. I'm not saying that you're going to have to answer for your sins at the judgment seat of Christ. One half of one sin would damn you to Hell forever. God's not going to judge you as a sinner, but He is going to reward you as a servant. Now you may not be able to figure that out, but I'm telling you, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss." How that loss will come; I don't know. But I'll tell you, it's going to be sad for some people in this building tonight who are saved by the grace of God. And you're going to find out that your life as a servant has been a colossal waste. And it will be a tragic, tragic, tragic loss.

I went to the deathbed of a man. I'll not call his name because he lived in this city. He was on the denominational payroll. He was a denominational worker. He was dying. I went in to see him. That man looked up to me and he said, "Pastor, I'm dying." And he said, "I'm not afraid to die." He said, "I am saved. My sin is under the blood. I am trusting Jesus." But he said, "Pastor, I'm going to tell you something. I am ashamed to die because I've not been a soul winner. I am not afraid to die. I'm just ashamed to die."

He did die, but he died, as the song says, Brother Jamie, "Must I go, and empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior so? Without one soul with which to greet Him, must I empty-handed go?" "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Saved, but singed. He gets into Heaven with his, the smell of smoke in his clothes. He just does make it. And the only reason that he makes it is this: that when the test of fire comes, the wood, hay, and stubble is gone, but the foundation is still there. And who is that foundation? The Lord Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Now here's my advice to you, listen carefully. If you are not saved tonight, you had better lay that foundation tonight. You had better receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and the foundation of your eternal life and destiny. When you do that, you become a part of the temple of God, the people of God. Your destiny is settled. You will go to Heaven.



Now, if you are saved, I want you to believe that every day that you live without abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ is a day that's lost for all eternity, for Jesus said, "Without Me ye can do nothing." The Bible says if your life is wood, hay, and stubble, it'll be burned. You'll suffer loss. Beginning tonight, beginning tomorrow, you say, "O Lord God, when You look at my life, may the attitude be there, may the authority be there, may the aspiration be there, and may I live for You with all of the ability that You've given me: my money, my talent, my time, my influence. Lord, let it count for You. And one day, Lord, when I meet You, O Lord, may You say to me, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

Bow your heads in prayer. Father, I pray that You will help us, each one of us, to so live, Lord, that when we come to face You not as sinners to have our sin judged, not as sons even to be chastised, but as servants; Lord, to have our work rewarded and approved or, perhaps, disapproved and burned. Lord, help us that we might, O God, have lived lives that are well pleasing to You.

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you're not certain that you're saved, would you like to be saved, would you? Would you like to know that you really do have life? Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life." Could I lead you in a prayer? We'll call this prayer the sinner's prayer. And you can pray and accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. You can do it right now. Would you pray this prayer? "Dear God, I know that You love me. Thank You for loving me. And I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. Jesus, I do trust You. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe you paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Come into my life. Take control of my life and begin today to make me the person You want me to be. And Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen."



PO Box 38300 | Memphis TN 38183-0300 | (901)382-7900