The Judgment Seat of Christ

2 Corinthians 5:9-13

3/20/11

Introduction:

**** We must live in light of our future evaluation by Christ at the Bema Seat Judgment!***

What is the Judgment Seat of Christ?

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

I. Is Made Possible by our <u>Future Resurrection</u> (v.9a; 5:1-8)

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

II. Is a Motivation for our <u>Daily Living – Now</u> (v.9b)

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

III. Is an Appearance with the Judge <u>None of us will Avoid</u> (v.10a)

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

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V. Is a Serious Time – <u>Not to be taken Lightly</u> (v.11a)

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VI. Is a Revelation or <u>Manifestation of the Real You</u> (v.11b-13)

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"Wherefore" - Paul now builds a practical application to the great resurrection emphasis in 5:1-8. In light of the fact that we will one day be present with the Lord (v. 8), we strive to work to please Him (v. 9).

"We labor" - We <u>strive</u> . . . "to be accepted of Him"; we make it our life's <u>ambition</u> and <u>goal</u> to do things for Christ that He would find acceptable.

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

II. Is a Motivation for our <u>Daily Living – Now</u> (v.9b)

"Present or absent" = at home with the Lord or on earth not yet at home with Him (v. 6 & 8). Whether in His presence or absent from His immediate presence on earth.

Paul's goal in life was the same. I live to please Him. I live to be acceptable to Him.

I this goal our goal?

Do we live each day with the conscience motivation to please Jesus Christ?

Because Paul was motivated by God's love for him, his one ambition in life was to live for Him (v. 14-15).

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

III. Is an Appearance with the Judge <u>None of us will Avoid</u> (v.10a)

"The Judgement Seat of Christ" - Judgement seat = bema seat.

It refers to an elevated chair on a platform from which official decisions were made and rewards were given.

One such bema seat was actually discovered at the ancient city of Corinth (IBD, :683-84; PIG 225-27; cp. Acts 18:12).

"Of Christ" - it is His judgment because He is God and He is judge.

Revelation 22:12
And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

"We must all appear" - the "we" in context includes all of those who like Paul will be "present with the Lord" (v. 8).

The bema seat judgment involves <u>only believers</u>.

The judgment for all non-believers of this age is described <u>not</u> as a bema seat but as the Great White Throne judgment (to occur 1,000 years after the bema seat judgment) (SEE Rev. 20:11-15).

By way of comparison, both judgments will be performed by <u>Jesus Christ</u> and will involve determinations based on one's <u>works</u>.

By way of contrast, the bema seat will determine rewards for believers whereas the Great White Throne will determine the degree of torment for non-believers.

The bema seat judgment involves <u>all</u> believers. None excluded; all included.

Every single believer from Abraham, David and Daniel to Peter, James and John. Everyone from Old Testament saints to New Testament saints (Pentecost to the Rapture).

Everyone who is part of the "First Resurrection" (Rev. 20:5-6).

"Appear" - to be seen; to be manifested or revealed (passive); not only will we be present there, but we will be clearly manifested there. Our lives will be revealed, brought out into full view. Our whole character will be made manifest (Plummer).

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

IV. Is a Determination of Eternal <u>Rewards Received or Forfeited</u> (v.10b)

"Receive" - *komizo* – a middle voice verb meaning to "get for oneself, to receive as recompense. The reflexive middle voice has the meaning, to receive back to one's self or to receive what is one's own. The Law of "sowing and reaping" will be finally and ultimately applied here.

"The things done in his body" - the things accomplished through (*dia*) the physical body.

Notice how <u>objective</u> God's judgment will be. The believer's reward is not based on God's subjective feelings nor is it based on the Christian's religious experience or what you planned to do for God. But it is based on the things you do by means of your body. Tangible, observable practical fruit will determine your future reward.

Salvation itself is a gift, but your rewards are earned; earned by what you do for Christ while you lived on earth.

"Things done" - What "things" can we do that will merit reward?

1) <u>Love</u> people, not merely in words, but in <u>deeds</u> and <u>truth</u> (1 Jn. 3:180

2) <u>Help</u> people in need. Every cup of water given in Christ's name will merit reward.

Mark 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

3) <u>Spread the Gospel</u> and <u>disciple</u> others (Mt. 28:19-20)

4) Sing a song or play an instrument for the Lord (Heb. 13:15)

"In His body" - The word "in" is the Greek preposition *dia* which usually means through or by means of.

The preposition describes the body as a channel <u>through which</u> God works. God works <u>in</u> us and <u>through</u> us to accomplish His will. Any "thing" we do that merits reward will be the result of God giving us the desire and ability to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

"Whether good or bad" - "good" – good as God measures goodness.

1) Was the work performed for the <u>right reason</u> (motive)

2) Was the work performed according to the <u>right rules</u> (God's Word) (did it line up with Scripture? EX; women pastors do not line up with Scripture – 1 Cor. 14; 1 Tim. 2)

3) Was the work performed by the <u>right power</u> (spirit or flesh)?

"Bad" - 2 words *kakon* T.R. – bad; *faulos* – worthless, good for nothing (like rotten fruit)

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

V. Is a Serious Time – <u>Not to be taken Lightly</u> (v.11a)

"Terror" = from *fobos* meaning fear. In includes the OldTestament idea of deep reverence and awe.

In this verse "the fear of the Lord" refers to the fear excited by the thought of standing before the judgment seat of Christ and having one's whole life exposed and estimated" (Plummer, cited by Rogers, p. 402).

"We persuade men" – Why did the fear of God's judgment motivate Paul?

--For <u>his sake</u>, he persuasively preached God's message of reconciliation (v. 19-21) (that he might be a faithful steward and rewarded accordingly)

--For <u>their sake</u>, he persuasively preached God's message of reconciliation that others might be saved and received rewards for faithful service.

The Judgment Seat of Christ…

VI. Is a Revelation or <u>Manifestation of the Real You</u> (v.11b-13)

"We are made manifest unto God " - God, says Paul, knew clearly the nature of his and his associate's faith. God could attest to the genuineness of Paul's salvation and sincere ministry.

Many would disregard Paul because of his lowly appearance and because of his weak speaking ability.

They carnally judged based upon what they saw. But God's bema seat judgment will involve heart evaluation.

Romans 2:16
In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

In his zeal for Christ, some of Paul's critics may have thought him to be "out of his mind" (cp. Acts 26:24).

But they thought the same thing of Jesus Christ! (Mk. 3:21).

God knows the heart and will judge accordingly.

Whether overly zealous or cool, calm and collected, Paul's motives in ministry was <u>God</u> and <u>others</u>.

See: 1 Corinthians 3:10-f

v.13

"Every man's work" - In context the "every man" refers to <u>believers</u> (and <u>all</u> believers; none excluded).

Believers who attempt to build on the foundation of Christ (v. 10) and who themselves will be *"saved"* (v. 15) will have their works evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Each Christian will be judged for his <u>own</u> works (don't worry about others; concern yourself with your own; you will answer for yourself).

***"Work"* =** In context, a positive deed done for Christ. All works built on Christ's foundation will be made evident.

"Every man's <u>work</u>" - Note: it is not people (believers) who go through the fire (not RCC Purgatory), but our <u>works</u> go through the fire.

It is our <u>works</u> not our sins that will be judged. Our sins were judged at Calvary (II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:1).

"Shall be made <u>manifest</u>" - to be brought out into the open so as to be seen for what it really is.

--The <u>secret</u> works will be made known (Ro. 2:16)
--The <u>motives</u> of "why" will be evident
--The <u>methods</u> of "how" will be evident

Just a <u>small box</u> full of gold, silver, and precious stones is worth more than a <u>barn</u> or <u>warehouse</u> full of wood, hay, or stubble!

Bigness (mass and bulk) does not necessarily mean goodness or precious value (cp. DeHaan).

When someone builds a house using only the cheapest of inferior materials, that house may look good at first glance, but it will:

1) Not stand the test of <u>close scrutiny</u> (an expert builder could look beneath the facade and determine its real worth)
2) Not stand the test of <u>time</u> (it will deteriorate rapidly)

"The day" - the article points to a day which is well known (Schlatter).

"The day shall declare it" - "The day" refers to the day of Christ's coming (1:8; cp. I Th. 5:4; Heb. 10:25). The Day of the Lord, when Jesus catches His Bride away.

When He returns, He will bring His rewards with Him (Rev. 22:12 - *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be")*.

"Revealed by fire" *(apocalupsis)* **-** Unveiled, uncovered, opened up to plain sight.

"By fire" - The refining fire of Jesus Christ [Particularly His all-searching, penetrating eyes (Heb. 4:13), which are like blazing fire (Rev. 1:14), will see right through to the true value (quality) and motives of the works we did for others.]

Just as hot fire purges the dross out of gold and the alloys out of silver and the sediment out of stone, so the fire of Christ's judgment will test or try every work we did for Him.

ILLUS: of a fire sweeping through a building and consuming everything combustible except valuable metals (Morris, p. 68).

"The fire shall try" - Test so as to prove genuineness. What is a "genuine" work?
--A work performed by His power (Holy Spirit)
--A work performed by His rules (Biblical standard)
--A work performed for His glory (right motives)

All works done by Christ's power (Jn. 15:4-5) and for Christ's glory (I Cor. 10:31) will be rewarded (whether: witnessing, discipling, teaching, preaching, ushering, cleaning, translating, babysitting, building, visiting, leading . . .all forms of serving).

"Of what sort" = of what kind of quality

God is not merely keeping records of what we did but how and why we did it.

--Gold, silver, precious stones =Products of a mighty supernatural creative act
--Wood, hay, stubble =Products of common natural growth and development
(DeHaan)

If you are not in the Word daily, you are no doubt building with the wrong materials. If you are not in prayer daily, you are no doubt building with the wrong power!

"What sort" - Quality examination. Why do we do what we do? What is our intention? Do we have interior motives (please self), exterior motives (please others), ulterior motives (get something). . . or "superior" motives (to please God)? (SEE: II Cor. 5:9-11a).

V. 14

ILLUS: How people don't build things to last.

"Abide" - To remain or survive the revealing fires. That which still exists after going through the fire will earn a reward.

"Built thereupon" - Only works built on the foundation of Christ will merit reward in Heaven.

--You may be involved in a lot of social programs, relief organizations, and humanitarian societies, etc., but your efforts will not be rewarded by God unless they were done for God's glory and His cause!

"A reward" - A reward for each and every "work" is promised (In this life, you may not get the recognition you deserve, but remember, nothing [not even a cup of cold water - Mk. 9:41] will go unnoticed by God.

ILLUS: of a old veteran missionary couple returning to America after many years serving God on the foreign field. As they left the ship, huge crowds were cheering, reporters were crowding around, etc. The couple soon learned that Teddy Roosevelt was also leaving the same ship. The woman sighed and complained of how there was no one there to welcome or cheer for them. Her husband replied, "Don't worry, dear, our recognition and reward come later-- when we reach Heaven's shore."

Rewards are often spoken of as crowns:

I Cor. 9:25 - *"Incorruptible crown"* - for striving lawfully

II Tim. 4:8 - *"Crown of righteousness"* - For those who love His appearing

Ja. 1:12 - *"Crown of life"* - for enduring testing out of love (cp. Rev. 2:10)

I Pet. 5:4 - *"Crown of glory"* - for the faithful pastor

Salvation is by grace alone, but rewards are based on our works.

Entrance into Heaven is not determined by our works, but the metals and honors we receive in Heaven are based on our works

Note: Even our works are the result of our allowing Christ to work through us (I Cor. 15:10 - *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.";* Phil. 2:13 - *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.")*

Our chief focus ought to be on laying up treasures in Heaven (Mt. 6:19-20 - *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.")*.

V. 15

Note, it is the believer's *"work"* which is burned up and not the believer.

"He shall suffer loss" - loss of reward throughout eternity.

It is never a pleasant feeling to *"suffer loss."*

II John 8 - *"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."*

"But he himself shall be saved" - Delivered by Christ from the fire. The same fire that tested our works could have tested our souls (if our souls were not justified by God's grace).

No believer can lose his salvation, but he can lose rewards.

"Yet so as by fire" - As one who escapes through the flames without being burned.

As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego endured the fiery furnace (Dan. 3), yet had just their ropes burned, so we will endure a fire that will only burn works performed by the flesh.

"The thought here is of a person who runs through flames without being burned, but who has the smell of smoke on him -- barely escaping!" (MacArthur, p. 85).

ILLUS: the explosion and fire at Chipper's Paint Warehouse, and Vernon's escape