

~Other Speakers G-L: Harry Ironside:

We are told in John 5:22 that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," so that in this sense every judgment throne is to be considered as the judgment-seat of Christ. As the resurrected Man, He has been appointed by God as the Judge of all (Acts 17:31). Both the living and the dead are to give an account to Him, and this includes all men, whether saved or unsaved (1 Pet. 4:5; Acts 10:42). But so far as condemnatory judgment is concerned, believers will never enter into this. For them all such judgment is already past (John 5:24). Yet, while this is blessedly true, because all our sins were dealt with in the cross of Christ, it is a solemn fact, nevertheless, that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

In our Authorized Version this expression is used twice. In Romans 14:10 we are warned against judging one another now. We read: "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." Some manuscripts here read "God" in place of "Christ," and in verse 12 we are told, "So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." But Christ is God, so the thought is the same whichever word is used. And in 2 Corinthians 5 the apostle tells us how he has sought to live his life and maintain his testimony in view of this fact. He says in verses 9 and 10, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. 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." It was his ambition so to behave himself that he might give an account with joy at that great tribunal.

It is plain from Scripture that there is a vast difference between the judgment seat of Christ and the judgment of the great white throne, where the wicked dead are to answer for their sins and be judged according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15). The first takes place at our Lord's return prior to the glorious kingdom age, the latter at the end of time. He says in Rev. 22:12, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." And in 1 Corinthians 4:5 we read, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." Our blessed Lord is as a nobleman who has gone into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return. During His absence His servants are to be occupied in His interests. They are to use what He has committed to them for His glory. When He returns they will give an account to Him of their service.

It is well to remember that believers will be in their glorified bodies when they give this account. It will be after the resurrection of the sleeping saints and the rapture of those still in the body that we shall be manifested before our blessed Lord, either to receive His approval or to learn that we must suffer loss because of unworthy behavior. In 1 Corinthians 3 we have the outstanding scripture which deals with this judgment. A careful reading of verses 11 to 15 will make clear just what it is that will be brought to light in that day:

"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: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try 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,"

Observe, this has to do only with those who are building upon the one foundation, our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore they are already saved people. They have been regenerated and added to the Lord, and to Him they are to give an account in the day of Christ. It is every man's work that is to be made manifest; that work may consist in building gold, silver and precious stones upon the sure foundation, or, on the other hand, wood, hay, stubble. The searching flame of God's infinite holiness will try every man's work of what sort it is. It does not say, "of how much it is." It is the character of the work rather than the amount of it that is in question. The gold, silver and precious stones speak of that which is estimable, which is in accordance with the Word of God and for which there will be a reward. The wood, hay, and stubble speak of that which is either utterly worthless or of transient value, and will all be consumed in the judgment fire of that day. Whatever is according to the flesh will be destroyed; for that there can be no reward. Instead, we shall have to suffer loss. Everything that is of the Spirit and therefore in accordance with God's Holy Word, will abide, and for that we shall be rewarded.

These are serious considerations which ought to be borne in mind by everyone seeking in any way to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Unquestionably there is much work that is done professedly in His name, but is contrary to His Word, which perhaps attracts a great deal of attention and receives the applause of unspiritual people, who are not able to discern what is really of God and what is simply of man. All of this will be burned up at the

judgment seat of Christ. What a lot of so-called church-work the fires of that day will consume. Much which we have taken for granted as being in accordance with the mind of God will then prove to be simply the product of ecclesiastical machinery, and much of it without a passage of Holy Scripture behind it. When we stand before that august bema of Christ, everything will be brought to light. All the self-seeking, all the carnal egotism, all the fleshly energy, all the self-confidence that so often is back of our ministry will be made manifest, and all of this will go for nothing when our blessed Lord is looking for that which He can reward.

On the other hand, much that is looked upon with contempt by high-minded and heady brethren will then be seen in its true character, and of many a hidden saint, who has been passed by as insignificant and doing nothing of any real moment, the Lord will say, as He said of Mary of Bethany so long ago, "She hath done what she could." He will discern gold, silver and precious stones in the lowly but faithful service of "them that are quiet in the land" (Ps. 35:20), who have been content to be passed by and ignored here on earth, but whose one earnest desire has been to have His approval.

"He is coming! Oh, how solemn
When the Judge's voice is heard,
And in His own light He shows us
Every thought and act and word.

Deeds of merit, as we thought them,
He will show us were but sin;
Little acts we had forgotten
He will tell us were for Him."

God loves reality. "The proud he knoweth afar off." He dwells in the heart of the humble and it is the meek of the earth who glorify Him, whereas the haughty and self-sufficient dishonor His name.

Nevertheless He will find in every believer something to approve, for we are told, "Then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). But even though all one's work should be burned up, the Spirit of God tells us the believer himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. But who that knows the saving grace of God and appreciates the love of Christ would wish thus to stand before Him? It is for Him we should labor. His glory should ever be before us, and then when we receive our rewards at His hand, it will be because of the delight which He Himself has found in our service...