

# The Judgment Seat of Christ pt 1

By Jeff Noblit

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**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

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## **Anchored in Truth Ministries**

1915 Avalon Ave.

Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

**Website:** [www.anchoredintruth.org](http://www.anchoredintruth.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth](http://www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth)

We're going to talk about the judgment seat of Christ. I asked the Lord to show me what I could preach getting us ready for the fall outreach and I think he's done that and this is the final message before next Sunday's message. I have already been working on Acts 2:40, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Guys, I'm getting a lot up here. Real loud. Echo back right in my face.

So I'll deal with that next Sunday morning, Lord willing, and then...fall outreach work is a tough week to study but I'm going to try to get Luke ready and we'll jump back in our exposition of Luke, Lord willing, the Sunday after fall outreach.

The judgment seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5 and then in just a moment we're going to look at 1 Corinthians 3, alright? 2 Corinthians 2, beginning in verse 1, let's go down through verse 10. Paul writes to the church at Corinth and says,

1 For we know that if the earthly tent [he's talking about our bodies] this earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this present house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. 6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight - 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, [now here it is] whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Now, 1 Corinthians 3. Turn over there with me. 1 Corinthians 3, an exhortation primarily to pastors but it certainly has application to all because you will be held accountable, not

to the level pastors will but you will be held accountable did you co-labor faithfully with your pastors in Christ's work of building his church. 1 Corinthians 3:9,

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Back in our beginning text in 2 Corinthians 5, the apostle begins talking about the fact that we are in this earthly tent. This temporal housing that we are in. This is not our permanent home. This is not our permanent dwelling place. When the Jews wandered around in the wilderness, they dwelt in sanctuaries or tents, tabernacles they would be called. Just a temporary dwelling houses. Why? Because they knew they were not yet home. They had a promised homeland but for that journeying for those many years they stayed in tents because they were not home yet. Well, the apostle takes that concept, applies it to all of us who are believers in Jesus Christ during this present earthly pilgrimage, we are just dwelling in temporal tents. We're not home yet. But he says Christ is going to bring all of his children before him and call us to account for what we accomplished for him while we were all on this temporal pilgrimage and that's called, the Bible uses the phrase, the judgment seat of Christ, that accounting.

Now, this is radically different and opposite of the great white throne judgment. Two falls ago and last fall, the fall before that when I came back from my break, I preached on end time events and I spent some lengthy time preaching on the great white throne judgment which is totally different from the judgment seat of Christ. The great white throne judgment is where non-Christians, unbelievers, will be summoned before God to hear the final verdict of their eternal doom. We will not be there. Christians will not appear at the great white throne, but we will appear where this text is talking about. We will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, let's note some things about this setting. First of all, notice there is an imperative summons. I. The imperative summons. In other words, it's not going to be an option. You're not going to miss this judgment seat. Romans 14:10 says, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God." Now, that phrase may be broader than just the judgment seat of Christ, that phrase may include the great white throne, but what I want you to note is the imperative, "We shall all." Hebrews 9:27, "For it is appointed for men

to die once and after this comes judgment." Once again, it's maybe broader than the text we're looking at but the imperative spirit is still there. We must appear.

Now, 1 Peter 4:17, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God." Now, note the certainty of that and I believe that's happening right now in our day and in our culture, God is judging the professing church. He's making it clearer and clearer every day who are my true children and where are my true churches versus my false children or those who are false professors and those who make up what might be called, John MacArthur uses the phrase, I didn't coin it and he's very trustworthy I think, non-churches. They claim to be God's but they have so veered from sound doctrine and sound biblical practice in church life, he said, you can't call them churches. Not to say some individuals in that group might be true Christians but as a whole, it's a nonchurch. And I believe that kind of judgment, that kind of sifting and separating and clarifying is going on.

But note this is an imperative summons. Notice also that it's widely inclusive. What I mean by that is it includes every single Christian. Every single believer in Jesus Christ – now listen – will appear at the judgment seat of Christ. I would be radically derelict and accountable in my duties if I did not caution you and lead to develop the kind of ministry so that if you are active and faithful in the ministry here, you could appear faithful and found faithful at the judgment seat of Christ. That's why the Bible says pastors have a higher level of accountability in judgment because what we do and what we establish effects whether or not your work is fruitful for God. I mean, there are some people who could spend their whole lives devoted to a congregation and then be so weak and so anemic and so shallow they did very little for God's true church and God's true kingdom, though they worked so diligently. So there is the wasting of the pastor's leadership and the wasting of those dear saints who labor in those kinds of settings. So it's very, very important that we know that we know that we are laboring, never in a perfect environment because that's impossible, but in a true church so that the true Gospel, God's true ministry and God's true glory, is being advanced in the earth. That's what you and I are going to be held accountable for. Every single one of us. We must 2 Corinthians 5:10, we must, that's imperative, all, that's the inevitable nature of every single one of us.

Now, this is like a serious family meeting. Has your dad ever called a serious family meeting? I mean, everybody has to be there. There are no exceptions to that. That's what this is. We're having a family meeting. Everyone must be there. I'm going to tell you, every pastor will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ, if he's converted, those pastors who are true. False teachers won't be there. They'll be at the great white throne and they are doomed. But every pastor, every deacon, every businessman, every laborer, every farmer, every homemaker, every little boy and every little girl, every teenager, every senior citizen, every white person, black person, red person, and yellow person. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

When you do appear, you'll not appear as a group. Individually you'll stand before God on that day. It's an individual summons, also. He says in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "so that each one." Each one, "may be recompensed for his deeds done in the body." You know, it's

been a response we've heard from the very first time we tried to reach out to anyone and encourage them to come and join our small groups or visit a worship service or maybe a fall outreach service, "Well, I'll tell you what, I don't go to church but I don't want to be like all those hypocrites down at the church." Well, you need to understand something: there is never going to be a perfect church to join but when you stand at the judgment seat of Christ, you will not stand beside all those hypocrites down at the church. And can I let you in on something: a lot of those hypocrites at the church will be at the great white throne judgment anyway. They are not true believers.

The point is: you alone will stand at the judgment seat of Christ as a professed follower of Jesus as Lord and give an account for what you accomplished for his work while you were on this temporary pilgrimage in these tents, these earthly bodies. Now, later on we're going to get an eternal body that lasts forever and we'll never sin once we get cleaned up and get in heaven and glorified but we will give an account. Romans 14:12, "So then each one," notice every single person, "each one of us will give an account of himself to God."

When I was a teenaged boy, I was driving through a neighborhood and a fire truck came by real fast and I looked down the hill, it might have been 2 tenths of a mile away and there was smoke coming up and it looked like it was coming up out of the house of a friend of mine so I turned behind the fire truck, went about halfway from where I saw the truck to where I saw the smoke and stopped and got out and walked down the street. When I got back, there was a police car sitting behind my car and he wrote me a ticket because it's against the law to follow a fire truck. Now, I don't know, that used to be a big deal when I was young. Was that a big deal around your place when you grew up? Whatever you do, you don't follow fire trucks. I mean, maybe it's just my house, my family, I don't know.

I knew that rule and I thought I stopped far enough away but technically I was guilty and I remember going before the judge and I had a family member standing with me and he let me off and he said, "You had better not ever come in this courtroom again," and I've never been back. I've never been there back. But I remember how it felt so good to have a family member standing with me who, by the way, personally knew the judge. That helps a lot. Look, it's not going to be that way on this day. You will appear – now listen to me – stark naked alone. Not unclothed in a clothing sense. Stark naked alone before God. All cosmetics gone. All covering gone. All camouflaging gone. What you are, you will stand alone at the judgment seat of Christ. Did you serve God in your church with a true desire for the good of the church and the glory of God? Or were you one of those who just used the church for your ministry? It will be shown on that day. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, what a stirring and penetrating statement that must have been to the church at Corinth because so many of them, Paul just blatantly and outright, he pulled no punches with these folks. He just told them, "You are full of pride and you are full of flesh and you're trying to use the church to your own advantage and your own glory. You're not in

it for God's glory." So this must have been a penetrating and shocking thing for the Corinthians and I'm sure that's one of the reasons why he taught it this way.

Well, notice not only is this an imperative summons, notice and I've already bled over into that some because I got excited about it, it's a revealing session. It's a revealing session. Stuff is going to be revealed. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, he says, "For we must all appear." The idea of "appear" there is to be made manifest. You are going to be made manifest. This is the same kind of wording the Bible uses when it talks about Jesus returning and it talks about he will be revealed. It's where we got the word revelation for the last book of the Bible. It means finally, finally, finally, after all the false, after all the ungodly, after all the parading hypocrisy in his name, finally all will be stripped away and the true Lord God Christ will be unveiled and appear as he truly is and those who are truly his will be shown to be truly his. And all the false, and all the arrogant, and all the deceivers and the twisters and the spinners and those who would take God's truth and put a twist on it to serve their fleshly desires, all that is going to be exposed and banished away. There will be an appearing of the unveiled Christ.

In the same way, we have an appearance we're going to make at the judgment seat of Christ and, as I said earlier, all will be peeled away that we might try to put on. Is it not true, my Christian friend and brother and sister in Christ, that the only thing that will matter on that day – now listen to me – is what he did through you, not what you did for him. What he did through you. Everything you did for him is going to disappear but what he did through you will remain and last forever. The Bible says just a few things to give you the encompassing of the all-encompassing aspect of this, 2 Corinthians 5:10 talks about how we will answer for every deed that we have done. 2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us to take every thought captive. Our thinking will be examined. Matthew 12:36 says every careless word will be called into account. Romans 2:16 says the secrets of men's hearts will be exposed and judged.

What a powerful picture that is but is it not refreshing though, folks, to think that the day is coming when an absolute righteous one will finally bring judgment to bear? Nothing but what's really right will stand when he gets done. A whole lot of stuff may go on today. We have a climate in our country where you can appoint federal judges and they will reinvent law. They will write their own law by their judicial decisions and it's not a true interpretation of the Constitution. We live in that kind of context but I'm telling you a day is coming when the God of the universe in the person of Jesus Christ, the one who wrote the law, will judge everything and every man according to the true contents of his life and heart. It's going to be a revealing session.

Let's amplify this from 1 Corinthians 3. That's our other text. Turn over there, if you will. 1 Corinthians 3 and we'll look at that for a moment. 1 Corinthians 3, let's look at verse 9 again. Paul is writing to this church and he's talking again about pastors primarily but there is application for all because you are held accountable to co-labor with your pastors in preaching the Gospel, winning lost souls and building God's church for God's glory. It's a community work. Then he says in verse 9, "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me,

like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it." So he says, "I was the church planting pastor in Corinth and I started the church there." Other pastors and actually at this point, there have been no pastors appointed by Paul or his associates so actually these are lay leaders who are just good teachers, just good leaders in the church and they are helping continuing in the work on and Paul says, "That's good. That's the way it ought to happen. That's the way it ought to be going." But, the last part of verse 10, "Let each man be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Folks, that's what we've got to constantly strive to be about at Grace Life Church and that is this: if Christ and his Gospel does not change men and build his church, then we will fail. We're not going to build this on any other foundation. "Yeah, but Brother Jeff, we've heard if you'll do this, this and this. Yeah, we've heard about a church and they are doing this, this and this." Yeah, call me in year 10. Call me in year 17. Call me in year 24 because I've been here 35 years. I've seen the long-term effects of all the other foundations that look good for a season. There is no other foundation in the universe for God's work to be done, God's way to build God's people for God's glory than Jesus Christ. Not Jesus plus our cleverness but Jesus Christ. So Paul says, "be careful," and I think the word "careful" is there because you and I are all alike tempted to tamper with the foundation a little bit from time to time so it's good for all of us, starting with Jeff Noblit, to continue to remind ourselves, make sure it's Jesus and his true Gospel.

Then he says in verse 12, "Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it." It's going to be exposed and revealed. Now, let's talk about those metaphors. He says the good work. If you are laboring with your pastors and building a good solid church that is God's work for this time period in God's economy, if it's a good solid work, it's like gold, silver, precious stones. If you are participating in a work with a weak pastor and a weak ministry or you're just doing your own thing and not really honoring a good pastor and his good ministry, then you're likely building with wood, hay and straw.

Now, let's think about those a little bit. Gold, silver, precious stones. These things are the creative work of God. Man can't just go out and make gold or make precious stones. He can't grow it, cultivate it. It's just God's work. That pictures the new birth. You see, everything about a person being born-again, coming to faith in Christ and being added to the church is God's work. We don't do that. We can't do that. God has to do that.

Now, wood, hay and straw, you have to plant it. You have to spray herbicides on it. You have to put fertilizer on it. You have to pray for water or artificially water it. You have to cut it. You have to dry it. You have to sort it and bundle it and store it for it to be any good and that pictures the old nature. That's men doing religious stuff and giving people religious hoop jumps and the different things to "build God's work." By the way, it can have very good impressive outward results but there is no inward truth in it. Wood, hay and straw, that's what the old nature, the old fallen man can perform and do.

As a matter of fact, keep your Bible ribbon in 1 Corinthians 3 and go with me, if you would, over to Galatians 5. Would you do that? Galatians 5 and let's look at the difference between God doing the work by his power through us and we doing it in our own power and in our own way. Galatians 5:19 says, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Now, why is Paul having to list all of this stuff and then warn them, "When you see those things starting to come out of a group or ministry, when you see those things and they are fairly common in people's lives who claim to be a part of a real work, a real ministry, you can know that's not God's work."

You see, we can do all this stuff without God and that's why I keep telling you over and over again, "Pastor, how do we know if somebody is saved? This lady looks like she sacrifices, she gives, she's devoted?" I say, "T-i-m-e. Over time, the truth will come out about it because, you see, God's work has no expiration date on it." Are you with me? God's work of building and saving his own people, building his own church, started in eternity past and it will last through to eternity future. But imposters and false professors, they are made up of their own strength and own energy and it's a corrupt strength and a corrupt energy so if you watch it long enough, you'll start getting hints of, verse 19, immorality, impurity, sensuality. You'll start getting hints of idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I'm concerned about some of the new ministry methods that include drinking alcoholic beverages in order to reach people. Paul said, "Those kinds of carousing and things like that are not the way God does his work." Now, good brothers and sisters can fall into things and get back out of it but these are the deeds of the flesh. That's wood, hay and straw and Paul says some people who have some of these things showing up in their lives claim to be good servants of God but he says, they're on the wrong track.

But, look at verse 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit," what God's Spirit can enable to come out of you which is contrary to what you naturally are but now you supernaturally are these things, verse 22, Galatians 5, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." So you see a real contrast between what man can do and what God does through a man.

Now, there's a real difference in the materials, back to 1 Corinthians 3:9-17 as he talks about gold, silver, precious stones, build upon that. Paul said, "I started with that, now you keep building on that." Have you ever noticed that \$1 million in precious stone, I mean, you could put \$1 million of precious stones in your pocket and nobody would ever see it. Yet a barn full of straw is not worth the money to move it. Precious stones, they're not big, bulky or massive but a large load of hay is worth less than even the smallest diamond. And we're just prone that way, we're just prone to wood, hay and straw. We're prone to big stuff that has no real value in it in God's eyes. We tend to appraise things by

their bigness and their mass. M. R. DeHaan in his excellent book said, "We tend to see the crowds and the numbers and the number of 'converts,' but God sees the little gold of that precious shut in, isolated from the world, almost forgotten, who carries on the all important ministry of prayer and intercession which is the secret of the massive results." Gold, silver and precious stone are found in palaces, wood, hay and straw are found in mud huts. He said when you're doing God's work, if you want to do well at the judgment seat of Christ, you make sure you're working with a church that's really into gold, silver and precious stone. Not just showy big stuff that's very often just wood, hay and straw.

A couple of thoughts here and I won't go much further and I'll finish this tonight but a couple of thoughts here. First of all, we need to make sure that we are about gold, silver and precious stones in the doctrines that we hold to. You and I live in a day where the going fad is atheological, I mean, they just basically couldn't tell you what they believe. It's just kind of a general, mushy, broad thing that they believe in. Again, I was listening to a Christian radio station and we've been screaming this from the house tops for 30 years but finally a "mainline" denominational Baptist pastor said with that he was seeing as awful what has happened in Baptist and evangelical churches when there is such a very, very little emphasis on true Bible doctrine anymore. This is old news to us but how is it that our forefathers, our Baptist forefathers would rather be martyred than give up Bible doctrine and we can't get Baptists today just to barely even speak out loud that they believe in sound doctrine. It's amazing.

Gold, silver and precious stone because – listen to me now, are you listening? On that day, every pastor's teaching which is what the word doctrine means, every pastor's teaching will be made manifest. It's going to be exposed. It's going to be revealed on that day. Now, you listen to me: if you stood with it, paid for and supported it, you will be held accountable also. Be careful. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you today, I would tell you today, you say, "Pastor, this is a little harsh." Well, sometimes we need a little harsh. If you have anything in your home by Joel Osteen, burn it. Save God the trouble. The garbage rot that is out there today in the name of Christ that's a million miles from sound doctrine. I know people love it. I know they throng to it. I know they think it's wonderful. They love you to make them comfortable in their sin. Satan thrills at that because he can take them all the way into hell happy. It's wood, hay and straw. It looks great but do you know what you'll find out? Now, you listen to your pastor: do you know why I read books that are 300 and 400 years old? Because those men were under the oppression of the state churches of Europe and they had to know if they were going to die, it was for sound Bible doctrine. So there was just an anointing on those men to exegete the Scripture because their lives depended on it. They were not going to die for a joke or a fairytale or a dynamic personality. They had to know, "If they're going to kill me, I've got to know I'm basing my life on the truths of the word of God." And they did by the thousands and thousands and thousands.

As I've told you, I've been doing a little genealogical stuff lately and there were 3 Nobilit brothers who were Frenchmen, members of nobility. That's all the genealogists tell us. And they were converted to the doctrines of grace under the ministry of John Calvin and had to flee France, Roman Catholic France, and came to America and one of the 3



brothers journeyed down the East Coast to South Carolina and later became the bunch that became over this way which I am connected to. You think about that, why would men of nobility leave their country? Oh, this wasn't getting on a Boeing 747. Get on a boat. So did so many, practically all of your forefathers and somewhere connected to the same heritage. Because they heard the Bible preached and they said, "That's gold, silver and precious stones. That's worth giving my life for." And if it wasn't for our forefathers like that, there would be no greatness of this country and we've just about lost it.

Our doctrine must be sound Bible doctrine. Now, you've got to understand something: while we do have an increasing number of so-called conservative Bible believing denominations who are beginning to openly embrace out and out rank evil, that is happening. It's just astonishing in my lifetime the change in what men will out front, square shouldered pronounce as good and God calls it evil. But there is still usually a very, very subtle and insidious work going on to just twist and turn and twist and turn and massage and shape and generation after generation after generation keeps twisting more and twisting more and pretty soon many, many churches that our forefathers died to establish in sound doctrine become folks who are just playing games and there is not hardly any gold, silver and precious stones in their doctrine or in their practice. It's just wood, hay and straw. And that day is going to expose it and going to show it.

In this day, in the day the Apostle Paul is writing to the church at Corinth, it's funny how nothing changes in 2,000 years. Do you know what he was fighting? You know why when Paul finished his ministry he said, "I fought the good fight"? Do you know why he's saying that? Because he was a pastor. He said, "All I do is fight." He said, "I'll go to Corinth and about halfway get them straightened out and then I'll venture over to Ephesus and Rome and maybe Philippi and it's not 3 months later and they're back in a mess and I have to go there and fight again to get them back to the truth." Brothers, do you realize that it is a fight to keep a church anchored in truth? It's a fight.

Now, you're quite easy but God has given you a maturity that is rare and it would be proud, false humility if you didn't admit that. You have a maturity that is rare. You stand, you turn on Joel Osteen and it's like the circus hour to you. You're not tempted by that stuff. You get it but most churches don't and it's a fight because you continue, like Paul had 2 major areas. He would get a church planted on gold, silver and precious stones, he would go away and come back, now ladies, don't get upset with me, often ladies in the church because he addresses this in other epistles, would have learned some new thing and they would bring that teaching in and what they were actually doing was they were either bringing in Judaistic legalisms or Greek Roman human philosophies and kind of dressing it up with the Gospel so they would be really smart and effective. Paul would come back and say, "Get that wood, hay and straw out of my gold, silver and precious stones. Get that stuff out of here." And he'd fight again to get the church back pure. Now, all of this, again, is in the context of that God is going to reveal what is truly his gold, silver and precious stones in his working of winning souls and building his church and what is truly just wood, hay and straw.

Look at verse 13. We're going to close for this morning. I have no idea because I didn't bring my watch and I can't preach over because the elders, they time me every week and I'll be in trouble if they call me to account. But I did bring my calendar, so we're in good shape. Verse 13, "Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test," I like the New American Standard's wording, "will test the quality," or of what type, what sort, "of each man's work." Listen, God's work of building his church began with God's Son dying for that church and paying the redemption price on the cross and he has strict building codes in how he wants this thing done. He's got strict building codes.

We were going to do some work out here on the road. The city has a drain out here in our access and we thought we could just kind of do this or that and we contacted the city engineers and strict, I mean, they had a certain way. By the way, they did it, it was the right way and it works well. It's smooth. It's not bumpy. I mean, they have strict codes and they ought to have strict codes but I'm going to tell you, God's got strict codes for the way he wants his church work done.

You men need to be men. You need to lead your families to solid stuff. There may be seasons when some of the kids don't like it. They're not happy about it. I'm going to tell you, those men who are not manly in their spiritual leadership and end up going to churches because it's the church where their kids have fun, are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? Why don't you grow up and be a man? I know the spirit of the day is to be an effeminate, whiny sissy. We need men in the church of God. Always sweet and caring to their wives and daughters. Always compassionate in understanding, but when it comes to God's truth, you've got a backbone like a saw log and you say, "We're going to go where God's truth is preached and Sally may not be happy about it right now and Tommy may not be happy about it right now, but if we'll be real and humble before them, one day God's Spirit will apprehend their hearts and they'll go to their graves praising God for true spiritual dads and moms."

What's more, dad, you've got to understand something: you're the pastor of your household but you don't pastor on your own, you pastor under the church's pastors. And you won't do well at the judgment seat of Christ if you don't make sure your family is anchored in a place where they are genuinely striving, regardless of the cost, to build that ministry on gold, silver and precious stones, not flashy, fluffy, temporal, empty, wood, hay and straw.

Now, here's my final appeal. Listen and we'll go home. I am 100% convinced, 100% convinced if you'll support the leadership of this church to do the things we are calling you to do: be faithful in small group ministry, support the preaching of the word of God and let's do all we can to plant sound churches around the world for God's glory. If you'll support that, I am confident you'll stand at the judgment seat of Christ and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Now listen to me: I love the Gideons. We give money to the Gideons. I thank God for the Gideons but that, at best, is second place. I don't have one verse of Scripture that tells me an organized group of men or women doing ministry out there somewhere will get a good review at the judgment seat of Christ. I do think they

will but I don't have any scriptural basis, but I have a boatload of Scripture to tell you if you'll give your life to a solid church for the glory of God, God says, "That's the centerpiece of my work," and you can hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Now, we've got, here's our chief of police down here. We've got good Christian organizations in law enforcement. Thank God for that. We've got fellowship of Christian athletes and Campus Crusade for Christ. Thank God for that. Amen? We've got businessmen who have built their businesses with a godly Christian church. Hallelujah. But that's secondary and it should result in helping folks get converted and get in churches that are sound. You see, the centerpiece of God's work is God's local church and I can guarantee, I can't say that on many things but I can guarantee you, if you'll give your best effort. Now look, you've watched my life. You've got to raise kids. Take them to ball games. There's stuff and you've got to be careful with some of this. We had limits and you have to too but God knows that's the real world. I'm not saying you don't do those things, but the centerpiece of your heart and energy should also always be, "I'm a local church centered Christian," because that's the centerpiece of God's work.

Now, there are a few seasons, not that many actually, where the church says, "This is a season we are especially focusing on sharing the Gospel with the lost." Now, we do that every week, amen? But there are some special seasons where we say we're going to pray a little harder, we're going to put a little more energy, we're going to work a little harder to try to get the Gospel to the lost this season compared to the average season and that's what we're coming up upon. So I want to challenge you afresh this Sunday morning, give our efforts to see souls saved this next week your best energies.

Now, God knows if you're providentially hindered. God knows if you can't come one night. But you know too if it's really providential hindrance or if you're just laying out. I'm just telling you. Are you listening to me? It hasn't been easy to get this church to gold, silver and precious stones. It has not been easy and most of you were there on the journey and I thank God for you. But I don't want to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and neglect a ministry that is trying to do things the way we are trying to do them and the way we're trying to do them. You want it to be on your record, "As best I could, I gave it my best to support God's church and God's work for God's glory."

So let me leave you with that challenge because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be recompensed according to the deeds we did while in this temporal body for the body of Christ. Now, certainly I'll close after this, there is good we ought to be doing in our communities, in our world, dozens of other things, but again, for the child of God that's always secondary because our primary responsibility in ministry is in God's church. Aren't you glad God did that? I used to almost get paranoid about all the ministry needs in the world and that maybe I was neglecting things and missing things and I'm sure I was. But then when I learned and grew to understand the centrality of God's word because his church is like, "Wow, praise God. I get it now. That's doable." Amen? That's doable. I can say no to even good things as far as ministries out in the world but I will never say no to God's main thing, the work of God's local church because I want to please

him and honor him and glorify him and I do want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."