

## The Judgment Seat of Christ pt 2

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

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2 Corinthians 5. Let's turn there, would you, and we'll finish this up and finish early and have our prayer time together. 2 Corinthians 5 as Paul is writing to the church at Corinth and he talks about the judgment seat of Christ, that's different from the great white throne again. That's not the place, the great white throne is not the place where Christians will appear. We're not going to appear as to whether or not we go to heaven or hell but there is a serious family meeting that we're going to have and each one of us alone will give an account and be recompensed for the deeds we've done in the body whether they're good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 1,

1 For we know that if the earthly tent [that's these present bodies] 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 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, 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 right quick. Turn back that way. 1 Corinthians 3, beginning in verse 9, Paul writing here primarily to pastors but there is application for all of us here and he says,

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.

We're talking about the judgment seat of Christ and, first of all, that there is an imperative summons. He says that we must all appear and that's back to 2 Corinthians 5. We must. If God says you must, then you must. Then he says we must all appear. It's inclusive of every single believer. Every single believer will appear there at the judgment seat of Christ. Then he says so that each one will be recompensed. So there will be an accounting of each one of us. So we see there is an imperative nature to this family meeting that's coming up for every single professing child of God. Well, not only is it an imperative summons, secondly, we see that it's a revealing session. He says we will be appearing there in verse 10, we will be appearing there and being made manifest before God.

Then we jumped over to our last text, 1 Corinthians 3 and we started to see how God is going to reveal whether or not we labored for God with gold, silver, precious stones which would mean basically that we walked in the Spirit and functioned according to God's truth in what we did for him on this earth. I think that's very interesting because Paul is writing in contrast to really expose and refute so many things that were going on in the name of Christianity that were not good things. They were not sound. They were not gold, silver and precious stone, they were Christian ministries and Christian teachings, now I'm saying that figuratively or just by way of illustration or argument. Christian ministries, again, that were of really wood, hay and straw and had not true value or lasting quality to it whatsoever. And there's a day coming when God will make evident what the truth really is. And we saw that there's a great, great difference between gold, silver and precious stone and wood, hay and straw.

As a matter of fact, in 1 Corinthians 3 he really points out there are three types of builders. Now note this, first of all, in verse 14 there is the valuable builder. "If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward." So he says, "In Christian ministry, if your ministry is truly of God and truly God blessed and God empowered, then it's gold, silver and precious stones and then at that judgment seat evaluation, it will be made shown to be that you were a valuable worker in God's work."

Friend, do you understand that there are folks who have spent 70, 80, 90 years of life and most of their life devoted to some kind of what they felt like was Christian ministry and they will get at the judgment seat of Christ and have been not useful but worthless in their

work for God? He points that out because the second kind of worker, there's the valuable worker we just read about in verse 14, then there's the useless worker, verse 15. This is 1 Corinthians 3, "If any man's work is burned up," that means it was wood, hay and straw, "he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." That's a challenging verse to me that there's actually some people who will spend their whole lives in whatever labor and pursuits they're about, their soul was genuinely saved but they'll have no true works to even present to God or have to be rewarded before him one day in heaven.

It's just an astonishing thing to think about and I really believe that that's going to be primarily due to the fact that they were under such weak or false teaching all their lives. You and I all know some dear saints of God. Some of them are your moms or your grandmoms or granddaddies or whoever, that you feel like really loved God but they were in an environment of such carnal or weak preaching and teaching they probably were not able to invest themselves in the kind of gold, silver and precious stones ministry that they could have been had they had quality leading and discipleship. Maybe that's what this is talking about. They're saved but there is no lasting value to what they did for God and it's going to be made evident on this day.

Then there's a third type which is actually not a builder at all. This third type is not a valuable worker or a useless worker but actually a destroyer. Paul throws this in at the end of the text in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 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." Now, this would be the out and out willful denier of Christ who's working to go against the things of Christ and the Gospel of Jesus Christ and God says, "They tried to destroy my work. I'm going to destroy them."

Now, just a little bit about the rewards and the retribution and we'll not talk too much here but he continues on in 2 Corinthians 5:10 here. He said earlier in our text a man is going to be compensated for the deeds done in the body. In 1 Corinthians 3:14, if his works remain, he's going to be rewarded. So in both texts he says, "For the child of God at the judgment seat of Christ there is going to be a reward or a compensation." What is that? I don't really know. We have some vague ideas perhaps from the Scripture. I don't know what that means but I do know God told the apostles they would sit on thrones with him. There are likely going to be levels of glory and authority and privilege in heaven. Is that not kind of interesting to you? Think about that. There are going to be likely levels of glory and authority and honor even in heaven among all of those who are redeemed by grace. It just seems that God set it up that way and it's going to be probably some of the folks will have the most esteem and most glory whom we esteem the least and that's what I love about the equitable nature of God's kingdom and God's work.

But we do know the test as to whether or not you will be compensated and receive rewards is a test of fire. It will be tested by fire. He says that here in 1 Corinthians 3, but it seems that God has a lot to say about fire in his coming judgment. Hebrews 12:29, our God is a consuming fire. Daniel 7:9-10, "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And

the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him." So a lot of fiery symbolic things there to picture not only the purification but the consuming also of that which is against God in the making evident. Fire shows the quality of something and obviously that's going to be taking place also. 2 Thessalonians 1:7, the Lord Jesus shall "be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire." Luke 3:17, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Various interpretations there but that is a picture of God's ministry and there is going to be a holy fire test to find out 1. were we a valuable builder. I think when you come into a season of special evangelistic outreach or even in February when we come into a season of recommitting ourselves to missions, it's a time for every one of us not only to increase our zeal and our energy in those areas but to reevaluate the motives of our heart and the quality of our ministries. Are we truly in flow with God? Are we truly yielding to him to his Spirit's control and to the authority of his word in what we're doing and in the way we do it? There is always, as I said in the earlier message today, there is always a fight to get out of the idolatries, the worldliness, the flesh pleasing things that creep into our hearts and lives and ministries and clean that back up and get back to the pure ministry of God, based on the word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God.

2 John 8, "Watch yourselves." Why do you need to watch yourself? Because we're constantly slipping back. "Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward." Interesting. John's writing to the churches and he says, "Be careful. You can slip away and become a useless worker. Stay with the stuff," so to speak. C. H. Spurgeon said, "There are no crown wearers in heaven that were not cross bearers here below." And maybe that gets to the crux of the issue. Are you faithful to minister for God in your church for God's glory even though that means bearing a cross often? Bearing a cross before family members? Bearing a cross before friends? Or bearing a cross out in the world? In the factory? In the church? In the office? In the school, young people? Wherever that may be that you're willing to make sure you don't lose the quality of the work we're all about so we might on that day be proven by fire as a valuable builder and hopefully in God's grace, not be revealed as a useless builder.

I guess the answer would be: are your works fire proof? Are your works fire proof? You know, I have to be honest especially in the early half of my ministry, some of my stuff that I did was not fire proof. It won't stand the test and I'm afraid that might be true of a lot of us. Perhaps it's not what we've accomplished, it's what we've accomplished compared to what we could have accomplished if we were true to God and true to his word and our motives were pure. Someone said success is not what you've done but it's what you've done compared to what you could have done. I'm not talking about the quantity but rather the quality of the work. You know, it's easy to fool ourselves. Again, one can be hard working, sincere but be a useless builder and the fire test will show that.

I don't even know where I got this quote. I got it many years ago but someone said many great works shall thus go down in ashes in the judgment and be absolutely disowned by the Lord. Many proud builders who are acclaimed by men while they lived here and were honored with great tributes when they were buried shall hang their heads when all their work becomes nothing in the fire test. But many a humble preacher of whom nobody made much in this life shall shine at that day because he wrought gold, silver and precious stones while others who had maybe great, great acclaim in ministry work and, by the way, this is as true for men in the ministry as it is for ladies who are working in God's churches, some of them will get to the end and because of wrong heart motives and perhaps even wrong methods that are not real biblically sound, when they go through the fire test, they're going to come and their soul is saved perhaps but they will come through, the Bible says, with only the stench of smoke. God help us that that's not the case.

So Paul began in our beginning text in 2 Corinthians 5 using that analogy of how we are tent dwellers, we have a temporal pilgrimage. We're just on a pilgrimage passing through. We're not to our home yet and when we do get home, God's going to summon all of us in this serious family meeting where every individual will be made manifest before God as to what we did in the flesh whether or not we were a useful builder, a valuable builder, a useless builder. Then lastly, I just want to mention it, there is a third designation and I don't know exactly who fits here, to be honest. I don't know. Sometimes I'm prone to believe that there are more destroyers that God promises that he will destroy than maybe we'd like to believe. We know there are out and out heretics and those who work against our Christian faith but I don't know, maybe it's our day but then I study church history and think, "No, it was true in other days when so many who named the name of Christ, so many who were esteemed as Christian authorities and functioned in church hierarchy who were all false prophets and false teachers and were actually destroying the church instead of building up the church."

But right quick, back in 1 Corinthians 3, let's look at this again. He says there in verse 17 as he's talking about we're going to be revealed on that day, the quality of each man's work will become evident on that day. There will be some who will receive rewards. There are some whose soul may be saved but their works amounted to almost nothing. Then he throws this in at the very end, verse 17 of 1 Corinthians 3, "If any man destroys the temple of God." The sanctuary of God. I believe that includes the individual temple of your body but also the temple of God's collected local church. "God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."

So the Bible says that God repays in kind. Now, we go back to the Old Testament and the Old Testament law taught that physical death was the proper penalty if you marred the physical temple. When God had his temple built, it was to be considered holy because it represented him and if you physically marred it, you endured the penalty the death. So God says there is going to be the eternal destruction, eternal death. It's the penalty of marring his spiritual temple and that is the church. The church. I mean, goodness, gracious alive, those of us who are ministers should have some fear and trembling about, "Am I doing this the right way? Are my motives pure? Is this truly for God's glory?" And

once again, as I said to you a million times, let me say it a million and one, that we are not succumbing to the fads and the gimmicks and the trends and what the culture would demand of us to be and do but we just stay with the old stuff.

So these destroyers, now, they're distinct from the useless or unwise or unskillful builder that God says their soul will be saved but they'll not have nothing. These are the hardened false teachers. Destroyers. They literally attack the very foundation, the person of Christ himself and the very core elements of the Gospel. A. T. Robertson said in his commentary, "The church wrecker, God will wreck. A false teacher or any professing Christian can come to a place where they so vilify, undermine and spread strife in the church that the church is destroyed and if so, God will pay them back in kind."

It's so common. It's so common, it's like are you kidding me? This is so common and that is this: that men and women in local churches out of sheer – now listen to me – sheer power and control motives destroy churches. Are you hearing me? Just simply, "I want my way. I want to get my group. I want to have the most people at the business meeting. I want to get my vote." They're destroying churches. It's amazing to me the lack of fear of God in some of these places. Thank God that's not the pattern here but it is the pattern in a lot of places.

In 1 Corinthians 10, we'll not turn there for time. We want to get to our prayer time but in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul says, "You know, the nation of Israel grumbled and the people sat down to eat and they rose up to play." Here's what he's saying, he said, "And then God destroyed them in the wilderness." They sat down to eat, they rose up to play, they grumbled about the things of God. What is he basically saying there? He said, "The nation of Israel fell into a place where they threw their hearts into worldly, fleshly idolatries and lust in order to build their community. To build themselves up. To keep themselves together. To keep everyone happy." Isn't that what Aaron did? Moses goes up on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments and the people were getting out of hand and Aaron said, "How am I going to keep them happy? Well, I'll make them a golden calf and they'll be like the pagans of the nations around them and that will make them happy. That's what we'll do." That's what he's referring to in 1 Corinthians 10 when God said, "I'll destroy them." What was his point? His point was they were destroyed because they destroyed God's nation with idolatry, with worldly things and God said, "I will destroy you."

Then lastly just as a word to end on, in Matthew 16 Jesus tells the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said, "Well, people think you're a great prophet like Elijah or somebody." He said, "Well, who do you say that I am?" Peter speaking for the whole group said, "Well, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Of course Jesus said, "Well, blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal that to you but my Father who is in heaven. God's Spirit enabled you to see that I am the true Christ." Then Jesus said to Peter based on the truth Peter spoke, "Upon that rock, upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

So Jesus said, "Here's the thing, I'm going to build my church. You are a useful builder when you build with me. When you get on my team." God does not need us building his church, he wants us to join him in building his church. Once again, Jesus did not say build my church, he said, "I will build my church." You're not to build his church. He's not going to build your church. He said, "I will build my church. Now, be a useful builder and build with me."

So we come to this fall outreach effort and we remind ourselves afresh and anew: let's make sure we get the kind of men in here, that our motives are true, we're not looking for hoop jumps, for easy believism, we're not looking to pack the doors or pack the buildings out with the gimmicks and things of the world. We want it to be a true, solid work of God and bring him great, great glory. Amen? I don't know how we'll fare at that fire test but my heart's desire is we'll be considered valuable and useful workers for God's glory.