

The Judgment Seat Of Christ

“For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

The word “for” in this passage is the Greek word *gar* signifying “therefore” or “because” and in the previous verse the apostle had written, “... we make it our aim to be well pleasing unto him.” Paul’s desire to be “well pleasing” unto God was because he (and all) is to be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Of course (as the apostle will show) he did not serve God solely because of the terror (prospect) of having his life bared before all at Christ’s judgment seat; he was also moved (constrained) by the love of Christ: the love Christ has for us.

The warning that we will appear before God’s judgment seat, that we will be held accountable for the things we do in the body is not simply the teaching of the New Testament. The wise man wrote, “This is the end of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or bad” (Ecc. 12:13f). A future judgment is certain for all. The Hebrew writer said, “It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Paul warned the Romans that they should neither judge nor set at naught their brethren: “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:10-12; Isa. 45:23).

Note, please, that it is before the judgment seat of Christ that we will be made manifest. We understand that “God” will judge us, but Jesus is God and He said God had given all judgment into His hands (Jn. 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31). When Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and then of the end of the world (Matt. 24, 25), He spoke of Himself as setting on the throne of His glory, gathering all the nations before Him and judging them (Mt. 25:31-33). Therefore when one reads in Revelation 20 of a great white throne and of one sitting on that throne, he knows that the One on that throne is Jesus although John did not specifically identify Jesus as such. Today Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2) — our Mediator. He is the One to whom and through whom we address our intercessions and prayers. But in the day of reckoning, He will no longer function in those previous relationships; He will then be our Judge.

In the judgment will manifest the things we have done in the body, whether good or bad. The words we speak; our feet for the places they carry us; our hands for the things they do — all these things will be laid bare before the throne of Christ. And, we need also to remember that God will not only hold us accountable for the things we do; He will hold us accountable for the things we fail to do. To those on His left hand at judgment He will say, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick,

and in prison and ye visited me not ...” (Mt. 25:41-43). Need we be reminded that James wrote, “What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Can that faith save him?” (James 2:14).

At the judgment we will not only be held responsible for our deeds; we will answer for the thoughts and intents of our hearts. In 1 Cor. 4:5 Paul charged brethren, “Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.” In Jesus’ sermon on the mount He said, “Ye have heard that it was said, thou shall not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:27f). And not only can we commit adultery without actually doing so; we can kill without doing so. All we need to do to be held responsible for murder is to hate (Mt. 5:21-24).

We must be diligent to see that all our service to God is from the heart. We are commanded to sanctify Christ in our hearts (1 Pet. 3:15). We should “keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23). Let us always remember God’s words to Samuel: “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature ... for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

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