

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST¹

By David Wilkerson

Paul admonishes us not to be deceived about God's hatred for sin in His house. What could be clearer than the following warning: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

Paul was addressing the church at Corinth, adding further, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led" (1 Corinthians 12:2). This suggest they had once been enslaved to a besetting sin, led astray by some form of idolatry. Then Paul adds these hopeful words, "And SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU: but you are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

The church today seems powerless or unwilling to even judge righteous judgment - because we have lost a sense of defilement caused by wickedness in our midst. So many have hidden dark parts in their own lives that they must excuse the sins of others. The cry for toleration often flows from unjudged flesh. The only way sin in the church can be challenged is by prophetic, Elijah-like preaching from men of God who have judged and forsaken their own sins. We lack bold prophets like Nathan who can't be bought, who have the courage to point a holy finger and cry out, "Thou art the man."

God's ultimatum

Paul said, "Such WERE some of you, BUT..." Paul is addressing brothers and sisters in the Lord who had at one time indulged the flesh, some even after their conversion. (See 1 Corinthians 5:1-7). They had received what I call THE LORD'S LOVING ULTIMATUM! The Holy Spirit comes to the child of God indulging in sin, and He convicts; He warns; He patiently endures failure after failure. He sends the Word; He sends prophets and watchmen; He speaks in a thousand ways, in love commanding, "Lay down your sin! Stop this flirtation with death and danger! I will have to expose you, chastise you, if you refuse to crucify this thing."

The servant of the Lord who hates his besetting sin - who cries out to be delivered . who yearns to be free, holy, pure - must face the FINAL ULTIMATUM from the Lord. God will supernaturally get his attention; He will speak in no uncertain terms and say to him in the inner man, "NOW OR NEVER! IF YOU PERSIST IN YOUR SIN YOU MUST FACE THE CONSEQUENCES - JUDGMENT - EXPOSURE - YOU WILL SUFFER GREAT LOSS! YIELD AND SEE MY GLORY! YIELD THROUGH LOVE AND HOLY FEAR, AND I WILL COVER YOU, FORGIVE YOU, HIDE IN MY SECRET PAVILION FROM THE STRIFE OF TONGUES."

You find the Lord's ultimatum in the warnings of Peter also. Writing to "the beloved", he reminded them of what the prophets had foretold would happen in the last days. There would come "scoffers... walking after their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:1-3). They would be "willingly ignorant... of the promise of his coming... saying.. all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (" Peter 3:4,5). Peter warned that a fiery holocaust was coming by which "... the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up... the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved" (2 Peter 3:10-12). There follows this LOVING ULTIMATUM: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, BEWARE LEST YE ALSO, BEING LED AWAY WITH THE ERROR OF THE WICKED, FALL FROM YOUR OWN STEADFASTNESS" (2 Peter 3:17).

Do you hear the Holy Spirit in this warning, dear saints? The Spirit is saying: "You heard the warnings of prophets! You see, you know better. You have been warned! Watch out - lest you be led away with idolatry, compromise - AND YOU FALL! Beware lest you be changed and hardened in heart by ignorance and the error of the wicked - and be no more steadfast in the Lord and in His holiness!" Paul said, "Such were some of you... but..." But because you turned from your sin with hatred toward it, because you forsook it, because you brought in the death of the Cross, because you crucified the flesh and returned to the holy fear of God - you are now washed, sanctified, justified! And if you continue to walk in humility and in the fear of God, you need never fear your past sins. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13). God doesn't dig up old sins truly forgiven and forsaken. What brings men and women of God down is pride. That is what goes before a fall - a haughty spirit! "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). When past sins come to light, it is because there has never been a heartfelt grief or godly sorrow over it that worked true repentance. And the only kind of godly sorrow that works true repentance is that which breaks the heart for having brought shame and reproach to Christ and His cause. God is also set on bringing down ministers and ministries who have "eaten up the vineyard... with the spoil of the poor in their houses... who beat God's people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor" (Isaiah 3:14-15).

¹ C:\My Documents\SCHOOLofLocalChurch\Lessons\19Judgement\Articles\JudgmentSeat1.doc

The Judgment Seat of Christ

How fearful we are exposure here on earth. How horrible the thought of having our reputation ruined in the eyes of man. But these should not be our primary consideration in these last days. Lately, I have been thinking much of that day when I must stand before the JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. It is not man we must answer to in the end- it is God! As believers, we must all stand one day before the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus Christ to give account of every deed, word, thought. What a sobering truth that "EVERY ONE OF US SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD" (Romans 14:12). Paul warned, "... we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:10,11).

Few Christians today comprehend the reality of standing before Christ as judge, all alone, face to face with Him whose holiness is as a consuming fire. His eyes aflame and His pureness radiating with unspeakable splendor - He will call before Him every one who has taken His name and professed Him to be their Lord. John saw Him in all His awesome judicial power. He said of Him, "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters" (Revelation 1:14,15).

Think of all the flippancy and lightness in the church today. Think of all the foolishness, the jokes, the showmanship and entertainment, the worldly mixture, the parade of flesh and exaltation of man. Consider all the new doctrines of demons, the seductions of modern Jezebels, the ridiculing of those who cry for righteousness, the mockery of God's prophets and watchmen, the pursuit of riches and success. Not even the thought of it can endure His presence on that day of reckoning!

John said, "**His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength**" (Revelation 1:16). What a breakdown there will be when the redeemed throngs wait their moment of truth. Since time will be no more, this day of judgment cannot be measured. But Paul makes it very clear that we must ALL take our turn before His judgment seat; we must all bend our knees; we must all answer for our deeds. Many who have done great works in His name will be damned because they never forsook their iniquity. The Lord will say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." They must one day stand before what the Bible calls the Great White Throne judgment.

If in time we cannot even look into the sun - how can we in eternity look into the eyes of Him whose radiance is as the sun in all its strength. Face to face with the Son of righteousness, what can stand, what can endure; what hidden thing can continue unexposed; what secret can stay undiscovered? Here in the brightness of His holiness - Christ will judge every secret of the heart, every motive, every action. Paul wrote, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16).

"I Fell at His feet as dead"

John was a holy apostle, a faithful and obedient bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the one Jesus so loved, the one who laid his head on the Master's breast. But now, in the revelation on Patmos, Christ appears as judge, standing in the midst of the churches, eyes ablaze and thunder in his voice. And John, when he saw Christ in this fearful role as judge, said, "I fell at His as dead" (Revelation 1:17). What relief, what joy, it must have been to John when Christ put forth His right hand and laid it upon him - and those loving words were spoken, "Fear not .. I was dead, but I live ... I have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:17,18).

We are to walk in His love now, so as to "assure our hearths before Him" (1John 3:19). The Lord's purpose for us is to live in victory, "that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). But was not John's heart assured in Him? Was he not living in confidence before His Lord? He could not have been entrusted with the revelation of Jesus Christ had he not been a clean and holy vessel. It was not sin's clinging to John that cast him to the ground - it was the vision of Christ's unutterable holiness and purity. John was fully justified by the blood of the Lamb - he was standing before Christ as one robed not in his own righteousness, but that which is of Christ by faith. And yet he falls as one dead in His holy presence.

Here is a righteous man, exiled on the Island of Patmos for his unbending faith and testimony, obedient unto death, having, like Paul, given up all that is in the world to know Christ - and he crumbles in the blinding presence of Christ as judge. How will modern Christians stand before His fiery presence, who come with the stench of idolatry upon them? No one will appear there, with lusts clinging to them like deep-rooted wines and say to Him, "Overlook my rebellion, my compromise, my love for pleasure - and judge me not on my righteousness, but on Yours, O saviour - for I believe I am justified by faith." Keep in mind that death has no sanctifying power. Death will not change character. Those who refuse to forsake their sins are not truly saved. We are called to "confess and forsake our sins" (Proverbs 28:13).

How many careless believers will bend before our sinless Saviour thinking they were prepared for this hour, that they could endure His eyes of fire and the brightness of His holiness - only to discover that they had never truly denied the flesh and taken up the Cross to follow Him into resurrection life? No one will be

left standing, for it is written, "Every knee shall bow..." Ask praying Daniel, whose vision of Christ in glory drained him of all strength and cast him to the dust. Ask the holy prophet Isaiah what it is like to see Him high and lifted up, with His glory filling all things - for when he saw the King of glory he could but cry out, "Woe is me... I am unclean" (Isaiah 6:5). And this, after having been mightily used by God to proclaim His prophetic Word!

The fire of His holiness

Paul warned, "Every man's work shall be made manifest (shown up for what it is): for the day (of judgment) shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. In 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 (through) fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). I want to speak the TRUTH IN LOVE to all who can humbly testify that "such was I... but, now I am washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Who are these bowing before the judgment seat of Christ watching their works burn, SUFFERING LOSS, THOUGH SAVED THROUGH FIRE?

Can sins already confessed be brought out in the open before the judgment seat of Christ? I believe they will be. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). In that day not only is everything exposed in order to reveal the grace of God, but also to make manifest to us how our spiritual laziness robbed us of His appointed divine blessings. In that day it is not for forgiveness at all but to display to us His glorious holiness and grace. Everything will be brought into the open, not for judicial purposes, but declarative. In other words, we will be shown the whole history of grace to us individually and to all mankind and how we responded to it. "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" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

What we did not understand will then be revealed, and in every area of our relationship to Him we will see our failures and conduct in their true light - as seen by the Lord. Will not our hatred for sin seem so shallow when measured in the presence of His glory? We will see that we were more interested in security and indemnity than in conforming to His holiness. At the judgment seat all comes out in its full history, which is necessary to present to us a full account of the workings and the glory of God's grace.

I believe that even those who may have works which endure the fire of His holy presence will face some which will not abide, and they will suffer some loss. Our works will all be tried by the fire of His presence. Our Lord Jesus Christ will bring to light every motive, every hidden desire, everything done for self or acclaim - and measure it against His own pureness and absolute holiness to show forth the glory of His grace. What an experience that will be, to have the full revelation and vision of Christ's holiness and the righteous justice of God break upon us with all its overwhelming power! In light of eternity, in light of who He is in holy splendor and power - selfish, how transitory, how foolish, how insignificant will much of our work and deeds appear.

How can we lose when we know we shall be saved, even though it be through the fire of Christ's holiness? What kind of suffering? Does it not say, "He shall suffer loss?" Oh, beloved - what loss it will be when we are shown WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN! Beyond the eternal rewards lost, it will be revealed to us how much we lost on earth by living beneath the power of His Word. We will understand then how much love and confidence we denied Him - how shallow we lived - how little of His glory and presence we hungered for.

I believe most, if not all, will endure a fiery ordeal while under the gaze of His awesome eyes of fire - as we are made to know how much of His revelation we could have had but did not appropriate. Oh, the agony of seeing before our eyes the wasted time, the unnecessary burdens we carried of depression and fear, the unfounded worries which resulted from not trusting His promises. How many will cry aloud - "Oh, blessed Saviour, it could have been so much more victorious a life! I could have known You so much more intimately. I should have believed Your Word about worthless the things of earth were! I so neglected Your Word - I prayed so little - I was so often lukewarm. I did not care for the lost and needy as I should have. The naked, the poor, the hungry, the prisoner I neglected!"

Only then will we, and all the angels and created beings which dwell in His presence, understand the glory of His grace. Even though forgiven, all wrong motives, all flesh-inspired deeds, all that does not measure up to His holiness will be consumed by His fire. Then He who was dead and is now alive, who holds the keys of hell and of death, will tenderly lay His hand upon us and say, "Fear not" (Revelation 1:17). What glory that will be to come through the fire of His holiness into the eternal joys set before the bridehood. We cannot comprehend with our finite minds what peace, joy, and glory will flood out being when Christ touches us, and we arise to receive His embrace, and He lovingly whispers - "WE ARE ONE - ETERNALLY!"

Our Lord will show forth the glory of His grace - the angels will understand - we will understand. We will be a whiterobed host who can sing: "SUCH WERE WE... BUT ... UNMERITED GRACE... EVERLASTING LOVE, MERCY... AND GLORY! it was truly not by my works - but by his grace!" How many Christians who drink in hours of sensual, erotic TV - with all its lurid bedhopping, near-nakedness, infidelity, suggestiveness - will admit that a spirit of adultery is upon them? Jesus said to look is to lust, and the thought itself constitutes adultery. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say into you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his hearth" (Matthew 5:27-28).

There are Christians today, among them ministers, who can groan in spiritual agony over the blatant sins of adultery, fornication, and homosexuality being publicly exposed. Never before have so many well-known ministers fallen into disgrace. Never has the name of Jesus been more defiled before the eyes of the world. Yet those who can boast, "I'm not like that - I have never committed such horrible sins," can sit for hours viewing television programs that are as lurid and grievous to the Holy Spirit as any of the sins publicly exposed. Growing numbers of Christians today rent video movies which were incubated in hell, full of sexual filth, violence, cursing, and mockery of God.

Child of God, I want to say it in love, but I'm going to say it emphatically and clearly - MULTITUDES OF CHRISTIANS HAVE BECOME SPIRITUAL HARLOTS - ADULTERERS! Millions who testify they love Christ, that He is their Lord, are now watching filth they would have wept over just five years ago. How can it be that the mind of Christ be in you, when you permit Satan to fill your eyes with demonic, sensual filth? Call me a fanatic, tell me I am a legalistic - but that will not change the fact that millions of believers, once on fire with the power of Christ's holiness, are now jaded in mind and have lost all spiritual discernment because of this idolatry. It makes me wonder how many believers, "at ease in Zion", will be lounging carelessly before this idol, drinking in corruption at the very last hour when the trumpet of God sounds.

I know how patient the Holy Spirit was with me and my family on this matter. Yet I knew God was grieved over my lack of discernment, my excuses, my foolish justifications - and the time came when I knew it would be impossible to keep the anointing of the Spirit and continue drinking from such a filthy cistern. I never was addicted to smut of any kind and I always blushed with shame even after watching any erotic network movie. For our family, there was only one option, and that was to rid our house of television completely. The Spirit of God has been never patient with the body of Christ on this issue - but now as we draw so near to the return of Christ, the Holy Spirit is calling the bride to prepare and adorn herself in holiness. The chaff is being blown away; judgment has begun in the house of God; the cup of iniquity is overflowing; true prophets and watchmen are voicing God's hatred against all idolatry; the evil is growing worse and worse; the urgent call is going forth to come out of Babylon and partake not in her sins. Since television has become so vile and has degenerated into an acceptable form of soft porn - IS IT NOT TIME TO HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING AND BREAK ITS HOLD OVER YOUR HOUSEHOLD? Why is it so hard for a lover of Jesus Christ to give this idol up?

It truly breaks my heart to hear the excuses of Christians who say they are hungry for God and who have made some real spiritual progress - yet they will not deal with this one last stronghold. I tell you, with weeping, that no one who claims to be devoted to Jesus Christ will come into His fullness and glory which He is now pouring out upon a holy remnant - if a single idol or demonic stronghold is permitted to remain. Beloved saints - why, why, oh why can we not discern that television has become the most powerful stronghold of Satan, his most strategic weapon against the people of God, his exalted and unjudged place in the hearts and homes of a people who testify they are under the lordship of Christ? Even more tragic is the matter of grieving the Holy Spirit out of our lives and homes. If you are seeking an accelerated move toward God, truth, and holiness - you will not take these warnings lightly! You will stop making excuses and fall on your face before God and ask the Holy Spirit to set you free.

Most Christians have no right to grieve over the way the wicked gloat over exposed sin among the Lord's shepherds. Instead, there ought to be self-judgment, crying out to God for an honest heart-searching so that we ourselves may not come under divine judgment for reproving others when we do the same thing. As surely as the Spirit of God is judging sin in His house, He will judge sin in your house and mine. Like Isaiah, I have prayed, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). The more of His mercy that He shows us, the more of His love revealed in us, the more we ought to cry aloud, "O Christ, precious Lord - how much time we have wasted! How blind we have become! How undiscerning of Your holiness and judgments! Oh, that we had maintained clean hands and pure hearts before you! My Jesus - why did we grieve You so - and how could You love us so much to deliver us from the snare of Satan?" We must not make excuses of blame others, but judge our own sin and forsake it once for all.

Truthfully, if we got what we deserved, we would all be exposed before the world for our past sins of idolatry, pride, lust, and hypocrisy. We need, every one, to walk before our holy God with His righteous fear and dread upon us. We should tremble in His presence for extending to us such grace and mercy - hiding us in His shelter from the powers of darkness. God help us to pulverize all our idols and walk before Him in holiness.