

9 - JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Series of 13 Sermons by Ron Thomas on "Our Final Journey" by Pastor Ron Thomas

Text: I Corinthians 4:1-5. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 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."

Before we go too far, we would do good to examine some of these words in our text a little closer. The Greek word for "judge" is anakrino an-ak-ree'-no, which means to investigate, examine, enquire into, scrutinize, sift, question; to estimate, determine the excellence or defects of any person or thing. The word "praise" which occurs in verse 5, in the Greek is epainos ep'-ah-ee-nos which means approbation or commendation, and is used here to describe the praise or commendation bestowed upon believers hereafter at the judgment seat of Christ. In verse 5, the definite article indicates that the "praise" will be exactly in accordance with each person's actions, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As Paul writes these words, he is suffering the judgement of some of those in the Corinthian church. There were some in this church who were questioning his leadership as well as his apostleship. In his second letter, the apostle Paul will be forced, though it was distasteful to him, to defend himself and even boast of God's call upon his life and his credentials as an apostle. So, Paul knew first hand about judgement.

Here in these verses, Paul speaks of three types of judgement we all experience. First, he says, we in a lifetime, we will all experience or suffer the judgement of man. In verse 3, he says "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." The judgement of man includes everything from a court of law, to the critical eye of a friend or neighbor. We are all prone to make judgements, come to conclusions about someone based on what we see or hear. We have been on both ends of this sort of thing, the receiving end, and the judging end! Of course it is always easier to be on the giving end of judgement and criticism, than to be on the receiving end.

Second, Paul speaks of self judgement. He says in verse 3b-4a, "I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified." We often judge ourselves. This self assessment can include everything from condemning our own actions and attitudes, to condoning our own actions and attitudes. Third, Paul speaks of our judgement by God Himself. In verse 4b, he says "but He that judgeth me is the Lord." God is not just our Creator, He is also our judge. Acts 17:30-31 reads, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." So in a lifetime, we will experience all three of these judgements. We will all fall under the scrutiny of our fellow man, ourselves, and God.

Did you notice that he rated these three judgements? He said that to be judged by man, to him, was a "very small thing." Paul did not place much value in man's ability to judge properly. He said it was to him the very least in importance. He went on to say that he didn't even trust his own assessment of himself. He said, "I know nothing by myself." In Jeremiah 17:9 we read, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

We can deceive ourselves! "There is none so deceived as he who is self deceived." We see this in I John 1:8-9. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The judgement or review of others and even ourselves were nothing compared to the judgement of God! Therefore he concludes in verse 5a, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." Paul advises us to be slow to judge others. This is basically what our Savior said in Matthew 7:1-5. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." It is very clear in this passage, that Paul lived for the divine review of God. He lived not so much for the praise of men, but the praise, the commendation, of God! Why?

In verse 5, Paul explains why he discounted the judgement of men, and valued the divine judgement of God. He says, "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." He gives two reasons. First, God sees all things! Only God sees all the circumstances. He sees the struggles a man has had; He sees the secrets that a man can tell to no one. Second, God knows all things! Only God knows all the motives. "Man sees the deed but God sees the intention." Many a deed that looks noble may have been done from the most selfish and ignoble motives; and many a deed which looks base may have been done from the highest motives. He who made the human heart alone knows it and can judge it. Man's judgement begins to pale in the light of God's ability to see and know all things! We are reminded of I Samuel 16:7 which says, "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

The apostle Paul knew that there was coming a day, when all men would stand before God and face His piercing gaze. Notice in verse 5a, Paul says, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." On OUR FINAL JOURNEY all of us will face the judgement of God. An old hymn written by Will L. Thompson is entitled, There's A Great Day Coming. Here are some of the words. "There's a great day coming, A great day coming, There's a great day coming by and by; When the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left, Are you ready for that day to come? There's a bright day coming; A bright day coming, There's a bright day coming by and by; But its brightness shall only come to them that love the Lord, Are you ready for that day to come? Are you ready? Are you ready? Are you ready for the judgement day?"

After the rapture of the saints and the resurrection of the "dead in Christ," While the world is involved in seven years of tribulation, in Heaven, the redeemed will stand before the judgement, the review, of God in what the Bible calls the "Judgement Seat of Christ." Paul writes in Romans 14:8-12, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living. 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. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Then notice II Corinthians 5:8-10. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 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." From these passages, it is obvious that this is a future judgement for all believers, a time when each of us shall stand one on one before Jesus Christ, to whom God has given all judgement.

What will be judged in that day? Paul says we will be judged for "deeds done in the body whether good or bad." Here we will answer for our investment of our lives. This is not to be a judgement for sin. Our sins have been judged once and for all on the cross! This judgement of the redeemed is about service. One day we will all give an account to God for our lives, our life investment, our service to God! Notice I Corinthians 3:11-15. "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." As believers, the foundation of our lives is Jesus Christ. In Him we are saved, restored to the Father, forgiven and justified before God. This is a standing that is ours by faith, and remains forever. It is unalterable! Woe to those who have as their foundation their own works of righteousness, their own personal goodness, their own efforts to remain sinless! Self righteousness is no foundation at all! It is quick sand!

Praise God for our sure, solid, steadfast foundation provided by the grace of God in Jesus Christ! He is the "same yesterday, today and forever." However, it is left to us to build upon that foundation. Once we are saved, we have a life to live for Jesus! We can build upon that foundation which is Christ with "gold, silver, precious stones," or we can build with "wood, hay, stubble." What is the difference? Gold, silver, and precious stone is permanent, it has enduring value. Wood, hay, and stubble is combustible. It has little value and is temporal. The difference is the investment, the nature and quality of our works. I John 2:15-17 warns us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." A worldly investment of a life will be consumed by the fire of God's divine review! The things of this world will pass away! Also, works and deeds that are good on the outside yet rotten on the inside in that they were performed out of reluctance, for the praise of men, out of improper motives, they also will be consumed by the divine review of God. For most of us, this will be a bitter sweet moment. It will include reward. We will be rewarded, crowned if you will, for our faithfulness and service to God. In II Timothy 4:6-8, Paul writes "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

It will also be a time of loss for most of us. All of us have failed in our lives to make the right investment, to do the right thing for the right reasons, the proper motives! For sure there will be some surprises as we face the Lord on that day. Some of the things we just knew would bring a crown, will not gain the mention of our Savior, and some of the things we have forgotten, will claim a reward! Jesus said in Matthew 10:38-42, "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

What a powerful moment this will be for each of us. Romans 14:12 says, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." In that day there will be no excuses, no one to blame, no one to stand behind! Someone has said, "In the choir of life, it is easy to fake the words- but someday each of us will have to sing solo before God."

As the children of God who will one-day face the Father and give an account of deeds done in the body, we need to be reminded once again that we cannot save time, we cannot store it up so to spend it later, we must spend it as we live it. Each and everyday we are making an investment, the greatest investment of our lives. Jesus faced His disciples after being questioned by Peter concerning His life investment plan which included dying on the cross and said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works." At the end of life, it will not be a great retirement plan, financial security, accumulated wealth, that will impress the Lord. All of that will be "wood, hay and stubble." The Lord will be looking at the investment of our hours, days, weeks and years.

How much of our life have we given to what He considers precious; things like the Word of God, the church of the living God, and the eternal souls of men, women, boys and girls? As Paul said in I Thessalonians 2:19-20, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." **ARE YOU READY FOR THE JUDGEMENT DAY?**