

I Corinthians 3:10-17
The Judgment of Believers

- The good news of the Gospel is that believers will not be judged for their sins.
Rom.8:1-2 “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”
John 3:18 “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
- But what are we to make of texts like
II Corinthians 5:10-11 “¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may be **recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done**, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.”
- How are believers going to be judged?
 1. Some will argue that “believers will not be judged” and try to explain passages to the contrary in some other way.
 2. Others will suggest that “believers will be judged but not too harshly.”
 3. Others believe that “believers are expected to live holy lives so as to pass the test of God’s judgment.”
 4. Still others would say that this is another paradox that cannot be explained.
- It is important to understand the three judgments that effect believers. For more details on this see apptoteach.org theology files #905, #906
 1. **Damnation** - The Biblical judgment of believers for their sins at the cross. Christ bore our judgment so that we are justified as though we had no sin. This is a judgment that deals with “eternal” things.
 2. **Discipline** - The Biblical judgment of believers for their sins by the church. This is one way in which God disciplines, or prunes his children for their growth. This is a judgment that deals with “temporal” things.
 3. **Disclosure** - The Biblical judgment of believers at the Bema or Judgment seat of Christ. This is the disclosure of the motives and fruit in a believers experience to determine the rewards and lack there of in heaven. This is the subject of this lesson.
 1. **Rom.14:10-12** “¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For **we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God.** ¹¹ For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.’ ¹² So then **each one of us shall give account of himself to God.**”
 - a. “**the judgment-seat of God**” is not a “damnation-judgment” situation, but rather a “disclosure-judgment” situation. The issue is not God’s rejection or acceptance of the person, but rather the person’s faithfulness being made

- "manifest to God" or revealed for what it really was "in the body" (not positionally "in Christ").
- b. **"every tongue shall give praise to God"** My sense is that for those works which were according to the flesh, there will be a great appreciation for God's grace in forgiving, and for those works that were according to the Spirit, there will be a great appreciation for God's grace in enabling. But the truth will be made manifest.
2. **II Cor.5:10-11** 10"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may be **recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done**, whether good or bad. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences."
- a. **"we must all appear before"** — Here again we read that every believer will stand before (not beside) God to be judged. The structure and content of these verses resist any attempt to avoid the fact that we will be judged. We need not conclude that the judgment involved will be one that leaves us feeling rejected or proud, but rather in awe of God's grace.
 - b. **"recompensed"** or receiving that which is "according to" what was practiced in this life (whether good or bad). This will involve gifts that will magnify God's power in us or His mercy toward us.
3. **I Cor.4:3-6** "But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both **bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts**; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive: But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"
- Here it is clear that although we cannot clearly know the motives behind another's actions, God does know and one day will judge motives.
 - We also see here that one day all deeds and motives will be exposed.

A. How can believers prepare for the Bema.

1. Be a good team member.

"10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.

- a. **The building of the Body of Christ is the objective.** Spiritual birth is the beginning not the end of a ministry process that culminates in a mature Bride of Christ.
- b. **The Body of Christ is a team experience and those who fail to respect this will be judged.**

2. Build on Paul's teaching.

“¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

a. Two forms of Christianity with two different emphases.

1. The **teaching of Jesus** in the Gospels (before the Cross) - How to live under the law (Kingdom ethics).
2. The **teaching about Jesus** -What to believe and how to walk in the Spirit. (Cross and Resurrection). This was Paul's emphasis and is expressed in the Epistles (after the Cross).

b. Tension between these emphases exists in the church today as it did in the first century.

1. In the early church it was expressed through the Legalists.
2. Today it is expressed through the social gospel.

3. Give your best.

“¹² Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw”

- a. All that looks good may not be good.
- b. The quality of our investment will not be fully known until it is judged by God.

4. Watch your motives (a key to quality).

“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.”

B. What is at stake.

1. Not salvation but reward and loss.

“¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.”

2. Edification in this life.

“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.”

C. The point of this text.

*We will be judged for our ministry in this life
on the basis of our motives and our contribution
to the welfare of the Body of Christ.*

D. General observations

1. The emphasis is on ministering to and within the Body of Christ. Transforming the world, and winning the world is not in view.
2. Quality is emphasized over quantity. Christian ministry deserves our best.

3. The judgment is not about heaven but about rewards and loss. When we fail to invest in the church we hurt ourselves in this life and the hereafter.

E. Lessons from this text.

- 1. It is assumed that each of us is responsible to make a ministry investment in the Body of Christ.** Spectator consumers will have nothing to show at the Bema.
- 2. We need to examine our motives.** Ministry may look good but not be good.
- 3. We must prepare to one day have our hearts disclosed and be judged.** This is not a matter of heaven or hell but rewards and their loss.