

*The Judgment Seat of Christ*  
*II Corinthians 5:8-11*

Judgment on our sins is history. God judged our sins in the death of Christ upon the Cross. Jesus promised, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words and believeth on him that sent me, shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24) Condemnation could be translated "judgment." Paul wrote, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) Since Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree, God would be unjust to hold us responsible for them. This is a glorious and comforting truth.

However, there is a present judgment that falls upon Christians in the form of chastisement. When we walk in deliberate disobedience we are in danger of this judgment. It resulted in death for some early Christians and sickness for others (I Corinthians 11:30). We can avoid this Judgment if we judge ourselves in repentance and confession when we find ourselves in the wrong before the Lord.

But there is yet another judgment facing the Christian. This is the "judgment seat of Christ." We find this judgment described several times in the writings of Paul. It is the matter that Paul is presenting in our text. Let us consider three great things associated with the judgment seat of Christ.

***I. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST WILL BE A CONFRONTATION WITH CHRIST***

The confrontation will be for every Christian. Paul takes special pains to emphasize that every Christian will be present. "We must all" be there. He furthermore presents the confrontation as a divine necessity. The "must" in the statement gives emphasis to this.

Judgment seat translates the Greek word "bema". The word would have special significance for the Christian in Corinth. During the days of Paul's ministry in that community, he had stood before the bema in that community. His ministry caused such an uproar in the community that he was arrested, and brought before Gallio at the judgment seat. I have stood before that very place where the bema in Corinth has been uncovered. So, the word is a legal word that refers to a court situation.

The important thing about this bema is that it is the bema of Christ. Christ Himself will be the judge. It is of interest that Paul does not say the bema of Jesus, but rather the bema of Christ. He uses the title that speaks of His glory. It will not be the lowly Galilean that we stand before, but rather the exalted and glorified Jesus. If you want to catch something of the difference that is involved contrast the revelation of the exalted Christ in Revelation 1 with some of the scenes in the Gospels - The appearance of the Christ was so awesome that John, who knew him well during the days of His flesh, fell before Him as dead. It will be the awesome Christ that we stand before.

It will be the Christ with all authority. The Father has committed to Him the authority to judge. The throne of judgment belongs to Him as a divine gift. The judgments that he hands down on that day will have no appeal. Whatever he decides will stand.

It will be the Christ with infinite knowledge. What will it be like to stand in His presence knowing that He knows all. No earthly judge can ever have such knowledge, nor can his judgments reflect such knowledge. They are always subject to appeal. Better evidence may turn up later which will reflect on his decision, but not so in this case. It will be the judgment seat of Christ.

What kind of meeting will this be?

## ***II. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST WILL RESULT IN A REVELATION OF CHARACTER.***

The word translated "appear" involves more than a mere appearance on our part. The root idea in the word is to be revealed or to be manifested. The idea here is that when we stand before Christ as His judgment seat of Christ our true character will be exposed to Him, to us, and to the watching universe. What a moment that will be!

Obviously, things are not always what they appear to be. This is especially true when you deal with human beings. What you see is not always what you get in human relationships. I remember a lesson I learned when I bought the one and only diamond I have ever purchased. As I looked at the diamonds in the jewelry store with my naked eye, they all looked perfect to me. I could not understand why the jeweler wanted to charge me more money for the smaller diamond than for some of the larger ones. Then he explained to me that the larger ones were flawed, even though I could not see the flaws with the naked eye. When he held them up in front of the powerful magnification that he had, the flaws were obvious.

Indeed, my wife has a fake diamond that sure looks real to my naked eye. She inherited it with some other things we were not sure that it was a human creation until we took it to a jeweler for examination. This is an example of what the judgment seat of Christ will be.

Each of us as Christians are God's diamonds. Outwardly, we may all look alike. But, when we stand in the awesome light of his presence, we will be revealed. What ever flaws there may be in our character will be exposed. If we have been fake, this too will be seen. The things about ourselves that we have been successful in hiding from others will be exposed for all to see.

There will be two sides to this exposure. Everything good that is exposed in our character will bring glory to God. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." When anything good is seen in us in that moment, the angelic choir will break forth into an ant-tem of praise to God. But whatever is flawed will be our responsibility. Our character is the result of our response to what God is doing in our lives.

## ***III. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST WILL BRING COMPENSATION FOR CONDUCT.***

This is the basic purpose of this encounter with the glorified Christ. "That everyone may receive things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Our works are really an expression of our character. Our character will be revealed, and our deeds will be rewarded.

Paul gives some emphasis to the things "done in the body." In the passage before us he has described this present life as being "in the body." It is a basic characteristic of our present condition we are in the body. But the body is a wonderful tool with which we can serve the Lord. In spite of its frailty and temporary nature, it is capable of things that have an eternal significance. What we have done in the body will be compensated on that day. It will be a moment of reward for our stewardship.

There will be compensation for proper stewardship of the material things on that day. Jesus emphasized that money and material things can be used in such a way that they become eternal treasures. On that day you will have your heavenly "11 savings account" returned to you. That could be either a moment of supreme joy, or a moment of great sorrow. Surely there will be tears from those who suddenly realize that they have lost all of their treasures. The manner in which they handled the things of this world just did not involve any investments for eternity. There will also be a compensation for your stewardship of time. Time is a precious commodity that can be invested for eternity. Paul called on us to "redeem the time for the days are evil." Will it not be a moment of great sadness

when it is revealed how much time we have wasted on worthless activities. Then, it will be seen how little time was invested in prayer, in character building activities, in activities that were designed to bring the message of Christ to a lost world. I wonder how we will feel about the amount of time we have spent watching television on that day? This is one of the things we do in the body that is usually "worthless."

The impact of our speech will be seen on that day. Speech is done in the body. Jesus warned that we would answer for every idle word. How many times did we use our speech to bring others to Christ. to bring love and comfort to others. How much of our speech was just a waste of time and energy? How much of our speech was actually hurtful in its impact on the lives of others. We will find out on that day. Not even a kind word spoken for the Lord will go unnoticed.

The power of influence will be seen on that day. For those who have been salty, who have been filled with light, there will be compensation on that day. But there will be a terrible sense of loss to those who have not used their influence wisely. When they see the results of moral compromise, and the results of wrong deeds in the influence they spread, there it will be a sad moment ... but too late. Every deed done in the body is having some influence on someone. How is it with you?

Will you leave the judgment seat tearfully or joyfully? Will you receive a generous reward or a shameful loss. It all depends on how you conduct yourself today.

#### ***IV. THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST IS AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CONSECRATION.***

On either side of this text is a statement that shows the power to encourage that this great truth has. "Wherefore we labor that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." As I noted in a previous message, "accepted" means to be well pleasing. The coming confrontation with Christ gives strong encouragement to intensity in our Christian service.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." The terror of the Lord is that awesome reverence that comes to the heart when you contemplate standing before Him to be revealed and compensated. It brings to the heart a healthy fear, a real reverence. This leads to a fervency in our attempts to persuade men about the gospel of Christ. Christians who become cold and lifeless in their commitment and service are those who have forgotten about this coming confrontation.

This great truth has the practical impact of encouraging daily consecration of life to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and to speak of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### ***Conclusion:***

Had you forgotten about this coming day? Now you have been reminded. What will you do about it? How you respond tonight and tomorrow will make a difference on that day.