

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 11-23-14 AM  
"THE CHRISTIAN'S DAY OF JUDGMENT"  
1 CORINTHIANS 3:11-15  
Non-Series Message

**1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)** "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

**Philippians 3:13-14 (HCSB)** "<sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus."

**Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV)** "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

**2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)** "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

**2 Corinthians 5:9 (NKJV)** "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him."

I. The Place of This Day of Judgment

**2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)** "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

**Romans 14:10 (NKJV)** "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

**Romans 14:12 (NKJV)** "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."

II. The Picture of This Day of Judgment (vv. 11-12)

A. The Foundation on Which We Build (v. 11)

**1 Corinthians 2:1-2 (NKJV)** "<sup>1</sup> And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

B. The Materials With Which We Build (v. 12)

III. The Purpose of This Day of Judgment (v. 13a)

IV. The Procedure of This Day of Judgment (v. 13b)

**Revelation 1:14 (NKJV)** "His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire."

**1 Corinthians 4:4-5 (NKJV)** "<sup>4</sup> For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."

V. The Possibilities of This Day of Judgment (vv. 14-15)

The two possibilities at the judgment seat of Christ are reward and loss.

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The Lord’s coming to reward His own was a tremendous motivator for the Apostle Paul. Paul’s ultimate objective was to glorify God with everything in his life (**1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)** “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”), but within that general goal, he lived in such a way that one day he could hear the Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21, 23). Paul wrote in **Philippians 3:13-14 (HCSB)** “<sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus.” Paul didn’t desire glory for himself, nor was he interested in doing better than others. His desire was to please the Lord with a life that received the Lord’s “well done”. What made the rewards so motivating to Paul is that they reflected the Lord’s pleasure with his life and work. Paul’s goal wasn’t to labor to be accepted by the Lord; he knew well that he was already accepted in Christ (**Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV)** “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”). He did, however, desire the Lord’s **approval** of his life and ministry. **2 Timothy 2:15a (ESV)** “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved...” It seems that Paul was obsessed with pleasing the Lord. Not all obsession is a bad thing! **2 Corinthians 5:9 (NKJV)** “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.”

Paul understood that there was coming a day when Christians would be judged. This judgment was not for our sins. Jesus took the judgment, the wrath of God for our sins on Calvary’s cross. I have never forgotten a story I read about 40 years ago. Two men were bird hunting in the mid-west plains, and the dried grass was almost up to their waist. They had been walking for a long time in this huge field where nothing could be seen in any direction but the high grass. Suddenly the men began to smell smoke and ahead of them they saw what is called a “wild fire”. The alarming thing is that the wind was blowing in their face. They knew that the fire would be on them soon and they would be burned up in the flames. They turned and started running as hard as they could in the opposite direction, but it was soon apparent that the flames were overtaking them. In the midst of this seemingly hopeless situation, one of the men stopped and reached in his pocket and took a match out of its container and lit it. He then lit the grass in front of them. The other man cried out, “What are you doing? We are trying to escape the fire and you are lighting another fire in front of us.” As the wind caught the fire and moved it in the direction they had been running, the men had fire going in front of them and fire coming behind them. After the fire he had set was several feet away, the man who lit the fire said to his friend, “Now step into the place where the fire has been and you will be safe from the fire that we were fleeing. You see, fire cannot come where fire has already been”. On the cross, Jesus took the judgment of God for sin. When we repent of our sin and surrender our lives to Him as Lord and trust Him alone to save us, we are united to Him in such a way that we are said to be “in Christ”. In Christ we are safe from the judgment of God on our sin because He has already taken our judgment and like fire, judgment will not go where judgment has already been.

The question then comes, “Why is this message entitled “The Christian’s Day of Judgment”? When it comes to those in Christ, the day of judgment is not relating to our sins; it is related to our works. Look at the first words of verses 13, 14, and 15 – “each one’s work” (verse 13), “If anyone’s work” (verse 14 and 15). Let’s examine closely this coming day of judgment for Christians where their works will be judged.

#### I. The Place of This Day of Judgment

While our text does not name this place where the Christian’s works are judged, the place is named in **2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” This place of the Christian’s judgment of works is also named in **Romans 14:10 (NKJV)** “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we [Christians] shall all stand before

**the judgment seat of Christ.**” What is going to happen at this place called “the judgment seat of Christ”? **Romans 14:12 (NKJV)** “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

The Greek word translated “judgment seat” is the word “bema”. I counted 12 times that word is used in the New Testament (though it is not always translated “judgment seat”). It refers to a raised platform and seat which was the official seat of a judge. It could be for a judge in civil or criminal matters or it could be a judge in an athletic event. When it refers to a bema at an athletic event, it was primarily where prizes or rewards were given out. This passage in 1 Corinthians 3 gives us more detail than any other passage about exactly what happens at this judgment seat when all believers stand before the Lord to give an account. If you would see things here on earth in the proper perspective, you must see daily events here in light of the fact that you will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account of yourself to God. Martin Luther said that there were only two days on his calendar, today and “that Day”. George Whitefield (who was a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards) never lost sight of the connection between his daily life and the coming judgment seat of Christ. Here is what Whitefield said he wanted written on his tombstone: “Here lies George Whitefield; what sort of man he was, the great day will discover”. He kept before his eyes the fact that human accomplishments and honors did not matter. All that counts is what is revealed at that final accounting – the judgment seat of Christ.

## II. The Picture of This Day of Judgment (V11-12)

The picture that is given here is that of constructing a building. The application can be to an individual Christian life or to a church. We will focus on individual lives, but keep in mind the application to a church.

### A. The Foundation on Which We Build (V11)

The most important part of any building is its foundation. I learned early in my ministry how important a foundation is. In my first church in Southern Ohio, our small sanctuary didn’t have a baptistery. We were having people come to know Christ and we had to go down the road about 10-15 miles to another church on Sunday afternoons to baptize. We decided to build a baptistery. We were simply going to add a little room on the back of the sanctuary with a baptistery in it and then knock a hole in the back wall and we would be in business. I had a Pastor friend near by who had been a construction superintendent before he went into the ministry. He said, “Don’t bother getting a building permit; since it is in the back of the building, no one will ever see it and you don’t need the hassle of building inspectors”. I was 27 years old and he was an old man of about 40 and I said, “That sounds good to me”. A group of us dug a foundation 12-15” deep and we mixed up some concrete and poured it in and were really proud of ourselves. We had our foundation. We were having VBS during this time. There was another church about a half mile away that had a name similar to ours and they were building a new sanctuary. During VBS, a building inspector was coming to inspect the other Church for the first time and he came to the wrong church – ours! He asked one of the Youth who was helping with VBS where the construction was and she said, “Oh you must mean our new baptistery. Follow me and I will show you where it is”. Let me skip the details and just tell you that what happened next was not a pretty sight! I learned a lesson then that 36 years later I have not forgotten. The inspector told me that our foundation was not close to being below the frost line. It would have cracked and disintegrated over time and our baptistery would likely have sunk. He was merciful and didn’t fine us, but we had to rent a jackhammer and break up the old foundation and haul it away. A faulty foundation when it comes to a building is tragic, but it is nothing compared to a life built on a faulty foundation! There is only one foundation that will stand the test – it is Jesus Christ and a complete reliance upon His finished work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. If the foundation of your life is the church, mental assent to certain doctrine, your own meritorious works, or anything other than the person and work of Christ Himself, we will not stand. You will find yourself separated from God for eternity. Because Paul understood the importance of having the proper foundation, he said in **1 Corinthians 2:1-2 (NKJV)** “<sup>1</sup> And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Why? It is because He is the only true foundation for eternal life because in reality, eternal life is Christ’s life.

### B. The Materials with Which We Build (V12)

The foundation pictures salvation in Christ alone. The building on that foundation pictures the Christian life. Every Christian has the exact same foundation. There is only one foundation. The buildings built on that foundation, however, differ drastically. Some are going to build on that perfect foundation with shoddy, inferior materials that won't stand the day of the judgment of our works. Some foundations will be built on with wonderful durable materials that will stand the test and be approved. The materials with which we build can be divided into two categories: Those materials that will stand the final testing will come through unscathed, and those which do not stand the test will be burned up. The durable building materials are compared to gold, silver, and precious stones while the materials that burn up are compared to wood, hay, and straw. Precious stones are probably not diamonds, rubies, and emeralds; it likely refers to building stones like granite or marble that stands the test of storms and time. Often in beautiful homes these precious stones of granite or marble were overlaid with gold or silver. Wood, hay, and straw were materials used in "thrown together" temporary buildings.

The building materials represent believers' responses to what they have been given – spiritual gifts and opportunities. We are not compared to one another but to the resources and opportunities that God has given us. The wood, hay, and straw do not apply so much to sinful things; they picture inferior things.

### III. The Purpose of This Day of Judgment (V13a)

The purpose of the judgment seat of Christ is to reveal who has built on their foundation valuable things compared to gold, silver, and precious stones and who has built with inferior materials pictured by wood, hay, and straw. When we have the proper foundation, our eternal abode and relationship as a child of God are secure. Once we have the proper foundation, we are responsible for how we build on that foundation. Let me put it another way: Where you spend eternity depends on your salvation that is through faith alone in Christ alone (proper foundation). How you spend eternity depends on your works accomplished in God's power and for God's glory. Everyone who appears at the judgment seat will be saved – even those who have their works burned up. **1 Corinthians 3:15 (NKJV)** "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself **will be saved**, yet so as through fire." The judgment seat of Christ is not about salvation; it is about being found faithful or not faithful in your stewardship of what God has given you (spiritual gifts and opportunities). The result of your faithfulness (or lack of faithfulness) as a steward that is determined at the judgment seat of Christ is not salvation but rewards in eternity.

Allow me to give an example. God has entrusted to His children a certain amount of financial resources. The amount isn't relevant; what matters is what you do with what He has given you. Are you living what the world would consider below your means so that you can tithe and then give above the tithe to missions, give to pay off needed buildings, and give to individuals in need? If you make a large salary or profit on your business, you may give a considerable amount, but are you giving sacrificially? You may be looked on by those in the world as successful, but at the judgment seat of Christ you may discover that you have built your life with wood, hay, and straw. On the other hand, your gifts may have been comparatively small, but it was a sacrifice and involved altering your lifestyle in order to give sacrificially and the judgment seat of Christ will reveal a life built with gold, silver, and precious stones.

### IV. The Procedure of This Day of Judgment (V13b)

Remember, the judgment seat of Christ is a time of testing to reveal what is worthy of reward. The figure of a testing fire is used. What is this fire? It may just be referring to how metals are tested with heat from the testing fires, but I think there may be something else this illustrates. I don't think that we can be dogmatic here, but it is interesting in the book of Revelation when the glorified Christ is presented, we see something special about His eyes. **Revelation 1:14 (NKJV)** "His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and **His eyes like a flame of fire**". Perhaps the symbolism is that Christ turns His fiery gaze on our works and enables us to see them as He sees them. Those works that are like wood, hay, and straw will turn to ashes at His gaze, but the gold, silver, and precious stones will be unscathed and thus rewarded. To our eyes, certain works may look really good, but when his fiery gaze is turned upon those works, "poof!" and they're burned up. Some works may have seemed like failures to us because we were judging them by the wrong criteria, but under His fiery gaze they turn out to be granite, marble, gold, and silver. Notice that what is measured is not primarily how much has been done, but the quality of what has

been done. When Paul spoke of the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians, he said in **2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” The words used for “good” and “bad” don’t refer so much to moral good and bad as much as they do to value. “Good” means valuable and “bad” means worthless. In other words, the judgment seat of Christ will reveal our works that were of value (eternal value) and our works that were worthless, wasted, and of no eternal consequence.

Not only will our works be judged as to their true eternal value, they will also be judged by our motive in doing them. It is possible to do something good with a bad motive. I may share the Gospel with someone and seek to win them to Christ so that I can boast to others and make them think that I am more spiritual than I am. I may give large amounts of money to some kingdom cause in order that people will think more highly of me or by a product I am selling because they have heard of my generosity. **1 Corinthians 4:4-5 (NKJV)** “<sup>4</sup> For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.”

The procedure at our final accounting is that the Lord Jesus will test our works as to whether they were valuable or worthless and whether they were done with the right motive which is a desire for God to be glorified out of a heart of love for Him.

#### V. The Possibilities of This Day of Judgment (V14-15)

The two possibilities at the judgment seat of Christ are **reward** and **loss**. That which is left after the fiery testing gaze of our Lord (the gold, silver, and precious stones) will result in a reward. Remember that we are not talking about salvation. Salvation is not a reward for our works; salvation is a gift of God’s grace. That which is burned up (wood, hay, and straw) results in eternal loss of reward. The Bible is extremely clear in a multitude of places that there are differing rewards for believers in heaven. That mystifies many people. “How can we be happy in heaven if we know how much we have lost because we were poor stewards and gave our lives for that which is worthless?” I don’t have all that figured out, but I believe that at the judgment seat of Christ there will be great regret. That is implied when it says some will suffer great loss (V15). We really can’t be dogmatic here, but could it be that one of the differences between believers in heaven is that some people will have more capacity to enjoy heaven and more capacity to glorify God for eternity? Everyone who built their life on the proper foundation will be there and enjoy heaven and glorify God to the fullest of their capacity, but some will have more capacity than others [Illustrate by a 50w bulb and a 500w bulb]. We really aren’t given all the details, but I don’t want to see all that I have spent my time and energy on be turned into a heap of ashes under the gaze of the one who has loved me and given Himself for me. Frances Schaffer called these folks, “ash heap Christians”. When we give God our leftovers – any money left over after what we want to use it for, our talents after we build our own business, our time after we retire, etc., we waste our life and we will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ.

#### CONCLUSION

Alan Redpath who was the Pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago many years ago gave testimony of what happened when he sensed God’s call to ministry. He was a very successful business man and was making lots of money. He shared that he resisted obedience to God’s call on his life and began to focus on all that he would have to give up. As he resisted, he said that six words kept ringing through his mind: “A saved soul, a lost life” [repeat]. Is there anything that God has put His hand on in your life that you are unwilling to obey Him? Is it how you use His money, some habit or relationship you are unwilling to give up? Is it something you sense God is telling you to do that you are just being stubborn and refusing to obey? Don’t waste your life! Don’t build on your foundation in such a way that on that day you will suffer great loss as you see all the things that you built your life upon turn to a heap of ashes.