Believer's Rewards
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1327

Tonight our subject in our prophecy series is the judgment seat of Christ or the believer's rewards. In the great closing chapter of Revelation Jesus gave us a clear statement introducing to us an event that would follow immediately the rapture. The statement that He made is in Revelation 22:12 and this is what He said: "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be." Jesus said I am coming quickly or suddenly and when I come I will have with me rewards to give to men on the basis of what they have done.

Now this introduces to us the fact that there is going to be a time of reward for the believer. This is not the only Scripture that mentions it. In II Timothy 4, we read this, the words of Paul as he closes out his ministry: "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 them also that love His appearing." When Jesus comes for His church it will be immediately followed by a time of rewards. We leave this world, we meet Jesus Christ in the air, we go to the Father's house and there is a time of reward.

Now this even is called by the apostle Paul the judgment seat of Christ. That is the term that is used in II Corinthians 5:10. And there Paul says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and He's talking about believers as we shall see later on.

Now Paul also speaks of this judgment in Romans 14:10. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Again indicating the same things. Some manuscripts there read the judgment seat of God, but it's talking about the very same thing.

Now the question that we want to pose and then answer tonight from the Scripture is what is this judgment seat? What is this time of rewards that happens immediately after the Lord comes? When I look forward to the rapture and I look forward to it and I know that Jesus could come any moment, but when I look forward to that I also have to have in my mind's eye the whole concept of rewards because that is what is going to take place immediately after the rapture. And so as I'm anticipating the coming of Christ, I must also be anticipating a time of rewards for the service, which I have rendered to Him. Therefore, this is a very important subject to me. If I'm going to be at the judgment seat of Christ I want to know what it is and I want to be there in all of the best possible circumstances. We want to know what the Scripture says and so what we're going to do is bounce around in Scripture and you're going to have to move with us a little bit to kind of stay with it.

Now I just want to take this from a simple standpoint and just consider each aspect of it right down the line, the place and time of it, the person, the people, the purpose and the promise. And we'll just take one of those at a time.

First of all where is this going to happen and when is it going to happen? The place and time. Well I've already told you and having read those two Scriptures I hope substantiated that it's going to happen immediately after the rapture. "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his works shall be." The picture is Christ coming and with Him is the reward. And then as I read from II Timothy 4, Paul says He's going to give me a crown of righteousness at that day and he talks about the day of His appearing.

And so we believe then that the judgment seat of Christ, as it is called by Paul, at least in a authorized version, is going to take place immediately following the rapture. Now what about the place of judgment? Well the place of judgment is clearly defined for us in the very term judgment. The translation of the Greek word into judgment is really not a fair translation because judgment conjures up all kinds of fearful thoughts. When we think about judgment in the classic sense of its use in Scripture we think about sin don't we? Because all the judgments that take place in the Bible are judgments upon sin except this one, except this one. And so it is really unfair to call this a judgment at all and perhaps it was unfair of the King James translators and all that followed in their train to use that term because it conjures up all kinds of fearful thoughts. The idea that we're going to stand before Jesus Christ and all of our sins are going be blown up on a screen. We're going to get so many supernatural slots for everything that happened after the cross and all of this kind of thing, and this is sort of a stop before we get into heaven. It's the St. Peter at the gate bit, you know, and do you pass? Well I'll check my list and all this. The idea of judgment has imposed upon our theology all kinds of misconceptions. Some have even decided, and of course this is basically what you come up with if you're a millennial, going back a few weeks you remember what that is, no kingdom. That everything happens at one big moment then you've got the judgment seat of Christ happening together with the great white throne and some people have everybody at the great white throne. And I think all of this basically has been conjured up by a misunderstanding of what the term means when it talks about the judgment seat of Christ.

Now let me just show you basically there are seven major judgments in Scripture. And I'm just going to list them for you. If you want to get them down you can study them on your own. I'll make a brief comment about each. And I want to show you something and I want you to keep it in mind. Every different judgment has its own time and its own place. God is very specific in all of them watch. The first we'll call the judgment of sin.

Now the judgment of sin is recorded in the four gospels. It happened in time about the year 30 or so A.D. It happened in place on Calvary's cross. That was the judgment of sin, was it not? For it was

there that He who knew no sin became what? sin for us. God judged sin fully and finally in the death of Jesus Christ. That was the judgment of sin in time about the year 30 A.D. or a little later, in place Calvary. That was sin being judged. That was judgment falling upon the God-man Jesus Christ as He bore our sins. God was judging sin.

Second judgment: the judgment of self. Now the judgment of self goes on in time throughout the church age, throughout the age of the believer's life. The place: the earth. In I Corinthians 11:31, Paul said this: "If we judge ourselves we shall not, what? be judged. If we judge ourselves we'll not be judged. You know what He meant by that? If we're careful to evaluate our own lives spiritually we'll avoid the chastening of the Lord. The place is earth. The time is now. The judge is the Spirit-controlled believer. And this is my obligation to so evaluate and so pattern my life after the things of God that I am consistently dealing with issues in my life and because I am doing that and living a holy life I do not fall under the chastisement of God for my sin.

Now let me say this: Christ's death on the cross took care of the sin principle, but as we live the Christian life God will discipline us. That is not redemptive discipline in the sense of redeeming us under God. That is corrective discipline. That just shows us we shouldn't do that any more. It's for the sake of our own joy and for the sake of our testimony. And so if we judge ourselves here and now on this earth we're not going to suffer discipline, but believe me if we do sin and if we do not carefully bring our own lives into control by the Holy Spirit what happens? The Lord will discipline us. He will chasten us, and every son he scourges. We all fail. We all sin and consequently know the judgment of God in the sense of its chastisement or corrective quality.

The third kind of judgment is the judgment of believer's works. Now this is the judgment we're talking about tonight. The judgment of believer's works is going to take place after the rapture. The place is not the earth, but the place is heaven. And we'll get into detail on that.

The fourth judgment in the Bible is the judgment of Israel. Israel is going to be judged. Now this judgment is recorded in Ezekiel 20:33-44. And you remember that when Christ returns at the end of the tribulation it says at that point He judges Israel. Now remember we've talked about the fact that He will purge out of Israel what? The rebels and then he will take those that are left to believe into the kingdom. The judgment of Israel then, the place earth, the time at the end of the rapture, the beginning of the kingdom.

So you see each of the first four judgments involves a specific time and a specific place. The judgment of sin, Calvary around the year 30 A.D. The judgment of self, now, as the believer lives day by day and as he deals with sin in his own life and lives a holy and victorious life he avoids chastisement. And then the judgment of believer's works, future, the place, heaven. The judgment of earth, earth at the end of the tribulation. Now what I'm saying is this: you can't lump everything together. God is very clear about distinctions in judgment.

Fifthly there is the judgment of the Gentiles. The judgment of the nations. This judgment is explained in Matthew 25:31-46 where the Lord comes and separates the believing Gentiles from the unbelieving Gentiles. The unbelieving ones are cast into hell. The believing ones go into the kingdom. The place, earth. Remember how Christ comes down, His feet touch the Mount of Olives. He splits the Mount of Olives, all the nations are gathered into the Mount of Olives, and there He judges the nations. The place is earth. The time is the end of the tribulation.

Sixthly, there is the judgment of Satan and his demons in Scripture. Now this is announced to us in Jude 6. It says, "The angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation and yet reserved an everlasting change on the darkness," watch, "unto the judgment of the great day." God has planned a special judgment for Satan and his angels. And of course, you know when this is? It is at the end of the thousand- year kingdom. You remember that Satan is loosed for a little season at the end of the millennial kingdom, and then God takes him and the Bible says, "They are committed to the place prepared for them, the Lake of Fire to be tormented day and night forever and ever. So, at the end of the thousand-year kingdom there's going to be a judgment on Satan and his demons, Revelation 20:10.

Seventh and lastly there is the judgment of the unsaved, the judgment, of all of the unsaved, of all of the ages, and that is recorded in Revelation 20:11-15. That is called the great white throne judgment, and that happens right after the kingdom, after the thousand-year reign of Christ there is a resurrection and all of the ungodly are brought before the throne and Christ judges them out of the books that are written. They cannot make it on the bases of good deeds and they're all thrown into the Lake of Fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Now there you have the seven judgments that complete God's judgment plans. Now keep in mind that every one of those has a unique place and a unique time and so we do not want to fall in the error of throwing everything in the same bag when we talk about judgment. Now we're going to put out of that the one judgment that we want to study tonight and that is the judgment of the believer's works. In a real sense it is almost unfair to lump it with those judgments because all of those judgments are judgments on the basis of sin, you see? This one is really not a judgment on the basis of sin unless it would be an indirect judgment on the sin of omission, and in that sense it is a judgment on sin. And we'll see what we mean by that in a moment.

Now the word that is used for judgment seat will come clear to us if we'll look at II Corinthians 5 and we'll begin at that point. II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad." Now the word judgment seat is the word that we want to notice. The literal Greek term is the term *Bema*. If you're going to transliterate it's B-e-m-a. Now that describes the place of judgment. Literally *Bema*means a raised platform mounted by steps. That's literally what it means. Its

simple meaning is just a raised platform. It is used in Acts 18 as the official seat of a judge. It is used as a place where a dignitary sat. For example, in the book of Acts when Herod wanted to have his big day and he had everything set up and he climbed up and sat on his throne he sat on a *Bema.*It's merely a seat of dignity or prominence or authority.

Now mark this: *Bema*is a place rather than an act. When you read the judgment seat of Christ the word judgment is not really intrinsic with the word. It really is just a plain old seat of authority. It's a place, a location. It doesn't have any connotation of penalty. It only has a connotation of prominence or authority or dignity.

Now the Corinthians had an interesting concept of *Bema*, which must be considered since this is II Corinthians and usually when the Spirit of God wrote to somebody in one of these letters He spoke in the language they understood and the terms that would relate to their culture. Outside Corinth was a large Olympic stadium and the Greeks, of course, were great on athletics and the Olympic games, of course, the heritage is obviously from back there. And the large Olympic stadium outside drew athletes from all over Greece. They would come and assemble periodically to compete in the Olympic games. In the midst of the stadium there was a raised platform. It was a platform of prominence. It was a platform of honor. It was a platform of dignity. It was called the *Bema*. There would be a contest. The winner of the contest would then be led to the *Bema*, he would ascend the *Bema*and stand on the top and he would be honored by a leading citizen who would take an oak leaf cluster or perhaps a laurel wreath or a garland for around his neck and he would step up and place that on him as the symbol of his triumph. So *Bema*does not significantly speak about penalty. It does not specifically speak about judgment. It really only specifically has reference to prominence or dignity or honor. And, of course, every believer is going to climb up on the honor stand. That's really what it's saying.

So you see, the judgment seat of Christ is not something that we're afraid of. Even in Corinthians we'll see later after everything has been done if says, "And every man shall have praise of God." Did you know that Christianity is the only thing I know of where everybody wins and nobody loses? There are no losers in Christianity. It's a can't lose proposition. We will all receive praise of God. We will all go up on the reward stand. Interestingly enough *Bema*is never used to speak of a judicial bench. It is associated only with honor and reward and dignity and prominence. So the place, the *Bema*. Where is the *Bema*? I'll tell you where it is. It's got to be in heaven. Why? Because Jesus said in John 14, "I'm going to come and I'm going to get you and I'm going to take you to the Father's house." And if we're going to meet Him in the air and go and be with Him then that's where it's got to be. The place, the time, after the rapture in heaven.

Now the person. Who is the judge? Who is the one that's running the show when we get there? Well, we know who it is. We must all appear before the judgment seat of whom? Christ. We meet Him in the air. I love what it says in I Thessalonians, "So shall we ever be with the Lord." So He's the one

that's going to administer the rewards. Boy won't that be a blessed time? And I don't want to get you hung up on legalism so just remember there's not going to be a loser there. Everybody's going to rise to the *Bema.*

Now we'll talk about some things that need to be considered in terms of negatives in a minute. But from the positive side, first of all, no losers. And Christ is the judge. John 5, Jesus said, "God, the Father, has committed all judgment under the sun." And you see that's part of the exaltation of Christ. He will manifest authority in judgment. Revelation 22:12, "Behold I come quickly and My reward," watch this I love it, "My reward is with Me to give." You see? So the reward is going to come from Christ Himself. I mean just the thought of standing face to face with Jesus and having Him say, "This is for you from Me for your faithfulness." That's personal isn't it? That's personal. And the idea of the Scriptures always there's an individual kind of thing for every person. It's not all right everyone who scored 64 go to the left side of heaven. Everybody who scored less the right side of heaven and there'll be a group there passing out crowns.

God is always very personal in dealing with believers and in the case of the judgment seat of Christ face to face with Him and in each case individually. He is going to be the dispenser of the gifts that show the faithfulness exhibited in our life. He is constant companion. He is bridegroom. He is rewarder. All right that's the time and the place and that's the person.

What about the people? Who's going to be there? Well look at verse 10 again. I'll tell you who's going to be there, we. "For we must all appear." You say, "Well who is the we?" Well that's easy to figure out. It's the church. It's Christians. In the first place Paul is a Christian talking to Christians and so the pronoun would encompass him and them as well. But let me show you why we know it's Christians. Verses 1 to 9 couldn't be anything but Christians and to keep it in the context it has to be Christians in verse 10, verse 1. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Can an unbeliever say that? No. So whatever we it is it's the same we that have an eternal tabernacle with God.

What about this one? Verse 5, "Now He that hath wrought us for the very same thing as God who has given us the earnest of the Spirit." Can anybody say that but a believer? Anybody possess the Holy Spirit but a believer? No. And then he says, "Therefore we are always confident that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." And then go down to verse 8. "We're are confident, I say, willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." Can anybody say that but a believer? No. Only believers are going to be present with the Lord.

How about verse seven? "For we walk by faith, not by sight." That's for a believer and only a believer. You see it's got to be the we of faith. It's us who know Jesus Christ that are in view. We are going to mount the platform of rewards. What a marvelous promise. All of us are going to be there.

In I Corinthians 3:15 and we're going to be jumping from II Corinthians 5 to I Corinthians 3 to Romans 14 and so forth so get ready. But in I Corinthians 3:15, I want you to take a footnote here of this point. Here is the same scene detailed to us, the same occasion, the judgment seat of Christ. Now some of the works that we're going to have to offer aren't going to be very valuable. They're going to get burned up. But watch. "If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be," is going to be what? "saved." Everybody at the *Bema*is going to be what? saved. That's why I say it's a can't-loose proposition. There's going to be a certain amount of loss that you'll suffer, but in the end you can't loose. You're going to ascend the *Bema*, there will be some reward for every believer and ultimate salvation, of course.

So all at the judgment are saved. Look at verse 11. I mean everybody who even gets there is going to have the foundation that no man can lay. That which is laid, which is whom? Jesus Christ. So you won't even be there unless you've got the right foundation. And what about verse 16? "No ye not that ye are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you." This is all Christians. This is a time for believers and believers alone.

Now I mentioned earlier seven judgments. The Christian is only really subjected, in this day and age as we know it, the church age, to three of those. We are subjected, in a sense, to the judgment of sin. You say you mean I have to die for my own sin? No, but I am crucified what? with Christ. So in a sense I was nailed to the cross with Him. Then the believer participates in the judgment of self to avoid discipline. And thirdly the believer will participate in the judgment of works, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Every believer is going to be there.

All right, we've seen the place and time, after the rapture in heaven. We've seen the person who is the judge, Jesus Christ Himself. And we've seen the people who are going to be there, the church. Now specifically, let's look at the purpose.

What is the point of this judgment? What is it going to be ultimately for? What is the reasoning involved? Well, in order to understand that we want to pick up on statement in Romans 14:12. Now here you're talking about the same judgment again. And here is the point: verse 12, "So then," Romans 14, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." There's the purpose. That's it simply stated. Every believer is going to give account of himself to God. You know God knows everything and God knows humankind better than humankind know themselves. And God knows that we respond to motivation and one of the greatest factors in motivation is the factor of authority and accountability. A man once asked Daniel Webster what was the greatest thought he had in his life and he said, "The greatest thought I ever had was my personal accountability to God." God knows that we need to be accountable to somebody. If we never had any bosses or any authorities I mean this world would be chaotic more than it is now. That's why everybody kind of cringes in a corner whenever authority starts to crumble. Have you seen that? You look across the

world whenever authority starts to crumble everybody starts to cringe because somebody's got to hold everybody in check. And that's what kind of panics us even in America as we watch what happens in something like Watergate and we see the crumbling of those that we are banking on to hold this thing together. Do you see? We respond to authority and authority has a great influence on us. You know what's the first law of safe driving? Watch for the police. Any body knows that. You go along going any speed you want until an officer pulls onto the street and then you go back to the speed limit and sing Praise the Lord and he pulls off and you floor it again. But you see we respond to authority. I mean it's the same in school when kids are in school and the teacher leaves the room. You go through the same process.

When I was a little kid one time and I got in a lot of trouble. One day in particular I was jumping to desk to desk when the teacher was out. She was gone and I didn't hear the pitter patter of those orthopedic wedgies coming and she came in and there I was between desks. And I was unaware of the presence of authority, but when I knew it was there, man did I shape up. There's a sense that God knows that humankind respond to authority, that authority plays a very important part in our behavior pattern. And the fact that we have to be accountable is a very overwhelming motivation. And so the Bible clearly says that the judgment seat of Christ is so that everyone of us, no exception, will be able to give account of himself to God.

And I think in a grace orientation very often we can be very free and easy about this accountability. But someday we're going to stand face to face with Jesus Christ and we're going to have to talk about the issue of our life.

Now there are many views of how this thing works. Some say this: some say this is a judgment, which will determine whether we get into heaven or not. That's a fairly common view. As I said earlier that's the Saint Peter at the gate routine where we all get up to the gate and we go through a little time of judgment and all the goods are weighed against all the bad's and if the goods out weigh the bad's we get into the place. Friends, that is absolutely ridiculous. In the first place what Scripture ever gave anybody the right to sit Saint Peter at the gate outside there at some kind of check-in station?

By the time you get to the judgment seat of Christ you'll already have been raptured, translated, glorified. If you've already been raptured, translated, and glorified there's nothing left to do to you. In terms of qualifications for heaven, it is done. The only people who are going to go in the rapture to begin with are the redeemed, right? So once we get that far there's not going to be any check-in station, there's not going to be any passport that we have to give, there's not going to be any qualification on that end of it. I thought of a verse that kind of goes at it from a strange angle, but it proves a point. Romans 8:30, "Moreover who He did predestinate, whom He called He also justified, whom He justified He also glorified." Now watch. Whoever He justified He glorified, so whoever He glorified He justified. So if you're already justified when you get there there's nothing to do in terms of qualification. So the old idea that you're going to get up there and somebody's going to put down a

little book and see whether you can make it or not is ridiculous. Unbelievers will never get anywhere near heaven. This judgment takes place not outside some pearly gates, but it takes place in the Father's house in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with the believers.

Now other people say this: other people say well this judgment is the judgment in which God is going to punish believers for all the sins they did after they were saved. This is another common view. That when you got saved that took care of the sins up to your salvation, but when you get up there all the sins you did since you've been saved are going to be flashed up on the screen. It's going to be like an eternal drive-in and a monstrosity of a screen and here comes John MacArthur. Look at this, oh look at this, you see. Boy what a horrifying thought.

I mean if I thought about that long enough I wouldn't want to go to heaven under any circumstances. And these people would teach us that all the sins from birth to salvation are forgiven when you're saved, but everything from salvation on has to be punished. You know what that does? It propagates the inadequacy of the cross. It makes a mockery out of the cross and says God can only handle sins up to a certain point. Listen, when Jesus died on the cross every sin was in the future anyway, every one of mine. Boy what heresy. Boy would that lead to legalism. Can you imagine that the legalism and the law keeping, the fear that that kind of thing would impose? And by the way, if you died with one sin unforgiven where would you go? Hell. You'd never get that far if there was one sin that hadn't been dealt with. And Romans 6 through 8 would be totally contradicted. Romans 6 through 8 says we are not under law, we are what, we are under grace. There is no way that any sin in the life of a Christian is unforgiven. Did you get that? There is no way that any sin in the life of a Christian is unforgiven.

In Hebrews 8:12 he says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember," now long? "No more." In Colossians, 2:12, great verse, "Buried with him in baptism in which you're risen with him to the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead and you being dead in your sins hath He made alive having forgiven you all trespasses." All of them. The tense is irrelevant. I John 2:12, "I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven you for His name sake." Now watch this one. Remember Ephesians 1:7, what a great statement, I love it. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." Did you get that? We have as much, watch this one, we have as much forgiveness as He has grace. You think that's enough to handle you? It says according to the riches of His grace. It doesn't say and you have been forgiven out of the riches of His grace. Not out of but according to. I'll show you the difference. If I go to a rich man or something and say, "There's a real need here and I know you're one of the richest man in the world and you've got x number of millions of dollars and I want you to give to this need." And the man says, "Oh I'll give to that need," and he sits down and writes out a check for nine dollars and a quarter. You say, "Thank you very much sir you have given me out of your riches."

But if I say to another rich man, "Rich man I have a need and the need is for x number of dollars," and the rich man takes out his checkbook and says, "How much do you need?" and he writes me a double the amount I need, then I say, "Ah ha you have not given me out of. You have given me according to." And when God starts dispensing grace He doesn't dole it out, out of His grace, He gives it out according to His grace. As rich as He is that's how much forgiveness you have. There are no limits. It is full and it is total.

Let me give you just a fabulous illustration of this. It comes out of Isaiah 38 and so many of the terms used in the Old Testament are vivid, but this one is really very very vivid. Isaiah 38, you'll know the Scripture. 38 verse 17 I think it is. Yes, listen to this: you don't even need to look it up, just listen. He says, "But Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption." Now he's talking to God and he says this: "For thou have cast all my sins behind Thy back." You know what the literal Hebrew is? You have put all my sins between your shoulder blades. Have you ever tried to turn around and looked between your shoulder blades? There's a lot of places you can see. That's not one of them. God has put your sins in the one place that, and that's a beautiful metaphor. God is saying in effect, "As a man could never see what was between his shoulder blades so I have placed your sins in a place where I cannot see them." That's forgiveness. When somebody comes along and starts telling me I'm going to have to stand before some big screen and watch my sins in cinerama, I say forget it.

Let me show you a couple of other passages. Romans 8: Romans 8:1. "There is therefore now no what? Condemnation of them who are in Christ Jesus." All right that's a clear statement. There's not any judgment. *Cateh crimah,*no judgment. No penalty for sin, none at all. Well there may be some things held against us. Go to the end of Chapter 8. This is so good; just love it! Verse 33: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Whose going to show up and say, "Well he did so and so." Watch. Shall God that what? Justify! Listen if God has already declared you just is there a higher court in the universe? Whose going to show up and say sorry God you missed a couple over here? "Who," verse 34, "is he that condemns? Is Christ?" No. See there's no condemnation. No charges, so you cannot expect to go to the judgment seat. You don't have to fear that you're going to have your sins exploded in your face.

But there's another interesting view. Other people say what's going to happen there is we're going to be judged for every sin we didn't confess. Now this is common. If you didn't confess it it doesn't get forgiven. Beloved I've told you many many times forgiveness of sin has nothing to do with confession in the life of a Christian. Confession is for fellowship not for forgiveness. When you are saved all your sins are forgiven. When you confess them you merely maintain the pure fellowship with the Father. Listen, I could sin and have in my life and not confessed it and it does not violate my salvation. You know what it does? It fowls up my pure fellowship with the Father. Unconfessed sin is an issue of fellowship and we've covered that so many many times. If you have questions about it you study I John 1 carefully and we even deal with that in the little book on the body. But confession is only for

fellowship.

So you see the judgment seat of Christ isn't a sin thing at all in the sense of positive dealing with sin. You say, "Well John, if it's not for sin what's it for?" I told you, it's for reward. But let me go back to II Corinthians 5 and let's pick it up there. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad. Everybody's going to receive the things done in his body. Isn't it interesting that everyone is going to receive? It doesn't say anything about judgment, just receiving. Verse 9, "We labor that whether present or absent we may be accepted." Now notice the word accepted. Again it's confusion. It really means that we may be well pleasing. We're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul says we work in this life that when we get there we may be well pleasing. Remember the parable in Matthew 25? Well done, verse 21, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of thy Lord. That's what it's all about. It's a time of receiving. That's what the word accepted literally means. We're going to be made manifest to Jesus Christ to receive our reward in accordance with the things, which we have done in our body whether they be good or bad.

Now let me take a footnote. Again people have been confused on the term whether it be good or bad. You say, "Well there's the bad things. What's going to happen with that? Are all the bad things going to be exposed?" Let me give you a clear thought on this. I think it's clear. You must understand the word bad. The Greek language mainly uses two words in reference to bad or evil: *ta cos*and *paneras* . Those speak of moral ethical bad as opposed to goodness. Those speak of evil, sin; neither word is used here. The word used here is *phaulos*p-h-a-u-l-o-s. That word is used to speak of something, which is worthless. It is not a moral word. It is not the ethical word. It is not the idea of evil or sin. It is simply the idea of something that has no lasting value. The best synonym and the one that most lexicons would give would be worthless or valueless.

And so this judgment, beloved, is not to decide whether we've done moral good or moral evil, it's simply to take those things, which we have done as believers and see which of them had eternal value and which of them did not. Now believe me there are things that I have done in my life that are morally inconsequential, but at the judgment seat they're just going to be worthless. You go out and you spend an afternoon mowing your lawn. Now morally that's inconsequential and when you get to heaven that'll go into the fire and it'll be burned up, in terms of subtracting.

Now that's a very very minimal reference. There are other things, which may have more moral implications. But basically the term here is not to give us the idea there's going to be a good bunch piled up here and a bad thing over here. It is valuable or it is worthless. Now watch. The judgment seat of Christ then is this: a man goes who has lived believing in Jesus Christ, all of the works which he has done are there in the mind of God. It is then a process of God subtracting the worthless ones from the valuable ones and then rewarding the believer on the basis of the valuable ones that remain. The difference in rewards is only going to come because some believers have understood their

priorities and they're going to have a pile of valuable things while other believers, probably most, are going to have a monstrous pile of worthless things. But it's not a question of moral evil. It is only a question of sorting out the bad from the good in the sense of what is valuable.

Now in order to see how this works the Bible gives us three different figures. The first is stewardship and this we'll look at in Romans 14 and we'll just take these very quickly. But in Romans 14 and we'll see it in other passages as well. We're introduced to the idea of stewardship. We as Christians, now mark this, we as Christians have been given certain things by God. We've been given spiritual gifts, we've been given natural abilities and talents, now these are not our own. We only hold on to them like stewards. A steward was somebody who ran something for someone else. He didn't own it; he just took care of it. As we've said many times you don't own your spiritual gifts. They're not yours, they're Gods. He gave them to you. You're supposed to care for them in trust. Life is a stewardship. You need to manage it. Peter talks about that, doesn't he? that we need to take care of our gifts as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. And so we are merely managing what we have for God.

Now in Romans 14:10 it says, "Why do you judge your brother?" Some of these Christians instead of managing their own stewardship were running around trying to manage everybody else's. "Why do you judge your brother? Why do you set it not your brother for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Listen he says this: you be concerned with the stewardship of your life because you're going to have to face God with it. Before you get all preoccupied in what somebody else is doing, you get preoccupied in what you are doing with your stewardship. You may not agree with some other Christian's activity, you may disagree with some other man does, even some man in the ministry, but that is his stewardship. You care for your stewardship. Now this doesn't mean you don't rebuke a sinning brother, but it means in the area that is gray, in the area that is non-moral, in the area where each man can be led of the Spirit of God it is not for you to operate the stewardship of another man's life. For we're all going to stand there. "And as I live," says the Lord, "Every knee is going to bow to Me and every tongue confess, and every one of us give account of himself to God."

So we are granted a stewardship of life and we'll stand before God to render account for that stewardship. And it behooves us not to be preoccupied with somebody else's stewardship but only with our own.

Now the stewardship metaphor is carried out again in I Corinthians Chapter 4. Let me just quickly point you to that. I Corinthians 4:1, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." We're stewards again. We hold them in trust. Verse 2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found," what? "Faithful." That is all God says. I've given you a trust. Now be faithful with it. Then Paul goes on to talk about I'm not going to judge my own stewardship. I'm not going to judge someone else's stewardship. I'm going to let God do that. Verse 4 at the end, "He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come and He," watch this, will be bring to light the hidden things of darkness, make manifest the

counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God." Did you notice that beautiful statement at the close of verse 5? Every man is going to have what? Praise of God. Every Christian is going to be a winner.

Now He says your life is a stewardship. You take care of your own. Don't judge others and wait for the Lord who when He comes will make an evaluation and even reveal the inside, the hidden things of darkness, motives, and then reward you on the basis on the good which remains after the worthless has been subtracted. And so the Bible sees this as a stewardship.

Now the Bible also sees it as a structure, another metaphor. Verse 11 of Chapter 3. Just go back one chapter. I Corinthians 3:11. Verse 10 He said, "Everybody's going to build on a foundation." Verse 11 he says, "The foundation is Christ." Now he says here's your life. You're going to build and you're either going to build gold, silver or precious stones, or what? Wood, hay and stubble. And what's going to happen? Every man's work shall be made manifest, the day will declare it, it will be revealed by fire, the fire shall test every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built on it shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved yet as by fire.

Now what's he saying? He's saying as a Christian you have a foundation, Jesus Christ, and you have a choice to build. You can build your life on wood, hay and stubble. Do you know that wood, hay and stubble are not morally bad? Did you know that? Wood's a nice thing. It's good. You can make some lovely things, beautiful, nice, artistic beautiful wood things, and it's great. Now hay is not so good. You can make a thatched hut that doesn't last too long. Stubble that's strictly bird nest material.

But there are basic degrees of what you can do and it's not morally evil that is the dominate theme. It's merely inconsequential. Do you see? And you know this is the tragedy of so many Christian's lives that they don't live horribly immoral lives; they just live disastrously inconsequential ones. That really if they died there wouldn't be anybody in the world, spiritually speaking, who would miss them. And everybody's going to be saved, and everybody's going to have praise of God and there are crowns for all of us, but believe me there are some who are going to receive more than others because some are going to have the gold and the silver and the precious stones that are going to go through the fire and they're going to be deemed by God to be precious with eternal value. And beloved you what to know what it comes down to? You go right back to the beginning of Chapter 3 and it comes down to whether you are carnal or what? Spiritual. Carnal people do worthless things. Our lives, this is my prayer for my life, our lives should be so absorbed in priorities that we are building upon the foundation of Christ with gold, silver, precious stones and that's what's going to stand the test.

There's a third figure and the last one we'll look at in I Corinthians 9. And here the Christian life is like a race, and again it speaks of the time of rewards. Verse 24, "Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run that ye may obtain." Christian ought to run to win. "We all

strive for the mastery, use temperateness to discipline ourselves and they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." So Paul says, "I'm working to get a crown." I run not as uncertainly, I fight not as one that shadowboxes, I keep my body, bring it into subjection." In other words what he's saying is I have to discipline myself. As a Christian the object is to run to win, which means you have to keep your body under subjection. You know what the literal Greek is? I beat my body black and blue. I have to discipline myself.

Now Christian you're going to stand before Jesus Christ and it's going to be a time of rewards and you are going to need to discipline yourself to understand your priorities and to be a steward of your gifts and talents to receive a full reward. You say, "Well what's God going to judge then?" Well first of all He's going to judge motives. Do you know that? That's going to rattle a lot of cages, 'cause there's some people who've got all the works but you know what they did it for all the wrong reasons. And whatever you've done out of legalism disqualifies you. God's going to judge the motives. You say, "Where did He get that?" I Corinthians 4:5, we just read it. "He's going to bring to light the hidden things of darkness and the secret counsels of the heart."

Boy I hear that and I say, "Search me O God, and know my heart. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me." And then He's not only going to judge the motives. He's going to judge the conduct. We're going to receive for the things done in the body and then He's going to judge the service. Every man's work shall be made manifest. Every feature of our Christian life is going to be exposed to see whether it has eternal value and remains and is worthy of reward. And so we see the place, the time, the person, the people, and the purpose.

Lastly, the promise. What's going to happen? Well we go right back to II Corinthians 5 and we find out. Pardon me, I Corinthians 3. Stay where you are. We go to I Corinthians 3 and this is what it says. "If any man's work abide," verse 14, "Which he hath built upon he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss." There are the two things. There's the promise that awaits, either reward or loss. For some it's going to be a day of wonderful rewards. Did you know the Bible talks about five crowns: the incorruptible crown, crown of righteousness, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of glory, the crown of life. Each a separate reward for faithfulness. There's going to be wonderful rewards. The incorruptible crown, that's for the one who obeyed the Lord's command and made self-sacrifice and disciplined his life to live for God. The crown of righteousness, that's to all who love His appearing. That means everybody who is so in love with Jesus Christ that the looking for His coming dominates their life. The crown of rejoicing, the soul winners' crown, the crown of glory, the shepherd's crown, that's for the elders, the pastor teachers. The crown of life, that's for the guy who went through the persecution and martyrdom for Jesus' sake. Crowns.

You say, "But John," I always think of the Imperial Margarine commercials, boinggg, you know, is it some kind of a crass thing where we're just racking them up for some cosmic closet to store them away? No it isn't at all because in Revelation 4, what do the 24 elders do with their crowns? They cast

them at the feet of Jesus. What a blessed day that'll be. Oh what a joy.

But listen, beloved, I hesitate to say this, but yet I say it because it's in the word of God. Some of you are going to be there and you're going to suffer loss. You're not going to receive the full reward that you could have received. Why? Because you haven't lived the kind of life you should have lived. You haven't ordered your priorities. Listen. Listen to this statement: II John 8, "Look to yourselves, listen, look to yourselves that you loose not the things, which you have wrought that you receive a full reward." You know you can actually earn things and you can actually do the things that please God and then like Paul had such a fear of you can become a cast away. You can forfeit your crowns by some sin in your life. Remember Revelation 3:11, remember this: "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man," what? "Take your crown." Paul said in Colossians 2:18, "Don't let anybody rob you of your prize."

With some people, I hate to say it, it's going to be a day of shame. But you say, "I thought there was no judgment." No, but there'll be shame there. Say, how do you know that? I John 2:28, "Little children, abide in Him that when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." You know it's possible that a Christian is going to be at that judgment seat and down deep in his heart there's going to be maybe just a little, and I don't think the right word because I don't think we can understand heaven and there's no sorrow there, but there's going to be a loss. The Bible clearly says, "suffer loss." And the Bible does indicate the possibility of shame. And there will be some works very definitely worthless. I don't know about you but I want my life to count in that day and then I want the joy of giving those crowns to Jesus Christ who makes it all possible. Check your life, beloved.

Let me just give you a little poem I think I recited once to you. It was in my grandfather's Bible and I memorized it many many years ago and that poem has stuck in my mind. It goes like this: When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ and He shows me his plan for me, the plan for my life as it might have been. And I see how I blocked Him here and checked Him there and wouldn't yield my will. Will there by grief in my Savior's eyes, grief though He loves me still? You see in that day there's going to be that possibility of living a whole lifetime with little to show for it. The poet goes on: Then my desolate heart will well nigh break with tears I cannot shed, I'll cover my face with my empty hands, I'll bow my unfound head. Oh Lord of the years that are left to me I give them to Thy hand. Take me, break me, mold me, for the pattern that Thou hast planned.

I think we'll all receive a crown, at least, but I love the Lord Jesus Christ so much that I want to show Him that I have desired to win everything there is to win for His glory. I hope you have that same desire in your heart.

Father, thank you for the time we've spent together. We know that there's no sorrow in heaven, but Father there's sorrow in our hearts now to think that we would accept all that You have done for us

and not do all that we could for You and know that we would suffer loss and know that we would stand and give account of our lives and when the works that we have done are given the test of fire the most of them by far would be burned and consumed away as worthless. God, help us to order or priorities, help us to do the things that matter. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).