



“And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” – John 8:32

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

A young pastor in training was given the opportunity to speak to the large congregation that he attended. In the course of His exhortation he declared confidently that, “There is nothing you can do to please the Lord.”

Of course there is nothing we can do to please the Lord in obtaining our salvation; that is solely the work of Christ for us through His atoning death and resurrection from the dead. That is not what this young pastoral candidate I heard was saying. He was telling everyone that nothing we did in our walk with God would please Him. The underlying message of his statement was that we can live without worrying because nothing we do will affect our standing with the Lord. In other words, if we abuse grace we have been given, it’s okay because we are still saved. We still may be saved, but someone needed to remind this young man of what the Apostle Paul has reminded all of us. –

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 has done, whether it be good or bad. – I Corinthians 5:10

For it is written, ‘As I live, says 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. – Romans 14,11,12 from Isaiah 45:23

But he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done: and there is no respect of persons. – Colossians 3:25

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 has 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. – I Corinthians 3:13-15

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. – Galatians 6:7

A pastor I met was in a quandary about what to say at a funeral he was to conduct for a member of his congregation. Apparently this person, a professed believer, had a record of consistently being mean and disruptive. The pastor honestly did not have anything positive to say about him other than the fact that the man had confessed his sins and sincerely repented as he was dying in the hospital.

The pastor decided to be realistic about the man’s character and emphasize the Lord’s grace and the man’s repentance before he died.

Apparently that man recognized on his death bed, the reality of his ultimate confrontation with the Lord at the judgment. His repentance would open the door for the Lord’s grace to forgive the man’s sins, just like it did for the repentant thief on the cross, (Luke 23:39-43), but his works, and the damage he had done to others, would still be submitted to the fires of judgment that the Apostle Paul described.

Fortunately the man repented in time, but the Lord describes what happens to those who do not care about how their behavior affects the lives of others. –

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Truly I say to you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, ‘My lord delays his coming;’ and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Matthew 24:45-51

We note that the hapless believer is cut in two, “asunder.” This is a severing of the heart. When believers who practice evil appear before Him, there is a judgment made on those two areas of their disobedience, meanness and carnal self-indulgence that has resulted in harming others through their selfishness. The sword of the Lord’s word convicts them, figuratively cutting them in two, severing away their religious pretensions. They are appointed the rewards of hypocrisy and share in the torment of regret at the loss of rewards and are plunged into spiritual agony of soul. Thus they experience the same symptoms of those appointed to hell, “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Therefore we can conclude that there are no rewards for those who are not concerned about pleasing the Lord in their earth lives.

The word of God is very clear on how the Lord wants His people to treat one another, and it is vitally important to take heed to His warnings and admonishments.

The prophet Ezekiel gives us a prophetic picture of the judgment in the 34th chapter of his book in the Bible. The Lord begins by showing us through the prophet’s writings, the judgment that will befall the leaders, “Shepherds,” who have been entrusted with the care of the Lord’s flock. In verses 1 through 10, the Lord describes shepherds who have been more concerned for their own gain at the expense of the sheep, and had no genuine care for the people. -

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds; ‘Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and you clothe you with the wool, you kill them that are fed: (Those who are right with the Lord and can correct the shepherds) but you feed not the flock. The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have you ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yes, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live,

says the Lord GOD, surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became meat to every beast of the field, (became prey to false doctrine and sin) because there was no shepherd, neither did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not My flock; Therefore, O you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. - Ezekiel 34:2-10

Verse 4 of this passage can be further illuminated by Jesus' description of the goats' lack of service in Matthew 25:42,43. –

For I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me not in: naked, and you clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited Me not.

What condemned these goats was an inherent lack of compassion, which is an evidence that they were void of the Holy Spirit and thus may never have been genuinely saved in the first place. Therefore the punishment is recorded as being the same as what is reserved for evil non-believers. –

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. - Matthew 25:46

The Apostle James warns us not to seek to be a teacher (James 3:1),- unless God calls you, don't seek the job in your flesh; because there is more required of those who assume to be distributors of God's word and they can be judged more severely, (Luke 12:48), especially if they have been feeding the sheep wrong doctrines

Ezekiel's prophecy goes on to show us God's judgment upon the congregations where the Lord separates the cattle from the cattle and the rams from the he goats.

And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seems it is a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but must you tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet? And as for My flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. - Ezekiel 34:17-19

The Lord is specifically addressing the males in the congregations, the "rams" and the "he goats." God has ordained the men to be the spiritual leaders and guides of their families. Apparently the Lord is finding fault with the males in His church, who in some ways have mirrored the behavior of the shepherds in not regarding how their behavior has affected their relationships and their witness for the Lord. By not seeking to be conformed into the Lord's image as all believers are exhorted to do, they have benefited from what God has given them, "eaten the good pasture," and "drunk of the deep waters;" but the witness of their lives has not been consistent with the goodness of the Lord that they have been ingesting. Their witness has resulted in pastures that they have marred with their feet and waters that they have fouled. Thus their hypocrisy has left a bad witness for the flock.

God sees the motives of the hearts and knows every thought

that comes into our minds (Ezekiel 11:5). He sees the ones like the man who left such a poor witness in his wake, that has pastor had nothing good to say about his life apart from his last minute repentance. He could be described as among those cattle who have "*thrust with the side and with the shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till they have scattered them abroad*"- Ezekiel 34:21.

The judgmental thrusting and pushing that repels those whom the Lord is seeking to be comforted and helped by His people, will be judged by our God who is a "consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29).

We need to remember as we are cowering among the herds, that the fires of God's judgment are motivated by His love for our souls. Real love is corrective, and His words to us are replete with admonishments woven among His encouragements and His promises. We all must endure the corrections that He will administer at the judgment seat of Christ.

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. - I Corinthians 11:32

Those who have heeded the words of the Lord in this life, have sought to please Him by following the Apostle Paul's encouragement to "*Cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" – II Corinthians 7:1

Real holiness is defined by the fruits of the Spirit that are formed within a believer by his abiding in the vine of Christ (John 15), and desiring to be led by the life giving Holy Spirit of our Lord that develops those fruits in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23).

We can be presented before God having no "spot or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:27); because if we are willing to judge ourselves, evaluate our walk with Him now, submit our wills to His will and let Him change us into the people He wants us to be: then we will not be judged. - *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged (I Corinthians 11:31).*

If we are obedient in this area, then our experience at the judgment seat of Christ does not have to be one of shame and regret, but one of joy when we hear the Lord say, "*Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: you enter into the joy of your Lord*"(Matthew 25:21).

I will leave you with these words from our Lord. – *If you love Me, keep My commandments (John 14:15). These things I command you, that you love one another (John 15:17).*

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, again in this place, which is without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be a habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.

Jeremiah 33:12

Oh Ye Shepherds, cause your flocks to lie down. Teach them to rest in Christ, and refresh them there from still waters cupped in His hands. Oh, ye shepherds, Is there any other rest? I know of none, saith the Lord.

Oh Ye Shepherds, cause your flocks to lie down. Now they run from words to words. There is no rest in words, unless they are from My mouth. Oh, ye shepherds cause your flocks to lie down, feed them My words and they shall have rest.- "Oh Ye Shepherds" from "The

Still Small Voice by H.D. Shively