

Eternal Judgment

by Anton Bosch

Anton Bosch's sermon on Eternal Judgment emphasizes the necessity of understanding both God's grace and justice, highlighting the eternal consequences of our choices regarding faith in Christ.

Duration: 42:52

Scripture: Hebrews 6:1, Revelation 3:11, Revelation 5:13

Topics: "Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story that changed his life as a young Christian. He attended a conference where an old mission lady sang a song that made him realize the importance of serving Jesus wholeheartedly. The speaker emphasizes the concept of appearing before the judgment seat of God, highlighting the element of terror in this event. He refers to the parable of the talents to illustrate the need to use our gifts and abilities for God's kingdom. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the balance between the love and grace of God and the justice and judgment of God.

Transcript

Alright, let's turn to Hebrews chapter 6. This is our last one in the series. Thank you for staying with us. And maybe it's good just to conclude with the scripture that we've been examining for the last few weeks.

Ten weeks in fact. Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 1. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.

And so, the final of the series is of eternal judgment. Now, you'll see that He's really begun right at the very beginning. Repentance from dead works right at the outset of our relationship with God.

We have to turn away from dead works. We have to come to Him in faith. Then there is the four baptisms, then the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and then finally eternal judgment.

And so, He's taking right from the beginning through to the end. Now, the issue of eternal judgment is something that we don't like talking about. We like to talk about the love of God and the grace of God.

But the love of God has to be offset against His justice. The grace of God has to be offset against His judgment. And so, we can't just preach one part of the message.

God's message is an entire message which deals with His goodness and with His grace, which deals with His goodness and His severity. In the Romans, Paul writes to the Romans and he says, Behold therefore the goodness and the severity of God. These are the two aspects of the nature of God.

As men in our relationship with our children, as fathers and as parents, we tend to lean to one extreme or the other. We tend to either be too severe or too strict, or on the other extreme, we tend to be too gracious or too loving. And if we do either of those, then obviously the children will not grow up with the correct understanding of a father.

They will either become unruly and undisciplined, or on the other hand, they may have all sorts of complexes and all sorts of fears because they have been over-disciplined. And so, we need to find a balance between those two. And obviously, God is perfectly love, has perfect love, but at the same time, He is absolutely just.

And so, He has these two extremes. And of course, His judgment, we can't speak about judgment without speaking about the fact that our judgment as sinners has been passed from us unto the Lord Jesus, and that on the cross of Calvary, the Father judged the Lord Jesus, punished Him in our place, put upon Him our sin, our guilt, and our shame, and the judgment, the penalty of our sin was laid upon Him, so that we can go free. And in that, we see also again the goodness of God, but also the severity of God.

He can't just change the rules. God is bound by His Word. He is bound by His rules.

And so, He couldn't just say, look, let's forget about the sin. Let's just ignore that as though that never happened, and let's start all over again. No, in fact, the price for sin had to be paid.

And Jesus pays that price for us at the cross of Calvary. Now, you see that He speaks of it as eternal judgment. That word eternal means everlasting.

There are many people who like to teach, who like to believe that God's judgment is not eternal, that God will send you to hell for a short while, and then once you've sort of gone through a period of pain, depending on how many sins you've got, and depending on how many good deeds you've got, then you spend a certain period, and then after that, God will take you out of that. But God's judgment is not only final, but it is eternal. And so, it is something which will last forever and ever.

It never stops. It never ceases. And so, there are a few principles we need to talk about, about this judgment.

The first is that obviously everyone will be judged, whether we are Christians or non-Christians. All will be judged. Hebrews 9, verse 27 says that it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment.

And so, as much as death, together with taxes, as they say, is inevitable, that's one of the things we cannot escape. Death and taxes are there. It's a fact of life.

And so, none of us will escape death, obviously unless the Lord Jesus comes before the time, and we are taken to be with Him before we die. But other than that, everyone will die. And if we die, immediately after death, the next thing that we face is judgment, and the judgment of God.

In Ecclesiastes 11, it says that as the tree falls, so it lies. It goes into more detail. It says if it falls to the south, it will lie to the south.

Now, that's a remarkable observation. The way a tree falls, that's the way it's going to lie. But he's obviously applying, there's another application for that, and that is the way that we die, that's the way that we die.

If we die unsaved, we are unsaved for eternity. If we die saved, we are saved for eternity. And so, nothing can change.

As much as a tree can't decide, look, I'm not comfortable lying this way, or would you lie another way? So, in the same way, you can't make up or change your mind after death. We have this life, and as much time as we have in this life, we have to make our decisions. And that decision is final the moment we breathe out the last.

Now, in John chapter 5, it tells us who the judge is. And John 5 verse 22 and also verse 23, it says that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. And so, in fact, Jesus will be the one who will exercise the judgment, obviously as part of the Godhead, as part of the Trinity.

The Father and the Spirit is also obviously intimately involved. Not one of them acts on his own. Jesus goes into great detail to explain that nothing he does is not what the Father wants him to do.

Nothing he says is not what the Father says anyway. And so, their judgment is one. But, in fact, the Lord Jesus will be the one who will sit in judgment, both of the believers and of the unbelievers.

Also in John chapter 5 verse 30, it tells us that God's judgment is just and is righteous. So, God doesn't judge, and Jesus doesn't judge the way we judge. We tend to judge depending how we feel.

Our judgment varies from one day to the other. And we even see that in the courts, not only of this land, but of any land. If you end up before a strict judge, you'll get a stiff sentence.

If you end up before a lenient judge, you'll get a lenient sentence. And also depending on all sorts of other factors. But God is not variable.

He's not changing. His judgment is righteous. His judgment is absolutely fair.

He can't be bought. He can't be bribed. He can't change His mind.

And so, that is a scary thought, but it's also a very comforting thought. In that He will be fair. He will be righteous.

He will be just. But obviously, for those who are on the wrong side of God, for those who have never made peace with God, obviously that is a very scary and a very serious thought to consider. And so, let's go to Revelation chapter 20, and let's talk firstly about the judgment of the unbeliever.

And I'm just going to go to one scripture on this aspect, and then we'll spend quite a bit of time on the issue of the judgment of believers. And Revelation 20 takes us right to the end of time, and this is the second, third, last chapter of the Bible. And it tells us in verse 11, Revelation 20 verse 11, Then I saw a great white throne, and a hymn was set on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.

And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God. And books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life.

And the dead were judged according to their works by the things which were written in the books. The seed gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one according to his works. Then death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.

This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Now, you'll see that he speaks in verse 12 about the dead.

He saw them small and great standing before God. Now, when we spoke about the resurrections, we said there were two resurrections. The first resurrection unto life, which is that of the believers before the millennium, before the thousand years of peace.

And then there's a second resurrection, the resurrection of the dead. Because that is what they are called. They are called the dead.

Now, they are called the dead because the scripture teaches us that we are dead in our trespasses and sins. We are spiritually dead until we come to Christ. Now, these people also physically died, so they were both spiritually and physically dead.

Now, they are resurrected, so they get temporal physical life, but spiritually they still have no life. And so they are still the dead. They are referred to as the dead even though they stand on their feet before the judgment seat of Christ.

And this is called the great white throne judgment. And Jesus then will judge them. And it's essentially whether their names are written in the Lamb's book of life or not.

And obviously their names are not found there, because these people are those who have never accepted Christ, who have never believed on the Lord Jesus, and therefore their names are not written in the book of life. Now, many people say, well, what's the purpose of the judgment? Why do you then have a judgment? Because when they died, as we said, it's appointed unto man once to die, then judgment as the tree falls, so it lies. So, if a man died or a person died as an unbeliever, then what's the purpose then of this judgment, which then happens a long time down the road at the end of the age? Why is there then still another judgment? Well, I believe it's simply to fulfill the requirements of the law.

And you'll know that even in our law there are two aspects to judgment. And so what will happen is a man may be found guilty, and he would be pronounced as such by the magistrate or by the judge, and then he will come back at a later stage for sentencing. And so his guilt has been established.

Now it's a matter of just pronouncing the sentence. Now, in here you see a very similar kind of process. The question here is not whether they're guilty or not.

The question is simply going through the legal aspect of saying, your name is not in the book of life. These were the opportunities you had to accept Jesus as your Savior. You never accepted Him.

Therefore your name is not here, and you are condemned forever. And this is a terrible thing. This is a fearsome thing.

And the New Testament says it's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a living God. And this is an awesome judgment. It's one thing to be judged by an earthly magistrate or judge for a crime.

It's another thing to be judged by Christ. Not just because He is a great God and because He is a great judge, but because He paid the price for our sin. We could have, not us, but those who are at that judgment could have gone free.

They could have had eternal life if they'd only accepted the fact that Jesus took their punishment in their place. And so that makes the judgment even worse. So it's not just even a matter of being guilty.

But what makes it worse is that the judge was the one who had paid the price for you to go free, and you rejected the liberty which He has offered. You rejected the forgiveness and the grace which He extended while you were alive. And so the judgment is a terrible thing.

And you'll find there that He speaks about the fact that they are cast into the lake of fire. This is eternal judgment. This is eternal hell.

A terrible thing. And I trust that none of us will find ourselves there at that time. This concept, this aspect of the teaching of the Word of God is the main reason why atheists are atheists.

Why evolutionists are evolutionists. Because they don't like to be accountable. And so they say, no, well there is no God.

God never made the world. God never made things. Things just evolved.

Because the moment we accept that God is, the moment we accept that we have to accept accountability. We have to accept that we are going to have to stand before Him one day. And give an account for the way that we lived our lives and for the things that we did.

But here the issue really is not how well I lived my life or how badly I lived my life. The issue here is did I accept the forgiveness that was offered through Jesus Christ or not. That's the issue.

If I accepted His forgiveness, my name will appear in the Lamb's Book of Life. And I will not be part of this judgment. If I did not accept Him, then obviously my name will not appear in that Book of Life.

And I will be part of this judgment. Alright. Now let's talk about the judgment of believers.

Now if we go to Romans chapter 14. And this is a separate judgment. And maybe I trust I'm not confusing you.

Because the Great White Throne Judgment which we just spoke about now. That's at the end of the thousand years of peace. This judgment which we're talking about now for believers is at the beginning of the thousand years of peace.

And we're not going to get into details to exactly where. But there's basically a thousand years between these two judgments. Now in Romans chapter 14 and verse 10.

Romans 14 verse 10 says, 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. 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 each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore. But rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. Now you see he's speaking here about brothers.

He's speaking about those who are believers. He's writing to Romans, to the Christians in Rome. And he's saying we.

He includes himself. Paul is included in this. And he says we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Now this is not the great white throne judgment which we've spoken about. And we'd have to go to many other scriptures to show the difference between the two. But if you can trust me on that, that this is a separate judgment.

This is a judgment for Christians. And you'll see that he says here that verse 12. So each of us shall give an account of himself to God.

And so individually every Christian as much as every unbeliever will stand before Christ at the great white throne. Every believer will stand before Christ before this judgment. Which is the judgment essentially for rewards.

The purpose of this judgment and we'll see it in the other scriptures as we go along. Is not to determine whether you're saved or not saved. The purpose of this judgment is not to determine whether you'll go to heaven or not.

The purpose of this judgment is to determine what rewards you will receive. For the way in which you served Christ. Now if we go back, remember the issue of repentance from dead works.

Everything I did before I came to Christ is of no consequence whatsoever. All the good things I did, all the bad things I did, they were dead works. They were not able to be of any value.

And if we come to Christ, if any man been Christ, Corinthians says, he's a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold all things have become new.

So really as far as God is concerned, as a Christian, my life begins the day I give my life to Jesus. The day I'm born again. That's the beginning of my life.

That's the beginning of when the books begin to record the good and the bad that I do as a Christian. Up to that point, doesn't count. Now let's go to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Now this is why this is important for us to have all of these principles.

To have them all together and to understand them all together. Because if you only have the teaching on repentance from dead works, we can then get the impression that I don't have to do anything. As long as I believe in the Lord Jesus, that's all that matters.

But that is not the end of the conversation. From the moment I become born again, I now have a responsibility to live a life which is godly. To live a life which pleases God.

And to do the things that He wants me to do. And for that there is a judgment and there are certain rewards. Now if we go to 2 Corinthians 5. Sorry, I'm not there yet.

2 Corinthians 5 and verse 9. Paul says, therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. Now remember the basis of this. It's not so that I can earn brownie points with God.

Or that I can somehow earn merits with Him. But because He's done so much for me, I want to do so much for Him. When I fully understand what He has done for me in buying my salvation, paying the price for my sin on the cross of Calvary.

I have to live a life of worship and of gratitude and of service to Him. Not to repay Him. I can never repay the price that was paid on the cross of Calvary.

But it is simply as a sign of gratitude and saying, Lord you've done so much for me. The little I can do for you is nothing in comparison. And I do it as an act of worship.

I do it because I love you. That is the motive. And so Paul says, we make it our aim then to be well pleasing to Him.

To please the Lord. Verse 10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

See the same words that we read in Romans. That each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

And we are well known to God and I also trust are well known in your consciences. Now he's then saying that we have to appear before the judgment seat of God. And he says there is an element of terror in that.

Terror is not in the sense that we may be condemned. But terror in the sense that you remember that Jesus tells a parable of men who were given different talents. And this is a picture of the Lord Jesus.

He says this man goes away into a far country. He's a ruler. He then comes back and he says now give an account.

You received 10 talents. You received 5 talents. You received 1 talent.

What have you done with those talents? And remember those who had taken the 5 talents. The one who took the 5 and he earned another 5. He says well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.

And he's given authority over cities. But the other one who took the 1 talent that he had been given by the master. He takes that and he hides it away.

And he gives the 1 back to you and he says well here's what you gave me in the first place. I did nothing with it. And you remember that the master says you wicked and you slothful servant.

You knew that I reaped where I didn't sow. And so he deals with him very very harshly. And so there is an element of dread in standing before God on that day.

And saying well he's given so much to us. He gave us his son. He gave us his spirit.

He gave us the church. He gave us his word. He gave each one of us gifts.

He gave us so many things. Opportunities, time, energy. Whatever all the things that he's given to us.

What have we done with those things? And we stand before him on that day empty handed. And we say Lord I did nothing. I used those things to build my own empire.

To put together things of an earthly nature. But I did nothing for your kingdom. I did nothing to please you.

I did nothing to serve you. And so Paul says because we know the terror of the Lord we persuade men. But there's another aspect that motivated Paul.

So on the one hand there was the terror of God. But on the other hand there was the love of God. In verse 14 in the same chapter.

For the love of Christ constrains us. Because we just thus judge that if one died for all then all died. So he says that the terror of the Lord is one aspect.

But the love of Christ also constrains us. Forces us in a sense. That word constrained means that you're constrained or forced.

Put into a place where you have no options. When something is constrained it's put into a narrow place. And so he says I don't really have many options as to what I'm going to do with my life.

Because the love of God has or the love of Christ has constrained me. Put me into that place where I have to do what pleases Him. And so there are these two things.

The judgment on the one hand and the love of God. Both of these things motivating and driving Paul. And they should be motivating and driving us.

Now if we go to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. We've been in 2 Corinthians 5. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 3. And here we'll see exactly how this judgment works. And it gives us a lot of accurate detail as to the basis of the judgment. Now the context here is that Paul is speaking about working in the church.

Building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. And he says we are all different builders. Some plant and others water.

God gives the increase. And then verse 11 he says no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw.

Each one's work will become manifest for the day will declare it. Because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burnt he will suffer loss. But he himself will be saved. Yet so is through fire.

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy which temple you are. So he's saying that we're all working.

We're all building in the church. We have part to play in one way or the other. But some people are building with gold, silver, precious stones.

In other words things that will last. Things that will endure. Others are building with wood, hay and stove.

Things that are cheap but will not endure. And then he says that everyone's work, the day will test the work. Verse 13.

Each one's work will become manifest for the day will declare it. Because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work. And so what we'll do is we'll stand before Jesus on that day as Christians.

And the question is not whether we're saved or not saved as we said. The question is what have we done for him. And you remember there's that little plot that some people have on their houses.

Only the things that are done for Christ will last. And so the things I did for myself, the things I did for ego and for pride, even though they were godly things, those things are wood, hay and stove. They will be consumed.

They will not stand. But the things that were done for God in the right motive, with the right attitude, those things will last. They will stand the test.

And then he says for those things there will be a reward. But then he says what about someone who has no works. Remember the thief on the cross for instance.

He was saved. Jesus said to him, there you'll be with me in paradise. But he had no time to do anything for God.

He died virtually moments after he was declared righteous. So what about him? People say well what about him? Well he will be saved. But the scripture says that he has no works and so there's no reward.

And so it speaks about, he says if anyone verse 15's work is burnt, now in the case of the thief on the cross, there's no work to be tested anyway. But if someone may even have served God for a long time, but in fact it has no substance, that is burnt. But he will suffer loss.

In other words, he will suffer loss in the sense that there's no reward. But then he says he himself will be saved, yet so is through fire. And so he'll still go into heaven.

But he will receive no reward. And so we say well that's no big deal. As long as I can get to heaven.

Many Christians tell me that. All I'm interested in is I just want to get to heaven. Well I don't think that it's as simple as that.

And there's a story I often share with people and some may know the story, but a thing that changed my life when I was about 17 years old and I had gone to a conference in Bloemfontein of the church and there was an old mission lady, I never knew who she was and I've never discovered the song again. But it was the first and only time I ever heard the song. But she sang a song one night which changed my life as a very young Christian.

And the song basically said that when I see him, I'll wish I've done more. More, more, so much more. And I realized that when I stand before Jesus on that day and when I for the first time fully appreciate the price he paid for me at the cross, when I for the first time fully appreciate what was involved in my salvation, I'll wish I had served him better.

And you know then it's too late for regrets. Then there's no time to say well Lord I'll go back and I want to serve you again. It's only today that we have.

And so over and over the scripture both Old and New Testament encourages us to work while it is day because the night is coming when no man can work. In other words we have time, we have energy today but we may not have it tomorrow. And so standing before him and saying well as long as I can make it into heaven, no that's not what it's about.

Because when I see him, when I see him face to face, when I see those nail prints in his hands and his feet, I will really, every one of us, doesn't matter how faithfully we've served him, I believe there will be a sense in which we will say I wish I'd just served him a little bit better and I'd served him a little bit more. Now what are the things that will be judged? Now I'm just going to go through this very quickly and not go through each one of the scriptures. But one of the things that will be judged is our motives.

And so as we've said it doesn't matter how much I've done, if I did it with the wrong motive, and remember Jesus speaks and we dealt with this under the heading of dead works. He speaks about the scribes and the Pharisees and they said well you know we do all these things, we fast and we give money to the poor, we do all those things. But he says you do it so that men can honour you.

He says you've had your reward. There's no reward for you in heaven. There's no future reward because you did it to get men's honour, you got men's honour, so you got what you were out for.

And so the wrong motive is no good. So our motives will be judged and 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5 speaks about that. The secrets of men in Romans chapter 2 verse 16 it speaks about the fact that he will judge the secrets of men.

Those things that are deep down in our hearts that we think that other people don't know about. He knows about those things. And those things will be brought out in the open.

Those things will be judged on that day. Obviously if we've confessed them before him and I've been forgiven, then they've been forgiven. But those things that are not being dealt with and that we hide in our hearts and we think nobody knows but God does know, those will be judged.

Matthew chapter 12 speaks about the fact that every idle word, every word that we speak, doesn't matter whether it was spoken in jest, we will have to give an account. Because remember words are very very powerful. Words can build up and words can destroy.

And so those words that we speak that hurt people, those words that we spoke that blessed people, all those words we will give an account for on that day. The things that we have done. Matthew chapter 25 and 1 Peter chapter 1 speaks about the fact that we will give an account for how we cared for other people.

Those who are hungry of my brethren, Jesus says in Matthew 25. Of our fellow Christians. Did we see fellow Christians in hunger and we didn't help them? Did we see them in need and we didn't visit them? Did we see them sick and we didn't attend to them? And so how we lived our lives in relationship with one another.

That we will give an account for. And then ultimately in Matthew chapter 25 he speaks about the talents and the basis of that judgment is on faithfulness. Faithfulness.

So it's not a matter of how much we've done. It's how faithful we've been. And some of us have many talents.

And God is going to require much more from us with many talents. Some of us only have one or two talents. We will be judged according to the few talents that we have.

And so we can look at some people, some great preachers who maybe have affected thousands and thousands of lives through their preaching. And we say well they are going to receive a great reward. And maybe there is somebody, I always speak about the little old lady who's never been able to, maybe she's crippled or she's bedridden, she couldn't do anything.

And maybe she's going to receive no reward because she's done so little. And there's this great preacher, he's done so much. But you know if she was faithful in doing what God asked her to do maybe all she could do was pray.

But if she prayed faithfully, a hundred percent, she will receive a great reward. That great preacher, if he was unfaithful in preaching or he was maybe faithful to a certain extent but he wasn't faithful all the way, he will receive a lesser reward than the old lady who was a hundred percent faithful. So God is not interested in how many people we've reached or how great our ministry has been.

Because remember, what we have we received from Him in the first place. So the preacher with the great talents, God gave him those great talents. The little old lady with one talent only able to pray, God gave her that one talent.

So He's not asking how great our gifts are. He's not asking how great success we've attained. What He's wanting to know is how faithful we've been in that one talent or those two talents or the ten talents, however much He's given to us.

And so the bottom line is faithfulness. And you'll see that's what He says, well done, good and faithful servant. But to the one who took the one talent and he hid it, He says you wicked and you slothful servant.

In other words, lazy servant. You didn't apply yourself. The way that I ask you to apply yourself.

And so the question then is what rewards? If we're all going to go to heaven, then surely there's, you know, what reward can there be that is greater than getting to heaven? Well, the first I believe and the greatest reward of them all is also in Matthew 25, just the commendation of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, people are driven by a need for recognition. People are driven and people do the most amazing things so that people will slap them on the back and say you're great.

You know, it's not even the money that they get or the prize that they get at the end of the day, just the fact that people approve. People are absolutely driven for the approval of men. And, you know, I think we're all moved when we see men and women who have overcome great odds and won some great race or some great prize and are recognized by the world.

The world stands up and they say what a great man or great woman. Look what they've done. Look what they've achieved.

But, you know, nothing can compare with the acclaim and the approval of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's what we need to hear. Well done, good and faithful servant.

That would be a tremendous thing, you know. And it's not going to be something that happens in secret. It's not going to happen somewhere in a corner.

In fact, this judgment is going to be public because he says that which is done in secret will be shouted from the mountaintops or from the housetops. And that which is done in the hidden parts that will be revealed to all. And so that's going to be an awesome day for some who have done terrible things and wicked things as Christians.

And there are Christians who don't live good lives and don't please God. But then it's going to be a great day for those who have faithfully served God, never sought for men's acclaim or never sought for men's approval, but simply served God faithfully looking for His approval when He publicly approves. And remember Jesus says if we deny Him before men He will deny us before the angels and before the Father.

But if we acknowledge Him before men He will acknowledge us publicly before His Father and before the angels. And so that's going to be a great day when Jesus turns to His Father and He says, here's this, you see my servant here. I'm identifying with him or with her.

They faithfully have served me. And so here is someone I'm well pleased in. Remember the voice that came from the Father concerning Jesus.

This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased, hearing Him. Now we'll never hear those words in this life. God is not going to do that for us.

But on that day, maybe if we've been faithful, we will hear His voice declaring before the whole world, before all principalities and powers and the angels Here's whoever, here's this man or this woman. I'm well pleased in them. They've been good and faithful servants of mine.

That's a great reward in itself. And then of course in Luke chapter 19 it speaks about ruling cities and during the millennial reign of Christ, those who have been faithful they will be given authority to rule over cities. Some of us will maybe get a suburb to look after.

Some of us will get cities. Some of us may get larger areas. Some of us may get nothing.

But depending how faithful we've been. And that's just a principle which is taught there. And then finally in 2 Peter chapter 4, Paul talks about, he says, Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.

And there are a whole lot of other scriptures. Revelation chapter 3, 11. Revelation chapter 4, verse 24.

Various other scriptures that speak about a crown that we're going to receive. Now we say, surely that's sort of materialistic. What do you want to do with a crown in heaven? As long as I can just get into heaven, that's all that matters.

But again if we read in Revelation 4, what they do with these crowns is they throw the crowns at Jesus' feet. And so the crowns we receive is not to say, look my crown is bigger than your crown. But the crown we receive is so that we can have something to throw at his feet in worship and adoration.

Because remember we're now in heaven and we've not been able to take anything from this earth. And so we can't take some money or gold or whatever from this earth and say that when we get to heaven then we'll have something to throw at his feet. No, in fact all we will have is what we receive on the day of judgment.

And so if he gives us that crown, we'll have something to throw at his feet. And Revelation 4 says that they throw the crowns at his feet and they say, you are worthy to receive blessing and honor and glory. And so it would be a terrible thing to stand before him on that day and the crowds are throwing crowns at his feet, worshiping him with these things.

And we stand there empty handed, having nothing to give, nothing to worship him with. Because in fact we have been slothful and we've been slack in our service of him. And so why is this an important principle? Because all of these principles must underlie our lives.

And as much as if we just go back to the first principle of repentance from dead works, as much as every moment of the day I must be aware that I can't do anything to earn my salvation. I can't do anything to earn blessing from God. That is something that must be a principle which is fundamental to my life, foundational to my life.

That must be there all the time. But in the same way, each of those principles must be present in my life all the time. It must be foundational to all my motives and my actions and the things I do and the things I don't do.

But one of the other things that must be there is the awareness that I'm going to have to give an account. That I'm not living a life which is just aimless and without purpose. And that somehow I can just live my life in a careless way.

But I need to live my life knowing that I'm going to have to give an account for all my time, for all my gifts, all my talents, everything that God has given to me. He's going to require an account of those things. And you know, it's quite scary how few Christians understand this principle.

Because when you look at their lives, you see that their lives are lived selfishly. Their lives, everything about them, everything they have, everything they own, all their gifts, their talents, their abilities, their time, their financial resources, it's all used for selfish purposes. And they live as though there is no judgment.

But when this becomes real, when this becomes part of the foundation in our lives, we're aware that yes, God doesn't want us not to enjoy our lives. He doesn't want us not to have times of recreation and to have nice things. But at the same time, we need to live in such a way that we recognize that everything that I do is being recorded.

The books will be opened. Everything that I say will be recorded. And I will have to give an account for those things.

And so let me live my life in such a way. And so Paul says that knowing the terror of the Lord, he says, I fulfill my ministry, I persuade men, but also the love of Christ constrains me. And so do we just want to receive rewards? Or do we need to serve Him because He's first served us? Do we need to love Him because He first loved us? And as we've said, we can't repay what the price He paid for us.

We can't give Him back a fraction of what He's done for us. But He's done so much for us. He's worthy of everything we're able to bring.

He's worthy of everything we're able to give Him in terms of serving Him and of blessing Him. And remember, it's not just what we do for Him in an airy-fairy style. Many people think, how can I do things for Him? But what I do to the church, what I do for the church, these are things that are being done for Him.

If I remember, Jesus says to Paul, Paul, you're persecuting me. But in fact, Paul was not persecuting Jesus physically. He was persecuting the church.

But in the process, he was persecuting the Lord Jesus. In the same way, as we bless the church, as we bless other Christians, we are in fact blessing the Lord Jesus. As we serve one another as brothers and sisters in the faith, we are serving the Lord Jesus.

And He recognizes all of those things. And so God give us grace that we may look at our lives and say, am I ready for this judgment? You know, the same way as when you have to write an exam at the end of the year, it's no good getting to the day before the exam and say, well, I don't know whether I'm ready. And that's why schools and other places will give you tests along the way to prepare you and say, well, am I ready? And you need to examine yourself and say, well, am I on schedule? With my studies, will I make it when I get to the test? And in the same way, Paul encourages us on a number of occasions to examine ourselves, to say, well, where am I? Am I doing what God wants me to do? Am I living my life in a way that He wants me to live? So that when I get to the day of judgment, I'm not suddenly caught by surprise.

And so let me examine myself, he says, because when I judge myself, he says, that's better than I come to the judgment and God then has to judge me. And so let me judge myself, let me be hard on myself. That's really what he is saying.

Lest the Lord have to be hard on me, so that I may stand before Him on that day, not ashamed, but that I may hear those words, well done, good and faithful servant. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the price that Jesus paid for us on the cross.

And Lord, we recognize that none of us deserve that. And Lord, at the same time, none of us can repay that because that is a price too awesome and too great to contemplate. There is just no way we can repay you for what you've done for us.

And so Lord, we pray that you would just generate within our hearts and through your Spirit just pour out your love upon us in our hearts. Lord, that we may understand that in fact you've loved us so much that we need to love you in return. That you've done so much for us, Lord, that we need to lay our lives at your feet in service and in worship and in adoration.

And so Lord, help us to indeed come to terms with these things, that we are not our own, but that we've been bought with a price and that we belong to you, and that we may use our time, that we may use our talents, that we may use our abilities, that we may use our resources to serve you. And Lord, that we may on that day hear those words, well done, good and faithful servant. Lord, some of us may never have been acclaimed by men in this life, may never have received any recognition during our lives here on earth.

But Lord, that doesn't matter because what we want is we want your acclaim, we want your recognition, we want to hear you acknowledge us before your Father and before the angels in heaven. Help us, Lord, for this not just to be a theory or something that we read about in the scriptures, but Lord, that it may become a principle and a foundation in our lives, that we may live our lives in awareness of this as much as we're aware of the fact that you saved us by your grace. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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