

# The Judgment-Seat of Christ

by Jackie Hughes

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of serving God for His glory, as our motives, ministry, and money will be examined at the judgment seat of Christ.*

**Duration:** 49:54

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:1-3, 2 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 5:9-11

**Topics:** "Judgment Seat", "Christian Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a humorous anecdote about a situation where he had to sing with an organist who didn't know how to play the music correctly. Despite the initial confusion, they managed to work together and continue the song. The speaker then transitions to a more serious topic, expressing his fear of standing before the judgment seat of Christ and giving an account of his actions. He emphasizes the importance of persuading others to follow Christ and living a life that is pleasing to God. The sermon concludes with a mention of the uplifting effect of singing and a reminder that our imperfections will be transformed in heaven.

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## Transcript

Getting self-caught up here with these glasses. Tremendous just to be here and hear that tremendous singing. Does your soul really good.

Prepares you for heaven. Those of you who were singing a wee note out of tune tonight, you'll be changed before you get there. You ought to remember me telling you at one of the last prayer advances that I used to sing in a gospel group when I was saved at first.

Then my wife and I sang together. And then one night on our way to a service, my wife took ill. When we arrived at the service, the preacher said, you'll have to sing in your own.

I said, I've never sang on my own before. He said, you can do it tonight. I know nothing about music.

And the woman that was playing the organ knew even less about music than I did. So I gave her the music and she started to play. What she started to play wasn't what I was going to sing.

So I looked at her and she looked at me, smiled at each other. And she started the second time. And again, what she played wasn't what I was going to sing.

And again, I smiled at her and she smiled at me. She started the third time, and I thought, Lord, I need to jump in here somewhere or this congregation will think I fancy the organist. So I started on with a little bit of effort, got through the first verse.

But she wasn't happy. She thought it wasn't high enough. So on the big effort, I got through the second verse.

She still wasn't happy. And on the third verse, she was playing so high, my mouth was opened so wide, there was nothing left to come out. And my solo career started and finished on the same night.

But I come from a church that really loves good singing. We love real good singing. And it's been thrilling to hear the singing here tonight.

The last chorus we sang together, only one life to live. I must not miss the well done of God. It's good to rejoice in the fact that you're saved.

It's good to know that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. It's good to know that this your sin is under the blood of the crucified one. But men, there is a day of accountability.

We need to understand that there is a day of accountability. And I want to read tonight some verses from 2nd Corinthians. And in chapter 5, 2nd Corinthians chapter 5. And at verse number 1, for we know that if we're earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God on house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Now he that hath wrought for us the selfsame thing as God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight.

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body unto be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. 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.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. We'll just end the reading there at verse number 11. We know that God will bless the reading of his own inspired and inerrant words.

It doesn't matter how often a man preaches, he always is nervous. It's something that comes with being a preacher. One of the things that when I look back on my life, having spent almost 30 years in a country that was torn apart by terrorist activity, when we were married at first we lived in one of these terrorist areas in the city.

One night there was a bomb explosion nearby and our youngest girl was just a baby then and she was thrown straight out of the bed. On another night we were lying on the floor while bullets were coming off

the lamppost outside the door. The next night I was going out to preach and you know what it's like when you're only married.

She thinks the world of you and she kept saying you will be very careful. Do you really need to go? Will you get back home? And I said don't you worry. She said it's alright for you because you don't have the sense to worry.

On two occasions I was almost killed in some of the activities. There is a certain amount of fear that strikes into your soul, but I can tell you tonight that the thing that frightens me more than anything else is knowing that I've got to stand at the judgment seat of Christ. That scares me.

The very thought of having to stand and give an account of those deeds done on the body. I remember once before God saved me I remember standing in a shop or outside a shop window looking through the glass in the shop and noticing on the back wall of the shop there were these large boxes of chocolates. And I thought it would be lovely to have a chocolate and so we went into the shop.

We moved up the back wall. I opened my coat, just put my hand up the back, lifted the box of chocolates, put it up my coat, buttoned my coat and was ready to go out when I found a hand resting on my shoulder. And I was standing and they were debating what they were going to do.

Will we bring the police? What will we do with them? And I'm standing thinking you would need to do something quick before these chocolates melt up the back of my coat. I thought nobody saw me, but somebody did. And men, when you think nobody knows or nobody sees, there is somebody who does.

Somebody who does. And in 2nd Corinthians and the chapter 5 you need to understand who Paul is writing to in this chapter. It's very simple when you take the 5th chapter of 2nd Corinthians.

Because constantly you have this word we. You have it in verse 1 for we know. You have it again in verse 2 for in this we groan.

Paul is including himself. You have it again in verse 3 if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. You have it again in verse 4. You have it again in verse 6. You have it again in verse 7 for we walk by faith.

You have it in verse 8 we are confident. You have it in verse 9 we labor. And you have it in verse 10 for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt the Apostle Paul is speaking about believers. Because unbelievers don't walk by faith. Unbelievers are not confident that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

And you understand the context of what the Apostle is saying and writing in the chapter. He is writing about believers. We believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

This is not an optional extra. This is a reality. We shall stand individually.

We shall stand personally before the Lord our Savior. It's standing at the judgment seat or the Bema as it is sometimes referred to. You see at this time when the New Testament was written the Bema was not a judicial seat upon which a judge sought to pass sentence but rather a throne from which the judge distributed prizes to the winners of the game.

It's the Bema not to test a believer's title on fitness for heaven but to scrutinize our works on service. For the Master. All our works are going to be scrutinized at the judgment seat of Christ.

And that frightens the life out of me. Frightens the life out of me. I don't know what it does to you.

Frightens the life out of me. And I want to just underline a few things. First of all there is a point of differentiation here that we need to understand.

This is judgment for believers under service. Not believers under sins. Our sins were judged at the cross.

They are under the blood. It's not a judgment for sin. It is a judgment for service.

It's a judgment seat for believers. The judgment seat or the judgment for sinners is outlined in the book of Revelation. The great white throne judgment.

If only men and women in our world today would realize that they're going to stand before God and give an account. It sometimes would bring us to the reality of service for Jesus Christ. Sometimes we incline to just play Christianity.

Sometimes we're inclined just to play church. But there is something that is a definite reality that needs to be understood tonight. We must, we must all, every one of us individually stand before God.

What a sobering thought. What a sobering thought. If there is differentiation to be understood between the judgment seat of Christ and the great white throne judgment in Revelation where every sinner will stand and the books will be opened.

Can I say that this judgment at the great white throne there's not only the point of differentiation, there is personal examination. Personal examination. When it comes down to personal examination, I would suggest to you tonight that all our motives will be examined.

All our motives. The Apostle Paul reminds us again in 1 Corinthians and chapter 4 that when the Lord comes, he will expose the motives of people's hearts. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.

Oh, when you think of it tonight, this examination at the judgment seat of Christ will not be based on outward observation, but on inward motivation. What was it that motivated me? What was the motive in doing it? Why am I here tonight? Am I here because I wanted to fly across the Atlantic Ocean? Am I here tonight because I simply wanted my name on a form? My motive for being here will be scrutinized at the judgment seat of Christ. My motive, your motive will be scrutinized.

Think of all the hidden things in your life tonight. You see those things nobody else knows anything about. You've never revealed them to anybody else.

All the time you've been walking about, professing your faith, living like a Christian, carrying your Bible in the church, and all the time the inward motive of your heart has been wrong. All wrong. There's going to be an examination of our motives.

All will be revealed. Did I do it for the glory of God, or did I do it to puff up the flesh? It scares me. It really does.

This is one sobering thing that does in my life, you know, because we artists, people have a great sense of humor. When it comes to the work of God, we've got to be careful that our motivation is for the glory of God and not to please man. All our motives are going to be scrutinized.

I'll tell you, not only is all our motives going to be scrutinized and examined, our ministry is going to be examined at the judgment seat of Christ. Our ministry. All the preaching will be scrutinized.

Every preacher at the prayer advance tonight, every sermon we've ever preached, every word we've ever spoken from the pulpit is going to be scrutinized at the judgment seat. Oh, listen, in the work of God there are some things that are really important. A man can turn up at a meeting with a message, but it may not be God's message.

And a man's got to be sure in his heart that he's got a message from God because his ministry, his preaching is going to be examined and scrutinized at the judgment seat. Almost makes you not want to preach anymore. I'll tell you this, not only is the preaching going to be examined and scrutinized at the judgment seat, but the praying is going to be examined and scrutinized at the judgment seat.

You know, so often we can be guilty of far a single praying. There's a difference between saying prayers and praying prayers. There's a whole lot of people can say prayers, but there's a vast difference in saying it and praying it.

I remember once in the local school, I'm on the Board of Governors in the local school. Our system's different. I'm allowed into the school to conduct assemblies and speak to the children.

It's great. Long may it continue. But there's a minister on the Board of Governors.

He's an Anglican minister. He's as dark as night. There's more life in a corpse.

And he said to me one night, speaks with a Southern drove brother, would you like, would you like to come down to my church and tell us what you believe? I said, sure. So when I arrived, he said, we'll have a little reading and a little prayer. And he opened the book and he read a verse and he read a prayer.

And then he said, it's over to you. Now, after one hour of telling them what I believe, I've got to be honest. I never was invited back, but you know, it's sad.

There's a whole lot of people on all the do say prayers. If they miss the prayer meeting, you could almost stand and say, Lord, they're not here tonight, but here's your prayer. Cause it's the same every week.

Not from the heart. They're simply reciting a prayer and it's all going to be scrutinized at the judgment seat. But when you think of the personal examination, our motives are going to be examined.

Our ministry is going to be examined. Our money is going to be examined at a judgment seat. We're stewards of the mysteries of God.

And that is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. The word steward there means a slave who managed the affairs of his master's household. Remember what the Lord said to the nation of Israel and Malachi? You have robbed me, but how have we robbed you? You have robbed me in tithes and offerings.

And sometimes when it comes to the work of God and advancing the work of God, we'll do everything on anything, but put our hands on our pockets. It's like we say sometimes in Ireland, some of these boys,

when they're putting money in the offering, they're almost saying, God be with you till we meet again. But it's all going to come at the judgment seat.

It's going to come up. It's all going to be scrutinized and examined at the judgment seat of Christ. Something else you need to see in the chapter.

Not only that the point of differentiation, not only the personal examination, but there is an embarrassing revelation here. Because when we stand at the judgment seat, we need to understand that we're sending material up. You know what the scriptures tell us? Other foundation can no man lay than has led.

That is Christ Jesus. We're building on the foundation. But one day the materials are going to be tested by the fire of the judgment seat.

What kind of material was it? Was it performed for God's glory? Performed for God's glory to be likened to gold or silver or precious stones? Or is it work that's performed in the energy of the flesh and it's going to be burned up at the judgment seat? Amen. Can you understand it tonight? Everything we have done is going to be led bare at the judgment seat. A lot of it.

And some of us, when it's all assessed, we're going to stand ashamed before the Lord. What a day. What a day.

I wonder, will you be embarrassed when you meet the master? Will you be ashamed when you meet the master? What was it we sang? Only one life. Only one life. And the Lord will never say well done if you haven't done well.

There are times when in the work of God, sacrifices have to be made. But God will know whether we made it for his glory or not. To stand alone at the throne of God and to see all your works burned up will be an embarrassing scene.

Will be an embarrassing scene. There is a rewarding presentation here because there's going to be rewards at the judgment seat. Going to be rewards.

The Bible speaks about some of these rewards. Remember Paul when he wrote 1 Corinthians 9, he speaks about the incorruptible crown for faithful service. Well done, good and faithful servant.

There's an incorruptible crown that's going to be presented. Remember when Paul was coming to the end of his ministry? In 2nd Timothy he said, that the time of my departure is at hand and henceforth there is there up for me a crown of righteousness with the Lord. The righteous judge shall give me a day.

And not to me only, but to them also that love his appearing. Here is a crown of reward to those who love his appearing. Peter reminds us in 1st Peter and chapter 5 and verse 4, that there's a crown of glory for the faithful servants who have tended the flock.

Feed my sheep and those who have been faithful in feeding the sheep will be rewarded. They'll be rewarded. That's why men, you gotta feed your soul on the Word of God and you've got to be with God before you go before people because you need fed if you're going to feed them.

You cannot feed them if you're not fed. You see all these internet stuff and all that's going on, there's no such a thing as getting into the internet and pulling something down on a Saturday night and getting up on Sunday morning and preaching it. That's all I'll tell you.

You need to get onto your knees before God and wait that God talks to you. And when God talks to you, then you know you've got it from God. And when you get it from God, you can stand before the people and you can declare this is the Word of the Lord.

It's the Word of the Lord. You've got to get it from God. And there's going to be crown of glory for faithful servants.

Remember in the book of Revelation chapter two, there's a crown of life. It's reserved for the martyrs. Do you ever feel when you hear some of the things that happen across the world and you hear about those people who have given their lives for Jesus Christ? Ever feel you'll be ashamed? I said at one of the conferences one night in our church, we had a pastor from China.

When he arrived in Northern Ireland, the little bag he was carrying contained two shirts. That was all. He stood on our meeting Wednesday night and spoke of how he had pastored a church, how he had been put in prison for 22 years in the labor camp.

How that during those 22 years in the labor camp, his wife and her family were allowed to visit him. When he spent those 22 years in the labor camp, his wife had died. He wasn't even notified that his wife had died.

His job in the labor camp was in the cesspool with all the stench. And he says the cesspool became like hallowed ground because none of the guards would come near it because of the stench. And he said from that cesspool, I was able to have communion with my God.

And he said, I would sing in the midst of the cesspool. And I broke in to singing in the Chinese language. I come to the garden alone when the Jew is still in the And the voice I hear falling on us here, the voice of God discloses.

And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known. You know, you could almost feel the tears sitting right here.

And I said, Lord, I'm going to be ashamed when I get home, when I see what they've gone through. I met them in Eastern Europe because I've been traveling Eastern Europe for 25 years. I traveled during the communist years.

Everybody could call the Eastern Europe after the wall came down. There wasn't a whole lot wanting to go before the wall came down. And we went in during those years and met some of the sweetest saints of God you could ever meet who were paying a price for their faith.

Might I see some of them standing with nothing of this world's goods come up and the tears running down their cheeks and all they can do is point up. I'm going to see the King. Going to see the King.

And you just say, Lord, I'm ashamed. What have I ever sacrificed? What have I ever done? As the martyrs cry. I don't know why some of you read the one of the latest missionary news bulletins that come out about what was happening in Korea where recently some of the believers were led down and run over by a steam roller for their faith in Christ.

Men, what have you ever done for Christ? What have you ever done? Excuse you. There's something else I want to say to you tonight. Not only is there this embarrassing revelation and the rewarding

presentation, but you know there's a final preparation here, I believe.

When you go into the book of Revelation chapter 19, you have the marriage of the Lamb. Everybody loves a wedding. Well, every woman loves a wedding.

I don't know what it's like in the United States, but my wife loves weddings because when the wedding invitation comes in, the first words on her lips are, what am I going to wear? In other words, I need a new outfit. But in the marriage supper, in the marriage of the Lamb in Revelation 17, in that or 19 and verse 7, it says, rejoice and be glad, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. Did you ever think of that phrase? His wife hath made herself ready.

Where did she make herself ready? Tell me now. Where did she make herself ready? She didn't. Because you know as well as I do that there are saints who have left this earth and have not been speaking to other saints.

There are people who have left this earth professing believers, who have been critical, who have split the work of God. Their heart has not been right out into eternity without even speaking to others. I believe, and this is what I believe.

You may not agree with me, but you have a right to be wrong. I believe that when presented to the Master is a perfect church without spot or without wrinkle. I believe that the bride is going to have everything put right at the judgment seat of Christ.

If it's not put right down here, it'll be put right up there before we go in for the marriage of the Lamb. How is it tonight? You know that person you're not talking to? You know that critical spirit that has come in? You know the damage you've been causing? You know the jealousy that's in your soul? You know that old bitterness that rises up within you? And you've never made it right. If you don't do it down here, you're going to do it up there.

And listen men, it would be easier to put it right down here and having to put it right up there when you stand before the King who sets the bimah. What a day that's going to be. One of the saddest things as a pastor, I find sometimes visiting some of older saints who are almost at the point of leaving this world, to hear them say, Pastor, I wish I had done more for the Master.

How many of us may stand one day at the judgment seat of Christ and saying, I wish, I wish I had given Him more. I wish. Can I say something final? I'm in no hurry.

My wife's not expecting me the next Friday. There's a moment of realization here. You know, wasn't it thrilling to hear our brethren preach today? I was blessed in my soul and challenged.

Wasn't it great to see souls bow and trust Christ? Maybe there's somebody here tonight and you're saying, well, the judgment seat doesn't apply to me. For I'm not saved. And you may say, well, it doesn't really apply to me because I'm not saved.

I want to tell you if the judgment seat doesn't apply to you tonight, the great white throne does. And when John sees the scene of the great white throne, he says, I saw the dead small and great stand before God and the books were opened and another book was open, which is the book of life. He says, death and hell give up the dead that were in them.

And for years I pondered that phrase, death and hell. What does it mean? Death and hell give up the dead that were in it. And then I realized when a man dies without Christ, his soul goes straight into hell and the body goes into the grave.

And when it stands at the great white throne, the grave will give up the body and hell will give up the soul to stand at the great white throne. And when the judgment is passed, they'll be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. You know what people are doing now because they don't believe in God.

They don't believe anything about religion. They think that when it comes to the end of the journey, and again, I can't speak for your country, but when they come to the end of the journey, the thought in their mind is, get me created up of nothing there. But I want to tell you this, nothing, I mean nothing goes out of the earth's atmosphere.

And it's as easy for the Lord to gather the particles from the atmosphere as it is to gather the dust from the ground. It's as easy. It's as easy.

And then you're going to stand at one of these judgments. You're either going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the service you've rendered. Every motive of every part of your ministry will be scrutinized.

Did I do it for the Lord or did I do it for me? If you're not saved, you're going to stand at the great white throne and the books are going to be opened. God has it recorded. And you'll be lost for all eternity.

What a thought. Could you imagine a soul coming to a prayer advance, spending almost three days in the atmosphere we have had with a glorious singing that we've listened to, the preaching you've heard? Wouldn't it be a horrible thing to go from a prayer advance into a lost eternity? You'd be better going to hell from darkest Africa than going from a prayer advance. When you think that God did everything humanly possible to save you, when he sent the darling of his bosom from the heights of glory right down to the depths of Calvary so that he might take your place, be your substitute, die for your sin, shed his blood that you might be forgiven from your sin, buried in the tomb, rise again from the dead that you might have a living Savior.

And yet, you still say no. No. Lord, no.

I was asked to go and see a man on one occasion. Quite a character he was. I didn't know who the man was.

Never met him in my life. I went into the hospital ward. He was sitting on the seat by the side of the bed and he was sitting stooped over like this.

And I had to get down on my knees and look up into his face. And he just says to me, hello, who are you? I said, you call me Hughes and I'm from the Baptist Church. He says, oh.

I says, what age are you? He says, I'm 80 years old. I said, is it true that you were brought up in the brethren? He says, it is. I says, you would know all about God's salvation.

He says, I do. I said, you know, you need Jesus. You need salvation.

He says, I do. I says, do you not think at 80 years of age, you're 10 years into borrowed time? Like in time you were getting saved. He says, son, I intend to get saved.

I went home and the first thing in the morning, I said to my wife and went back to the hospital. He's dying. And I went back to the hospital and the same thing again.

I had to get on my knees and speak up into his face. And I said to him, what about your soul? He says, son, I intend to get saved. I said, but you're well into borrowed time.

And then I said to him, what shall I tell the woman who asked me to come and see you? He says, just tell her almost persuaded. Could you imagine what it must have been like dropping into a lost eternity? Almost persuaded. Don't be almost tonight.

Be all together. Let's bow together just for a moment in prayer.

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