

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

Session 52: The Judgment Seat of Christ, pt. 6

We have been looking at the judgment seat of Christ (JSoC). So far, we have found three issues we will face and give an account.

Judgment seat of Christ Issues:

- 1) Evangelistic Efforts**
- 2) Our Edification**

The third issue was in Romans 14 and it concerned our treatment of a weaker brother and we defined a number of ways in which a saint can be considered to be a weaker brother.

I want to add one more thing. I have come to the conclusion that our treatment of the saints is not just for a weaker brother, but we will give an account of the way we treat every brother and sister in Christ. That will include the way we talk about them and the way we think about them because those things are a true reflection of how much the doctrines of godly love and charity are working in us. These are issues that reflect just how mature we are in the faith. The issue is not tenure (how long we have been doing what we do) and whether we are erudite (how much knowledge we may have accumulated), but the issue is Christ living His life in us.

Therefore, I am going to label this third issue as how we:

3) Value and Esteem the Saints

The unconditional love, the way we are to value and esteem every member is no light matter to God. That is a third issue we will face at the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, let us take this back to 2 Corinthians 5. If you recall, verses 9-11 constitute a section within the fifth category of the sufferings of Christ of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:9 Wherefore **we labour, that**, whether present or absent, **we may be accepted of him.** ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that **every one may receive** the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

The fourth issue for which we will give an account is:

4) Our Labor/Service for Christ

As you can see from what we have covered so far, the judgment seat of Christ is not about rehashing our sins; those are already dealt with by the blood of Christ. Neither is the judgment seat of Christ about salvation for only saved people will be there. No saved member of the body of Christ shall escape this judgment by being unknown; no one will be able to disappear into the background.

The terminology is like that of being called before a judge in a courtroom – for we must all appear... No one will be excluded from this judgment because of his or her rank or wealth.

What is God after in having us stand before this judgment? Is it to punish those who did not live for Christ? This judgment actually has a deeper purpose than being punitive. As members of the body of Christ, who have been given the mercies of God as a foundation, and the word of truth whereby we “build” on that foundation of Jesus Christ, we have been given the opportunity to manifest the life of Christ. We have the privilege of making known the riches of God’s grace not just by what we may say, but how we live. We are given the honor of making all men see the fellowship of the Mystery and making God’s manifold wisdom known in the angelic realm.

In light of all that, at this judgment, God’s intent is that the glory of Christ may be seen, and that is the primary purpose. So, this judgment is an opportunity to showcase the glory of our great Savior. It will be revealed how much Christ meant to us, but more than that, how much our lives reflected the glory of the Son of God. The exaltation of Christ is the expectation and to that end our lives will undergo a review.

Secondly, all of the dross of spiritual impurities that we have picked up must be purged away so we can be presented blameless before the Father and so that our conformity to Christ can be completed.

So, the judgment seat of Christ has a fourth issue which concerns our labor to God. This judgment will evaluate our service to Christ to determine if those labors are acceptable to Him. If our labors pass the test, we will receive reward.

Ask yourself, “What am I doing in service to Christ?” One does not need to be a pastor or missionary to serve Christ; every saint should have multiple areas of service to the Lord Jesus.

So, how will our service be judged? What is the basis of this judgment and what are the criteria for determining if our labors for Christ will be acceptable?

I want us to consider that there are three types of labors we can perform in service to God. As a result, there are slightly different criteria for each type. Let’s take a look at each of these.

God’s word instructs us who are members of the body of Christ to labor in some particular ways with Christ. We will refer to these as Required Labors.

1. Required Labors

Required Labors are those labors, which are incumbent upon every member of the body of Christ. Some of these labors are connected with a “call” from God.

a. By calling

For example, we are “called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

It is not that we are not already “holy ones” in our standing before God, we are, but Paul is talking about us being called to conduct ourselves as saints in our everyday living (practice). In other words, we are called to live like the saints we have been made to be in Christ. This “call” to be saints mean that we are expected to live as saints, that the things we do will be “labors” for which we will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ.

I encourage you to look at the various things we, as members of the body of Christ, are called to. For example, we are called according to His purpose, we are called to His fellowship and we are called to suffer with Him. That means there is an expected labor in connection with each of those callings and that labor has an expected result, which will be revealed at the time we perform it, but will be reviewed and rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ.

Since we are talking about being “called” to certain things which have a reward in view, I want to mention a point of clarification. Whenever people hear that we are “called” to one thing or another, they often carry God’s callings too far.

While God has called us all to be in practice, the saints we have been made to be in Christ, God is not issuing individual calls to service as He did in the Old Testament with the prophets; or at the start of the dispensation of grace (DoG) with Paul, when He called him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. I am saying that today, God is not calling men individually into the ministry.

Today, in this DoG, God is not calling us to be a prophet or an apostle. Neither is He calling men to the ministry of being a pastor; men can desire that office if they want it, but it is not a “call.”

1 Timothy 3:1 This *is* a true saying, **If a man desire the office of a bishop**, he desireth a good work.

Not understanding this leads to some dangerous unbiblical doctrines such as extra-biblical revelations, mistaken ideas of how God is dealing with us today, and foolish attempts to determine God’s will.

The next aspect of our expected labor is in connection with the divine institutions.

b. By divine institution

For every divine institution that we are a part of, we have a responsibility to labor in accordance with it. If we fail to do that, we will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ. All of our labor within the divine institutions will be examined to determine if they are acceptable to God. That has to do with marriage, family, church, government and work.

We are not going to take the time to detail any of these but as you are studying this out this week, please take some time to think about your labor within each institution.

c. By doctrine

Every form of doctrine, every pre and post doctrinal exhortation: these are all expected to be up and running in our lives. For example, the form of doctrine by which we exhibit godly love and charity, is not a suggestion, it is the expectation. It is part of the normal Christian life.

The next area of labors I am calling is Voluntary Labors.

2. Voluntary Labors

These are the ways in which we labor with God which the Bible does not specifically tell us. For example, you may want to be a missionary and carry the gospel to a foreign land. You may want to join an organization like Wycliffe Bible Translators where you would go to a place where there is no written language. You would learn the spoken language, create an alphabet, translate the scriptures and then teach the people to read. Or, it might simply be translating it into an already established language. Or, it might be like what I did, I started a Bible Institute.

God is not “calling” individuals to the mission field. I have heard many remarkable stories about how God has called someone to some specific country and all of them contend for extra-biblical revelation. It feels good to have a “story” and I know these are sincere people who want to serve God, so I am not maligning them; they are a product of preachers and teachers who have not taught them how to discern God’s will.

So let me explain how it works; if you are thinking of going into some kind of full-time service, just make a wise sonship decision based on the doctrine you know. A “sonship” decision is one made out of the doctrine that you can point at in your Bible. It is not about your preferences, it is about doctrine.

Check your motives and make sure they are godly. Stop interpreting events as God's way of guiding you. You have His word and it is sufficient to make any decision you need to make.

One of the kids in my youth department in Baton Rouge grew up and today he and his wife run these homes in Africa for orphans where they get an education and the gospel. That is a voluntary service. The Bible did not tell Robert to do that and God did not single him out and tell him to do it. He and his wife chose to serve God in that way.

We can make sonship decisions about all kinds of ministry endeavors. For some, it may be in a secular field like medicine or construction. But no matter, these can all be done in the name of Christ and with an intent to do spiritual good as well as meeting physical needs.

But if this is how we are serving Christ, there are a couple of things to bear in mind. Voluntary Labors cannot substitute for Required Labors. It isn't either/or. My desire to be a pastor does not preclude me from anything God requires of every saint.

Secondly, every labor we perform for Christ will be judged on:

1. What we are doing
2. How we are doing it
3. Why we are doing it

For example, I have engaged in some actions simply because I knew they would push my own edification forward. Yes, those things involved benefits to others in physical ways and sometimes in spiritual ways, but I chose to do some difficult things because I knew it would not only benefit them, but my own edification as well.

Also, since our rewards are all ultimately a measure of what God has done through Christ, even when we are laboring for a reward, we are actually laboring to showcase God's power and glory. And that makes those labors acceptable to God.

2 Corinthians 5:11 **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.

There are a lot of different ideas about this verse, and I don't want to go into the whole list. When Paul talks about the "terror of the Lord," I think he is referring to the sobering thought of standing before the Lord in judgment of any sort, because of the nature of who He (the Lord) is, and also because of the nature of this event, judgment; the evaluation of our edification, our evangelism efforts, our treatment of the saints and our labors for Christ. Even knowing we are not in danger of losing our salvation, it can still seem to be a "terror" to stand before Him, especially if our labor has not been acceptable to Him. I can see how the "loss of reward" would be "the terror of the Lord."

And, I think, especially in view of what this judgment is about: the building of our inner man, our treatment of other saints, our evangelistic efforts and our service to God. No matter what we may think now, when we get to the judgment seat of Christ, we are going to realize just how much these issues mean to our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we are ill-prepared to give an account of these things, I think it could be a terror, and I don't think the Lord Jesus is going to try and persuade us otherwise.

2 Corinthians 5:11 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.

Persuade men to what? Looking back over the passages that concern the judgment seat of Christ, we persuade men:

- To be faithful ambassadors and publish the word of reconciliation to the lost
- To take care how we build our edification by utilizing the doctrines in Paul's epistles
- To treat and think about each other with godly love and charity
- To labor in a way that is acceptable to God and worthy of reward
- In short, to be able to stand before the JSoC with confidence, and not fear

In other words, because we know what it will be like to stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ, we teach this doctrine to persuade you to labor in the way that is pleasing to Him, because you will give an account of it.

2 Corinthians 5:11 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.

In other words, these same things that we are saying to you, we are made manifest to God for these very things. God knows if we are upright in our endeavors to please him; God knows if we are fully persuaded of the reality of eternal things.

2 Corinthians 5:11 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.**

Paul is saying that he trusts that the Corinthians have such proof of his integrity and the truth of his message, that their consciences will acquit Paul and company of those charges against them. Paul is saying that God knows he and his co-laborers are true, and he is trusting that the conscience of the Corinthians will also know them to be true, that the truth of the message will resonate with them.

So, let's make a practical application of the doctrine in verses 9-11.

The doctrine that allows Paul to deal with the accusations and objections that are coming from a group outside of the assembly is found in verses 10-11. This is the same doctrine that ought to work for us too.

When you are accused of being self-righteous or prudish, judgmental or intolerant, just remember that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of ourselves (verse 10), and let us labor not to be acceptable to our critics, but that our labors may be acceptable to God (verse 11).

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The Most Important Decision