

The Judgment Seat of Christ

We need to fully understand what this is all about. I will do my best to explain it to all of us. Here are the two scripture references to this important subject. **Romans 14: 10-12** and **2nd Corinthians 5: 12**.

Both scriptures are referring to **believers** – Christians. This is not to the unbeliever. Believers here are giving an account of themselves and their lives to the Lord Jesus.

It is not referring to our “*position, or justification*” before Him. Our position before Him was determined by our *believing* in His work on the cross. **John 3:16** – All of our sins are forgiven and there is now forever “no condemnation” to those who are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:1**).

At the judgment seat of Christ, believers are rewarded according to how faithfully they served the Lord Jesus. **1st Corinthians 9: 4-27, 2nd Timothy 2: 5**

The bible speaks of believers receiving “crowns” as a result of *faithful service* to Him. We have discussed in the past the (5) crowns available to every believer. Scripture references are as follows;

1. The Incorruptible Crown - given to those who master the old nature (1 Cor. 9:25-27).
2. The Crown of Rejoicing - given to soul winners (Prov. 11:30, Dan. 12:3, 1 Thess. 2:19-20).
3. The Crown of Life - given to those who successfully endure temptation (Jas. 1:2-3, Rev. 2:10).
4. The Crown of Righteousness - for those who especially love the doctrine of the rapture (2 Tim. 4:8).
5. The Crown of Glory - given to faithful preachers and teachers (Acts 20:26-28, 1 Pet. 5:2-4).

James 1: 12 is one of the best descriptions of the crowns “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him”

Now – Look again at 2nd Timothy 2: and let’s read it – Notice the reference to “good soldier” in verse 3. Notice the reference to warfare in verse 4? Notice the reference to soldier in verse 4? Notice verse 5 where Paul discusses competing in athletics? Notice his reference to receiving a crown? Notice how the participant must compete according to the rules of the game?

What does verse 6 mean?

Now, it must be remembered that Paul uses this *competing theme* around the “bema” seat, or judgment seat of Christ. Picture if you will, the arena where gladiators are competing. They are carrying out their “fight” in the center of the arena in front of a huge cloud of witnesses – True?

Side note here beloved – After listing all of the Old Testament Saints and what they accomplished by faith in Chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews, the writer starts our chapter 12

with; “since we are surrounded by such a great *cloud of witnesses*” i.e.; these Old Testament Saints who are surrounding the arena of our lives today, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin (that of unbelief) which so easily ensnares us, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

These combatants compete in this arena as the Cesar is watching. Paul is using this arena analogy to help us understand what is at stake here. Our lives are the arena where we carry out the warfare we are engaged in. The King (the Lord Jesus) is watching what is going on in the arena of our lives.

At the “bema” seat, the Cesar gives out rewards to the contestants in the ring. This is the picture that Paul is painting here.

Remember beloved, we are not required to be **successful** in this walk of life. We are to be found **faithful** to what is in front of us. That is the reason Jesus made the comments in Matthew 25: 14 and following, and then verse 21 and 23, “well done good and *faithful* servant, you were *faithful* over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things – Enter in the joy of your lord.” Our *faithfulness* to complete what is before us, is the key to our receiving rewards from Him.

Look again at 1st Corinthians 4: 1 & following. Emphasis on verse 5.

Now concerning the comment by Julie about 2 Corinthians 5:11 “therefore” (and we must remember what that word is therefore), “*the terror of the Lord*” what is this comment referring to?

We will look at the verses preceding this verse to determine the “therefore” to which Paul is speaking.

Verse 1 - The fact that we live in a temporary house – earthly body – and should it be destroyed, we have another immediately waiting which is eternal in the heavens, verse 2, in which we groan earnestly desiring to be out of this temporary body and to be clothed with this new body,

The knowledge that he possesses an *eternal house* in heaven allows him to have a *positive attitude* toward life’s *adversities*. Therefore we are always “confident” (verse 6) – Paul maintains a **cheery attitude** toward his present circumstances, and this attitude goes along with his comments in Chapter 4: 16 of “not losing heart.” Paul is not cheerful when things are only *going well*, but when things *are not going well* as well. Not even the prospect of facing death challenges his attitude.

Paul maintains this attitude because of the basic understanding that “as long as we are at home in this body, we are absent from the Lord” and his desire was to be with Him. Death to Paul was not an enemy, but a friend. Look at **Philippians 1: 21 and following**. That is the reason for his statement in verse 8 “to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Paul speaks about “in the body – here and now- and with the Lord as two distinct places. His actual desire was to be with the Lord.

Paul is testifying that in light of the eventual face to face with the Lord Jesus, or his remaining here on earth, his desire is to be *well pleasing to Him* (verse 9). What on earth can be wrong with that attitude?

He makes “pleasing Christ” his goal in this life. We are exhorted in Ephesians 5: to remember that we were once darkness (verse 8) but are now we are light in the Lord, so *walk worthy of your present position* by walking as children of light. Here we have the “horse before the cart,” as it should be and not vice versa. It is not *in order to be children of light*, but because **we are children of light**.

Some other examples Paul discusses as being *well pleasing* to God are: offerings that the Philippians gave to Paul (**4:18**), **then: all of us** offering ourselves as “living sacrifices” in **Romans 12:1** and children obeying your parents in **Colossians 3: 20** - all these activities are pleasing to God.

The words “must all appear” in verse 10 of 2nd Corinthians 5, is a warning that every one of us will appear before this bema seat. It will happen. We will all appear to give an account of our actions while on this earth. Believers are cautioned that their work on earth will be judged as either: gold, silver and precious stones, or wood hay and stubble. **1st Corinthians 3**. If the work they completed survives the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, the work will abide, and we will be given rewards for them. If these works do not survive, ie. wood, hay and stubble, they (the works) will be destroyed by the fiery Holy Spirit, and the believer will suffer loss. What loss will he suffer? He will suffer the loss of *rewards*. Here you have contrasted the different between “good works” and “dead works.” The thing that makes the difference between a good work and a dead work is your motive for doing them. They could be the same work.

According to **Romans 2: 16** which says that there will be a day to come in which “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to “*my gospel*” Paul said. What was his gospel?

Remember that Paul is putting forth the argument that all of our works will be judged by the Lord Jesus. We will not be judged regarding our sin, for this was dealt with at the cross.

Now to address **Chris’s** comment concerning our bodies. It is easy to believe that we are going to receive a new body, and therefore need spend no thought on the one we live in today. This thought is contrary to scripture. We are called to *honor God* with our bodies. **1st Corinthians 6: 18-20**. Read it.

To summarize, let me say this. Remember that at this “bema” seat, what is being judged is *our works*, while in this body. Remember further that 1st Corinthians 4: 5 ends with “Then each ones praise will come from God.” In the day that we stand before Him, each one of us will be receiving praise from Him.

The issue of our sin is settled. Further we would do well to meditate on the following passages; **Romans 2: 4** – “the goodness of God leads us to repentance.” We repent (or change our mind) about things depending upon our understanding of His **goodness**, not worrying about His **wrath**. Acknowledging His goodness, seeing His goodness toward us, and understanding His goodness is what changes our mind about Him. It is what gives us a “confident expectation of

good things happening in our lives every day.” It is what gives us a “good opinion” of our Heavenly Father. And too; **2nd Corinthians 5:14** – The love of Christ constraineth us; In other words, it is His love for us that “holds us together” or preoccupies our thoughts or holds us or compels us to be what we are. NOT THE **FEAR** OF HIM, NOT THE CONCERN OF **PUNISHMENT** FROM HIM, NOT THE **ANXIOUSNESS** THAT WOULD COME TO US BECAUSE OF OUR LACK – But His love that keeps us together.

Get rid of all thoughts about Him that would cause you to hold back from His presence, or His love, or His total acceptance of you just as you are.

You are “highly loved”, “deeply forgiven”, and “highly favored” in all that you do and are right now.

Meditate on that wonderful news.