

## Confident Expectation: Looking Forward to the Judgment Seat of Christ<sup>1</sup>

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When I first worked for the Sun Oil Company as a brand new member of supervision, I had my first experience with performance evaluation. On the scheduled date I sat down across from my manager while he went over with me how well he thought I had met the expectations of my job. Throughout the year I would be reminded from time to time of goals that had been set and how important it was for me to keep my focus. “Lots of time left,” I’d think. But that kind of thinking was disastrous. It tempted me to waste time with the result I would miss achieving the goals set for me by my manager.

I know of very few people who do not reflect on the judgment seat of Christ without some feeling of dread. The judgment seat of Christ is the one event at which the work of every believer will be evaluated by the Lord Jesus. We’ve all failed. We’ve done things we’d rather forget--permanently. So how to be confident when standing before the judgment seat of Christ is a real issue. We need to know what the Bible says about our chances of being bold before the Lord when He returns (1 Jn. 2:28; 4:17).

In the following discussion, we will look at what Scripture has to say about the Judgment Seat of Christ, 1) it is inevitable. Can’t be missed. 2) it is personal and individual. We’ll get our own turn in the dock. 3) The judgment is not about sin; it’s about works. 4) It is about the quality of our works, 5) There will be definite results of this judgment, and so 6) there are definite ways we can prepare ourselves to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ with confidence.

### **Inevitability and Individuality**

The appearance of every believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ is unavoidable. In the second letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote:

*“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to Him” (2 Cor. 5:9). Why? “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (5:10).*

Similarly, Paul wrote to the Romans:

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are taken from *The Scofield Study Bible: New King James Version*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002 edition), unless otherwise noted.

*“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.”<sup>2</sup>*

*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 shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom. 14:10-12)*

Both passages tell us that we all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Observe the emphasis of the phrases, "we must all appear" and "we shall all stand?" We can't skip it. There are no cuts. No one can call in sick. No one will mistakenly oversleep. There will be no excused absences.

Did you also see that the appearance is individual, "*that each one may receive...according to what he has done*" and again from Romans, "*each of us shall give account of himself to God.*" No one will suffer loss because a group member let down the side. The evaluation of one's works will be between himself/herself and the Lord Jesus. The judgment is inevitable, and it is individual.

Several other passages that suggest either judgment or some kind of evaluation that may result in reward are as follows: 1 Cor. 4:1-5; 9:24-27; Php. 3:8-14, 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10.

### **The Judgment Itself<sup>3</sup>**

*What it is not.* One thing is clear, if one is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no impending judgment for sin. Judgment for sin was fully satisfied by Jesus Christ through His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection (Rom. 4:25). Scripture tells us that the believer's sin is removed from him "as far as the east is from the west" (Psa. 103:12). Moreover, the writer to the Hebrews, quoting the prophet Jeremiah, declares concerning believers, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 10:17, KJV; Jer. 31:33-34). No more judgment for sin! Just let that sink in.

*What it is.* However, the judgment seat of Christ is the term depicting the evaluation of the believer's works(2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10, 12) . That evaluation

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<sup>2</sup> Several translations following Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (27th. ed.) and United Bible Societies' (4th edition) have "the judgment seat of God."

<sup>3</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. (Wheaton, IL. Victor Books, A division of Scripture Press, 1988) 512-513.

Here again, Paul declares that the judgment is unavoidable, "we shall all stand" and it is also individual, "each of us shall give account of himself to God."

will take place before the “judgment seat” or “bema” of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Charles Ryrie states: “Earthly *bemas* were raised, throne-like platforms on which rulers or judges sat when making speeches (Acts 12:21), or hearing and deciding cases (Acts 18:12-17).<sup>5</sup>

During the apostolic age, the *bema* was also the platform on which the judge at athletic events sat and from which he recognized the winner of the event with an award. The judge of the event would beckon the winning athlete to ascend the *bema* to receive his prize. Ascending the *bema* to receive the prize may have been what Paul had in mind as “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Php. 3:14). The judgment seat of Christ is the place where the believer's works are evaluated.

### **Bases of Judgment**

Exactly, how will Christ evaluate our works? More will be said later about this, but for now apparently what Jesus will look for is how well we’ve managed our God-given opportunities (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27; Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:10 ff.; 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:8, etc.)

### **The Goal: Winning the Prize**

As with any contest the goal is to win and receive the award. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul lists three elements characteristic of an attitude set on winning the prize: 1) clarity of purpose (24), 2) self-control (25), and 3) perseverance in bodily discipline (27).

#### **Clarity of Purpose**

The prize for Paul was twofold: 1) to gain Christ and 2) to win people. To win people suggests the art of persuasion, but we recognize that it also includes boldness, fearlessness, and usually a greater purpose, which for Paul meant to gain Christ. What does it mean “to gain Christ” (Php. 3:8)?

*To Gain Christ.* Peter O'Brien suggests that what Paul is looking for is a deepening relationship with Christ, which is getting to know Him deeply as a dear friend.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, appearing before the *bema* and hearing "well done, good and faithful servant" would open the door for greater fellowship with Christ upon entering the kingdom.

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<sup>4</sup> The Greek word translated, “judgment seat” is the word, *bema*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 512

<sup>6</sup> “He desires to know Christ more, for he wants this personal relationship with his Lord to deepen.” Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 391.

If you stop to reflect on it, what honor could be greater than to hear "well done" from the Lord Jesus? A lot depends, though, on what comprises the content of that "well done." When Paul writes to the Philippians he tells them in chapter 3 that since coming to know Christ he considered all his earthly achievements as loss, worth nothing, for the sake of knowing Christ (Php.3:4-8). One might ask, "Paul, does that also mean giving up your personal safety for the sake of the gospel?" In a telling passage in 2 Timothy at which time Paul, alone in a dungeon, awaits the executioner's ax. Writing to Timothy, he says, "At my defense, no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them." Now listen to this: "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me,..."(2 Tim. 4:16-17a). Jesus and Paul were in the dungeon together.

Several years ago, my wife Judy and I were invited to join the sixtieth wedding anniversary celebration of Dick and Carolyn Geer. Second Lieutenant Dick Geer was a platoon leader in the American forces in Europe from just after D-Day onward. At the anniversary celebration, Dick introduced me to two older gentlemen who had been members of his old platoon and out of the love they had for Dick were attending the celebration. Dick introduced one of these heroes, "This is our platoon sergeant. He was our BAR<sup>7</sup> man" meaning he was entrusted with one of the most effective automatic rifles of the war.

This group got together every year at the home of one of the platoon members. At that time these men were in their mid-eighties but they never let that deter them from making that trip. They had fought together, shared foxholes together, froze together in the winter of '44-'45, and as a result bonded together with a bond stronger than blood. When they got together, they reminisced of hardships, the terror of battle, the loss of buddies, but also pranks like shaking the snow off tree branches on their buddies huddled in foxholes. Unspoken were the words, "We went through combat together, and we had each other's back. I love you guys."

Was this not Paul's ambition, going through hardships, enduring persecution for the sake of Christ, and figuratively, occupying the foxhole with Jesus (Php. 3:10)? Because he suffered together with Jesus, he and Jesus became quite close, and I'm sure Paul looked forward to the day he would ascend the bema of Christ when Jesus would look at him and say, "Hey, good job. We went through combat together, we were in prison together, and we went to the executioner's block together. I was there, and I had your back, Paul. Well done." In his suffering for Christ, Paul forged a bond stronger than blood. That's what it means to "gain Christ." Nothing could be better.

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<sup>7</sup> Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). The BAR was one of the more fearsome weapons carried by soldiers into combat in WWII. It was no unusual for there to be no more than one per platoon. It was a very effective weapon..

*To Win People.* As an apostle and disciple of Jesus Christ, Paul determined to be a “servant to all (mankind)” (1 Cor. 9:19) so that he might *win*<sup>8</sup> them to Christ. In the following verses, Paul shows us the lengths he went to to see people believe in Jesus. Paul adapted himself to whatever the situation of his audience required so that he could win them to Christ. Such was his purpose. (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

### **Self-control**

We use the term “exercise” to refer to bodily exertion for the sake of becoming physically fit. We frequently use the term to refer to something we do over and over to improve and display a particular skill. For example, piano students will perform scales over and over to improve their keyboard skills. Athletes perform certain moves, tactics, and strategies repeatedly to develop skills in their sport.

To achieve these all-consuming goals,<sup>9</sup> Paul exercised self-control through personal discipline so that he would faithfully compete and not disqualify himself from winning the prize (1 Cor. 9:25-27). The Greek text could be translated, “Everyone who competes practices holding his bodily desires in. They to win a corruptible crown; we, one that is incorruptible”(v. 25). Practicing self-control requires keeping one’s desires on a leash. He may be referring to one’s fleshly desires, like eating too much, or he could have one’s angry responses to fear, frustration, and hurt. Whatever was foremost in his mind, Paul’s main concern was that if he relaxed just a little bit from a disciplined effort, let his faithfulness in ministry slide just a little bit, he would miss the prize. He was not afraid of being punished for sin; he was afraid of missing the prize by not giving a one hundred percent effort to the work God had given him. Let’s look first at faithfulness and then at personal discipline.

*Faithfulness.* Several Scriptures emphasize the importance of faithfulness. For example, the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) and the parable of the minas (Lk. 19:11-27), although different do share certain features. They both feature an owner who travels to a far country. Before he leaves he calls his servants and entrusts to each of them a portion of his wealth. Upon his return, the owner calls his servants to account to see what each has done with the portion entrusted to him. The stories emphasize that the servants who faithfully invested, cared for, and multiplied the owner’s property were rewarded. Unfaithful servants lost what

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<sup>8</sup> Paul uses the word, *kerdaino*, which is used for “to gain, acquire as gain, to win”

Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000). Paul uses this word five times in 1 Cor. 9:19-24 and uses the word “save” in a synonymous sense in vs. 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.3: “all-consuming : taking all of a person's time and attention : being the only thing a person thinks about ” accessed February 19, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/all-consuming>.

they had. Although there are important differences between these parables, the emphasis on faithfulness is common to both. It is the one personal quality that is central to the owner's evaluation of each servant's effort. Faithful servants were confident when the master appeared.

The importance of faithfulness is certainly implied in John's instruction to the Christians of the first century.<sup>10</sup> In 1 John 4:7-21, John dwells on the importance of loving God and loving other believers. He writes: "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God*" (7). Later he writes, "*No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us*" (12). Now notice the connection that John makes with the judgment seat of Christ. He says "*Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness (i.e., confidence) in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world*" (17). Faithfully loving one another is the key because by so doing we show others what God is like. Consequently, love is made complete when we faithfully show God's love to one another.

### ***Bodily Discipline***

One could argue that bodily discipline is similar to the exercise of self-control, Bodily discipline is certainly an aspect of self-control. In 1 Cor. 9:27, the New King James wording is, "I discipline my body..." which is a softening of the Authorized's "I buffet my body." The old King James translation captures the force of the Greek, *hupiadzo*, which literally means "I give myself a black eye."<sup>11</sup> In other words, I treat my body as severely as I must to keep it under subjection so that I can maintain a credible witness. Jesus urged much the same of His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount: "*If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you... and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you...*" (Matt. 5:29-30). In other words, do whatever you have to do to be a good subject in the kingdom. Keeping one's body under control is not only needed for credibility in ministry but absolutely essential for winning the prize.

The seminary I attended had an honors grading scale that began at 3.5. You know what happens. When you graduate with that grade point or higher you get special recognition and that recognition goes on your diploma. I must confess

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<sup>10</sup> "The letter contains no hint about the identity or location of the readers beyond the fact that they are Christians. Since early church tradition associates John with the Roman province of Asia (in western Turkey), it has often been thought that the readers lived there. This may well be true especially since this association is confirmed by Revelation 2 and 3."

Zane C. Hodges, "[1 John](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 880–881.

<sup>11</sup> Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, [A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament](#) (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 515–516.

there were times in my seminary career that I did not do my best. I knew it at the time. I thought I'd be happy with just getting through. "Nobody cares about your GPA," seminary representatives would say. "Search committees will never ask you to parse the verbs in Psalm 19." I thought, "I can get by." The result was that I came to graduation having missed honors by .04 points. I did not get the prize, and right now as I look at my diploma, there is no special recognition for honors work at seminary. I did graduate with a pretty good GPA, but because I let up on personal discipline, I became disqualified from honors recognition; I was disqualified from obtaining the prize. On graduation day when seminary officials recognized classmates for their faithfulness and hard work, I sat in my seat and said, "I almost made it." That's exactly what Paul wanted to avoid.

Similarly, Paul encouraged Timothy to personal discipline, comparing training for godliness to the stress of training for an athletic event. Paul writes, *"But reject profane and old wives fables, and exercise (gymnazo, exercise, train) yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"* (1 Tim. 4:7-8). Note the exhortation to "train" with a view to the life "which is to come." Paul encouraged Timothy to bodily discipline with a view to the inevitable evaluation of his ministry at the judgment seat of Christ.

## **The Work**

It is quite clear the kind of effort that must be expended to receive a reward at the judgment seat of Christ. But expended effort doing what? Four questions need to be answered concerning our work: 1) What is it? 2) Where does it occur? 3) Who does it? and 4) When is it? Paul refers to himself and Apollos as workmen/builders (3:5). However, others contribute to the building (3:10, 12-15).

Answers to several of these questions can be found in 1 Corinthians 3:5-17:

*"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.*

*According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.*

*For 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, straw, each one's work will become clear; 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 burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

*“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that 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.”*

Beginning with an agricultural theme, Paul quickly changes to that of a builder/construction worker, skillfully assembling materials on a solid foundation, to construct a beautiful temple (1 Cor. 3:9-17).

*The Work.* In 1 Cor. 3, Paul characterized the work as a construction project. In this case, he, Apollos, and others are building up the temple, the Corinthian church. The concept of building up the church occurs throughout the Corinthian epistle where the congregational members are exhorted to love one another in order to build up one another (1 Cor. 8:1; 13:1-15; 14:1; 16:14, etc.). The question then is, of what does this work consist? The answer is fairly straightforward. It is building up other believers. One can see how that concept extends well beyond the pastor or the Sunday school teacher. It can just as easily apply to moms and dads, grandparents, single people, etc.

A few years ago, I was watching the video of the memorial service for Dr. Howard Hendricks. Dr. Hendricks was one of my seminary professors and was a beloved teacher and Bible conference speaker. There were the expected eulogies from well-known celebrity colleagues and former students who had been special to Dr. Hendricks. His three children all were given a very prominent role in the service. One especially poignant memory came from his youngest son, Bill Hendricks, who imagined what it would be like for Dr. Hendricks to experience a performance evaluation given by the Lord Jesus, Himself. My immediate thought was who would think of such a thing? But then Bill Hendricks fantasized the kinds of questions that might be asked.<sup>12</sup> For about five minutes,

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- <sup>12</sup>1. Did you love your children’s mother and treat her right?
  2. Did you provide for the family I gave you?
  3. Did you hang in there and trust me for grace and strength when times were tough at home; did you remain with the family instead of running away?
  4. Did you talk about me; more importantly did you personally have a real evident relationship with me that they could see?
  5. Did you try to instill my ways and my values into your children?
  6. Did you communicate to each of them that you cared about how their lives would turn out; did you remind them that they have gifts I gave them, and that each of them really does matter; and that they could and should make their lives count?
  7. Did you celebrate their successes?
  8. Did you do your best to communicate that loved them, even if sometimes you struggled to know how to express that love, and even if some of those expressions missed the target?



Bill Hendricks listed eight questions that his dad might get as part of his examination.

I will never forget that part of Bill's eulogy. The force of those questions were directed to the influence Dr. Hendriks had on his family for godliness. But this is at the core of the work the Apostle Paul is talking about. It is the work of building up fellow believers in the most holy faith.

*The Place.* Paul specifies that his ministry occurs within God's building, which he identifies as the believers at Corinth (3:10, 16-17). Although the primary application is for the church at Corinth, the truth of this instruction can be broadened to include any local church. Paul is talking about how well every believer is building up and encouraging other believers in their walk with the Lord Jesus.

Paul writing to the Ephesians pictured the church as a household the well-being for which he was responsible, as a kind of major-domo, to the owner of the household, God (2:19). Regardless of his circumstance whether beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, weariness, hunger, thirst, cold without adequate clothing Paul felt the weight of responsibility for the welfare of the churches (2 Cor. 11:28).

Peter similarly, understanding the figure of a building as the body of believers writes: *"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet. 2:4-5). The figure of "the temple" really is a figure for building up other believers and influencing them to godliness.

*The workmen.* The workers in Paul's mind are those who minister to other believers in the local church. In this passage, Paul could be referring to workers like himself and Apollos. However, it is just as likely that these workers were congregational members, responsible for the spiritual growth of each other (see 1 Cor. 8:1; 13:1-15; 14:1; 16:14; Rom. 14:10-13).

What is important is the work that produces the lasting quality of ministry (gold, silver, precious stones) characteristic of the wise builder. David Lowery points out three different kinds of workers in the temple: 1) the expert builder (1

Cor. 3:10)<sup>13</sup>; 2) the unwise builder (3:15), and 3) the destructive builder (3:17)<sup>14</sup>. The expert builder is one whose work is lasting, i.e., it will survive the fiery test (3:12-14). The unwise builder is one whose work, while it may appear substantial (wood, hay, and straw can be artfully fashioned building materials), will not be permanent. The destructive builder, although the damage he/she does may not be immediately apparent, actually causes ruin to the structure. The kind of damage that Paul may have in mind is the divisiveness and quarreling that was now going on in the Corinthian church (3:3; cf. Eph. 4:1-3). This divisiveness arose from partisan loyalties among groups within the Corinthian church, with each group devoting itself to following a particular apostolic worker whether Paul, Peter, or Apollos (1 Cor. 1:12-13).

Paul encouraged godly church leaders (wise builders) to lead by example (1 Tim. 3:1-13).<sup>15</sup> They were to be men of sound Christian character whose home lives were to be models for all. They also were to display exemplary conduct in their communities “having a good testimony among those outside” (3:7). A careful look at the passage shows that these men were to be taken from a pool of qualified men within the local church body. So the work of building the Temple required the wise workman to have consistent godly character, who taught by example and served as an incentive to others, especially younger men.<sup>16</sup> It will be men and women like this who will receive *the crown of glory that does not fade away* (1 Pet. 5:2-5) or the crown of righteousness awarded to faithful elders. It is the work of influencing others to godliness, committed followers of the Lord Jesus, that will reveal itself as gold, silver, and precious stones.

*The Futility of Worldly Wisdom.* There are at least two reasons why worldly wisdom is made up of combustibles, wood, hay, and straw and will not stand the test on “that Day”.

First, masters of worldly wisdom draw attention to themselves. They seek the center of attention since they are the ones who are experts in worldly

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<sup>13</sup> ἄρχι-τέκτων -τέκτονος ὁ (< τέκτων craftsman) master-builder (Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis* 502.)

<sup>14</sup> David K. Lowery, “[1 Corinthians](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 511.

<sup>15</sup> It isn't only the men who are selected for special consideration in the local church. Paul uses language similar to what he used for the qualifications of elders and deacons for older widow ladies who might qualify for church support (1 Tim. 5:5-7, 9-10). Godly men and women are wise builders in a local church because they model godliness for the flock of God.

<sup>16</sup> That this is the case can be seen by looking at 1 Cor. 5:1-8, an extreme case of immoral behavior tolerated by the Corinthian church. The danger of permitting it to continue was a risk to the entire church body. Note the emphasis on the sin likened to the pervasiveness of “leaven” in a lump of dough. So those who lead by the example of upright lives influence the local body to a life of godliness. Those who allow sin to occupy space in their lives will like leaven, cause great damage to the local body.

wisdom. This kind of specialized knowledge initiates them into a kind of high priesthood which would tend to give them positions of prominence. That the search for prominence seems to be the pursuit of the worldly-wise can be seen in Paul's description of them as "puffed up" (1 Cor. 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 13:4; Col. 2:18; 1 Tim. 3:6).

Second, friendship with the world is enmity with God (Jas. 4:4). One needs only to look at schools, once great bastions of biblical truth who lost their spiritual edge by submitting to standards of accreditation. Because as Paul writes, the world through wisdom did not know God (1 Cor. 1:21), and to preach Christ, "*is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.*" Compared to the wisdom found in God's word, "*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God...*" (3:19a) "*The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile*" (3:20). As Paul writes, God will turn the wisdom of the worldly-wise on themselves: "*He catches the wise in their own craftiness* (1 Cor. 3:19b), meaning that "*God causes their cunning to defeat their own ends and serve his.*"<sup>17</sup> Of course, any building using worldly wisdom in its construction is unlikely to last.

*The Result.* It is the wise worker whose work will endure at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If anyone is confident at the *bema*, it will be the one whose work endures. Although at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he did not show dread at the prospect of appearing at the *bema*, neither did he show great confidence. He was quite willing to leave the outcome to the Lord Jesus. He tells the Corinthians: "*For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord*" (1 Cor. 4:7).

Notice the change in his confidence when late in his life he writes to Timothy: "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Notice the emphasis on faithfulness: "I have kept the faith;" perseverance: "I have finished the race;" and personal discipline: "I have fought a good fight." There is no dread here, but rather great confidence, an anticipation of a great and immensely enjoyable event.

## Conclusion

So how do we have confidence before the *Bema*? From the Scriptures we have examined we can look forward to the Judgment Seat of Christ with confidence for the following reasons:

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<sup>17</sup> Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 503.

1. We can have confidence before Him because our ministry/conduct as a disciple of the Lord Jesus has been other-centered for His glory, and
2. We can have confidence before Him, not because our walk with Christ has been perfect, but because we have been faithful.

For many of us, we look back on our lives with some dismay. We haven't always been faithful; we haven't always acted in love toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, in the time God allows us, we can turn that around and with the Lord's coming in view, make the days we have left count for eternity. I'm certain that will not go unnoticed at the Judgment Seat of Christ.