

# On What Basis Will We Be Judged on Judgment Day?

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So brethren, if you would, I too would have you open to the book of Hebrews just as a launching place for the message this morning. In our theology class a week ago we got to talking about judgment day. And I thought not only because questions came up then pertaining to judgment day, but I think also as we draw to the close of another year, perhaps, there are few better ways that we can test ourselves, no better test maybe that we can apply to ourselves in order to discover the true quality of our present Christian life, and to evaluate where we are in the sight of God than to examine ourselves in light of the reality of the coming judgment. Judgment day.

## Christ's Two Appearings

The author of Hebrews. Hebrews 9. Hebrews 9:27 - familiar to many of us. Often quoted by many of us. And yet, it's interesting that in the context, the fact it's appointed to man once to die and then the judgment isn't the primary thought. The primary thought is that Jesus came once already and died for sin once, and that He's going to come again to save, to retrieve His people. That's what you find in Hebrews 9:27. Christ appeared once to suffer. He'll appear a second time to retrieve His people. And the point of the author here is this: that His first suffering, then coming to save His people - that sequence, the one following after the other is just as certain. It's almost like the fact we're going to die and then face the judgment is the thing that we already know. It's already established. It's the thing that he's seeking to prove is that Christ died once for sin and then after that, He's going to come for His people. And it's just as certain as judgment follows death. And notice, "it is appointed for man once to die, and after that comes judgment." Obviously judgment upon everyone who is in that category of man.

## Appointed to Man Once to Die

Man is a general term. I think every one of us should say and come really face to face with this. Man - it's so easy to say that. "Appointed to man once to die..." You say it to yourself. It's appointed for me to die. There's going to be that first Sunday many of you meet together after my funeral. I am going to die and after that, my judgment. This is a very individual and sobering reality. And we're all moving on to that. All of us. We shall all stand face to face with that. What's that? I mean, there is a white throne. There is a great throne. We are going to stand face to face with God, with the greatness of God, with the justice of God, with the holiness and righteousness of God and you can't run away from that reality. You cannot run away from it. You can try to convince yourself it's not going to happen, but that doesn't free you from this. You can put it off. You can ignore it. You can put your head in the sand like the proverbial ostrich. It's not going to help. We are moving on and on. It's like the sands of time are sinking. They're sinking. They're going. Just the last moments since we've been in here, you can't stop time. It's moving. We move to that appointed time. This appointed reality. And the plain teaching of the Bible is

that my eternal destiny is going to be proclaimed on that day. Now your eternal destiny and my eternal destiny, they are being established and fixed now in this life, but on that day, it is going to be proclaimed. That's the reality of Scripture. There's a verdict. We are all going to stand trial. I know some don't like this teaching, but we can't escape this reality.

Look, the Jews in the Old Testament, they were familiar with this reality. You can read through the Psalms. I don't want you to turn there, but just listen to this. Psalm 96, "The Lord comes, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness." And this is just such a powerful text. We hear this quoted from time to time. Solomon gives us this one. We just sang in that song: "careless sinner." Listen to what Scripture says. "Rejoice," somewhat in a sarcastic tone. "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. Let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart." Just do your heart's desire. Fulfill the lusts, the desires of your heart. Just do that. "Walk in the ways of your heart. Walk in the sight of your eyes." Just whatever you think looks good - you see a beautiful woman, you see money looks good, you see a beautiful car, beautiful stuff. Just pursue it all. "But know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment." Have you ever read that text? There's another place in Ecclesiastes where the preacher says this: "God will bring every deed into judgment." Wow! Just in the time I've been here at church, I walked through the door, I talked with Brother Jonathan Sanguinetti. That conversation is going to be brought. I went out and got a bag of golf balls for Steve. I filled my coffee. I talked with some sisters out here. I talked with David over here. You think about that. Every deed. God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing. So it's not like it's just going to be the deed. It's going to be my mind, my motives. It's going to be opened up. Every secret thing whether good or evil. No foreign doctrine in the Old Testament.

Of course, you know, when we move into the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ - He doesn't even seek to prove this. It's a given. He just expected that the Jews knew their Old Testament. So this was already a given in the Old Testament. Listen to how He speaks. "Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah" than for that town. What's He talking about? I'll tell you this, that when people come under the sound of the Gospel and they refuse the Gospel, it's going to be more tolerable on the day of judgment than for Sodom and Gomorrah. And we often think "Sodomites!" Boy, they're bad! God burned up the whole city. It's going to be more bearable, it says in one place, more tolerable, on the day of judgment - it's just a given. There's a day of judgment coming and it is going to be more tolerable for some than for others on that day, which means some are going to be punished more.

How about this? "I tell you..." Jesus, again, just speaking truth. "I tell you on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak." Boy, there is something about that for every one of us that ought to make us tremble. And listen, I think that's our Lord's point. This is serious stuff. How you live here is serious because there's coming a day when we have to give an account for all of this. You know what? This, I'm certain, is the primary motivation for atheism and for wanting to believe that we evolved from apes. You've got to push God out of the picture because this is unsettling, and it is especially unsettling if you have spent your whole life just pursuing sin. Jesus says this, "The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise up at the

judgment..." You get the point. This flowed from Jesus' preaching and teaching. In John 16:8, speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter - "...Who is to come, when He comes..." what was He going to convict the world of? Sin and righteousness and judgment. And I'll tell you this, the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. And when those apostles took forth the Gospel there in the book of Acts, what sort of things did they say? In the power of the Holy Spirit, here's Paul declaring, "God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He has appointed and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead." And you know, out of all the things that Paul could have talked about, he comes face to face with that ruler Felix the governor, and it says that he reasoned with him about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment. Felix was alarmed. And he had a right to be. The idea of judgment is alarming.

### **Living in Light of Coming Judgment**

And I'll tell you this, we should be a church, we should be a group of people who lives governed by this reality. We should think about this. And we should live in light of this reality; not be ignorant to it. Nothing we do is done in secret. Everything is going to be brought out into the open and each of us is going to answer for what he or she has done. Listen to our Lord plainly, and He said this to His disciples, "Nothing... nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be made known." Brethren, the certainty of it, the reality of it. Paul says, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord" in speaking about this. The impossibility of escaping this. Should that not appeal to every single one of us? Does that not demand the attention of every single one of us? Should this not govern the life of every single one of us? God help us to not live sloppy and carelessly in light of this sobering reality. I have to die. And then... then, my judgment. Judgment. Look, you can't say: "Oh, well, I'm a Christian." "I'm somehow exempted." No, you're not. No, you're not. And the Apostle Paul was especially clear on this reality.

Listen. Listen to how he speaks to the Corinthians. And notice the use of the pronouns. "Yes, we are of good courage." You need to ask yourself: who is he talking to? "We are of good courage. We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." Who are the "we" who when they're absent from the body are at home with the Lord? We. "So whether we are at home or away, we make - we - make it our aim to please Him because - for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." That's why we make it our aim. See, that's a motivation. You recognize that. That's how you use that conjunction there. Because. We aim to please Him, because... You say, well, that's the word "for." Yeah, it's because. We aim to please Him, because... And then in the very next verse, it says, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord." That's how the King James reads. "...We persuade men." Because we know. We know. That is a day of terror. If you are outside of Christ, that is not a good day for you. The certainty of all this.

And listen, you remember in Romans 14, Paul's distinctly speaking to Christians. And he's saying, look, you shouldn't be judging each other. Remember? They were wrestling over the observance of a day. They were wrestling over whether they should eat meat or should not eat meat. He says this, "Why do you pass judgment on your brother?" See, he's clearly speaking to Christians here. "Or why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

## No One Is Exempt

You know there in Matthew 25, it says, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory," what is going to happen? "The angels with Him," He's going to sit upon a glorious throne and all the nations are going to be brought before Him. And you see He divides them. Both are there. Both. Those on the right. Those on the left. They're all there. None exempted. None excepted. Christian, we're not exempted from this. There's no way out. It says of Jesus Christ that He is ready to judge the living and the dead - those who are alive in Christ, those who are dead in their sins. We must all appear. All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And you just imagine that in your minds. All must appear. What a vast assembly! No one missing.

It made me think. Sometimes I'll ask is Darrell here? Is Matt here? If there's a question about what the deacons are doing, and no hand comes up. Somebody says oh, his family's sick. Not on that day. Nobody's missing. Nobody's out. Nobody happened to be late or family's sick. None excepted. None.

Can you imagine Adam and Eve? They're in there too. Can you imagine? I don't know how much they'll look around. I don't know how much they'll be able to take this in. I don't even know honestly where they're at spiritually. I have my theories on that. But I can just imagine them. What have we done? Vast ocean of humanity, and they condemned that whole human race aside from those who have been rescued out. What have we done? Think about it. The Romans will be there. Pilate will be there. Nero will be there. Caligula will be there. Claudius will be there. Tiberias will be there. All the Caesars will be there. Those who sat on the Roman senate. Those who were the slaves. Remember all those when Jerusalem fell, they led away multitudes - captive Jews - they'll all be there. The Jews that exodus-ed out of Egypt. They'll be there. Those that came out of Babylon. They'll be there. David will be there. Goliath will be there. Guys with five fingers - remember them? the Anakim, the Nephilim - they'll be there. The giants. The vikings. The Persians. The Nazis. Those under the British Empire. Those under the Japanese Empire. All our presidents. The governors. The mechanic. The housewife. I mean, they're all there. These multitudes of people. There's Herod. Those who pierced Him. Judas is in that crowd. Demas - we heard about him. He'll be there. Those from Sentinel island. They're there. Those from India are there. Those from China are there. Those from the Soviet Union are there. The Brazilians are there. The Canadians are there. The Nicaraguans are there. There's no one excepted. Do you see them all? Can you imagine them in your mind? The Assyrians, the Babylonians. Pharaoh - proud Pharaoh. All his Egyptians. They're all there. The Ethiopians. Those that were there in the days of Queen of Sheba. South Africa, Australia, New Zealand. They're all there. None's missing. I've thought often about the Popes. They're there. The priests. Those that push their priestcraft. All those that bow the knee to Allah - they're all there. They're there. Those who followed Buddha - they're there. All of them, the masses. Those who sat on benches and judged others. We just heard about a sister down in the church at Monterrey. The judge got bought off when her husband beat her. That judge is going to be there. And that husband is going to be there. And you are going to be there. The rich, the poor, the plumbers, the mechanics, the tax collectors, the prostitutes. They're all there. Can you see them all in your mind?

And you are there. That is the sobering reality. And there is that point in time when you've got to stand there and it's all brought out. We must all appear. You just think about that:

appear. You're going to appear exactly as you are. Here people can't see in here. They don't know what we're thinking when we do the things we do. They don't know what motives drive us. We posture ourselves. We smile at people when we're not smiling inside. We say we're doing well when that's not true. We disguise. But in that day, no disguises. No disguises. None. It says that in that day when everything is dissolved, Peter tells us the earth is dissolved and the works that are done on it will be exposed. What a word! We talk about: man, he was exposed. "God will bring every deed into judgment (Ecclesiastes) with every secret thing." Luke: "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known." 1 Corinthians 4:5, Paul says, "The Lord will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart."

Now look, I'm like you. I mean, if you're saved, I'm very much like you. If you're not saved... (incomplete thought) But I know this, we're from Adam's stock, and I know we're sinners. And I know that when we come face to face with these realities it's unsettling. It's a serious thing. Exposed, says Peter. No costumes. No masquerading. None of that. No hypocrisy. The eyes of the One there upon that throne are going to see everything for what it is. Our hearts, our motives, our secret desires brought out into the blazing sun. That's the reality of Scripture.

### **What Is God Looking For?**

Now here's the thing, here's the thing we need to ask ourselves. What, when we come before God, what evidence is it that God is looking for? Because we know this, we know that some go to the right and some go to the left. What makes the difference? We've all committed sin. So it's not just a matter of whether you committed sin. What is it that Scripture says? What is the evidence that's going to be brought out and looked at very closely on that day? What are the terms of our judgment? Or what is the basis upon which we'll be judged? Listen carefully to what Scripture says. Listen. Romans 2:6 says, "He will render to each one according to his works." Now hear that. When you think of judgment day: works. Works. That repeatedly comes at us in Scripture. Listen again. 2 Corinthians 5:10 from which I've already been quoting. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil." See, when your life is lived, you are due something. That's the way Scripture speaks. Matthew 16:27, "The Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father and then He will repay each person according to what he has done." Look at your life. You are going to be repaid for what you have done. That includes today and yesterday, this last week, this last year. You are going to be repaid for what you have done. That's what Scripture says. We can't get away from that. The Bible closes out - listen, if there's something that the Lord wants to leave us with as the book of Revelation is coming to a close, this is what He says: "Behold, I am coming soon bringing My recompense with Me to repay each one for what he has done."

Now listen to me very carefully. These are clearly from Scripture the terms of judgment. Pay close attention to what I'm about to say. These are not the terms of salvation. Now look, if you're baffled by why the terms of one are not the terms of the other we're going to look at that. Don't just jump to the conclusion that can't be. No, you have to pay attention to what Scripture says. These verses are not talking about how a man is saved. They're talking about how a man

is judged. That's the situation. What they teach us is that on the day of judgment nothing is going to be considered except a man's works. And it's no use saying: I believe in God. I believe this. I believe that. It will be no use saying you profess Christ. No use saying you belong to a certain church. The question will be this and this alone on judgment day: What were your works? That's what Scripture says. You cannot get away from that. The question is how did you live? Hear me. I'm using biblical terms here. The standard for justification or condemnation in that day will be one of works. Matthew 12 is crystal clear on this.

Now open your Bibles there. Matthew 12:33. And you're going to see the connection. I hope this takes shape and form in your mind and in your thinking how the Lord's logic runs through these verses. Matthew 12:33, 34, 35, 36, 37. There is a flow of thought here. And I want you to see. Just so you recognize, right at the beginning, look at verse 36. "I tell you on the day of judgment..." I just want you to see this has to do with the day of judgment. Now back up to v. 33. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad." This is taught in other places in our New Testament. But here's the reality, I can always look at the fruit and see what kind of tree it is. Always. And that's what's going to happen on judgment day. Your fruit will be evaluated and it will prove who and what you are. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For the tree is known by its fruit." So what are you going to be judged on on that day? You're going to be judged on your works. That's another way of saying fruit. The fruit of your life is going to be the evidence brought into the courtroom.

Now notice this. "You brood of vipers! How can you speak good...?" Okay, these vipers are brought up on that day. Their time of judgment comes. And their works are looked at. But you see what Jesus is saying here? They can't have good fruit on that day. Why? Because at the heart level, it's impossible to bring forth good fruit from a bad heart. That's the logic here. "How can you speak good? How can you bear good fruit when you are evil?" The tree's bad. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." And I could say this, out of the abundance of the heart, you act. I mean, what is Romans 6? We thank God that you've become obedient from the heart. Obedience. Didn't Jesus teach in another place? Murders and fornications - it all comes out of here.

Now, look. Watch. "The good person (v. 35) out of his good treasure brings forth good." So when God's judging, your works are brought out. Listen, this is an infallible test. If your works are good, you are good. If your works are bad, you are bad. Infallible. Everyone is going to be judged on that basis on judgment day. Let's keep going here. "The good person out of the good treasure brings forth good. The evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil." See, this has everything to do with judgment day. "I tell you, on the day of judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak." Now notice this. Here is the basis of judgment. "By your words, you will be justified, and by your words, you will be condemned." You have to recognize how "justified" is being used there. That is a word that He is applying to what happens on judgment day - not when you first get saved. That's what happens on judgment day. That is the basis upon which you are going to be justified or condemned, by the evidence brought forth on that day in your works. And if your words are good, it proves the tree was good.

Listen, this is just as possible right now. You recognize in that day, you're going to be judged for what you say today. Your words today will prove whether you're going to be justified or condemned on that day. That means that when we open our ears and we listen to each other

speak, the proof of who and what we are is there already. We can see it in people's words. We can see it in people's actions. And that is going to be the basis of judgment in that day. "By your words you will be justified; by your words you will be condemned."

### **Pitfalls to Avoid**

Now, here's what you don't want to do. You don't want to let bad logic lead you to explain away the reality and importance of what judgment day is all about. For example, here is really bad logic. This is bad logic. You don't want to think this way. One: we're saved by faith. Yes, we are. Not by works. But that's your starting point. I'm saved by faith, not by works. Two: I have faith since I believe. I'm a Christian. One: We're saved by faith. Two: I have faith. Three: Since I believe, I must be saved. Four: If I'm saved, I'm forgiven of all my sins. Five: Since I'm saved and forgiven of all my sins and not saved by works, well, therefore, I'm not really worried about my works since they cannot really matter in the end. That is bad logic. That is not biblical logic.

Or here's another: We're justified by faith. That's one. Not by works. Two: To be justified means that the righteousness of Christ is mine. Christ's obedience has been imputed to me. It's been laid to my account. So three: When I stand before God on judgment day, nothing I've done will matter; only what Christ did will matter. That too is bad logic. That is not what Scripture teaches. The reason we know that they're both faulty is because Matthew 12 is crystal clear. Look at it. Now look, judgment day is not about the perfect obedience that Jesus wrought. You don't see that in those texts there. Jesus doesn't say: Don't worry about what you've said because in the end when judgment day comes it really won't matter what careless word you spoke if after all you're a Christian and My righteousness has been imputed to you. Then it doesn't matter. That's not what He says. What He is very clear to say is how you speak - see, when He talks to those vipers, He's talking about what they said; not what He said. This has to do with you and me. This has to do with our language. The clear meaning of Matthew 12 is that if you are a good tree, a good tree bears good fruit. God is looking for good and bad people on judgment day, and if we want to know if a person is truly good at the heart level, then examine how he speaks. Examine a man's words. That's what Jesus is saying. Listen, when we take the words that are spoken in secret; when we take the words when you're with your lost friends, lost people at work, school; when we examine your words that are spoken when you don't think Christians are listening; when we take all those and sum them up; when we take up the words of a man's life, that doesn't mean that Christians will not be found to have had some careless words. But the reality is that when you sum all those words up, the words of a Christian are so starkly different than the words of the lost man that you are able to be judged on that basis and on that basis you will be justified or condemned. That's what Jesus is teaching. That's clearly His teaching.

Sometimes we talk about there being enough evidence. Have you ever heard that? Somebody talks about is there enough evidence in your life of convicting you of being a Christian? Suppose you lived in communist Soviet Union or communist China or you lived in the days of the Nazi's and Christianity is heavily being persecuted, and they bust in and they take you and they bring you to court and you're put there on the stand. You're the one on trial. Is there going to be enough evidence to condemn you? Well, that's exactly what judgment day is.

And I say "condemn you" because in this world, that's condemnation if you're found to be the Christian. But in that day, that will be your justification if there's enough evidence in your life.

### **Evidences of Salvation**

Brethren, this is exactly the truth that we find taught in Matthew 25. Turn there. What a glorious picture! Here is Christ. The Son of Man comes. Matthew 25:31 through the end of this chapter. You have this picture of Christ with His angels. This is amazing! You see pictures of this in 2 Thessalonians. He comes in this power! And He is going to wreak vengeance upon those who did not obey the Gospel. And He comes and He comes in this glory. He comes and He sits down on that judgment throne. "And before Him (in v. 32) will be gathered all the nations. And He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." Now here's what I want you to see. He does not say to us here: What I'm looking for is who's justified and who's not. He does not say to us: I'm going to look for who has faith and who doesn't. Now look, obviously if you're one on the right, you are justified and you have faith. That isn't the issue. The issue here is on what basis does He separate them? What is the basis for judgment here? What is the basis? What is that which distinguishes those who go to the right from those who go to the left? V. 33, "He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left." Well, this is interesting. It's like He looks - we know sheep look different from goats - and He separates them. See, the very nature of that is our tree illustration. One is a good tree. One's a bad tree. One's a sheep. One's a goat.

But what is it that evidences? What is the fruit that evidences the reality of who and what they are? Notice, "The King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for...'" Listen. That is "because," again. For. Here's the reason. "For I was hungry, and you gave Me food." Listen to what He doesn't say. He doesn't say it doesn't matter whether you gave Me food or not because after all, My righteousness is being imputed to you. And since I did good to the poor, that's credited to you. Now look, there may be a reality to that, but that's not the basis of judgment. The basis of judgment is whether you fed. Because you know what they say? "Lord, when did we do that?" And you know what He doesn't say? "Well, you actually didn't do that. I did it in your place." Uh huh. Because if you didn't do it, you end up on the left. What He says is, "As much as you did it unto one of the least of these My brothers, you did it unto Me." You did it. This is your life.

And I'll just tell you this, one thing you want to notice is that people are judged on that day for what they did not do as well as what they did do. Because He turns to those on the left and He says - it's amazing - one of the broadest, most comprehensive pictures of judgment day that we have in our Bibles and not a single thing is said to those on the left about the fornication they did do, the drunkenness they did do, the idolatry they were involved with. Isn't it amazing? The primary thing the Spirit of God would have us to know about that day and about those on the left is what they did not do. Wow. My brothers, "as much as you did it unto one of the least of these My brothers, you did it unto Me." If they hadn't actually done it, they would have been just like those who are being condemned. That's the difference. The condemned didn't do it. You can't say, well, the righteous, they did do it, but only through the imputation... That's not the issue there. It's what they actually did.



## The Relationship of Faith and Works

Now listen, of course when it comes to salvation, Scripture's plain. We are saved by grace through faith and it is not according to our works. The method of our salvation is justification by faith only. But we need to recognize how vigorously the Scriptures fight to show us that if our faith is real faith - the real, saving faith - it always results in good works. And this is that vast argument brought forth by James. Now even though James isn't specifically speaking about judgment day, he is specifically speaking about the works that are going to be evaluated at judgment day.

Look at that. James 2. We need to follow James' logic here. Scripture fights to show that if faith is real, there will be works. And if there are not works, that faith is useless and cannot save. That is the teaching of Scripture. James 2:14 - I'll let you all get there. I want you to see this with your own eyeballs. James 2:14 - rhetorical question: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" Another rhetorical question: "Can that faith save him?" What answer is he obviously looking for? It can't. And judgment day is going to bear out this reality. You know what's interesting? In verse 15, this is Matthew 25, is it not? "As much as you did it unto one of the least of these, you did it unto Me." Here it is. Look at it. "If a brother or sister - (one of Jesus' little ones) - is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; be warmed; be filled;' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?" Answer that question. What good is that? It's not good. "So also, faith by itself if it does not have works is dead." People who want to argue that dead faith saves, that is twisting Scriptures to your own destruction. "Someone will say, 'You have faith; I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works; I will show you my faith by my works."

See, there is judgment day. Faith working through love. None of those works which will justify the redeemed on that day are separate from faith. They're the completion of faith. Watch. v. 19, "You believe that God is one? You do well." He's being sarcastic. I mean you do as well as the demons do. And shudder. They believe. "Do you want to be shown, you foolish person that faith apart from works is useless?" And isn't it interesting? Abraham who was set forth as the father of faith, the one who is justified by faith, the one who is declared righteous because of his faith - isn't it interesting? He is the very one - the father of the faithful - "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?" You see this? This is key. What you do with your life shows what you really believe.

Listen, if you say God is my portion, God is my treasure, and God says: then I want you to sacrifice that thing that I know is an idol in your life. You say nope I'm not going to do it. You've immediately said whether you think Jesus Christ is most precious. And you know why people walk away who don't have any root when persecution comes? Because Jesus really wasn't their portion. Their own comfort was. Their own convenience. Their own pleasure. v. 22, "You see that faith was active along with his works." You see, that's the thing. Faith working out by our words, by our actions. Faith was completed by his works. "And the Scripture was fulfilled that said Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way, was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

And I'll tell you this, this should affect our disciple-making. We're to make disciples of all the nations. We don't want to be so quick to get people in before we've allowed the Holy Spirit to do His work on people. What happens is that we say to people: Well, you know, it's simple. Just believe. Just believe. Yes, they say, I believe. And we say, oh great! Then everything's good! Everything's well! When the truth is all may not be well. Yes, we must tell people to believe, but we must never stop at that. Yes, we must stress to people that they can never be saved by their own efforts, their own works. They can only be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ and by His merits, His death on the cross, His shed blood. Yes. But we must also stress to people how Jesus saves. Did He give Himself to redeem us from all our unlawfulness? Yes. But did He give Himself to purify us to be a people of His particular possession, zealous of good works? You better add that part to His salvation or you just chopped it in half.

Have you not heard our Lord say, "I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit." You need to get this. "Apart from Me you can do nothing." You see, judgment day, good works are brought out, good fruit. You know what's true of all that good fruit? None of it was accomplished separated from Christ. Not the tiniest fruit. "You bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples," is what Jesus said. That's how you prove. That's what judgment day is. You prove who you are, whether you are real and genuine by the fruit. These are the only works which are going to count on that day. And little is more dangerous than leading people to think that a mere belief of certain truths or acceptance of certain teachings or simply making a profession of faith in and of itself saves. There's danger in giving people the impression that as long as they say they believe, all is well. If the works that will always be present when the faith is real, if they're absent, brethren, antinomianism is fatal to men's souls.

What's antinomianism? It means that people are relying on the fact that they've made some sort of decision, or they rely on the fact that they make certain statements of faith, but that's all divorced from their practical life. It's the idea that starts by assuming: well, I'm saved, so my sins are forgiven, so it must not really matter what I do. It doesn't matter if my life conforms to the commandments of Jesus Christ or not. But we know that. We know what it says. That if we're not keeping His commandments, if we're not bearing that fruit, we're liars. The truth isn't in us. That faith that never evidences itself by works is a dead faith and a faith that will never save a soul.

Oh brethren, folks, friends, those of you that don't know the Lord, what I ask you is this: Will there be any evidence of the sincerity of your faith? On that day when your whole life is put on the table? If grace does not make us differ from other men, it's not the grace of God that He gives to men when He saves them. Lay that down. We're not perfect. But I'll tell you this, though we not be perfect, we are people - the Spirit has opened our eyes and there is a preciousness in this unseen Jesus Christ and our eyes go upon the One who is perfect and He's our example and He goes before us. And He bids us to follow Him. And His sheep hear His voice and we know that voice. We know the tenderness of it. We know the omnipotence of it. Brethren, the thing is the reality is we aim to walk worthy of the high calling to which God has brought us.

The reality is this: Look, if you come to judgment day and your actions are no better than those of the lost, you can profess whatever you want about your faith, but you're deceived. And it's going to be discovered on that last great day. Your deeds, your deeds, your deeds. Not

merely the profession, but your deeds. Not the mere talk. It's deeds shall be the evidence of grace. If your actions are no better than those of the lost, if they're no different, if you are no different than the lost on judgment day, then listen, you are no different from the lost and just because you went to church and had a profession... By your works you will stand or you will fall on that day. I mean, suppose you join the church, but you remain a fornicator in the heart. You get on the Internet. You do things you shouldn't do. You do things in your mind even during services like this you shouldn't do. Yet you joined the church. But you remain a fornicator. Suppose you get baptized. You constantly cheat on your taxes. Suppose you profess with the most glowing testimony that amazes many of us, but you remain the most vicious slanderer. Do you think that God will never require that of you? Sir, ma'am, brother, sister, if you're no better than other men in your conduct, then you're no better than other men. And you're going to stand no better off on that day. And if Christ once says to you: "Cursed. Depart from Me, you cursed." Cursed you will be and must be forever. Now if you can stand here and say, well, that's fine. Bring it on. I'm not really concerned. I'm not afraid. Somehow it's all going to work out. Then I'll leave you now to your insanity.

### **Encouragement for Believers**

But to those of you - I know you - you're not perfect, but you are obedient from the heart. You have a love for the Lord. We sing a song: "More love to Thee." We sing another song: "The Beauty of Holiness" is that the one that speaks about that desire to love more - we feel that! Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. We don't want it. We don't like it. We know we're not perfect. But we do know that we're different than we were. We know that old things have passed away. We know that we do have a love for Christ. We do have a love for His people. Oh, it's not perfect. It's not. We know it's not. But we have those longings. We have a new heart. We have the law of God written within us. We do long and we hunger and thirst after righteousness. We have a true love for others, a sincere desire to please Him. I know we've got people like that here. And you may be just like those people: Lord, when did we feed You? And it's probably good we forget a lot of the things we do. I think the redeemed will be really surprised on that day - the things that will be brought back that you will have forgotten that you did.

But I have a word for you from the Lord. Listen to this. Isaiah. "Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them." In other words, this coming judgment is going to be well with you. Oh, a fearful, awesome day - it's healthy to tremble. It's healthy to talk like Paul: knowing therefore the fear of the Lord. But the Lord wants me to tell you this: "Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds." And there's that text there in Revelation 14 that says, "Blessed indeed says the Spirit, you will rest from your labors and their deeds shall follow them." The things you do - how does that happen? How do your deeds follow you? Because you're storing up treasure in heaven. And He will repay. Remember? When you have a meal, invite the people that can't pay you back. Because in that day, you're going to be repaid. Your deeds are going to follow you out into eternity with this treasure. You have but little. Look, you don't have to have a lot. You can be like that widow. You can have your two mites. You may have a little, but hear this. Hear this: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little..." Luke 19 says "a very little." But you were faithful. You were faithful. You may not

have the greatest spiritual gifts in the world. You may not have the most amount of money in the world. But whatever God has given you, you were faithful. "Enter into the joy of your Master."

No one is going to be there on that day to answer for you, but you. Everyone else gets out of the way when it's your turn. You will stand. Total exposure. It's just you and the Judge and the works that you have done. And you're going to be tested by fire. Scripture tells us it's going to burn up a whole bunch of stuff - wood, hay, and stubble. It goes. Nothing hidden. Nothing forgotten. Every thought, every word, every deed, every motive, every intention - all laid bare. But we thought the sins of the righteous being pardoned and forever blotted out, we could never come into judgment. And beloved, the reality is they are pardoned and they are blotted out. And that is why the righteous need not fear the coming day of judgment. But brethren, the truth is we must be tried too. And we have this hope. We will stand the trial. That is our hope. That is it. The way of the righteousness by Jesus Christ allows us to submit ourselves to the most tremendous test. Why? Remember both parts - both parts. On the one hand, He gave Himself up to redeem us from all our lawlessness. And on the other hand, to purify a people who are zealous of good works. And so, that good work you did is going to be brought up. Any hint of lawlessness - it's forgiven. Who can bring a charge against God's elect? Nobody. Not even on that day. And Jesus is going to look at all of His children, all of the sheep, to all of us: "Well done." Because this is the reality, He's gone to work in His people and they will be zealous of good works. They will be. And so prove to be His disciple. Because if those good works aren't there, He's failed. But He never fails. And those works are going to dictate and bear witness to what you are in that day - that great day.

Brethren, we must not be afraid to be put in the balances because the blood removes every blemish. You say it says every careless word... Yep, if you spoke a careless word and there was any sin attached to that, which I take it there is if it's a careless word - blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven. It will go well in that day. Brethren, blessed are the merciful. When the works that come out show that you were one of His little ones who showed mercy to others, versus being the self-seeking, the disobedient - no, you showed mercy. Blessed are the merciful because they shall be shown mercy. They shall receive it. And if Christ calls you blessed, just like if He calls you cursed, you're cursed. If He calls you blessed, oh, you are blessed indeed. And you will be blessed forever. Just remember, brethren, remember as we come into this new year, Scripture ends on this note. "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My recompense with Me to repay everyone for what he has done." That day hastens. It is appointed to you to die and then the judgment. Behold, we can cry out, Lord, come quickly.

Lord, I pray that You would give this church a healthy sense of what Paul was trying to express to the Corinthians there that our aim is to please You, because we know that we must all stand before the judgment seat of God, and that we're going to receive a recompense. We're going to be repaid. We're going to have to give an account. We're going to be judged according to the things that we've done in our body, whether they've been good or bad. Lord, I pray - I pray that You'd cause the careless here to flee to Your Son. I pray that You would quicken consciences. I pray that the Spirit of God would do that very thing that was promised - that He would convict men of sin and righteousness and judgment. Bring a healthy conviction into our midst, Lord. I pray this in Christ's name, amen.