

# THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

## INTRODUCTION

The actual word translated 'judgment seat'<sup>1</sup> occurs only twice in the Greek New Testament in connection with the 'judgment seat' of God and of Christ before which all Christians shall one day appear, once each in Paul's letters to Rome and to Corinth. But this raw statistic is misleading because, in fact, there are many passages in the New Testament which relate to the subject.

## KEY BIBLE PASSAGES

The following are those which I consider to be the seven main passages:<sup>2</sup>

(i) 'Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls ... For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

'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. 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. 4a, 9-12).

(ii) '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'.

(1 Cor. 3. 9b-15).

(iii) 'With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

'Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God'.

(1 Cor. 4. 3-5).

(iv) 'My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord'.

(1 Cor. 15. 58).

(v) 'Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 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'.

(2 Cor. 5. 9-10).

(vi) 'I have fought the 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).

(vii) 'Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to everyone according to his work'.

(Rev. 22. 12).

In the two passages in which the actual expression occurs,<sup>3</sup> the word translated 'judgment seat' refers properly to a tribunal where a judge sat. Sometimes the word refers to the raised official platform on which the judge's seat was situated and sometimes to the actual seat itself.

As we have noted, the word occurs only twice when speaking of the great day of review for Christians. And I was fascinated to discover that the only occurrences of this word in the latter section of Luke's 'Acts of the apostles' (namely, the section devoted to the ministry of Paul) relate to (i) a judgment seat at Corinth (that of Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia)<sup>4</sup> and (ii) a judgment seat linked with Rome (that of Caesar himself).<sup>5</sup>

We can hardly fail to observe that it was only when writing to Christians in these two cities that Paul used the word. He could be confident that, if not others, the saints in these two cities would be familiar with it. But we know that, in the passages in Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians 5, Paul has neither (i) human proconsul nor (ii) human emperor in view. Far from it.

### **TIMING, LOCATION, FACT AND PURPOSE**

The timing of the judgment seat of Christ is easily established from the New Testament. The consistent claim there is that *it will take place soon* (in all likelihood, immediately) *after the Lord's coming for His church*.

By way of example, we might refer to Paul's words to the Thessalonians: 'For what is our hope, or joy, or *crown of rejoicing*? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ *at His coming*?<sup>6</sup> or to his word to the Corinthians: 'Judge nothing before the time, until *the Lord comes* ... and then each one's praise will come from God'.<sup>7</sup>

And then we have the testimony of the Lord Himself:

(a) stretching from His words recorded (i) in the Gospels, through to His words recorded (ii) in the very last chapter of the Bible;

(b) stretching from (i) His words in Luke 14: 'when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And ... you shall be repaid at (better 'in') *the resurrection of the just*',<sup>8</sup> through to (ii) the central of His three-fold 'I am coming quickly' sayings of Revelation 22: 'Behold, *I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me*, to give to everyone according to his work'.<sup>9</sup>

So, the New Testament clearly identifies **WHEN** we are to appear before the judgment seat.

Although the New Testament is silent on the matter of precisely **WHERE** this will take place, it seems most likely that this will be *in the heavenly realm* itself. The only alternative, I suppose, is that it will take place '*in the air*', the sphere where we will first meet the Lord at His coming.<sup>10</sup> But scripture says nothing about this and so neither will I.

What matters is not (i) **WHEN** we shall stand before the judgment seat, still less (ii) **WHERE** this will be, but (iii) **THAT** we *shall* stand there, and (iv) **WHY** we shall stand there.

That is, our concern lies, neither with (i) *the timing* nor with (ii) *the location*, but with (iii) *the fact* (the absolute certainty) that we shall appear there, and with (iv) *the purpose* we shall appear there; namely, to have our lives and service reviewed.

### **'BEFORE', 'ALL' AND 'EACH'**

It is important to note that, apart from the word translated 'judgment seat' itself, the two key passages (Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians 5) have three other words in common; namely, the words (i) 'before', (ii) 'all' and (iii) 'each'.

(i) 'Before'. We need to think carefully about the One before whom we are to appear.

Many capable Christian scholars and Bible translators believe that Romans 14. 10 originally read, 'the judgment seat of God', rather than 'the judgment seat of Christ' of the King James Version and the New King James Version. And there is certainly extensive manuscript evidence in favour of this.<sup>11</sup>

In practice, the amendment doesn't make a great deal of difference, because the Lord Jesus not only made it clear that the Father executes *all* forms of judgment *through* the Son but explained both the purpose and the reason for this:

(a) The purpose: 'The Father has committed all judgment to the Son, *that* all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father'.<sup>12</sup>

(b) The reason: He 'has given Him authority to execute judgment *because* He is Son of man'.<sup>13</sup> Whatever other significance and depth of meaning is attached to the title 'Son of man',<sup>14</sup> we know that the One who sits in judgment on men is not only *one with the Father*<sup>15</sup> but is also *one with men*.<sup>16</sup> He shares, that is, the nature of those He judges,<sup>17</sup> a point registered by Paul with the Athenian philosophers, 'God ... has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by *the man* whom He has appointed ('designated')'.<sup>18</sup>

That both God and the Lord Jesus are involved in the judgment of the believer's service is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 4, where we read that it is '*the Lord*' who will shed light on those things now hidden by darkness and who will expose the secret intentions and motives of the hearts<sup>19</sup> but that the resulting personal praise will come from '*God*'.<sup>20</sup>

(ii) '**All**'. Great stress is laid on the fact that '*all*' the people of God, without exception, are going to stand and to appear before the judgment seat: (a) '*we shall all* stand' (Rom. 14. 10); (b) '*we must all* appear' (2 Cor. 5. 10). Make no mistake; the time of review will be all-inclusive. No invitations are going to be issued for recipients to accept or decline as they wish and no apologies for absence will be accepted. It will be a case of compulsory attendance.

(iii) '**Each**'. Although we shall '*all*' be present for it, the time of review will clearly be intensely *personal*:

(a) '*each* of us shall give account of himself to God'<sup>21</sup> and

(b) 'that *each* one may receive'.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, it is worth noting that other key passages which deal with the subject of the judgment seat also lay emphasis on the fact that it will a time of individual assessment.

This is true, for example, of:

(a) 1 Corinthians 3, '*each* one will receive his own reward according to his own labour ... let *each* one take heed how he builds ... *each one's work* will become clear ('manifest'); 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',<sup>23</sup> and

(b) 1 Corinthians 4, 'Then *each* one's praise will come from God',<sup>24</sup> right through to

(c) Revelation 22, 'to give to *everyone* (literally, 'to *each*') according to his work'.<sup>25</sup>

That is, although 'all' of us who are Christians will be there, we will not be judged *en masse*. Like it or not, there will be no opportunity for me to lose myself in the crowd or to hide myself behind any other saint or saints!

It is a sobering thought, indeed, that I am to answer *personally* and *directly* to the One who died to save me.

## TO GIVE AND TO RECEIVE

I notice next that the judgment seat is a place where we shall all both '**give**'<sup>26</sup> and '**receive**' (or, better, 'receive back').<sup>27</sup>

### 1. All are to 'give account'

First, each of us is going to '**give account** of himself to God'.<sup>28</sup>

The New Testament makes it clear that all human beings – without exception – are, at one time or another, going to give account to God.

The apostle *Peter* speaks of *non-Christians*, who will be called to account for their *sins*: 'they are surprised', he wrote, 'when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but *they will give account* to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead'.<sup>29</sup>

The apostle Paul speaks of Christians, who will be called to account for their service: 'each of us shall give account of himself to God'.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Distinguishing the Judgment Seat from the Judgment Throne

It is important that we distinguish carefully between, on the one hand, (i) the judgment seat of God and of Christ, 'before' which believers will 'stand'<sup>31</sup> to account for their service, and, on the other hand, (ii) the shadowless Great White Throne of Revelation 20, 'before' which unbelievers will 'stand'<sup>32</sup> to account for their sins and for whom it will be the place of fearful and final condemnation.<sup>33</sup>

I want to stress that the genuine believer has no place before the Great White Throne. The Lord Jesus declared, 'whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed ('passed over', 'crossed the frontier') from death to life'.<sup>34</sup>

The believer's sins have already been fully judged and punished in the Person of his glorious substitute at the Cross. The believer need have no fear, therefore, that the One who occupies the judgment seat is going to dredge up and pass sentence on the very sins for which He died.

By way of contrast, the judgment seat is concerned with the review, the scrutiny and evaluation of the Christian's service. It has to do with the allocation of the believer's reward as a servant and not with the determination of his destiny and destination.

Everyone must appear before either the judgment seat or the Throne and all will, at one time or other, be assessed 'according to their works':

(i) believers, when the Lord comes to render 'to each according to his work',<sup>35</sup> and

(ii) unbelievers, at the Great White Throne when they will be 'each judged according to their works'.<sup>36</sup>

We need to be very clear that the judgment seat of God and of Christ is concerned with the conduct of believers and not with the condemnation of sinners.

## 3. No wasted labour

According to chapter 10 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, God has said, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord ... their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember ('remember against them', that is<sup>37</sup>) no more'.<sup>38</sup> For that reason we will have no place before the Great White Throne.

But the One who, according to Hebrews chapter 10, does not remember our sins against us, according to chapter 6 of the same Epistle, does not (and will not) forget our service. For there we read that 'God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name'.<sup>39</sup>

We can rest assured that 'the Lord, the righteous Judge'<sup>40</sup> will miss nothing, but nothing, of that which has been done sincerely for Him and that He will fully recompense His people for all the cost, the suffering and the sacrifice which they faced when serving Him.

When encouraging King Asa to remain true to the Lord and to continue to stamp out all idolatry from the nation,<sup>41</sup> Azariah the prophet said to him, 'Be strong, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded'.<sup>42</sup>

The apostle Paul voiced a similar encouragement (which reaches down to us today) at the close of 1 Corinthians 15:

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord'.<sup>43</sup> And Paul's opening 'Therefore' alerts us to the importance of the preceding main body of the chapter.

For, in context, Paul was saying, 'if there is such a thing as resurrection, if there is such a thing as life after death, if there is such a thing as another world, if there is such a thing as a time of review and recompense, then ...'.<sup>44</sup> And the apostle was at pains to assure the Corinthians that, because there is indeed another world for the Christian to live in, his or her labour in the Lord's service was not wasted.

It was expressed neatly over 300 years ago: 'Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are assured of such abundant recompenses in a future life? ... The labour of Christians will not be lost labour; they may lose for God, but they will lose nothing by Him ... Those who serve God have good wages'.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. The Judgment Seat and the Judgment Throne again

Although I have to say that I do not view the judgment seat at all lightly (indeed, I confess that I view it with considerable apprehension), I am enormously grateful that, by God's grace, I shall appear *there* and not before the Great White Throne.

And I rejoice to know that the One who, on that day, will assess and evaluate all I have done in my body<sup>46</sup> will, there and then, Himself carry in His body the very marks<sup>47</sup> which confirm that He once died to take away my every sin and deliver me from having ever to appear before that Throne of judgment!

### PRACTICAL CONTEXTS

And it would be difficult to miss that these two explicit New Testament references to 'the judgment seat' of God and of Christ<sup>48</sup> occur in intensely practical contexts. And any understanding we have of the scriptural teaching on the subject carries with it, therefore, the most serious and profound practical implications for the way we live and serve.

Mark well the conjunction 'for' in both Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians 5:

(i) '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 God.'<sup>49</sup>

(ii) 'We make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body'.<sup>50</sup>

First, then, Romans 14.

### ROMANS 14

The background is that there were major disagreements in the churches at Rome over which food Christians could and should eat, and over whether or not Christians should regard some days as having special religious significance.

There were two opposing camps. The one party (who were more scrupulous and particular) 'judged' the other party and criticised them, while the other party (boasting of their liberty) looked down on and 'despised' the first party.<sup>51</sup> The one camp viewed the other with an attitude of criticism while the other camp viewed the first camp with an attitude of contempt.

Paul faced the saints with various factors and considerations aimed at putting a stop to their spiritual warfare, and one weighty consideration was that no believer has the right to judge another believer on such matters, because both believers are personally and directly accountable to God.

'We shall all stand',<sup>52</sup> he says, 'before the judgment seat of God',<sup>53</sup> adding that 'each of us shall give account of himself to God'.<sup>54</sup> That is to say, I am personally and directly accountable to God, and not to you—nor you to me.

On that day, you and I shall stand before that seat; neither of us will sit on it.

We shall not be giving account of each other, for each other or to each other.<sup>55</sup> It follows, therefore, that, for me to judge you now, is for me to invade God's domain and to usurp God's prerogative. And that is no light matter; it is (to put it no stronger) gross presumption on my part!

#### 1. Responsible to Christ as Lord

Not only is each of us personally and directly accountable to God as judge, but also, as noted seven times in verses 4 to 9, each of us is personally and directly responsible to Christ as Lord.<sup>56</sup>

The apostle stresses that the Lord Jesus alone has ultimate authority over His servants, for every servant 'stands or falls' to 'his own lord'.<sup>57</sup> Even on the natural level, it would be presumption for somebody to meddle with the domestic affairs of others. If somebody is wealthy and has several household servants, he isn't likely to be amused if one servant does nothing but constantly criticise and boss around the other servants.

It has been well said that 'each believer will have enough to do in keeping his own account right without interfering with others' accounts!'<sup>58</sup>

What is more, 'Christ died and lived again', Paul says, 'that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living'.<sup>59</sup>

Understandably, you and I delight to meditate on texts which tell us that the reason Jesus died was to do us good:

(i) 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age' (Gal. 1. 3-4).

(ii) 'He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jew and Gentile) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation ... thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross' (Eph. 2. 14-16).

(iii) 'Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed' (Tit. 2. 13-14).

(iv) 'Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate' (Heb. 13. 12).

(v) 'Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God' (1 Pet. 3. 18).

(vi) 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3. 8).

We enjoy knowing that we have been delivered, reconciled, redeemed and sanctified. But that is only part of the story. One purpose Jesus had in view when He died and rose to new life was that He might be Lord over all His people.

That is, when the Lord Jesus, the Living One, entered the hostile and alien realm of death and conquered it, rising to life for evermore,<sup>60</sup> He established His supremacy in both domains – in both that of death and that of the life beyond. And so, in whichever of these realms believers are found, they come under His lordship.

The believer's proper goal throughout life is not his own will, but the Lord's, and death doesn't alter this relationship. Death doesn't mean the end of our service for the Lord Jesus but our promotion to higher service for Him. We shall continue to serve in heaven and we will do so for ever; 'His servants<sup>61</sup> shall serve<sup>62</sup> Him. And they shall see His face'.<sup>63</sup>

## **2. Lording it over other Christians is out of bounds to me.**

But, as I have neither died nor lived again, I do not, therefore, possess the qualifications to lord it over either the dead or the living.

I simply do not possess the necessary credentials to exercise lordship over other Christians, requiring them to conform to my rules and whims. Only the Lord Jesus has the right to be their 'Lord', and He died and rose that He might have that right.

In summary, and putting it bluntly (though no more bluntly than Paul), I must keep off God's patch as universal Judge and the Lord Jesus' patch as universal Lord.

When preachers speak about our sins having been cast 'into the depths of the sea',<sup>64</sup> they sometimes say that the pardoning God has put up a large 'No Fishing' sign. I suggest that, when it comes to forming judgments of a personal nature on others, 'the Judge of all'<sup>65</sup> erects another sign; namely, 'No Trespassing!'

In the closing chapter of the last letter we possess from Paul, he expressed his confidence, 'Henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which *the Lord*, the righteous judge will *give me* in that day'.<sup>66</sup> But it is clear from what he told the saints at Rome, he was well aware that, before *the Lord* would '*give*' his reward to *him*, *he* would first have to '*give*' something to *the Lord*. For every believer will first have to '*give* account of himself'.<sup>67</sup>

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5

We earlier observed<sup>68</sup> that the judgment seat is a place where we shall all both '*give*' ('each of us shall *give* account of himself to God', Rom. 14. 12) and '*receive*' ('that each one may *receive* the things done in the body', 2 Cor. 5. 10).

Moving on now from Romans 14 to 2 Corinthians 5, it becomes a question of what the believer is to *receive*, or, better, to 'receive back' (the word carrying the thought of repayment and recompense<sup>69</sup>); namely, to receive back the things which he has practised 'through the body'.

And here lies one motivating force<sup>70</sup> behind the Christian's goal of securing the Lord's approval, whether in the body or out of it: 'We make it our aim ('we make it a point of honour', 'we are ambitious'<sup>71</sup>), Paul says, 'whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him'.<sup>72</sup> *For* we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body'.<sup>73</sup>

### 1. In passing

In passing, I note:

(i) that *our* own earnest endeavour 'to be well pleasing to Him' needs to be matched by the humble acknowledgement that we need *God's* help to do just that: 'Now may the God of peace ... make you complete in every good work to do His will, *working in you what is well pleasing in His sight*'.<sup>74</sup> and

(ii) that the word rendered 'appear' is a totally different word to that which is translated 'appearance' in verse 12: 'those who boast in appearance and not in heart'.<sup>75</sup> The word here in verse 10 does not mean 'to put in an appearance', but 'to be manifested', 'to be displayed'.<sup>76</sup>

The word here signifies "'to appear", not in the sense of a simple "showing up" but in the sense of being laid bare'.<sup>77</sup> The distinction has been illustrated by the observation that 'it is one thing "to appear" in a doctor's office and quite another thing to be X-rayed by him'.<sup>78</sup>

The apostle's motivation has been well paraphrased: 'We must all have our lives *laid open* before the tribunal of Christ'.<sup>79</sup> For, if I may put it this way, all the veneer will then be stripped off and we will face the Righteous Judge without the opportunity of donning any disguise or mask, such as is all too easy for us to do in this present world.

### 2. The apostle's body

Towards the close of his previous epistle, the apostle had applied the truth of the judgement seat to the service of *others*: 'My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord'.<sup>80</sup> But here in 2 Corinthians 5 he is applying the truth of the judgment seat to *his own* service.

In context, he is now speaking of his own body, which has been the subject, not only of the earlier verses of chapter 5 but of most of chapter 4. In brief:

(i) The apostle has spoken of his *present* body – frail, mortal and decaying (2 Cor. 4. 7-16).

(ii) He has spoken of his *resurrection* body – a 'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens', in contrast with his present 'earthly ... tent' (2 Cor. 4. 17 – 5. 5).

(iii) He has spoken of the possibility of his being *disembodied* – of the interval between death and the Lord's coming, when he would have no body, occupying neither 'tent' nor 'house' (2 Cor. 5. 6-8).

(iv) Now he says that ...

(i) though his present body is frail, mortal and decaying,

(ii) though he would much prefer to have his resurrection body, and

(iii) though he would even prefer to have no body at all, because he would then be 'at home with the Lord',

... yet he certainly does not despise or belittle his body,<sup>81</sup> because he knows that what he performs 'through' it while in the world carries with it far-reaching and lasting consequences (2 Cor. 5. 9-10).<sup>82</sup>

### 3. To 'suffer loss'?

'Each one', he says, will 'receive back the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad'. It is important to note that the word 'bad' does not refer to that which is morally evil and wicked but to that which is worthless and paltry.<sup>83</sup> That is, Paul is speaking of receiving back 'the things done in the body ... whether good or "good-for-nothing"', with the 'loss' of reward which the latter involves.

And that word 'loss' in connection with the judgment seat propels us, of course, into 1 Corinthians 3: 'If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss'.<sup>84</sup>

I understand Paul<sup>85</sup> to refer in 1 Corinthians 3 to the nature and the quality of the teaching which is built into the local church;<sup>86</sup> built on the only adequate foundation which can be laid for a church, namely the preaching of 'Jesus Christ'<sup>87</sup> and Him crucified (as expounded by Paul in the previous two chapters). Paul was concerned, not only with where the teachers at Corinth were building (namely 'on' the right foundation which he had laid) but also with how they were building,<sup>88</sup> and with what.<sup>89</sup>

Although I am satisfied then that, in context, Paul is saying 'only teaching which is true to Christ crucified will stand the testing fire of His evaluation', I am confident that the principles which he lays down apply to all who contribute anything to the local church and indeed to any form of Christian service.

'The day'<sup>90</sup> (that is, the day of review; the time when we appear before the judgment seat) will 'declare' (will 'make plain') the true nature and value of all our work,<sup>91</sup> as the Lord sees it ... whether that work is seen as 'gold, silver, precious stones' or 'wood, hay, straw' ... whether that work is seen as valuable or common, costly or inexpensive, durable or perishable, whether it took time and effort to obtain or was quickly and easily come by.<sup>92</sup>

### 4. 'Revealed by fire'

And the big issue, Paul explains, is whether, when our work is exposed to heaven's fire, it will be found to be combustible or not.

'The image of a fire ravaging a group of buildings and fully consuming everything save only the most durable materials would have resonated with the Corinthians. Corinth had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and its re-founding in 44 B.C. by Julius Caesar probably meant that some buildings in Paul's day were a patchwork of new and old materials'.<sup>93</sup>

In 'the day' of the believer's review, 'the fire will test' his work with a view to acceptance and approval (as the word means<sup>94</sup>). But, in reality, only the work which survives the fire will attract a reward. If the work is consumed (is completely burned up), the person himself will 'suffer loss'; he will forfeit his reward; he will miss out.<sup>95</sup>

The apostle would later tell the Philippians that he had once 'suffered the loss'<sup>96</sup> of all that he had once counted dear and of great value, and that he had done this that he might 'gain Christ'. That had been as a Pharisee. Now, as a Christian, he is unwilling to 'suffer the loss' of a full reward when he appears before Christ!<sup>97</sup>

The lord Jesus once asked, 'what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?'<sup>98</sup> make no mistake; the next greatest tragedy to suffering 'the loss' of one's soul, is to suffer 'the loss' of one's service.

### 5. 'The counsels of the hearts'

It is clear from 1 Corinthians 4 that, on the day of review, 'the counsels ('the intentions') of the hearts' will be revealed.<sup>99</sup> In that day, that is, the Lord will take full account of the secret motives of our hearts.<sup>100</sup> And then, if not now, we will appreciate the meaning of what Paul says in verses 3-4; namely, in effect, 'It matters nothing to me what you Corinthians think of me ... it matters nothing to me what men in general think of me'<sup>101</sup> ... it doesn't even matter to me what I think of myself! The only thing which matters is what the Lord knows me to be'.



It has been well expressed:

'In the day that we stand before our Master and Maker, it will not matter how many people on earth knew our name, how many called us great, and how many considered us fools. It will not matter whether schools and hospitals were named after us, whether our estate was large or small, whether our funeral drew ten thousand or no one. It will not matter what the newspapers or history books said or didn't say. What will matter is one thing and one thing only – what our Master thinks of us'.<sup>102</sup>

There is something incredibly solemn about the words, 'If anyone's work is burned'.

I hope you will suffer a personal anecdote. Many years ago, my wife Linda and I stayed for a short holiday in a Christian Hotel<sup>103</sup> in North Wales. We were amused to spot a prominent notice above the reception desk there which declared – rather ominously: 'No smoking! If we see you smoking, we will assume you are on fire - and *will take appropriate action!*'

But, alas for you and me, when our service passes through the celestial fire test, we will have neither fire extinguisher nor bucket of water on hand to quench any flames!

## REWARDS

As is well known, the believer's rewards are spoken of in many ways in the New Testament. I will focus briefly on three, under the headings of (1) Crowns, (2) Commendation and (3) Cities.

### 1. Crowns.

We read of no less than five distinct 'crowns' which can be earned:

- (i) an *imperishable* crown (1 Cor. 9. 25);
- (ii) a crown of *rejoicing* (1 Thess. 2. 19; cf. Phil. 4. 1);
- (iii) a crown of *righteousness* (2 Tim. 4. 8);
- (iv) a crown of *glory* (1 Pet. 5. 4); and
- (v) a crown of *life* (James 1. 12; Rev. 2. 10).

In each case, these are *not of the kingly, diadem*, type of crowns, such as adorn, for example, the brow of the mighty warrior King in Revelation 19, where we read, 'on His head were many crowns'.<sup>104</sup> These 'crowns' are rather of the kind which formed *the victor's wreath or garland* in the Greek games.<sup>105</sup>

In the space available, I will single out the first 'crown', the 'imperishable ('the incorruptible'<sup>106</sup> crown' of 1 Cor. 9. 24-27.

## Scripture

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate ('exercises self-control') in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for *an imperishable crown*. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty.

Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

(1 Cor. 9. 24-27).

## Comments

By way of background, I note that 'Paul begins with an allusion to the then-famous Isthmia games, held every two years in honour of the Greek god Poseidon on the sea coast about nine miles north of Corinth. Held under the patronage of the city of Corinth, the Isthmia Games attracted thousands of competitors and visitors from all over the empire, and, among the many Greek games, ranked second in prestige<sup>107</sup> only to the ancient Olympics'.<sup>108</sup>

Paul had been in Corinth during the Games held in Isthmia during the Spring of 51 AD.<sup>109</sup>

'From what I have been able to discover, there were no permanent facilities for visitors to the Games until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD. Those who came needed, therefore, to stay in tents. I

suspect, therefore, that the Games afforded Paul ample opportunity, not only to share the gospel with the vast crowds of spectators which came, but, along with Aquila and Priscilla, to ply his trade of tent-maker to support himself (Acts 18. 1-3).<sup>110</sup>

I was amazed to discover that, although the crowns at Olympus were made of olive leaves,<sup>111</sup> those at Isthmia, in New Testament times, were made of withered celery leaves.<sup>112</sup> Yes, *withered* celery leaves! Now, that certainly is 'perishable'!

'Paul ends the section by making reference to his body. This, he says, he treated most severely, making it his slave and treating it as his slave.<sup>113</sup> It was not that he saw his physical body as the seat of sin, but he knew it to be the vehicle and channel through which sin operated and acted. It seems that even Paul had to battle with the love of ease, and needed to be hard on himself if he was going to obtain the crown.

'I take Paul to be saying that, in his case, keeping himself spiritually fit meant subjecting his body to the harshness and severity of his apostolic ministry, including, it seems, regularly fasting.<sup>114</sup>

'The word "castaway" (KJV; "become disqualified" NKJV) at the end of verse 27 gives entirely the wrong impression. The word which Paul uses refers to someone who fails a test; to someone, that is, who, following trial, isn't approved. In the context of this passage, it describes someone who is disqualified and, therefore, obtains no crown.<sup>115</sup>

'This possibility of disqualification has nothing at all to do with the loss of salvation, any more than a competitor who failed to observe all the rules in the Games (and thereby forfeited a crown) stood to lose his Greek citizenship. It has everything to do with the loss of reward, with losing one's "prize" (1 Cor. 9. 24).

'Paul is saying that he exercised strict self-discipline for fear that otherwise he might be disqualified on the ground that he had failed to fulfil the necessary conditions. He has in mind the scrutiny of the competitors at the close of a contest; when, if the victor is proven not to have kept all the rules, he forfeits the prize.

'Paul clearly took very seriously the possibility that he might yet be disqualified. We know that one of his keenest ambitions throughout his Christian life was that he might finish his race well. He had expressed it clearly to the elders of Ephesus, "now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy (Acts 20. 22-24)".<sup>116</sup>

The apostle knew – and made it crystal clear to others – that any 'crowns' which Christians are to *wear in heaven* must first be *won on earth*.

## 2. Commendation.

'Then (at the 'judgment seat of God', that is) each one's praise (each one's 'commendation', 'approbation', 'recognition') will come from God' (1 Cor. 4. 5).

### Scripture

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man travelling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them'. His lord said to him, '*Well done, good and faithful servant*; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'.

He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them'. His lord said to him, '*Well done, good and faithful servant*; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'.

(Matt. 25. 14-23)

### Comments

The Lord Jesus, in His so-called 'Parable of the Talents',<sup>117</sup> twice used the expression, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'.<sup>118</sup>

I confess that I couldn't help smiling when I read that *those very words* were inscribed on the tombstone of a country squire from the County of Warwickshire in England, who had been shot and killed when his servant's gun went off accidentally!<sup>119</sup> In the circumstances, I have 'grave' (!) doubts that 'Well done, good and faithful servant' was the most appropriate Bible text to be inscribed there!

But, seriously, I entertain little doubt that each of us longs to hear our Saviour address those very words to us personally one day. But, alas for you and me, those words – as the 'crowns' – must be earned.

It is claimed that, following the end of World War II, on the shore of New York Harbour, in full view of all incoming troop ships, there was displayed a huge sign which read: "Welcome home. Well done".<sup>120</sup> Certainly, the parade route for the soldiers, seamen and airmen who passed in review was 'festooned with signs: "Welcome Home" and "Well Done"'.<sup>121</sup>

We can be confident that, when the Lord returns, He will 'Welcome Home' every last one of His people. By His grace, as believers, we can be assured of that 'Welcome Home'. But whether or not we shall hear Him say, 'Well Done', is an altogether different matter!

### 3. Cities.

In three of His parables about reward,<sup>122</sup> the Lord Jesus stated the principle of a disproportionately high recompense being given to servants who are 'faithful in what is least',<sup>123</sup> 'faithful in a very little'<sup>124</sup> and 'faithful over a few things'.<sup>125</sup>

Each of the three parables direct the attention of the hearer/reader to:

- (i) the actions of servants who had some of their lord's goods available to them temporarily during his absence, and
- (ii) the time of reckoning and reward at the end.

### Scripture

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come'. But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas'. And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities'.

And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas'. Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities'.

(Luke 19. 12-18)

### Comments

Although it is the parable of the pounds only which speaks specifically of cities, all three teach that, in that coming day, the Lord will determine the scope for service which he will be given in His glorious kingdom, not on any arbitrary basis, but on the basis of what he has done here and now with what he has been given.

In other words, the believer's role in our Lord's manifested kingdom is being hammered out now on the anvil of this present life. By the wise and diligent use of our present opportunities, we secure responsibilities and opportunities for ourselves in another world on a vaster and grander scale than we can possibly imagine.

You may have heard or read the story of the elderly couple, who one stormy night many years ago, entered the lobby of a small hotel in the city of Philadelphia and asked for a room. The story goes ...

... that the clerk explained that, because of three conventions in the town, the hotel was full. 'But I can't send a nice couple like you out into the rain at 1 o'clock in morning', he said. 'Would you be willing to sleep in my room?' The couple hesitated at first but the young man insisted.

When next morning the elderly man paid his bill, he said, 'You're the kind of manager who should be boss of the best hotel in the United States. Maybe someday I'll build one for you'. The clerk smiled, amused by the older man's little joke. Two years passed.

Then one day the clerk received a letter from the elderly man, recalling that stormy night, and asking him come to New York for a visit. A round-trip ticket was enclosed. When the clerk arrived, his host took him to the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 34<sup>th</sup> street, where there stood a magnificent new building, a palace of reddish stone, with turrets and towers reaching up into the sky.

'That', explained the man, 'is the hotel I have just built for you to manage'. 'You must be joking', said the clerk. 'I can assure you I am not', came the reply. The old man's name was William Waldorf Astor, and the hotel was the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

Well, that is how the story goes.<sup>126</sup>

What a great story and what a powerful illustration. But, sadly in many ways, the story has been greatly embellished over the years and many of the details are simply not true.<sup>127</sup>

But I can tell you a far better story—and it is true. Our Lord's manifested kingdom will need managers and now is the time that we are establishing our places in it.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

### 1. 'Meet those eyes'

Bear with me as I share another<sup>128</sup> personal anecdote. I have never forgotten a line of a hymn which was given out several years ago in my home assembly at the Lord's Supper. The hymn (which came from the pen of James Montgomery<sup>129</sup>) is titled, 'The Lord Himself shall come'.

The line of the hymn which gripped me that day reads, 'How shall I meet those eyes?'<sup>130</sup>

'How', indeed, 'shall I meet those eyes' ... those penetrating yet loving eyes which once melted the heart of Simon Peter<sup>131</sup> and which are said three times in the book of the Revelation to be as a flame of fire?<sup>132</sup>

### 2. 'All ... revealed'

With reference to the judgment seat of God and of Christ, it has been well said:

'We are forbidden to count upon it lightly ... all that we have hidden shall be revealed. The books are shut now, but they will be opened then. The things we have done in the body will come back to us, whether good or bad.

Every pious thought, and every thought of sin; every secret prayer, and every secret curse; every unknown deed of charity, and every hidden deed of selfishness: we will see them all again, and though we have not remembered them for years, and perhaps have forgotten them altogether, we shall have to acknowledge that they are our own, and take them to ourselves'.<sup>133</sup>

### 3. 'My great regret'

Speaking now as a Christian of over 60 years, my great regret is that, through these many years, I have not loved the Lord more and served Him better. For I know full well that, sadly for me, this present life isn't a dress rehearsal. There will be no re-run and, when I 'stand'/'appear' before the judgment seat, it will be too late for me to alter anything.

I close with an old legend which I read some time ago about three men who were crossing a desert on horseback at night.

*'As they approached a dry creek bed, they heard a voice commanding them to dismount, pick up some pebbles, put them in their pockets, and not look at them till the next morning. The men were promised that, if they obeyed, they would be both glad and sad. After they did as they were told, the three mounted their horses and went on their way.'*

*'As the first streaks of dawn began to spread across the sky, the men reached into their pockets to pull out the pebbles. To their great surprise, they had been transformed into diamonds, rubies, and other precious gems. It was then that they realized the significance of the promise that they would be both glad and sad. They were happy that they had picked up as many pebbles as they did, but sorry—so sorry—that they had not collected more.'*<sup>134</sup>

And I have more than a suspicion that, when I appear before the judgment seat, I will wish that I had given (and had done) more.

By and by when I kneel at His feet,  
Beautiful feet, nail-riven feet;  
By and by when I kneel at His feet,  
I'll wish I had given Him more.

More, so much more,  
More of my heart than I e're gave before,  
By and by when I kneel at His feet,  
I'll wish I had given Him more.<sup>135</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Greek word, 'βῆμα' (transliterated 'bēma'), is translated 'judgment seat' in seven separate passages in the New Testament; namely, in (i) Matt. 27. 19; (ii) John 19. 13; (iii) Acts 12. 21; (iv) Acts 18. 12, 16, 17; (v) Acts 25. 6, 10, 17; (vi) Rom. 14. 10; and (vii) 2 Cor. 5. 10. (The same word occurs once in the New Testament with the meaning 'a step', that is, 'the space covered by a foot', Acts 7. 5.)

<sup>2</sup> New King James Version.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians 5.

<sup>4</sup> 'When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the *judgment seat*' (Acts 18. 12). 'In 1935, archaeologists discovered the *bēma* [judgment seat] in the middle of the south edge of Corinth's forum; it consisted of an elevated podium covered by a roof upheld by columns ... The *bēma* is dated to 25–50 C.E., suggesting that it was fairly new in Paul's day. Certainly, Paul expected Corinthians to be familiar with the image of a *bēma* (2 Cor. 5. 10)'. (Craig Keener, '*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*', Volume 3, on Acts 18. 12.)

<sup>5</sup> 'Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favour, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?" So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's *judgment seat*, where I ought to be judged' (Acts 25. 9-10). 'Paul means to say that he is a Roman citizen before a Roman tribunal'.

(A. T. Robertson, '*Word Pictures in the New Testament*', on Acts 25. 10.)

'As Festus was Caesar's representative, the tribunal before which Paul stood was Caesar's; but since he had not sufficient confidence in the impartiality of that subordinate tribunal, he appealed to the supreme tribunal. "I appeal to Caesar", he declared'.

(F. F. Bruce, '*The Book of Acts (New International Commentary on the New Testament)*', on Acts 25. 10.)

<sup>6</sup> 1 Thess. 2. 19: 'at His coming (Greek *παρουσία*)'.

'In the New Testament the word applies to the return of Jesus Christ. The various facets of this future visit are defined by the contexts in which *παρουσία* appears. In this instance it is Jesus' examination of His servants subsequent to His coming for them (1 Thess. 4. 15-17) that is in view'.

(R. L. Thomas, '*1 Thessalonians (Expositor's Bible Commentary)*' on 1 Thess. 2. 19.)

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 5.

'Paul does not mean that they are to make no judgments. In 1 Cor. 5. 12, in the context of flagrant immorality in their midst, they are commanded to "judge those on the inside", and in 1 Cor. 6. 5 they are expected to be able to judge disputes between brothers within the community. Rather, the kinds of "judgments" that must cease are those they are currently making about Paul and his ministry ... Such judgments are "before the appointed time" when the Lord, the "master of the household," will himself come and hand down the verdict: "At that time each will receive his praise from God." Thus their own judgments are inconsequential both because only the Lord can judge his own servants, and also because only the final judgment counts for anything'.

(Gordon Fee, '*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*' (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament*), page 163.)

See too, '*when the Chief Shepherd appears*, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away', 1 Pet. 5. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 14. 13-14. Cf. the apostle's words to Governor Felix, 'I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be *a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust*' (Acts 24. 15) and also the words of the Lord Jesus in John 5. 28-29.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. 22. 12; cf. 'I am coming quickly' (Rev. 22. 7, 20).

'The emphasis on the impending arrival of Jesus and the events described in John's vision is intentional (Rev. 3. 11). John is told not to seal the words of the prophecy of this book, "for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22. 10). Jesus is coming quickly with each man's reward (Rev. 22. 12). His coming is imminent: it is as if He is already underway. His impending arrival serves as a great motivator for godly living in the present. It also indicates there are no preconditions on His return for the church at the Rapture'.

(Tony Garland, *'A Testimony of Jesus Christ'*, page 172.)

<sup>10</sup> 'We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord *in the air*' (1 Thess. 4. 17). We shall meet Him at the rendezvous 'in the air'—a reference, I take it, to the earth's upper atmosphere, which, bearing in mind what Paul says of the devil as 'the prince of the authority *of the air*' (Eph. 2. 2) may possibly be regarded as enemy territory. In which case, it may not be too fanciful to say that the very choice of our place of meeting – the sphere from which Satan conducts his present operations – only serves to underline our Lord's glorious triumph over 'the god of this world' (2 Cor. 4. 4).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example:

(i) 'θεοῦ ['of God'] is read by MSS like κ\* A B C\* D G, and Χριστοῦ ['of Christ'] by κ(ς) C(2) P Ψ and others. The weight of the MSS is behind θεοῦ, and it would seem that Χριστοῦ has been imported from 2 Cor. 5. 10'.

(Leon Morris, *'The Epistle to the Romans (Pillar New Testament Commentary)'*, footnote 37 to Romans 14.)

(ii) 'At an early date (Marcion Polycarp Tertullian Origen) the reading θεοῦ ['of God'], which is supported by the best witnesses (δ η̄ A B C\* D G 1739 al), was supplanted by Χριστοῦ ['of Christ'], probably because of influence from 2 Cor. 5. 10'.

(Bruce M. Metzger, *'A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament'*, page 531.)

<sup>12</sup> John 5. 22-23.

'The Son has received the prerogative of judgement, and it is through the exercise of this power that men come to perceive His true majesty'.

(B. F. Westcott, *'The Gospel according to St. John: The Greek Text'*, page 192.)

'If the Son no less than the Father has life and death in His hand, the direct consequence is this, that the Son is to be not less honoured than the Father'.

(E. W. Hengstenberg, *'Commentary on the Gospel of St. John'*, page 277.)

*'That all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father'* ... 'The Emperor Theodosius being seduced from the truth by Arian teachers, Bishop Amphilocus, at Rome, took the following eccentric means of convincing him of his error.

Theodosius had raised his son, Arcadius, to the dignity of Caesar. Together in royal state they received the homage of their subjects. Amphilochus, on one of these occasions presented himself and bowed his knee before the emperor, but took no notice of his son. Theodosius, offended, exclaimed: "Know you not that I have made my son the partner of my throne?" The Bishop thereupon turned on Arcadius, put his hands upon his head, and invoked a blessing upon him, and then turned to go away.

Naturally dissatisfied with patronage in place of homage, Theodosius asked in angry tones if that was all the respect the bishop paid to an occupant of the throne, but the latter replied: "Sire, you are angry with me for not paying your son equal honour with yourself; what must God think of you for encouraging those who insult His equal Son in every part of your empire?"

(Joseph S. Excell (Editor), *'The Biblical Illustrator'*, on John 10. 24-39.)

<sup>13</sup> John 5. 27.

<sup>14</sup> 'Some see here a recognition of Jesus' humanity, since the title ['son of man'] can be used of human beings generally. It accordingly affirms His fitness to act as our judge because He had lived our human life. While there may be validity in this interpretation ... it is difficult to believe that this saying in the ears of a Jewish audience, or of someone versed in the Old Testament, would not have had clear overtones of Dan. 7. 13. This is particularly so since the Son of Man in Daniel 7 appears in the judgment context of the seating of the heavenly court and the opening of the books (Dan. 7. 10)'.

(Bruce Milne, *'The Message of John'*, page 99.)

<sup>15</sup> John 10. 30; cf. John 14. 9; 17. 21.

<sup>16</sup> 'You seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God' (John 8. 40).

<sup>17</sup> 'The prerogative of judgement is connected with the true humanity of Christ (*Son of man*), and not with the fact that He is the representative of humanity (*the Son of man*). The Judge, even as the Advocate must share the nature of those who are brought before Him. The omission of the article concentrates attention upon the nature and not upon the personality of Christ'.

(B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, page 194.)

<sup>18</sup> Acts 17. 30-31. Cf. 'He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained ('appointed'; Greek *'ὀρίζω'*, the same word as in Acts 17. 31) by God to be Judge of the living and the dead' (Acts 10. 42).

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 5a.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 5b.

'From God' comes 'at the end, with emphasis; the award is final ... there is no further court of appeal'.

(A. Robertson and A. Plummer, '*First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians (International Critical Commentary)*', page 78.)

<sup>21</sup> Rom. 14. 12.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 10.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 8, 10, 13

<sup>24</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Rev. 22. 12.

<sup>26</sup> 'Each of us shall give account of himself to God' (Rom. 14. 12).

<sup>27</sup> 'That each one may receive ('receive back'; *κομίζω*) the things done in the body' (2 Cor. 5. 10). '*Komizo* (*κομίζω*) denotes ... "to receive back, recover" ... metaphorically, of requital, 2 Cor. 5. 10'.

(W. E. Vine, '*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*', article 'Receive, Receiving', number A. 16.)

Compare, 'whatever good anyone does, he will receive ('will receive back'; *κομίζω*) the same from the Lord' (Eph. 6. 8) and 'he who does wrong will be repaid ('will receive back'; *κομίζω*) for what he has done, and there is no partiality' (Col. 3. 25).

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 14. 12.

<sup>29</sup> 1 Pet. 4. 4-5 (ESV).

It has been well said that 'Jesus who appeared before the judgment seat of men [Matt. 27. 19; John 19. 13] and suffered unjust judgment will one day sit in righteous judgment over unjust men [Acts 17. 31; 1 Pet. 4. 4-5]'.

(T. McComiskey, '*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*', Volume 2, page 369.)

<sup>30</sup> Rom. 14. 12.

<sup>31</sup> 'We shall all stand before the judgment seat' (Rom. 14. 10).

<sup>32</sup> 'I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne' (Rev. 20. 12 – JND, Revised Version, RSV, ESV, NASB).



<sup>33</sup> Rev. 20. 11-13.

'This judgment seat is to be distinguished from the premillennial, earthly throne of Christ, Matt. 25. 31, and the postmillennial "Great White Throne", Rev. 20:11, at which only "the dead" will appear'.

(W. E. Vine, *op. cit.*, article 'Judgment Seat, number 1.)

<sup>34</sup> John 5. 24.

<sup>35</sup> Rev. 22. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Rev. 20. 13.

<sup>37</sup> 'God's promise to us that He will not remember our sins any more (does not), mean that, somehow, He will forget or banish from His memory the fact that we were once sinners. When throughout eternity we look at the nail prints in the Saviour's hands, we shall surely not find ourselves saying, "I can't remember now why He has those wound marks. What was it that caused them?" Neither will God!

'The terms "remember", "remembrance", "remembrancer", are semi-technical terms. Ancient kings had a court official known as the "remembrancer" or "recorder" (2 Sam. 20. 24). It was his duty to keep the royal records of all significant happenings. And when the king called for it, the recorder had to bring him the books so that the king could examine the record of any particular citizen he was interested in; and if that citizen's record was found to be bad, the king gave sentence and the citizen was executed. That is what is meant by "remembering" someone's sins (see Rev. 16. 19)'. (David Gooding, '*An Unshakeable Kingdom*', page 200.)

<sup>38</sup> Heb. 10. 16-17.

<sup>39</sup> Heb. 6. 10 (NASB).

<sup>40</sup> 2 Tim. 4. 8.

<sup>41</sup> 'Azariah's speech ended with a word of encouragement to Asa. The king was on the right track and should persevere; his efforts would not be in vain'.

(W. Corduan, '*I & II Chronicles (Holman Old Testament Commentary)*', on 2 Chron. 15. 1-7.)

<sup>42</sup> 2 Chron. 15. 7. Compare, "'Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for *your work shall be rewarded*", says the Lord' (Jer. 31. 16).

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 58.

<sup>44</sup> '*Studies in First Corinthians (Precious Seed Publications)*', page 264.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew Henry, '*Commentary on the Whole Bible*', on 1 Cor. 15. 58.

<sup>46</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 10.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 24-25; John 20. 26-27.

<sup>48</sup> Rom. 14. 10 and 2 Cor. 5. 10.

<sup>49</sup> Rom. 14. 10.

<sup>50</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 9-10.

<sup>51</sup> Rom. 14. 3, 10.

<sup>52</sup> Not here 'shall appear' (better, 'shall be manifest') as in 2 Cor. 5. 10.

The word 'παρίστημι' ('stand before') is well known in the papyri in the judicial technical sense of appearing in court before a judge; so in Acts 27. 24'.

(J. D. G. Dunn, 'Romans 1-8 (Word Biblical Commentary)', on Rom. 14. 10.)

<sup>53</sup> Rom. 14. 10.

<sup>54</sup> Rom. 14. 12.

<sup>55</sup> 'On that day all meaningless differences between Christians will fade away and we will not be concerned about the validity of what others have done, for every one of us shall give account of himself to God ... This responsibility naturally drives us to constantly take inventory of our religious scruples and convictions to make sure that they are based in the infallible Word and not in the tradition or whims of men'.

(Hindson and Kroll, 'KJV Bible Commentary', page 2266).

<sup>56</sup> 'He who observes the day, observes it *to the Lord*; and he who does not observe the day, *to the Lord* he does not observe it. He who eats, eats *to the Lord*, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, *to the Lord* he does not eat, and gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live *to the Lord*; and if we die, we die *to the Lord*. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are *the Lord's*', Rom. 14. 7-9.

<sup>57</sup> Rom. 14. 4 RV.

<sup>58</sup> W. Wiersbe, 'With the Word', page 741.

<sup>59</sup> Rom. 14. 9 (there is very little manuscript support for the addition of 'and rose' in the KJV).

<sup>60</sup> Rev. 1. 17-18.

<sup>61</sup> 'δοῦλοι', bondservants.

<sup>62</sup> 'λατρεύω', with devotion.

<sup>63</sup> Rev. 22. 3-4.

<sup>64</sup> This is a reference to the words of the prophet Micah: 'You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea', Micah 7. 19. 'He casts them into the sea, *not near the shore-side*, where they may appear again next low water, *but into the depths of the sea*, never to rise again'.

(Matthew Henry, 'Commentary on the Whole Bible', on Micah 7. 19.)

<sup>65</sup> Gen. 18. 25; Heb. 12. 23.

<sup>66</sup> 2 Tim. 4. 8. 'As for Paul himself, he was as sure of his *crown* as he was of his *conversion*'.

(A. McShane, '1 and 2 Corinthians (What the Bible Teaches)', page 292.)

<sup>67</sup> Rom. 14. 12. 'To give account'; not, please, 'to give any old account'.

<sup>68</sup> On page 3 of Part 1.

<sup>69</sup> "'Receive" means "to receive back", "to get an equivalent", or "to get one's due"'.

(Radmacher, Allen and House, 'Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary', page 1500.)

Compare the words of the Lord Jesus, 'I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every one according to his work', Rev. 22. 12, where 'to give is ἀποδοῦναι: give back ... repay ... pay back'.

(Tony Garland, 'A Testimony of Jesus Christ', page 177).

<sup>70</sup> 'Paul's spiritual motivations for service include the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5. 9–11), the love of Christ (vv. 12–16), the power of the gospel (v. 17), and the commission of the Lord (vv. 18–21)'.

(W. Wiersbe, *op. cit.*, page 760.)

<sup>71</sup> "Aim" is from the Greek word that means "to love what is honourable." Paul demonstrated that it is right and noble for the believer to strive for excellence, spiritual goals, and all that is honourable before God'.

(John MacArthur Jr, 'The MacArthur Study Bible', page 1770.)

<sup>72</sup> Note that *our* earnest endeavour 'to be *well pleasing* to Him' needs to be matched by the humble acknowledgement that we need *His* help to do just that: 'Now may the God of peace ... make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is *well pleasing* in His sight' (Heb. 13. 20-21).

<sup>73</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 9-10.

<sup>74</sup> Heb. 13. 20-21.

<sup>75</sup> The Greek word is *πρόσωπον*.

<sup>76</sup> The Greek word is *φανερῶ*. 'To be manifested, in the Scriptural sense of the word, is more than to "appear". A person may "appear" in a false guise or without a disclosure of what he truly is; to be manifested is to be revealed in one's true character; this is especially the meaning of *φανερῶ*'.

(W. E. Vine, 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words', article 'Appear, Appearing', number A. 4.)

Examples of this verb 'outside of the New Testament are not very numerous ... to make visible'.

(R. Bultmann, 'Theological Dictionary of the New Testament', Volume IX, page 3.)

<sup>77</sup> R. P. Martin, '2 Corinthians (Word Biblical Commentary)', on 2 Cor. 5. 10.

<sup>78</sup> W. MacDonald, 'Believer's Bible Commentary', page 1839.

<sup>79</sup> The New English Bible.

<sup>80</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 58.

<sup>81</sup> 'Paul's emphasis on judgment for deeds in the body reiterates his opposition to any remaining elements of common Greek ideas disparaging the body, which Paul had refuted in 1 Cor. 6:12–14'.

(Craig Keener, 'The IVP Bible Background Commentary', page 942.)

<sup>82</sup> It does seem that the believer's reward will be eternal. Scripture speaks of an 'incorruptible' crown, 1 Cor. 9. 25, and an 'unfading' crown, 1 Pet. 5. 4 – both of which words Peter used of the believer's inheritance in heaven, 1 Pet. 1. 4. (The word translated 'unfading' occurs in only 1 Pet. 1. 4 and 1 Pet. 5. 4.)

<sup>83</sup> 'Whether good or bad':

(i) The word translated "bad" (*φάυλος*) indicates: 'evil under (the) aspect ... of its good-for-nothingness, the impossibility of any true gain ever coming forth from it ... This notion of worthlessness is the central notion'.

(R. C. Trench, 'Synonyms of the New Testament', Eighth Edition, page 305 {article lxxxiv}.)

(ii) 'Paul uses ... a word that means evil in the sense of poor, paltry, worthless'.

(C. K. Barrett, 'The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Black's New Testament Commentaries)', page 161.)

(iii) Compare, 'you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong (*ἀδικέω*) will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality', Col. 3. 25.

<sup>84</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 15.

<sup>85</sup> The '*wise master builder*', 1 Cor. 3. 10:

(i) 'J. Shanor, "Paul as Master Builder: Construction Terms in First Corinthians (NTS 34 (1988), pp. 461-71)", shows that the key term (*ἀρχιτέκτων*) refers to *the person in charge of the day-to-day work of building*, here the building of a temple'.

(Ben Witherington III, '*Conflict and Community in Corinth: Socio-rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*', page 133. Cf. A. C. Thiselton, '*The First Epistle to the Corinthians (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*', page 308.)

(ii) 'The term appears in temple inscriptions to refer to the supervisor of the day-to-day work of subcontractors'.

(David E. Garland, '*1 Corinthians (Baker Exegetical Commentary)*', page 114.)

(iii) The only other occurrence of the word in the Greek Bible is in Isaiah 3. 3.

<sup>86</sup> 'Primarily teachers are in view here, or the character of their doctrine, whether it is valuable or worthless. Clearly gold, silver, precious stones refer to the apostles' teaching, also that of Apollos and other good men, whereas the wood, hay, and stubble refer to teaching that was divisive, marked by the wisdom of this world, persuasive words of man's wisdom, words which man's wisdom teaches'.

(J. Hunter, '*1 and 2 Corinthians (What the Bible Teaches)*', page 36.).

<sup>87</sup> 'No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation ...' (1 Cor. 3. 11-12).

'Even as it would be absurd to build a structure of worthless materials on a foundation of gold, so it is wicked to cover over Christ with contrary doctrines'.

(John Calvin, '*Commentary on 1 Corinthians*', on 1 Cor. 3. 12.

<sup>88</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 10.

<sup>89</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 12.

<sup>90</sup> 'The day of our Lord Jesus Christ', 1 Cor. 1. 8.

<sup>91</sup> 'Its purpose in this context is not to punish, or to destroy, or to refine but to disclose the quality of the work'.

(David E. Garland, *ibid.*, page 118.)

It is not a judgment of God's people but of their work.

<sup>92</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 12.

<sup>93</sup> R. E. Ciampa and B. S. Rosner, '*The First Letter to the Corinthians (Pillar New Testament Commentary)*', page 155; cf. A. C. Thiselton, *op. cit.*, page 313.

<sup>94</sup> "'To test, prove," with the expectation of approving'.

(W. E. Vine, *op. cit.*, article 'Prove', number A. 1.)

<sup>95</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 15. Reward, not salvation, can be forfeited:

(i) 'The labourer who used cheap materials and took shortcuts will be pulled out of the flames and the rubble heap in the nick of time ... they will enter salvation "smelling of smoke," their labour gone up in flame'.

(David E. Garland, *op. cit.*, page 119.)

(ii) It is the builder's "work" (3:13) that will be burned up, not the builder himself. 'It is not the loss of salvation—which cannot be lost—but the loss of commendation which is at stake'.

(P. Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, page 103.)

(iii) 'The distinction is not between the lost and the saved, but among the saved between those who have built well and those who have built poorly'.

(Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians (Tyndale New Testament Commentary)*, pages 68-69.)

(iv) 'Even Christian service seriously flawed by self-interest cannot imperil the Christian believer's salvation'.

(A. C. Thiselton, *op. cit.*, page 314.)

(v) 'The loss suffered is not the loss of salvation but the loss of a reward, which, in the context, is simply defined as "praise from God". Brilliant work does not earn salvation; lackluster work does not lose it'.

(David E. Garland, *op. cit.*, page 118.)

<sup>96</sup> Phil. 3. 8. Paul uses the same Greek word (*ζημιόω*) as in 1 Cor. 3. 15..

<sup>97</sup> As a Pharisee, Paul had once 'suffered the loss' of all he had once esteemed of great value. As a Christian, Paul had no intention of 'suffering the loss' of a full reward.

<sup>98</sup> Matt. 16. 26.

<sup>99</sup> 'The counsels of the hearts' will be 'manifested', the same word as is used of the person himself, 2 Cor. 5. 10.

<sup>100</sup> 'Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts', 2 Cor. 5. 5.

'It is not enough, in order to pass judgment on men, that the hidden things should be brought to light. *The motive must also be known*'.

(T. C. Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, page 100.)

<sup>101</sup> 'That I be examined of you or of *man's day*' (1 Cor. 4. 3 JND). '*Man's day* is the time when man passes judgment on things. The day of our Lord Jesus Christ will be the time when He will pass judgment on the service of His saints'.

(W. E. Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, page 69.)

<sup>102</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Managing God's Money*, page 29.

<sup>103</sup> The Ashmount Hotel in Rhos-on-Sea.

<sup>104</sup> Rev. 19. 12 ... '*διάδημα* ... the symbol of kingly or imperial dignity ... translated "diadem" instead of "crown" in the RV'.

(W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'Crown', number A. 2).

<sup>105</sup> The word 'crown' which is used of rewards to be bestowed at the judgment seat:

(i) 'The usual meaning throughout secular Greek became a "crown" or "wreath" ... especially the victor's wreath of leaves at the various athletic games'.

(C. J. Hemer, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology Vol. 1*, page 405.)

(ii) '*στέφανος* ... the victor's crown, the symbol of triumph in the games or some such contest'.

(W. E. Vine, *op. cit.*, article 'Crown', number A. 1).

<sup>106</sup> The word (*ἄφθαρτος*) signifies 'not liable to corruption or decay, incorruptible'.

(W. E. Vine, *op. cit.*, article 'Corrupt, Corruptible, Incorruptible', number C. 2).

<sup>107</sup> 'The biennial Isthmian Games were the second most popular events in Greece (after the Olympics), drawing large crowds of Greeks to Corinth'.  
(Craig S. Keener, '1–2 Corinthians (New Cambridge Bible Commentary)', page 81.)

<sup>108</sup> 'Studies in First Corinthians' (Precious Seed Publications), page 47.

<sup>109</sup> Evidence that Paul was at Corinth during the Isthmian Games of 51 A.D.:

(i) Archaeologists found fragments of a stone which probably was once attached to the outer wall of the Temple of Apollo. Inscribed in it is a copy of a letter from Claudius to the city of Delphi, naming Gallio as the friend of Claudius and proconsul of Achaia. In all likelihood Gallio held his office in A.D. 52. Paul had arrived in Corinth 18 months earlier than his appearance before Gallio, Acts 18. 11-12.

(ii) 'The time spent in Corinth probably stretched from the fall of A.D. 50 to the spring of A.D. 52'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Book of Acts (New International Commentary on the New Testament)', on Acts 18. 11.)

(iii) 'The Isthmia Games were held every two years, including in A.D. 51'.  
(A. C. Thiselton, *op. cit.*, page 10).

<sup>110</sup> (Reproduced, with permission, from 'Studies in First Corinthians' (Precious Seed Publications), page 47.)

<sup>111</sup> W. Grundmann, 'Theological Dictionary of the New Testament', Volume VII, page 620.

<sup>112</sup> A crown of celery leaves:

(i) 'At the Isthmian games, originally pine, then later celery—and withered celery at that'.  
(David E. Garland, *op. cit.*, page 448 - Additional Note.)

(ii) 'The victor's crown at the Isthmian games was of celery'.  
(Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 'St. Paul's Corinth', page 95.)

(iii) Archaeologists have uncovered 'a mosaic of an athlete at Corinth with a crown of withered celery leaves'.  
(D. J. Wiseman and E. Yamauchi, 'Archaeology and the Bible', page 93.)

(iv) 'Isthmia ... The first contest was held for a crown of pine, but later, when the contest was made sacred, they adopted the celery crown'.  
(Plutarch, 'Quaestiones Convivales', 5:3.3.)

<sup>113</sup> Self-control:

(i) 'His stress in this metaphor is on self-control exercised so as not to be disqualified. His objective will be to get the Corinthians, in particular the Gentiles who were attending idol feasts, to exercise self-control so as neither to cause others to stumble nor to disqualify themselves'.  
(B. Witherington III, 'Conflict and community in Corinth', on 1 Cor. 9. 24-27.)

(ii) 'Athletes were famous for their discipline especially in the areas of sex and food, the areas that most preoccupy Paul's arguments in this letter [chapters 5 to 10]'.  
(R. E. Ciampa and B. S. Rosner, 'The First Letter to the Corinthians (Pillar New Testament Commentary)', on 1 Cor. 9. 27.)

<sup>114</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 27; note that 'fastings' are clearly distinguished from natural hunger.

<sup>115</sup> 'Castaway' KJV (ἀδόκιμος):

(i) 'ἀδόκιμος: rejected by the umpire; in allusion to the examination of the combatants at the close of the contest, when, if the victor was proved not to have contended in strict accordance with the conditions, he forfeited the crown'.  
(T. C. Edwards, *op. cit.*, page 242.)

(ii) 'ἀδόκιμος means worthless, rejected ... that which has not stood the test, that which has been shown to be a sham, and has therefore been rejected'.  
(H. Haarbeck, 'Dictionary of New Testament Theology Vol. 3', page 808.)

<sup>116</sup> Reproduced, with permission, from 'Studies in First Corinthians' (Precious Seed Publications), pages 50-51.

<sup>117</sup> The parable is titled, 'The Parable of the Entrusted Funds' in the Clarendon Bible.

<sup>118</sup> Matt. 25. 21, 23.

<sup>119</sup>

<sup>120</sup> 'After World War II there was a sign on the shore of New York harbour facing all incoming troop ships, which read: "WELCOME HOME. WELL DONE".  
(*Precept Austin*; accessed at [https://www.preceptaustin.org/2corinthians\\_418\\_commentary](https://www.preceptaustin.org/2corinthians_418_commentary).)

<sup>121</sup> 'General of the Army, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was among the soldiers, seamen, and airmen passing in review in 1945 ...The din from the cheering crowds had filled the avenue, and a festive blizzard of ticker tape and confetti swirled down to blanket the street along the way. The parade route was festooned with signs: "Welcome Home" and "Well Done". The people of New York were delirious'.  
(Source: <https://www.memorialdayfoundation.org/articles/safely-rest.html>).

<sup>122</sup> The three parables are: (i) The parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16. 1-13), (ii) the parable of the pounds ('minas'), (Luke 19. 12-27), and (iii) the parable of the talents (Matt. 25. 14-30).

For a brief exposition of (i), see <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-parable-of-the-unjust-steward-part-1/> and <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-parable-of-the-unjust-steward-part-2/>.

For a brief exposition of (ii), see <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-parable-of-the-pounds1-part-1/> and <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-parable-of-the-pounds-part-2/>,

<sup>123</sup> Luke 16. 10.

<sup>124</sup> Luke 19. 17.

<sup>125</sup> Matt. 25. 21, 23.

<sup>126</sup> For example, <http://www.christianity.com/devotionals/seniors/11539409/>.

<sup>127</sup> See <http://www.snopes.com/glurge/waldorf.asp>.

<sup>128</sup> An earlier personal anecdote concluded Part 2.

<sup>129</sup> James Montgomery (1771-1854) wrote some 400 hymns, including 'According to Thy gracious word', 'Forever with the Lord', 'Hail to the Lord's anointed', 'Stand up and bless the Lord', and 'Come let us sing the song of songs'.

<sup>130</sup> The line '*How shall I meet those eyes?*', can be found in 'Hymns of Light and Love' (number 599, verse 3), and in 'The Believers' Hymnbook' (number 272, verse 4).

<sup>131</sup> Luke 22. 60-61.

<sup>132</sup> Rev. 1. 14; 2. 18; 19. 12.

<sup>133</sup> James Denney, '*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*', pages 184-185.

<sup>134</sup> Richard De Haan, '*Our Daily Bread*', 27 July 2004; accessed at <https://odb.org/GB/2004/07/27/both-glad-and-sad>.

<sup>135</sup> Grace Reese Adkins (1884-1973),