

STONES OF GOD'S WITNESS:

Corinth – Standing Before Him

THINK OF THE FIRE

I Corinthians 3:10-15 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. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 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. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Bible history is filled with people who began the race with great success but failed at the end because they disregarded God's rules. They did not lose their salvation, but they did lose their rewards (1 Cor. 3:15).

- It happened to Lot (Gen. 19),
- Samson (Jud. 16),
- Solomon (I Kings 11), and
- Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). And it can happen to us!

ETERNAL VALUE¹

Will our life's work stand the test of the fire when we come before the Lord? Will it have lasting eternal value - or will it end up in ashes? There's an interesting difference between wood, hay, straw - and gold, silver, and costly stones. Wood, hay, and stubble are found above the ground. They catch the eye, just like many people's ministries do. They are quite plentiful and easy to find. On the other hand, silver, gold, and precious stones are found below the ground. Nobody sees them - again, like many people's ministries. They're not just lying around in a field somewhere for anyone to pick up. They are much harder to come by, in fact it takes a lot of hard work to get them. That's why they are so expensive. They are of much higher quality than many other things, and much more rare, too. Again, it's the quality, not the quantity that sets their value. Many things are difficult in the

¹ THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST The Judgment Of Believers by Leonard Ravenhill

Christian life, but we should desire to acquire those things which will hold their value, not only on earth, but in heaven as well.

Have you ever² seen the little plaque that reads, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last"? Well, that's not what the poet wrote. The poet wrote this:

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.
And when I am dying, how happy I'll be,
if the lamp of my life has been burned out for Thee."

Do you think all Christians die happy? Not on your life! Some of them die as miserable as sinners. Why? Because they've misused their time and wasted their lives. Many of you have laid dying on a hospital bed and prayed, "Lord, if You would only spare me I'll do this, that, or the other." Well, have you done it?

"His Plan For Me"³

"When I stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ
And He shows His plan for me,
The plan of my life as it might have been
Had He had His way - and I see
How I blocked Him here ,and checked Him there,
And I would not yield my will,
Will there be grief in my Savior's eyes,
Grief though He loves me still?
Would He have me rich and I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing,
Down the paths I cannot retrace.
Lord, of the years that are left to me,
I give them to Thy hand;
Take me and break me and mold me,
To the pattern that Thou hast planned!"
-Author Unknown

It is an exciting experience to run the race daily, "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:1-2). It will be even more exciting when we experience that "upward calling" and Jesus returns to take us to heaven! Then we will stand before the *bema* to receive our rewards! It was this future prospect that motivated Paul, and it can also motivate us.

² THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST The Judgment Of Believers by Leonard Ravenhill

³ THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST The Judgment Of Believers by Leonard Ravenhill

THINK OF THE REWARDS

1. JESUS REWARDS THOSE PERSECUTED FOR HIS NAME. Matthew 5: 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
2. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO LOVE THEIR ENEMIES. Matthew 5: 43-46 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
3. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO SECRETLY SACRIFICE FOR HIM. Matthew 6: 1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.
4. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO SECRETLY PRAY FERVENTLY FOR HIM. Matthew 6: 5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
5. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO FAST IN SECRET FOR HIM. Matthew 6: 16 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
6. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO HONOR HIS SERVANTS. Matthew 10: 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

7. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO SERVE CHILDREN IN HIS NAME.
Matthew 10:42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."
8. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO WORK FOR HIM. Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.
9. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO SERVE IN HIS NAME. Mark 9:41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.
10. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO LIVE HIS WAY ON EARTH. Luke 6:20-23 Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.
11. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO ARE GENEROUS AND DO GOOD WORKS FOR HIM. Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.
12. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO GO AND WITNESS FOR HIM. 1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.
13. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO USE THE RIGHT MATERIALS. 1 Corinthians 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.
14. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO SERVE HIM WILLINGLY. 1 Corinthians 9:17-18 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. 18 What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.
15. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO STAY PURE IN DOCTRINE. Colossians 2:18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,
16. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO SERVE HIM ALONE. Colossians 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

17. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO LABOR FOR HIM. 1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
18. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO SERVE AND SPEAK BOLDLY FOR HIM. Hebrews 10:35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.
19. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO STAND FOR HIM INSTEAD OF THE WORLD. Hebrews 11:26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (That means some of you will be rewarded for not going along with the foolishness around you, the immodesty, the materialism, the rudeness, the pride, the disobedient, and so on...)
20. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO STAY AWAY FROM APOSTASY. 2 John 8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.
21. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. Revelation 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."
22. JESUS REWARDS THOSE WHO WORK FOR HIM. Revelation 22:12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. (Grace is free rewards are NOT – they are costly!)

In the ancient Isthmian games of Greece, a pedestal⁴ stood at the finish line, and on it hung a wreath-the winner's prize. No one runs a race without some expectation of reward. The Isthmian races and the race spoken of in Hebrews 12, however, were not run for exhilaration. This type of race is the , the agony race, the marathon, the race that seems never to end. It is not a race you run simply for the pleasure of running. If you do not have something important to look forward to at the end of this race, you will likely not start it and will certainly not finish it.

1. The CROWN OF LIFE **to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and persevere to the end.** GOD CROWNS THOSE WHO LOVE HIM: James 1:12 God crowns those who love Him. God wants your heart! Love only counts to God if it's first place, priority #1 love, more than hobbies, money, professional achievements, scholastic honors, sports victories, possessions. Do you place a higher priority on God or: your

⁴ Quoted from Hebrews 12, MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

- job, your house, your recreation, your finances, (i.e. do you spend more time with investments on earth or heaven?)
2. The CROWN OF REJOICING **is also called the soul winners crown and it consists of people won for Christ.** I Thessalonians 2:19; Phil 4:1. The only things we can take with us are people! Are you taking anyone with you? Who, your friends, neighbors, children? ARE WE DISCIPLINING OTHERS? GOD CROWNS THOSE WHO BRING HIM PEOPLE: God crowns those who bring Him what He wants. God wants people, not houses, plaques, collectibles. Remember the Lord allows no U-Hauls behind a hearse. *Because the faithful proclaim the truth, there is promised a 'crown of exultation'.*
 3. The UNFADING CROWN OF SELF-CONTROL **is for Steadfast Racer that consistently brings the flesh under the Spirit's control, resisting all that disqualifies.** This one gets Imperishable Crown in I Corinthians. 9:25-27.
 - GUARD AGAINST THE APATHY OF AFFLUENCE Revelation. 3:17: Our world tries to make us seek self-sufficiency and independence; this begets spiritual indifference. The only solution is to take spiritual therapy as we talked about this morning as we:
 - VALUE RELATIONSHIPS OVER AND ABOVE FINANCIAL GAIN (Phil 4:1; I Th. 2:19-20);
 - DREAM ABOUT WINNING THE ULTIMATE PRIZE Matthew 25:21-23;
 - RUB SHOULDERS WITH THE LESS FORTUNATE TO REMIND US THAT THE MORE WE HAVE THE MORE WE NEED TO GIVE I Tim 6:18-19;
 - FOCUS ON THE SECRET OF GODLY CONTENTMENT I Tim 6:6-8 GOD CROWNS THOSE WHO DENY THEIR FLESH: The Steadfast Racer that resists all Disqualifiers gets the Unfading Crown in I Cor. 9:25-27. This is for Mastering our old nature. The Lord's reward for all His faithful followers are varied and wonderful, and all of them are imperishable
 4. The CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS **goes to those who faithfully watch for Christ each day living with eternity's values as their own.** These get the Crown of Righteousness in II Tim. 4:8. Remember Paul is now at the end of his life. He is in the depths of Mamertinum. This crown is for anticipating Christ. Are you? This crown is for following to the finishing line the course the Lord has given you? Are you? Finishing the race to the end. God crowns those who watch for Him: Look for Jesus every day. (I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER THE PARSONAGE WINDOW IN Rhode Island. When I drove up to the garage Bonnie would have the little ones watching. With wide eyes they would sound the coming home of dad. My joy is such a tiny example of God's longing for our attention!) The Victorious Warrior

who faithfully watches for Christ gets the Crown of Righteousness in II Tim. 4:8.

5. The CROWN OF GLORY is **promised to those who live as an Example to the Flock**. Faithful under-shepherds get the Crown of Glory in I Peter 5:1-5. SERVE CHRIST'S CHURCH BECAUSE GOD CROWNS THOSE WHO SERVE HIM: This is for feeding the flock. This is for enduring trials. *Because of the service of the redeemed, the reward given is 'the unfading crown of glory'*

THINK OF THE GLASSY SEA: Revelation 4:5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. 8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM ? Look at Revelation. 4:9-11 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (KJV)

1. Are you saved? Do you have the crown of life?
2. Are you winning and discipling people? Will you get this crown of rejoicing?
3. Are you Spirit controlled? Will you get the unfading crown?
4. Are you looking for Jesus? Will you get the crown of righteousness?
5. Are you serving Christ's church, His sheep? Will you get the crown of glory?

A. The Intensity of evaluation by the Heavenly Judge is very great. It is:

1. A DAY OF FIRE: 1 Corinthians 3: 13 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.
2. A DAY OF THE BURNING UP OF A LIFE'S WORK - BURN OR REMAIN. 1 Corinthians 3: 13-15 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. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
3. A DAY OF BEING SAVED BUT ONLY BY FIRE 1 Corinthians 3: 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
4. A DAY OF DAMAGE AND LOSS - LOSS OR GAIN. 1 Corinthians 3: 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 2 John 8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.
5. A DAY OF TERROR Good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5: 10-11 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. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.
6. A DAY OF SHRINKING FROM HIS PRESENCE IN SHAME - SHAME OR HONOR. 1 John 2: 28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.
7. A DAY OF BEING JUDGED BY GOD HIMSELF -- High or Low in Heaven Matthew 5: 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Hebrews 10: 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people."

When asked later in life what kept him going in Bible teaching, translation, and church ministry Martin Luther said this simple truth:

"I have but two dates on my calendar today and the day of the judgment seat of Christ!"

In other words he lived each day like he was on his way to explain what he did with his life to the One who gave him life – Jesus Christ.

Tonight will you come with me to that Throne? Will you let the Holy Scriptures transport you out of this world and into God's?

GOD'S PANORAMA OF AGES?

RAPTURE	1 THESS. 4	BE READY – The Son of Man cometh
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST	2 CORIN. 5	BE HOLY – We must all appear.
TRIBULATION	REV. 6-19	BE THANKFUL – Christ will keep us from the hour.
SECOND COMING	REV. 19	BE PATIENT – Christ will right all wrongs.
MILLENNIUM	REV. 20	BE FOCUSED – Christ will perfect the earth
GREAT WHITE THRONE	REV. 20	BE FAITHFUL – Point people to Christ.
HEAVEN	REV. 21-22	BE INVESTING – Lay up treasure in Heaven.

THINK OF GOD'S THRONE:

- Ezekiel 1:24-28 When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. 25 A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings. 26 And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. 27 Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.
- Daniel 7:9-10 "I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the

hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.

- Revelation 4:1-4 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. 3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.
- Revelation 5:8-14 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." 11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" 14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

- **THINK OF YOUR APPOINTMENT:** This evening each of us have an unavoidable appointment. This appointment should constrain our flesh and motivate our spiritual hearts.

- Romans 14:10 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.

- 2 Corinthians 5:10 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.
- 1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

So, its going to be first of all a very public event: **phanerothani** which means more than just to appear, it means to make manifest. Before the God of the universe and all of creation, we will be made known before all. And **bema** is the judgment seat of the rulers of old. It is raised for all to see. That is the place all will appear one by one. Secondly it is also a very personal event **pantas** [plural] must appear in order that each one individually which is the literal meaning of 'may receive'. Our lives amount to either good or **phaulon** translated bad does not speak of evil but 'good for nothingness'⁵ The believer is either going to have to answer for the good things done faithfully for the Master, or for the rest which was good for nothingness. This is 'light, unstable, blown about by every wind'. Oh, to stand before all in that day and to answer to Him. v.10 "For the all is to be revealed" (pantas) w/ article = sum total – none left out. (phanerothernai #5319) = to make plain, manifest, known = to be made manifest ↑(aorist passive infinitive) completely (as in character). One day each Christian will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10–12). The Greek word for "judgment seat" is **BEMA**, the very same word used to describe the place where the Olympic judges gave out the prizes! If we have disciplined ourselves to obey the rules, we shall receive a prize.

⁵ Trench, 296-97.