

Confession #4:
We've Been Too Earthly Minded

The Judgment Seat of Christ
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Text: 2 Cor. 5:1-11
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Series: 2 Corinthians

Introduction: Open your Bible to **2 Corinthians 5:1-11**. I want to speak today about the Judgment Seat of Christ. Our confession today is “We’ve Been Too Earthly Minded.”

Some of you know Steve Chisom. He is one of the greatest saints in our church. But he’s so weak, he cannot even come to church.

You see about 5 years ago, Steve came down with ALS, Lou Gerig’s disease. He can hardly walk these days. Some might think that Steve’s life is insignificant. Because Steve is a child of God, everything he does will be rewarded. Because he’s robed in the righteousness of Christ, there is no condemnation for Him. He is born again in Christ Jesus.

God cares about what Steve does. Every prayer he lifts up matters. He writes to people that you don’t write to. I visit other members of this church that are infirm or unable to come. They hear from Steve! He can hardly walk, but he can write!

Some days you feel so broken, you can hardly groan to God much less lift up your praise to God. God cares for you. He loves you. And what we do for Him matters.

This is the same message Paul gives in 2 Corinthians 5. Turn there if you would.

2 Corinthians 5:1–11 (ESV) — “1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.”

I want to encourage you today. Paul says there is coming a day when we will no longer groan with the burden of this body, broken by sin and sickness. All our burdens will be lifted. Paul says twice, that we are can always be “of good courage” (vs. 6, 8).

There is coming a day when this mortal body is going to put on immortality. All sin, sadness, and sorrow will be put off! “...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1Co 15:52).

This is why Paul summarizes his ministry in one sentence in verse 8b, “we make it our aim to please him.” This is our philosophy of ministry. We do not please ourselves.

“For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done” (Matthew 16:27). That day will be an amazing day! Martin Luther said that on his calendar there were only two days: “today” and “that Day.”

I. Who are the People present?

Explanation: This will a judgment for all believers!

- A. Our participation will be **Universal** – “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” – Every believer, whether great or small will appear before the throne of Christ and will give account unto Him of the deeds done in this body. It’s not just those who teach and preach the Word. We will have a stricter accountability, but the Bible says “we must all appear before Christ”.

Verses 10-11, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But **what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.**”

Romans 14:12 (ESV) — “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

1. **All believers will be separated unto Jesus on that day.**
– “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” –
There are various views on the timing of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Some believe there are actually two final judgments, one for believers and one for the lost.

How will the Judgment Occur?

Regardless of how and when this happens, the Bible teaches that Jesus separates all people into two groups. We see the saved at the Judgment Seat of Christ and the lost at the Great White Throne judgment. One judgment is for the Lord’s people – the Lord’s spiritual family. The other is for His enemies.

So all the apostles speak of the last judgment, but Jesus Christ gives us an understanding of what it will look like.

Matthew 25:31–46 (ESV) — “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ 41 ‘Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44 Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ 45 Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Clearly the judgment takes place at Jesus’ Second coming. Both the commendation of believers and the condemnation of unbelievers occur as two phases to one General Judgment of Christ. Christians sometimes distinguish between the two as:

- (1.) The judgment seat of Christ for believers, and
- (2.) The Great White Throne Judgment for unbelievers.

Jesus reiterated this earlier in **Matthew 13:24-30**, “He put another parable before them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, 25 but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. 27 And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ 28 He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ 29 But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow together until

the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

He interprets this in **Matthew 13:40-43** (ESV) — “Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

Jesus was actually quoting the Prophet Daniel. The one Judgment in two phases is exactly what the Old Testament prophets teach.

Daniel 12:2-3 (ESV) — “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

2. For this reason all people should seek to be 100% assured of salvation.

– “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” –

Every believer has the responsibility to have the assurance of conscience that you are living a life pleasing to God and that you belong to Him!

Here we come to the doctrine of assurance. If you are born again, you have the Spirit of God living in you. As **verse 5** says, God has prepared us for death... “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee”. The Spirit calls out within us, “Abba Father”. He’s the proof of purchase.

Illustration: You know those cereal boxes all have a “proof of purchase”. You know who made it. You know I was at the GoodWill store the other day, and most of the clothes are used and some a bit tattered. But I love used clothes. You save so much money!

3. All believers have the mark of holiness as they look toward that final day.

– “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” – and at the judgment seat, God will demonstrate His work in us.

- **Philippians 1:6** (ESV) — “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

- We are to be looking to Jesus who is the “Author and Finisher of our faith” (**Heb. 12:1-2**).

Our works will demonstrate that we are true believers.

- **1 John 3:2-3**, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Illustration: There’s so many counterfeits in this world today. Counterfeiting makes billions and billions every year. You look at your money, there are so many security features.

So it is with the believer. There are security features.

- The Bible says, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (**James 2:26**).
- Now works cannot save. **Ephesians 2:8–10** (ESV) — “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

But we must also understand...

“Without holiness no man will see the Lord” (**Hebrews 12:14**).

- **Matthew 7:19–27** (ESV) — “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. 21 ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”
- **1Jo 3:3**, “And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

We all know that every one God calls to salvation is justified, and every true Christian is being conformed in some measure to the likeness and image of Jesus Christ (**Rom. 8:29**). What a joyous truth.

So our works will be the evidence at the judgment that we are born again. Our works do not justify us. Our works cannot cleanse our sin. At best our works are as Isaiah says, “filthy rags”. But our works are the evidence of true faith.

So it is **Universal**. Every believer in Christ is going to stand before Christ.

B. Our participation will be **Unavoidable** - (“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”).

Heb 9:27, “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment”.

Every child of God is slated to appear at this judgment seat. When your name is called, you will stand before Jesus and you will face the deeds done in this body.

Explanation: We are all really good at forgetting. But God forgets nothing. The day is coming. We cannot put it off. We all have an appointment with God that we will keep.

C. It Will Be **Unmistakable** - There will be no defense allowed before this judgment seat. Every deed will be exposed and will be accounted for in front of all the saints of God.

We must understand that God in Heaven keeps perfect records. God sees it all, hears it all, and knows it all –

I. Who Will Participate?

II. What is the Purpose?

Those who appear here will not be judged for salvation or on the basis of their sins. Those who appear here are already saved.

The issues will not be:

1. **Sin** - Sin was taken care of at Calvary. When Jesus died, He died for the sin of the world - 2 Cor. 5:21. Romans 8:1
2. **Salvation** - That was forever taken care of at the moment of conversion. Nothing can ever change the state of the believer's soul. If a person is saved, they are saved forever!

Explanation: It may help us to understand a little bit about what the judgment seat actually was. In Paul's day, in every city there was a place called the Bema, or judgment seat. It was from this raised platform, usually in the center of town, that announcements were made, judgments rendered and crowns handed out.

The Bema seat was the place of *condemnation* as well as *commendation*.

All public proclamations came from this Bema seat. So, we mustn't think that it was only a place for fear and trembling. Certainly some were rebuked when they came here, but others were rewarded and blessed. Christ's seat of judgment is no different!

The Bible does, however, give us a little insight into who what will happen at the judgment seat of Christ for believers.

A. There Will Be a **Requiring** – We will all give an account.

Lu 12:48 “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”

“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” - not successful (**1 Corinthians 4:2, KJV**). Of course, we want to be successful, but we can't control the results.

Massive crowds and success are not necessarily the measure of heavenly success. Only God knows what is in the heart of those we are reaching. It's not quantity but QUALITY that God will measure.

B. There Will Be **Rewards** –

“Works do **not** affect our redemption. Works **do** affect our reward.” – Randy Alcorn.

“Eternal rewards are guaranteed; temporal rewards are not. Someday, as a servant of God, I will stand before Christ and my works will be evaluated. He will reward me accordingly. But in the meantime Scripture does not guarantee I will always receive rewards on earth. I may have to suffer for righteousness' sake (1 Peter 3:14-17). “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). For the moment, the cynical expression sometimes proves true: “No good deed goes unpunished.” But only for the moment.”¹

Verses 10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

The word “evil” means “worthless”.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15, “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and **the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.** 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, **he will receive a reward.** 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

¹ Alcorn, Randy (2009). *In Light of Eternity: Perspectives on Heaven* (Kindle Locations 1535-1540). WaterBrook Press. Kindle Edition.

We need to understand that every deed done in the name of Jesus will be blessed and rewarded over there. Men may not see the value of your service, but rest assured that Jesus takes perfect note and that He will reward you fairly for your sacrifice for Him.

Mark 9:41 (ESV) — “For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.”

God will apply the fire of His judgment to our works, and those that were done for Him and for His glory alone will pass the test and we will be rewarded accordingly.

In the kingdom we will be rewarded with a greater stewardship of service. Not everyone will be on the same level. We will all have a different level of rewards.

C. There Will Be **Reaping** –

Galatians 6:7–8 (ESV) — “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life”.

This will be fully realized in the life of every believer on that day. You see, there are things that we think are hidden, and covered up, but God knows all about them and He will drag all those secret things into the open. Many Christians have wronged others and never made it right, have taken things and never made restitution, lied and never set the record straight, etc. God knows about it all and will bring it to light at the Judgment Seat of Christ!

The Atheist and the Christian

“Two men owned farms side by side. One was a bitter atheist, the other a devout Christian. Constantly annoyed at the Christian for his trust in God, the atheist said to him one winter, “Let’s plant our crops as usual this spring, each the same number of acres. You pray to your God and I’ll curse him. Then come October, let’s just see who has the bigger crop.” When October came, the atheist was delighted because his crop was larger. “See, you fool,” he taunted. “What do you have to say for your God now?” “My God,” replied the other farmer, “doesn’t settle all his accounts in October.”

God’s compensation for both believers and unbelievers is usually deferred. But a day is coming upon all men, when the announcement from heaven will ring out, “The time has come for judging...and for rewarding” (Revelation 11:18). This will be the “appointed time” of judgment (1 Corinthians 4:5). “At the proper time,” Paul says elsewhere, “we will reap a harvest if we faint.” So he encourages us, “Let us not become weary in well doing” (**Galatians 6:9**). God has his proper time for judgment and rewards.”²

² Ibid.

D. There Will Be **Revelation** - All the motives, methods, attitudes and activities will pass beneath the microscope of God's just judgment and will be brought to light.

Verses 10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, **whether good or evil.**” The word evil here means “worthless”

God will judge us with total knowledge.

- “Nothing in all creation is hidden from Gods sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13, NIV).
- “He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness” (1 Corinthians 4:5).”
- **Matthew 12:36** (ESV) — “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.”
- **Proverbs 15:3** (ESV) — “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good”. Nothing can be hidden from His gaze, or His judgment.
- **Luke 12:2-3**, “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.”
- **Luke 12:3** (ESV) — “Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops”.

Nothing will remain secret or confidential. “There's no such thing as a private moment.”

When we arrive here, all pretense will be taken away! We will finally be seen for what we really are. Down here, we are able to pull the wool over people's eyes. Many times people will have an image of us that is false and forewing to that which we really are. However, when we stand before Jesus, we will be seen in all our ugliness. We will be exposed.

X-Ray

It is much the same as going to the doctor. He can look at the outside and not tell too much about you, but if he can do an x-ray, a CAT scan or an MRI, then he can see what's going on inside and make a more accurate diagnosis. Well, Jesus doesn't need high tech gadgets to see our hearts. He knows us perfectly and will expose us to the light one day.

I. Who Will Participate?

II. What Is The Purpose?

III. How can a person Prepare?

- A. Be **preoccupied** with heaven. **Verses 6-8**, “**So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**”

Col. 3 – Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

- B. Aim to **please** God in all things. **Verse 9**, “**So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him**”.

The Bible teaches us that we are to be like lights shining forth into the darkness - **Matthew 5:16** (ESV) — “**let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**” If the world cannot see Christ in what we are doing, then we can be sure it will burn up before Him.

We should look at everything we do and ask ourselves,

1. Is this pleasing to the Lord?
2. What kind of message is this sending out?
3. When I say that, or go there, or wear this, what statement am I making about Jesus Christ and His church?

- C. **Persuade** the lost. **Verses 10-11a**, “**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.**”

- D. Seek **peace** with God in your conscience.
Verse 11b, “**But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.**”

You need to do right when no one is looking. You need to have peace with God and in your conscience. Because that day is coming. When you are discouraged and you feel you are persecuted for righteousness, and no one is noticing.

- **Mt 5:12**, “**Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**”

If you are not at peace in your conscience, be sure you are ready for that day.
2Co 13:5, “**Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!**”

First and foremost, a person wants to be sure that they will appear here. As bad as this judgment may be, it will be nothing compared to standing before Jesus and hearing him send you to Hell. Be sure you are saved. If that is settled, then your greatest preparation tactic is to practice self-judgment – **1 Corinthians 10:31** (ESV) — “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”.

Romans 8:1 (ESV) — “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Only **commendation!** **Mt 25:23**, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Conclusion:

America's Debt

America is currently budgeted to go into debt for 40 cents for every dollar they spend. We are currently 14 trillion dollars in debt! That's 14 with twelve zeros. One day we won't be able to pay that any more. Some say August 2nd we could default on our loans. But there will be a day when our creditors come calling.

There is a day for all of us when Jesus will come calling. He does not come to condemn believers but to reward us. So much of what we do is empty and vain. The Bible says we are to love God with ALL our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

- John Wesley said, “I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity.”
- **Matthew 6:33** (ESV) — “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

If you were to face Jesus today in the judgment, what would be the outcome? Would you see all your works and deeds go up in smoke? O that we would hear Him say, “Well, done thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”?

“Only one life, ‘t’will soon be passed. Only what’s done for Christ will last!”