

THE "RECEIVING" OF 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10:
THE BELIEVER'S JUDGMENT

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BELIEVER'S JUDGMENT
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Among the many eschatological happenings of the future, the Judgment Seat of Christ is one that many scholars misplace, call by another name, or forget altogether. It is a necessary event to consider because it relates to the individual believer. The area of everyday Christian living needs to be brought more into the forefront as one focuses on the proceedings of this event. There will be discussion concerning the nature and the results of the Judgment Seat of Christ as seen in 2 Corinthians 5:10.

The chapter on the nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ deals with five basic investigatory questions to establish (1) when this judgment will take place, (2) where it will take place, (3) what the βῆμα is, (4) who the judge will be, and (5) what the elements of the judgment will be. The time element is established according to the convictions of the writer's eschatological beliefs. The subjects of this event are believers who are caught away at the rapture into heaven where they will stand before Christ who will judge righteously. This event is a necessary encounter for every believer. Deeds will be made manifest whether they are good deeds or bad deeds. The evaluation will result in awards. They will be given for good deeds. Bad deeds, also, will be given attention.

The chapter on the result of the Judgment Seat of Christ is centered basically on the word translated "receive." There are three areas that are dealt with. The first area is to determine the character of κομίσηται. This is done by the use of the Greek language which can and does express meanings behind our standard English translations which would not normally be thought of as one looks at the word. The second area is to determine the basis of κομίσηται. It is expressed under this topic that a believer's work of faithfulness or unfaithfulness are evaluated. Unfaithful deeds will be tested and the result will be loss of reward. On the other hand, faithful deeds will be rewarded. The third area considered is that of the objects of κομίσηται. This deals with two alternative awards. The positive side of the award will be crowns which will be received for faithful service. The negative side will result in a possibility of a believer suffering loss on account of his unfaithful deeds in Christ's service while here on earth.

The reality of the Judgment Seat of Christ is very much related to the Christian life. The fact that one's life will be laid bare before Christ should spur the believer to faithful obedience in following the directives and principles in His Word.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Charles R. Smith". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Adviser

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the scheme of eschatological things to come, judgment is an important aspect. There seem to be several periods of time which will be given to specific judgments featuring different groups of people. One judgment has passed already. That one is the judgment of sin by Christ on the cross for the believer (Rom. 6:1-10; 1 Pet. 2:24). There are several judgments still to come. At the end of the tribulation period, Christ will physically step on earth and initiate the judgment of Israel and the Gentile nations (Mt. 24 and 25). At the end of the millennium, fallen angels and Satan will be judged (Jude 6 and 7). The Great White Throne Judgment of the dead will also take place (Rev. 20:11-15). There will be a specific time for believers to be judged. Of all these judgment events, the one known as the Judgment Seat of Christ will be under consideration in this thesis. The acknowledgment established in the writer's mind of the facet of judgment in the eschatological framework still needs vital observation. There are many camps which have been established concerning eschatological timetables and schemes. They are the pre-, mid-, or posttribulational and pre-, post-, or amillennial systems. There is much debate

between these groups concerning when the rapture will take place, when the millennium starts, or even whether it shall end with the second coming of Christ. These views cause differing interpretations which are prevalent today in evangelical Christianity.

However, the writer believes that there are true believers in these camps and all of them agree on one thing. Christ is going to come again a second time. People can get so wrapped up in various eschatological interpretations that they miss a very important aspect of the Christian life. As Christians, the main object the Lord desires for us is to live a life that will be pleasing to Him. When believers consider the Judgment Seat of Christ, they should realize that debating one's eschatological hobbyhorse is not the most important thing. Christian living should not be pushed into the background and given second place. It may be because of the very circumstances surrounding the Judgment Seat of Christ that Christians in various theological camps desire to major on the fine points of interpretation and minor on the way they live their lives for Christ. There will be, nonetheless, an account given of their lives, works or deeds, which are accomplished while here on earth. It will be an extensive and thorough judgment rather than just a general judgment. It is the proposal of the writer to discuss this Judgment Seat of Christ and the implications it holds for every believer.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Introduction

Just the mention of the word "judgment" brings fearful and ominous thoughts into one's mind. For the unbeliever, this term should bring this warning. The Bible records that anyone who does not believe on the Son of God is already condemned. But, for the believer, who has believed on Christ and has been saved, such thoughts in the realm of destructive, eternal judgment should not be entertained.

For believers, an account of their life's service for God will be given as seen in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Because of this fact, a motivating factor is recorded in the following verse, 2 Corinthians 5:11, which states, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord" Terror could be translated fear. This could give the connotation of fear of incurring penalties or loss and should induce a reverential respect toward God because of the dealings which will happen when believers are judged.¹ A believer should exhibit respect for God and this should be a controlling motive for

¹James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 673.

life in spiritual and moral matters. Thus, a wholesome dread of displeasing Him must be foremost in a believer's mind.¹ This is why a believer needs to understand what causes the fear or terror of the Lord. Kevin Eady makes this comment:

There is no need to use what seems to be a lesser and more rare translation for reverence. It indeed is following a basic rule of hermeneutics to take the simple solution. 'Fear,' by its proper meaning is very close to 'terror.' Terror would be, perhaps, even better. For the terror of God and His holiness is just the proper reaction. That does not mean that the heart thumps wildly as long as one lives, but terror produces action, and terror of God's person is appropriate.²

Thus, the actions are precipitated in simple terms because of the judgment to come.

The certainty of a future judgment is generally accepted by almost all commentators. There is, though, a divergence of opinion among men concerning the identification of the different judgments spoken of in the Word of God.³ With this understanding, there will be a section which will deal with some basic investigatory questions. These will help determine the nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

¹W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966), p. 84.

²G. Kevin Eady, "Motivation for Christian Service in 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10-11, 14" (M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1982), p. 19.

³Wallace W. Geiger, "A Critical Investigation of 2 Corinthians 5:11a" (Bachelor of Divinity thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1955), p. 31.

When Will It Take Place?

Believers today are in what is called by Dispensationalists the Church Age. There is in God's plan an event which is still future that will take place. Christ is going to come again the second time. It is believed that Christ's second coming will consist of two phases. The first phase of the second coming will be initiated by what theologians call the "rapture" of the church. There is no intent to discuss the debatable views on the rapture. The view held in this thesis is a pretribulational rapture. This is expressed at this time so that the rest of the events can be plotted without the reader wondering where these events fall on a time line. The church is caught away to be with the Lord. Following this event, the seven year tribulational period will be initiated on earth and will end with the spectacular, glorious return of Christ to earth with His saints (which is the second phase) to plunder Satan and his company. The millennial kingdom will then be established for one thousand years, ending with the judgment for all unbelievers known as the Great White Throne. Finally, the eternal state will be instituted.

The rapture is the event where Christ assembles His body, the church, with Him. There are three reasons to consider that the Judgment Seat of Christ commences after the rapture and is concluded before Christ descends to earth.

In the first place, I Thessalonians 4:13-17 states that resurrection is an integral part of the rapture, reward must be a part of the program. Secondly, when the Lord

returns to the earth with His bride to reign (Rev. 19:8), the bride is seen as already rewarded. Lastly, in I Corinthians 4:5 and 2 Timothy 4:8, reward is associated with that day when He comes for His own.¹

It is a fact that this judgment of believers will take place after the rapture (phase one) and be concluded before the second coming of Christ to earth (phase two).

Where Will It Take Place?

The fact has been established that the Lord will catch away His church forever to be with Him. The Lord will descend from heaven and so it is believed that He will return there with His church. These two elements are found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 which states, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." A good illustration of this event would be seen in the marriage custom of the day in Jewish times. Christ is preparing a place for his own (Jn. 14:3). This is a promise He has made. Then:

Once he has prepared all things, he gathers together his attendants and returns toward the home of the bride. The party does not reach the home of the bride, because as they approach, a shout goes up. Now the enlarged wedding party, the bride and attendants added, return to the house of the groom's father.²

¹J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), pp. 220-21.

²George Parker, "Marriages of the Bible," The Shofar Magazine 9 (1979):5.

God has scheduled this place for a judgment of His church. As mentioned previously, there are several judgments which will take place according to God's future plans. A discussion of this judgment seat experience now follows.

What Is The βῆμα?

The Greek word under consideration here is βῆμα. What does βῆμα mean? This word is used in many different ways.

Secular Greek

A principal meaning of the term gives the sense of a stride or step. Vine describes it as akin to the verb "to go" or as translated in Acts 7:5 "to set (his foot) on," or literally "footroom."¹ For example, this referred to the platform mounted by steps in Athens on Pnyx Hill. Orations were made from here.

In Greek states the assembly sat in front of a dais [βῆμα] from which all official business was conducted. Thus, Herod Agrippa I sat on a dais to address the republics of Tyre and Sidon (Acts 12:21).²

LXX usage

There are two Hebrew words which are translated by the word βῆμα. The first is לִפְתָּח. This particular word has the same meaning as what the primary secular Greek rendering

¹Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 282.

²E. A. Judge, "Judgment Seat," in The International Bible Dictionary, vol. 2 (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1980), p. 839. Hereafter IBD.

is. It refers to a unit of measure or an area covered by placing a foot down.¹ The second word would be לִפְתָּח. In Nehemiah 8:4, it denotes a tower or a wooden platform.² Ezra stood to read the law from it. It has been noted that Ptolomy Philadelphus used βῆμα for this Hebrew word which means pulpit of wood or a raised platform from which official business, judgment or otherwise is conducted.³

Apocryphal literature

There are only a few references to the two meanings that have been given so far. In 1 Esdra 9:42 and Sir. 19:30, there are references to the steps of a man that reveal his character. Enoch 62:3, 5 gives the reference to the son of man judging mightily on His throne.⁴

Literal meaning

Not only was the primary meaning of the word βῆμα given but there was another nuance of the word given. It was used of the official seat of a judge. In relationship to judgment, it refers to the judgment seat upon which the

¹T. McComeskey, "βῆμα," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Colin Brown, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 369-70.

²Ibid., p. 369.

³L. Sale-Harrison, The Judgment Seat of Christ: An Incentive and a Warning (New York: Sale-Harrison Publications, 1938), p. 8.

⁴McComeskey, "βῆμα," pp. 369-70.

judge sits and exercises his judicial authority.¹ There are a number of examples, but a few will be cited for illustration. Matthew 27:19 places Pilate on the judgment seat and he is about to determine who should be released (i.e., Jesus or Barabbas). The party who was not released would then be turned over to the soldiers to be killed. There are two passages that give their attention to Paul, the apostle. Acts 18:12 records the occasion of his appearing before Gallio, the deputy of Achaia. The Jews sought to have him accused of some crime and wanted justice given out because of his teaching. Later in Paul's journeys, Acts 25:6 records that a new governor has replaced Felix (Acts 24) and now Festus brings Paul before him. The conclusion of this matter is Paul's appeal to Caesar. These passages have one end in mind. They depict the determining of a person's destiny.

2 Corinthians 5:10 along with Romans 14:10 are two passages where βῆμα is declared as the judgment seat of Christ. This is in contrast to the earthly judgment seats spoken of in the above passages. The earthly judgments concerned themselves with a destiny determining factor. 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10 do not carry that connotation. It is not believed that at the Judgment Seat of Christ for believers that their destiny is determined. It is believed that judgment is executed, of some kind, yet, there is a

¹Geiger, "A Critical Investigation of 2 Corinthians 5:11a," p. 29.

time of rewarding. The balance needs to be seen in light of the Corinthians' concept of the βῆμα as Paul writes to them.

Corinthian concept

It is important to understand how the reader would understand the term. To the Corinthian mind two conceptions would occur when they heard the word βῆμα.

Empirically

Corinth was a part of what was then known as the Roman Empire. The judicial system consisted of a group of men known to the Corinthians as the tribunal. They assembled in the agora or marketplace on a raised platform. The International Bible Dictionary confirms this presentation.

The Greek term βῆμα is used in the N.T. for the tribunal (Acts 18:12), the platform on which a Roman magistrate sat, flanked by his counsellors, to administer justice. It was traditionally erected in some public place, as is apparent in the case of Pilate (Jn. 19:13) or alternatively in an auditorium.¹

They represented the most august of justice systems at that time in the world. It was the solemn integrity of Roman justice that prompted Paul to use the image of the judgment seat of Christ because his audience was directly familiar with the Roman government. However, it is believed that there is another conception the Corinthians had of the βῆμα which needs to be considered.

¹Judge, IBD, p. 839.

Locally

When one hears terms like the Silverdome, the Spectrum, or Cotton, Rose, Super, or Orange Bowls, the one word that summarizes all the activities that transpire in these arenas is sports.

In Corinth, there was a large Olympic stadium or forum. In the middle of one of the sides of the stadium was a raised platform which was a place of prominence, honor and dignity. The contests would take place there in the arena. As winners were named, they would be led to the βῆμα, ascend to the top, stand and be honored by a leading citizen or umpire who would take an oak leaf cluster, laurel wreath or garland and place it on their heads as a sign of triumph.¹

Concluding remarks on βῆμα

There is a balance seen when considering what the Corinthian believers would have on their minds. Judgment would take place at the judgment seat of Christ, but not with a destiny determining process. There would also be incorporated the aspect of rewards. These are the two ways the Corinthian believers would conceive Paul's writing.

Who Will Judge?

The gospel of John is specific in its dealing with the greatest fact about Christ. He sets forth that ". . .

¹John F. MacArthur, Jr., "I'm Ready for the Judgment Seat," Goodnews Broadcaster 39:8 (1981):28-29.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn. 20:31). This is deity. Jesus claims equality with God and rightly so. Among the many functions of Christ in His deity, God has given Him a special duty. John 5:22 states that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. Future judgments have been placed in Christ's care and will be initiated by Him. This includes the $\beta\eta\mu\alpha$ of 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Christ possesses the qualities which are ideal for the coming judgments. As one considers the believers' experience in 2 Corinthians 5:10, there are four basic qualities which Christ exhibits as a judge with an unblemished court room record.

First, Christ is all-wise. He is the expression of wisdom. Not only does He have divine wisdom which He has always had, but He has human wisdom because of His living on this earth. Luke 2:52 states, ". . . Jesus increased in wisdom" A judge who will do a good job on a case needs this quality. He needs to be able to have some point of contact with the situation being judged. Really, Christ has the two-dimensional insight to make a wise judgment. Secondly, Christ has the quality of being a just judge. In today's world, there are many who would say God could not hate anybody or send them to hell. Such a view of God on their part is literally one sided. Sure, He is a God of love (1 Jn. 4:8), but there is the judgmental side of God which often gets neglected. Exodus 34:6, 7, recorded

earlier in the days of Moses, draws for us a picture of God as He really is. "The Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, sheweth mercy upon thousands, forgiveth iniquity . . . and who will by no means clear the guilty." God cannot be a loving God without being a just God also. To be onesided would be inconsistent with His character. Because God is this way, the Son, Christ Jesus will be so also. Christ Himself confirms this fact in John 5:30. It reads, "I can of my own self do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just." As a judge of the world as well as believers, Christ will be just in His judgment. Thirdly, Christ possesses the power needed as a judge. There are no outside influences that will be able to thwart His decisions. He is preeminent. By Him all things hold together (Col. 1:17b). There is no one else as powerful as He. Being the creator and sustainer qualifies Him to be judge. Finally, Christ is qualified as judge because of His authority. He has authority in the realm of human affairs. John 5:27 states God ". . . has given Him [Christ] authority to execute judgment also" He is not to be pictures as one who is sitting high on a throne and has no touch with the situations of humans. That verse qualifies Him further by stating ". . . because He is the Son of man." He is related to mankind and is able to judge more precisely because He has lived on this terrestrial globe.

The believer will not have any trepidation concerning the right decisions made at the βῆμα in 2 Corinthians 5:10. The one who sits in judgment will be wise, just, righteous, all powerful and authoritative. He knows man and will judge accordingly.

What Are The Elements of The Judgment?

There are several elements that are necessary to contemplate with regard to the judgment of believers at the βῆμα in 2 Corinthians 5:10. These elements are extracted from the text under consideration.

One will first note that this judgment is a certainty. This is indicated by the Greek word δεῖ. Arndt and Gingrich explain, in general, this can mean a compulsion of any kind. Specifically, it refers to a compulsion of divine destiny and is unavoidable.¹ This is something which is a mandatory, divine, necessary appointment. It must and will be so. There is no back door from which to escape. Believers need to be aware of this certainty.

A second thought to be noted is the inclusive nature of the βῆμα in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Paul writes, ". . . for [or it is necessary that] all of us" There needs to be a deliberation to determine who is under consideration in this phrase.

¹W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, trans., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 171.

There are three basic views which have been discovered in research. They will be preceded by an analysis of the Greek words τοὺς πάντας and their bearing on interpreting 2 Corinthians 5:10. The word "all" is a noun and in the Greek language there is an article which accompanies it. It also appears in the plural. B. O. Reicke gives two ways πᾶς is taken as a noun with an article to determine how it is used.

- (1) There is an implicative significance. The article is usually demonstrative and only with the plural. The example is Philippians 2:21. 'For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.'¹

The context shows who are meant. In this case Paul is referring to an attitude toward spiritual caring in contrast to Timothy and the care he would show the Philippians.

Reicke continues:

- (2) There is a summative significance. In explanatory apposition to a noun, πᾶς is used in a half adverbial way. The example is Ephesians 4:13, '. . . until we all attain or are unified.'²

The appositional word is "we." That first person plural pronoun refers to believers in a context about the body of Christ.

With these points expressed, the three views which were found concerning who is involved here in 2 Corinthians 5:10 will be discussed. These views range from one end to

¹B. O. Reicke, "πᾶς," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 5, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 888-89.

²Ibid.

the other end of the interpretive spectrum.

The "All Men" View

The simple understanding of this view is that all men will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. There is no distinction of specific judgments. Sydney Page, in an article on Paul's eschatology, verifies the thinking of this view.

The judgment (Rev. 20) depicted takes place before a great white throne. John does not specify who sits on the throne but, since . . . the throne is occupied by God, the Father, the presumption is that this is true also here. Paul refers to a future judgment in 2 Corinthians 5:10, but Christ is portrayed as the final judge. Despite the apparent disagreement about who sits on the throne, we should not conclude that John and Paul contradicted each other or that they refer to different acts of judgment. Although Paul more frequently describes Christ as judge, in Romans 14:10 he speaks of 'the judgment seat of God,' and the similarities between the text and 2 Corinthians 5:10 compel the conclusion that a single judgment is in view in both. Similarly, although God, the Father is normally represented as occupying the throne in Revelation, Christ shares that position with Him in Rev. 3:21; 22:1, 3. The slight variation as pictured in the NT does not force us to postulate a number of distinct judgments.¹

This view is not unaware of Paul's encouraging all men in general that the last judgment is a great and dread fact with which they (believer and unbeliever) have to equally reckon. William Morgan stated this:

The apostle's allusions to the judgment are neither few nor ambiguous, yet we have to take account of the perplexing fact that in the passages where he [Paul] gives a detailed program of the End, not only is all reference

¹Sydney H. T. Page, "Revelation 20 and Paul's Eschatology," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 23 (1980):41-42.

to the great event omitted but no place seems to be left for it.¹

For example, Morgan cited the passage of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 which speaks about the rapture of believers and adds that there is no mention of a resurrection of the wicked and a final judgment.²

This has been a representative selection of the "all men" view in order to understand how this group interprets the "all" of 2 Corinthians 5:10.

The "Minister" View

There will be given a representative group of this view of "all" in 2 Corinthians 5:10. The grammatical feature τοὺς πάντας is unique in that πᾶς in the plural and in the attributive position may carry a special limiting significance. This stringent interpretation, in contrast to the "all men" view, holds that there is only a small group of people spoken of.

John W. Pritchard argues this point from a point of grammatical and syntactical analysis.

Further proof of the primary thrust of Paul's thought in 2 Corinthians 5:10 may be adduced by an examination of two key grammatical features of the verb. The antecedent of ἡμεῖς and the uniqueness of τοὺς πάντας, when analyzed, will demonstrate further that Paul was

¹William Morgan, "Judgment," in The Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, vol. 1, ed. by James Hastings (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1915), p. 663.

²Ibid., p. 664.

definitely addressing himself to the matter of the judgment of ministers rather than believers in general.¹

The first person plural pronoun ἡμεῖς is a factor that this view focuses upon as supporting the minister view. The following chart sums up the scripture and plural pronoun use throughout the context.

SCRIPTURE	PLURAL PRONOUN USE
2 Cor. 1:19	Silas and Timothy
2 Cor. 2:13	Titus
2 Cor. 2:14	Paul's ministry and fellow ministers
2 Cor. 3:6	ministers of gospel
2 Cor. 3:18	contrast current ministry with Moses' ministry
2 Cor. 4:1, 2, 5	ministers
2 Cor. 5:9	those who labor in ministry
2 Cor. 5:10	by use of plural pronoun throughout context they refer to ministers

The second feature which this view uses to support the minister view is the phrase τοὺς πάντας. Pritchard stated that this construction will not stand alone as a proof of the persons included by Paul in τοὺς πάντας, but when combined with the previous discussion concerning context, and the first person plural pronoun usage, it provides further evidence that the primary thrust which Paul refers

¹John W. Pritchard, "The Scope and Nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10" (M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 30.

to in 1 Corinthians 5:10 is toward a selective group rather than Christians in general. Pritchard concludes:

In order to determine the sense in which *πας* in the plural, with the article in the attributive position is limiting, one must examine the context. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 the context has been previously noted to be speaking of a select group of people whose function within the body is the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, and so the limiting factor of *τοὺς πάντας* is seen to be in a select group of believers as opposed to believers in general, rather than believers as opposed to unbelievers.¹

The "Believers" View

The preceding two views represent a very broad perspective of interpretation of "all" in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and conversely a very stringent view of the same. The view presented here will seek to exhibit a more probable approach. There are contextual reasons for arguing for a limitation of "all" to believers in 2 Corinthians 5:10.

It is important to notice who the letter is addressed to. 2 Corinthians 1:1 says that the church at Corinth with all the saints are addressed. 2 Corinthians 1:8 refers to them as "brethren" (i.e., believers). 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3 refers to the Corinthians as "epistles known by men." They were different than those who were non-believers in Christ. Concerning the immediate context of 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Pentecost makes some valuable statements which build on what has been stated above.

The first person pronoun occurs with too great frequency in 2 Corinthians 5:1-19 to miss this point. Only the

¹Ibid., pp. 33-34.

believer could have 'an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (5:1). Only the believer could experience 'mortality . . . swallowed up in life' (5:4). Only the believer could experience the working of God, 'who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit' (5:5). Only the believer could have the confidence that 'while we are home in the body, we are absent from the Lord' (5:6). There is one day when we will be present with the Lord. Only the believer can 'walk by faith, not by sight' (5:7).¹

Upon evaluating the terms "all" and "we" in connection with Reicke's explanation and by evidence in the context of the whole Corinthian letter and especially the immediate verses under consideration it would be concluded that the subjects spoken about do not include all men nor a selective group of ministers, but rather refers to believers in general.

A third thought to be considered is that this judgment will be an individualistic judgment. Every believer will stand before Christ, the judge, and will give an account of his life.

A fourth thought is that there will be a revelational aspect to this judgment. The English word is "appear." The Greek word is "φανερωθηναί" which means generally "to reveal, make known or show" as used in this passage.² The important fact is that there will be a revealing. Because of the nature of this word, the meaning can be perceived. The verb form in 2 Corinthians 5:10 is aorist passive and suggests the fact of being made visible or revealed. Lenski summarizes, "φανερωθηναί is passive, hence more than

¹Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 221.

²Arndt and Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 960.

'appear,' rather 'be made manifest' but with the idea of greatest and completest publicity."¹

There is a purpose for every believer to stand before Christ. To further unfold another aspect of this concept, Philip Hughes defines the word "manifest" as "to lay bare, to be stripped of every outward facade and openly revealed."² There will be a total manifestation and revelation of a believer's life and service for Christ, however effectively it was performed. Nothing will remain hidden at that time.

Remembering in earlier discussion on βῆμα, the Corinthians had a concept of not only awards/rewards but the presence of judgment in the Roman world. It is with this understanding that another aspect of the judgment seat of Christ deals with evaluation. Pritchard affirms this by stating:

The Grecian use suggests that of evaluation of the results of an athletic contest, and the Roman use suggests that of evaluation in a judgmental sense, but in both cases, though different in applications the basic idea of evaluation is clear.³

With this balanced point made, every believer will receive

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 39.

²Philip E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians in the New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 180.

³Pritchard, "The Scope and Nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10," p. 41.

something for his good service and something for his bad service, too. This particular subject matter will comprise the bulk of the chapter to follow. However, for illustrative purposes, an analogy showing this evaluation concept can be given. There is an annual, local event called the Kosciusko County Fair which is replete with many "shows" put on by the local 4-H-ers. They bring their cattle, horses, pigs, lambs, rabbits and even inanimate objects such as fruit and vegetables, crafts and cookery. All of these are under the watchful eyes of judges, who have good proficiency in the categories entered. When it comes to the awarding ceremonies, after each individual animal, vegetable and mineral has been scrutinized, then awards are presented. However, not every one who entered the "shows" receives an award.

Conclusion

The enlightening facets, when determining the nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ, are when it will take place, where it will take place, what the βῆμα is, who will do the judging and what elements are necessary to consider.

CHAPTER III

THE RESULT OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Introduction

It is profitable to have a basic understanding concerning the nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ for the believer. It will be a revealing event for each and every believer. The question pertaining to what will happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ with regard to the reception of rewards for faithful service or not receiving rewards for unfaithful service will be under consideration in this chapter.

There are three particular areas of the Greek word $\kappa\omicron\mu\acute{\iota}\sigma\eta\tau\alpha\iota$ which will be discussed here. In the Authorized Version the word is "receive." It is important to discuss the character basis and objects of this Greek word. A desire to demonstrate what will possibly happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ will result as one comes to an understanding of this word.

The Character of $\kappa\omicron\mu\acute{\iota}\sigma\eta\tau\alpha\iota$

Each word has certain characteristics which are unique to itself. The English idiom, however, does not always express what a Greek word means. An understanding of

Voice, in the Greek language, can help further express a standard English translation meaning into the Greek meaning. Dana and Mantey record a definition of voice which will be helpful in this study. "Voice is that property of a verbal idea which indicates how the subject is related to the action."¹

Three Main Ways of Verbal Ideas

There are at least three main ways that voice is used with regard to verbal ideas. Dana and Mantey declare: (1) the active voice places emphasis on the subject producing the action; (2) the middle voice describes the subject as participating in the results of the action and is never used without some reference to the subject; and (3) there is the passive voice which denotes the subject receiving the action.² Context can be a determining factor, but the character of the verbal idea is important for understanding its meaning.

The Middle Voice

The verbal idea expressed in the Greek word *κοινωνία* found in 2 Corinthians 5:10 is the middle voice. The force of the middle voice includes the idea of strong personal involvement with a reflexive force involving the

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: The MacMillan Co., 1927), p. 155.

²Ibid., pp. 155-61.

subject in the verbal action. According to Arndt and Gingrich, the force of the middle voice of κομίζω includes the ideas of getting for oneself, receiving pay or wages.¹ Vine says "κομίζω denotes to bear or carry; in the middle voice, to bear for oneself, hence (1) to receive . . . ; (2) to receive back, recover; metaphorically, of requittal, 2 Cor. 5:10, of receiving back again."²

The middle voice is expressed in two ways in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Alfred Plummer has written, concerning the first way,

'In order that each one may receive as his due the things done by means of his body.' This corrects the false inference which might be drawn from τοὺς πάντας ἡμᾶς. We shall not be judged en masse, or in classes, one by one, in accordance to individual merit. 'St. Paul does not say merely that he shall receive according to what he has done in the body, but that he shall receive the things done--the very self same things he did; they are to be his punishment' (F. W. Robertson, Lectures on the Epp. to the Corinthians, p. 377). Chrys. points out that men are not much influenced by the prospect of losing possible blessings, the dread of possible pains is more influential In all three passages, 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25, κομίζεσθαι, 'to get what is one's own,' comes to mean 'to get as an equivalent,' 'to be requited.' Hort (on 1 Pt. 1:9) says that κομίζεσθαι 'means not to simply receive, but to receive back, to get what has belonged to oneself but has been lost, or promised, or kept back, or what has come to be one's own by earning.'³

Samuel Hoyt's dissertation expresses the second understanding

¹Arndt and Gingrich, p. 443.

²Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 257.

³Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1966), p. 157.

of the middle voice of νομίσται.

When a believer is not walking in experiential fellowship with God, he is passing up opportunities for reward which he will never have again. As a result he will lose the reward that God would have bestowed upon him had he been faithful. This will be a real and eternal loss.¹

These two examples are opposing in nature. Yet, the basic meaning of the middle voice is apparent.

Summary

The character of νομίσται is relevant in an understanding of the verbal idea. In short the expression of the verb will be a payment or lack of payment of some kind. It will be in direct proportion to the deeds done through the believer's body. It will be "his due."

The Basis of νομίσται

Introduction

It has been established that each believer will go through a revealing before Christ. This entails a receiving back to himself something which is due him or, conversely, receive to himself nothing which also is due him. There needs to be some basis for this evaluation or examination. The following study will examine the basis for such a judgment.

Works

The word "things" in 2 Corinthians 5:10 is used in a

¹Samuel L. Hoyt, "The Negative Aspects of Christian Judgment," Bibliotheca Sacra 137 (April-June 1980):126.

general sense. Particular references to the two categories of "things" which Paul refers to will be presented as the discussion proceeds. To a Christian, a born again believer, the body is a very important vessel through which God can work and in which the Holy Spirit resides. The believer's body can be totally committed to render pleasing service to God (Heb. 12:1-2) or the believer can really grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) and thus be less effective in his service to God. Paul mentions many times that a Christian believer must be careful how he serves and how to be a more effective servant of God. Therefore, "the things done through the body," refers to service to God and Christ. As a Christian believer, there is no more appropriate way of being honored than for service to God while on this earth. Also, there is no more deserved warning for a believer to ponder than the possibility of misappropriated service to God and its consequences.

Whatever is brought about through the body, by means of activity of the body life, will be evaluated in two areas of conduct.

Good

The first area of conduct will be ". . . whether good." Vine says, "This word ἀγαθός is an adjective describing that which is being good in its character or constitution. It is beneficial in its effect."¹ Most

¹Vine, p. 163.

Greek scholars would agree with this simple definition. John Pritchard in his thesis sums up this word. "Those activities which have been done with the proper motivation, proper methodology and proper context will be pleasing to the Lord and will be rewarded."¹ Ephesians 2:10 states that as a result of salvation, each believer is ". . . a workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." Our life style should be working good in His service. Good works are a result of salvation. There are many facets of good works which can be rendering service to God. This standard of conduct will be evaluated as each believer stands before the βῆμα. Every believer should be conscious of the fact of wanting to become more like Christ each day. Faithfully serving and pleasing Christ is a way to live daily with regard to future reward.

Bad

The second area of conduct examined will be the "bad" things or works. The Greek word used in 2 Corinthians 5:10 is φαῦλος. This word deserves a little more attention because Paul chose a more uncommon term. Therefore, this choice of words is significant.

There are two interpretations which have been suggested to explain this word. With regard to the first

¹John W. Pritchard, "The Scope and Meaning of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10," p. 43.

interpretation, Vine says, "φᾰῦλος primarily denotes slight, trivial, blown about by every wind; then secondarily, mean, bad, in the sense of worthless, contemptible, belonging to a lower order of things; this word is set in contrast to those who have done good things ἀγαθὰ as presented in 2 Cor.

5:10."¹ This type of action in its primary sense would tend to be aimless or worthless because of lost or wasted direction. Vincent states that φᾰῦλος could be translated "evil" in James 3:16, but it is an inadequate rendering because it fails to bring out the particular phase of evil which is dominant in the word: worthlessness, or good for nothingness.² The Christian has the potential of doing heartily the work of the Lord. However, the potential one has can be misguided and result in very little accomplishment for the Lord. It might be said that there would be the impossibility of any true gain coming forth out of a worthless service. Robert Gromacki cites an illustration which is used to set forth the concept of worthlessness.

Think of Mary and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42). Mary was commended by Christ for choosing the good part. What did she do? She sat at the feet of Jesus enjoying His fellowship and eating of the spiritual bread which came from His mouth. Martha was busy out in the kitchen fixing supper. What Martha did was not sinful or wrong in itself. Most good hostesses would have done the same thing, and this was Martha's protest about her sister. However, there are some things more important, more vital, more life satisfying than busy work for the

¹Vine, p. 51.

²Martin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 754.

Master. Mary's action was good; Martha's was bad.¹

The second interpretation of the word φαῦλος is "evil" in contrast to the meaning of "worthless." This word "evil" gives the connotation of sinfulness or base type when considering the character of someone or something. There seems to be more of a moral concept to this aspect of the word.

There are two sources worth quoting in regard to determining what φαῦλος may refer to. Ernest Achilles, in his article on "Evil," says:

Φαῦλος (six times in the N.T.) is used as a synonym of κακός and means evil, bad. In Titus 2:8 it is used in a judgment on people. Otherwise it is used for actions (Jn. 3:20; 5:29; Rom. 9:11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jms. 3:16 [R.S.V. 'vile']). Its opposite is ἀγαθός.²

Mark Failing, in his thesis, parallels this thought by saying:

The word φαῦλος is used in the New Testament six times (Jn. 3:20; 5:29; Rom. 9:11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Titus 2:8; Jms. 3:16). Each time it is used (with the possible exception of 2 Cor. 5:10) the word cannot be translated by the word "worthless" without making nonsense of the statement. Each time φαῦλος is used it has moral connotations. Why should 2 Cor. 5:10 be any different? It is also interesting to note that 2 Cor. 5:10 sets φαῦλος in contrast to ἀγαθός. This seems to lend itself to a particular moral context. With this in mind, it seems a most difficult feat to translate, and understand, φαῦλος as "worthless" in 2 Cor. 5:10.³

¹Robert Glenn Gromacki, Are These the Last Days? (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1970), pp. 161-62.

²The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s.v. "Evil," by Ernest Achilles.

³Mark R. Failing, "What Happens to Believers' Sins at the Judgment Seat of Christ?" (M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1979), pp. 50-51.

Of these two interpretations, the first one is desired, which renders φαῦλος as "worthless" instead of the meaning for the second interpretation, which reads "evil." Evil connotes sin.

It is not believed that sin of any kind is under consideration in 2 Corinthians 5:10. As a Christian, there is opportunity to do good works and there is also the possibility of performing meaningless or worthless service to God. They both will receive their respective attention. The good will receive reward. The bad will be rejected.

There are several passages of Scripture which indicate that God forgives and forgets sins. This judicious act of God removes the sin of a believer.

Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Micah 7:19 states, "He will again have compassion on us, He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, Thou wilt cast their sins into the depths of the sea."

Jeremiah 31:34, "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord' for they all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more."

Isaiah 44:22, "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, and your sins like a heavy mist."

Isaiah 38:17, "Thou has cast all my sins behind Thy back."

These verses indicate that the aspect of sin having any part in the βῆμα judgment is unlikely. Samuel Hoyt draws a distinction between judicious and family forgiveness of unconfessed sins which needs to be understood. He states as follows:

Another argument which supports the position that the Christians sins will not be an issue at the βῆμα relates to the present effect of unconfessed sins. Unconfessed sins relate to fellowship in this life. Any unconfessed sin stands as a barrier to fellowship and growth in one's present relationship to God. Confession brings immediate forgiveness and restoration of fellowship between the Christian and God. This is present-tense forgiveness and deals with 'family' forgiveness. The example is 1 John 1:9. This refers to family experiential forgiveness: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'¹

Hoyt further states:

Paul writes of the forensic forgiveness in Colossians 2:13: 'And you, being dead in your sins and the circumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.' The point Paul makes is that the believer is completely forgiven legally before the sin is ever committed.²

Hoyt's conclusion stands:

The question that arises concerning a believer's sins is between the Father and a Son (1 Jn. 1:9), and not between a criminal and judge. The legal side has already been settled. The question revolves around a contemporaneous relationship between the Father and a son. If there is a barrier which arises through a son offending the Father, there must be family forgiveness. It is not forensic forgiveness for that has been eternally granted and efficaciously applied the moment he became a child of God.³

¹Samuel L. Hoyt, "The Judgment Seat of Christ and Unconfessed Sins," Bibliotheca Sacra 137 (January-March 1980):37-38.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³Ibid.

However, there is a second view which states that believers' unconfessed sins will have to be taken care of at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

One aspect of this view is that the believer will receive literal punishment. Two authors explain it this way:

Justice toward His children demands that God reward them both for good works and bad works . . . There will be crowns and rewards for good works. There will be chastisement and stripes for bad works.¹

And,

There will be punishment, then, through fire, in the judgment of our evil works.²

A second facet is expressed in the statement that Christians will be publicly faced with unconfessed sin. Sale-Harrison says that unconfessed sins will be judged or confessed at that time. Therefore if we do not confess our sins, that unrighteousness--which has not been cleansed--must be manifested (exposed) at the Judgment Seat of Christ."³

A third facet that was discovered is even more severe. Johann Bengel says that,

¹Kenneth F. Dodson, The Prize of the Up-Calling or Paul's Secret of Victory (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), p. 82.

²William H. K. Narum, "A Study of the Eschatological Motifs of the Christian Life" (Th.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1951), p. 299. Quoted by Samuel L. Hoyt, "Judgment Seat of Christ and Unconfessed Sins," BibSac 137 (January-March 1980):33.

³L. Sale-Harrison, The Judgment Seat of Christ: An Incentive and a Warning, p. 53.

Even sins of believers, long since pardoned will be revealed, for many of their good deeds, their repentance, their vengeance upon their sins, in order to become known, require the revelation of their sin.¹

He explains this has to be because of his understanding of 2 Corinthians 5:11a. To sum up his statement, he says that the terror causes anxiety to Paul and those like himself. Such fear would have no existence if their sins were not to be revealed.

There is a question that has been raised concerning the possibility of even sin overshadowing a believer in eternity. To this subject Bengel expresses:

The past sins of the elect will not cease to be the objects of the Divine Omniscience forever . . . They will not cease to be remembered, although without any annoyance. He to whom much has been forgiven, loves much. The eternal remembrance of a great debt will foster the greatest love.²

To this last statement, it seems that God will never cease to have the sins of His children in the back of His mind. This is contrary to the understanding that God forgives and forgets the sins of His children.

Among the two arguments which have been presented, the argument regarding sin not being a factor at the Judgment Seat of Christ is preferred. Service to God in one's lifetime will be the focus of rewards or lack of rewards. Hoyt makes this observation:

The issue at the βῆμα is therefore not a question of Sin

¹Johann A. Bengel, New Testament Word Studies (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971), p. 295.

²Ibid., p. 296.

to be punished, but rather a question of service. The believer's life will be examined and evaluated in regard to his faithfulness as a steward of the abilities and opportunities which God had entrusted to him. Faithfulness will be graciously rewarded while unfaithfulness will go unrewarded.¹

Works Evaluated

Introduction

The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a time of evaluation. This evaluation will entail a way of testing which will reveal one's faithfulness to Christ in His service.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 presents the way that revealing will take place. It will be by fire. Dr. James Boyer and others depict this fire, not as a literal fire, but as a figure of speech for testing or judgment.² Christ, in His judgment, is a refiner's fire and will judge righteously, correctly and indiscriminately. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is within a context of Christian service. There are two categories which will be evaluated. In each group there are three elements. There have been many interpretations which have been attached to these two categories.

Perishable

The first category is made up of three elements. They are "wood, hay and stubble." The views set forth regarding the interpretation of these elements will be surveyed.

¹Hoyt, "The Judgment Seat of Christ and Unconfessed Sins," pp. 38-39.

²James L. Boyer, For A World Like Ours: Studies in 1 Corinthians (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1971), p. 50.

The first of these views relates "work" to people. These make up the building in the metaphor presented. Paul refers to the people of Corinth as "his work."¹ The second view is that "work" equals doctrine which refers to that which does not conform to the foundation or bad doctrine.² The third view is that "work" equals fruit in character which proceeds outwardly, expressing one's inward motivation and doctrinal stand.³ The final view understands "work" as a combination of things. It is not enough to say that Christ will limit Himself to evaluate only one aspect of a person's life and ministry, as was noted in the previous three views.⁴

As was concluded in 2 Corinthians 5:10, the term "bad" was preferred to read "worthless." The elements wood, hay and stubble are non-durable materials. A Christian not walking in true service to God will be counted as lacking in quality. The elements of his work for God will be considered worthless and perishable. The durability of the elements is but for a moment. They will not stand the test of

¹Rex A. Bonar, "A Consideration of the BHMA Experience Based on 1 Corinthians 3:14 and 15" (M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 5.

²Fred Rowden, "The Building Materials of 1 Corinthians 3:12" (M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1969), pp. 14ff.

³Bonar, "A Consideration of the BHMA Experience Based on 1 Corinthians 3:14 and 15," pp. 8ff.

⁴Ibid., pp. 11ff.

judgment as worthy of any reward. Should a Christian serve with only this type of quality service, the verse 1 Corinthians reads, ". . . he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire." Any aspect of salvation is not in question here. Nor does this expression refer to a Roman Catholic view of purgatory. Rather, it is a figurative expression meaning that a believer be saved by a narrow margin.¹ A proverbial saying which would express the point here would be "by the skin of his teeth." The person is saved but has very little if anything to show for his service to God.

Imperishable

On the other side of the metaphorical picture are the elements of "gold, silver and precious stones" (1 Cor. 3:12). The very nature of these elements gives the idea of valuableness and durability. The elements refer to faithful service rendered to Him as opposed to the unfaithful or worthless endeavors of a believer which will not stand the test of judgment. These faithful services are the "good works" of Ephesians 2:10 that have been done though maybe not in a consistent manner. Yet, there has still, on the part of the believer, been an attempt to be pleasing to Him. Paul and those to whom he is writing desire to be "accepted of him" (2 Cor. 5:9). Their life's goals were set on eternal values and not on temporal and perishable ones.

¹J. T. Townsend, "1 Corinthians 3:15 and the School of Shammai," Harvard Theological Review 61 (1968):500.

Summary

A believer's service for God will be evaluated. His body is the vehicle by which service is rendered. There will either be a rendering of good, faithful works or there will be a rendering of worthless, unfaithful works. The good works will endure when the time of judgment comes. But, the worthless works will not be able to stand the test of judgment. The results are two-fold. The unfaithful works of a believer disqualify him from receiving any reward. The consequence will be "suffering loss" (1 Cor. 3:15). But, on the other hand, the faithful works of a believer which remain or stand the test of judgment are worthy of "receiving a reward" (1 Cor. 3:14). These two consequences will be discussed in the following section.

The Objects of κομίσηται

Introduction

Knowing that pleasing Christ is a believer's utmost goal, there will be a time established when the rewards for such faithful service will be given. Although the mood will be joyous, there could and will be a sense of shame on the part of believers who have come to realize what worthless services they rendered for Christ. 1 John 2:28 reads, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed at his coming." Those who have faithfully abided in Christ will have boldness at his coming which means to have courage,

confidence, boldness and fearlessness, especially in the presence of persons of higher rank.¹ But those who do not express boldness will experience shame. Hoyt discusses the possibilities of understanding the word shame.

The term is clearly an aorist passive subjunctive, but the meaning is ambiguous. In the passive voice it could mean 'to be ashamed' or 'to put to shame.' The main problem is not defining shame but in determining what causes the shame.

The passive voice coupled with the expression 'him' suggests a believer withdraws in shame. It suggests a shrinking back from Christ . . . with the believer producing the action. The other possible interpretation is to understand Christ as putting the believer to shame. Coupled with the passive voice, 'from him' could suggest that Christ is driving the unfaithful Christian away from Him in shame. This second possibility seems contrary to the tenor of the New Testament, which pictures the church as the bride of Christ who will . . . enjoy Him throughout eternity. Such action would also imply that there is an unsatisfied offense between the Lord and the believer.²

It appears that the cause of shame is going to come as a result of a believer's own realization of unfaithful and neglected opportunities of service rather than being rebuked by the Lord.

The positive aspect of this time will be receiving rewards of some type. The negative aspect will be that of lack of rewards or as 1 Corinthians 3:15 states, ". . . suffer loss." The following discussion will deal with these opposite aspects.

¹Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 636.

²Hoyt, "The Negative Aspects of the Christian Judgment," pp. 129-30.

The Positive Aspect--Crowns

The Corinthians were very aware of such a reward as a wreath or crown. The analogy is seen when one understands the sporting activities engaged in at the time. The judgment experience resulted in certain objects given. However, the wreaths or garland crowns which were given to the athletes would fade and die. This denotes their being in the physical realm. The crowns which are considered in the passages to follow speak of eternal and longlasting crowns.

There are at least five crowns delineated in the New Testament. These are promised rewards for faithfulness.

- (1) 1 Corinthians 9:25, "an incorruptible crown"
- (2) 2 Timothy 4:4, "a crown of righteousness"
- (3) 1 Thessalonians 2:19, "a crown of rejoicing"
- (4) 1 Peter 5:1-4, "a crown of glory"
- (5) Revelation 2:10, "a crown of life"

It is true that there is a debate when trying to decide whether these are five separate crowns or one crown with many facets. The factors, after being analyzed, were drawn to a conclusion concerning the crowns.

It appears that these are not literal crowns for believers. But rather it is a figurative way of depicting a spiritual reality. Bonar states:

The crown is not a literal wreath, but is rather comparable to the 'helmet of salvation' (Eph. 6:17). Christians are not wearing a literal, physical helmet; this is a figure to depict a great spiritual reality.¹

¹Bonar, "A Consideration of the BHMA Experience

They should not be viewed in a literalistic way that a crown of life goes to martyrs, a crown of glory goes to shepherds, a crown of rejoicing goes to a soul-winner, etc. They could be better explained as five facets of the great spiritual reality called eternal life. Bonar draws from James Rosscup concerning this matter:

There is one crown, not five. The crown has various component characteristics, such as life, glory, exultation and imperishability. It is not literal but a figure for spiritual realities more wonderful than we can imagine. The crown is the outlook for a faithful life. We never merit it, for our life is a gift of grace, but where that grace is genuinely at work it shows its dynamic in certain life-shaping characteristics (cf. Titus 2:11-14). And so 'you have your fruit with respect to sanctification and the end (or outcome) eternal life' (Rom. 6:2, cf. Gal. 6:8).¹

Christian believers should be motivated in this present life to perform the "good works" which have been ordained for them to walk in. The Judgment Seat of Christ will reward the believer according to the capacity of service for Him.

The Negative Aspect--Suffer Loss

This negative aspect is very difficult to explain because of the fact that it is easy to consider what rewards consist of, but it is hard to pinpoint what is paid back to a believer for the "bad" or unfaithful service he has done. There are two possible views that have been particularly considered.

Based on 1 Corinthians 3:14 and 15," p. 48.

¹Ibid., p. 52.

Loss of possible reward view

This first view is given by Samuel Hoyt. He states that the question is not punishment, but rather loss of reward.¹ He states that the understanding of the verb ζημιόω in 1 Corinthians 3:15 should be understood as "to suffer loss" or "to forfeit" rather than "to be punished." With this analysis he concludes:

The basic idea is loss or forfeiture of reward which one could have received. For each Christian there is potential reward. However, if the believer is not faithful, he will lose that reward, not in the sense that he once had it, but he will lose it in the sense that he could have had it.²

Diminished capacity view

This view states that "to 'suffer loss' (1 Cor. 3:15) means that one has to some degree forfeited the only opportunity afforded them to develop capacity to glorify and serve God."³ Bonar's analysis implies that since the reward is eternal, so the loss of reward is also eternal. To have a loss in any capacity to glorify, honor, serve, etc. would be devastating. Dwight Pentecost gives an illustration which clarifies this view.

You perhaps have gone into some fine home or public hall where they had a beautiful, crystal chandelier. When it was lit up, the whole chandelier sparkled with beautiful radiance. If you were to examine the chandelier, you

¹Hoyt, "The Negative Aspects of the Christian Judgment," p. 126.

²Ibid.

³Bonar, p. 59.

would find that it is made up of a number of small bulbs; there might be some 25 watt, some 50 watt, some 100 watt and even some 500 watt bulbs. Each one had a different capacity but each one was shining to the limit of its capacity. The chandelier was beautiful because of the total capacity of all that was within it. In eternity, some of us are going to shine to the glory of God with a 25 watt, 50 watt, 100 watt or 500 watt capacity. All will contribute to the glory of God according to what has been given to us at the Judgment Seat of Christ.¹

Conclusion

The statements of each of these views has possibility in explaining the idea of "suffering loss" for the unfaithful deeds done by a believer. The unfaithful actions of a believer will result in the loss of potential rewards. Thus, these actions will diminish his capacity to enjoy his eternal existence, which consists of glorifying and serving Him.

¹J. Dwight Pentecost, Prophecy for Today: An Exposition of Major Bible Themes on Prophecy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 160.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Judgment Seat of Christ will become a reality for the believer in the future. All of life's service will be manifested before the Lord Jesus Christ. The good works which have been done for Christ will be rewarded graciously. But those works which have been found worthless, the believer will experience loss.

The question which resounds in the heart of the writer is expressed this way: "How then shall we live?" In light of this divinely ordained encounter with Christ, a believer should be aware of how he is living each day and be found faithful in his endeavors for Christ. The directives and principles in the Word of God should be closely adhered to. The believer should apply them to his life so that there may be heard from the righteous judge one day, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Lk. 19:17). This is a present motivation for contemporary godly living.

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