

Rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ

The purpose of this lesson is to document the need for works accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the believer.

Faith is the requirement for justification/salvation. Faith is the requirement to live the Christian life. It is important to emphasize that anything a human does in the spiritual realm must be done on the basis of faith.

Salvation:

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

Ephesians 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

...

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

Walk by faith

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the

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word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

In this lesson, the word “works” based upon faith dependence on the Holy Spirit will be contrasted against “works” of the sin nature.

Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

Galatians 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Galatians 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Galatians 3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

And then there is this magnificent passage in 2 Corinthians. The quote starts with the beginning of chapter 5 to properly get the context.

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

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Earthly tent. Our human physical bodies right now. For Paul, this is a personal illustration since he was a tent-maker.

Torn down. You perhaps have seen on TV the demolition of buildings in Dallas and other cities. When our souls leave the residence of our physical bodies, the body starts to decay. It is only a “tent,” a temporary dwelling.

A building from God. There is yet a building, a permanent dwelling in heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:2 For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,

Living in a physical body has serious limitations when viewed from a heavenly perspective. So we suffer in this body looking forward to the day we receive a “resurrection body.”

2 Corinthians 5:3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.

2 Corinthians 5:4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

2 Corinthians 5:5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

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Pledge. From Biblehub.com:

“The term ἀρραβών originated in the business world of the eastern Mediterranean. It described a first installment that both initiated a transaction and guaranteed its completion. Because it was part of the whole payment, it functioned as a tangible promise that the remainder would certainly follow. In later Jewish and Greco-Roman practice the word also colored engagement customs: a groom’s gift to his bride signified that the wedding—and full covenantal union—was forthcoming.¹”

“By identifying the Spirit as ἀρραβών, Paul teaches that the indwelling Spirit is both (a) the first portion of the believer’s eternal inheritance and (b) God’s binding guarantee that the full inheritance will be delivered. The Spirit’s present ministries—illumination, sanctification, empowerment—are therefore foretastes of the coming glory (Romans 8:23). Just as a down payment is of the same currency as the final sum, the gift of the Spirit is of the same divine life that will fill the new creation.²”

2 Corinthians 5:6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—

2 Corinthians 5:7 for we walk (present active indicative) by faith, not by sight—

This is the Christian life. It is not just sitting around aimlessly applying faith. No. We are looking forward to our heavenly home with our friend and savior Jesus. We are going somewhere. We pack our bags by walking by faith.

1 <https://biblehub.com/greek/728.htm>

2 <https://biblehub.com/greek/728.htm>

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2 Corinthians 5:8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

To be with the Lord is to be free of the physical constraints we are currently bound by.

2 Corinthians 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing (acceptable/well-pleasing (present infinitive - purpose) to Him.

Just before Paul tells us of our requirement to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, Paul stresses that we walk by faith and that we are to please God. There is a logical argument here:

**Walk by faith → Good deeds → Please God → Judgment Seat of Christ
(rewards)**

This is the Christian life. We walk by faith. As a result the Holy Spirit produces “divine good.” This pleases God. The good deeds produced by God the Holy Spirit in our lives are rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ. That is how we order our lives. So, in this passage, Paul told us how to live the Christian life. We depend on God the Holy Spirit to live our lives. While doing that we have our focus on the future. It provides a motivation for moving forward.

It is important to impress this point on you when talking about Christian “works.” Our faith is the only part of the “work” that is ours. The actual spiritual work accomplished by our minds and bodies belongs to God the Holy Spirit. We are not puppets. We do this because we are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

All believers will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

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The important word for our study in this verse is “pleasing.”

“The term εὐάρεστος (Strong’s 2101) accents that which brings delight to the Lord. It is never used of merely satisfying human expectations; its focus is always vertical, measuring conduct, attitude, and offering by the standard of divine pleasure. Each New Testament occurrence therefore carries an implicit theology of worship, stewardship, and sanctification.³”

“2 Corinthians 5:9 speaks to the believer’s overarching ambition—“we aspire to please Him, whether we are here in this body or away from it.” The verse sits in a context of resurrection hope, showing that heavenly orientation fuels present faithfulness. Ephesians 5:10 similarly urges believers to “find out what pleases the Lord,” situating moral inquiry in a life-on-mission that exposes the darkness through the light of Christ.⁴”

We are to please God in our lives by faith depending on Him.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

All. Paul is writing to believers. The Greek does not just say “we.” No. It says we ALL. It is emphatic. No exceptions. You will be there.

Must. The Greek is clear. Appearing before Christ is a requirement. It is like receiving a summons to appear before a court. There are no exceptions in the case of the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will happen.

Each one. Everyone must appear, but individually. This is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as judge.

³ <https://biblehub.com/greek/2101.htm>

⁴ <https://biblehub.com/greek/2101.htm>

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Appear. Aorist Passive Infinitive. Passive voice: God will make sure we show up in a point of time. There is a purpose here.

Deeds. In the Greek, this is just the definite article. Paul purposely didn't say "works." While what we do is a "work" it is work done by God. Paul doesn't want to confuse us.

"Accountability: Every believer's stewardship will be measured. Spiritual leaders should teach a balanced view of grace and responsibility, encouraging congregations to "make it [their] aim to be pleasing to Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9).⁵"

So that. Purpose.

Recompensed. From Biblehub.com:

"The verb rendered by Strong's 2865 traces a movement from one domain to another—either bringing something to its proper destination or receiving it back as one's own. In Scripture this movement consistently serves the purpose of stewardship, reward, or fulfillment of promise. Whether the subject is a servant returning a master's money, a believer receiving a crown, or Abraham welcoming Isaac back from apparent death, the word draws a line between faith-filled action and its appointed outcome⁶."

Here the verb is aorist middle subjunctive. This will happen in a point of time after the Rapture.

It is interesting to note other occurrences of this verb in Scripture.

Hebrews 10:35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

5 <https://biblehub.com/greek/968.htm>

6 <https://biblehub.com/greek/2865.htm>

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Hebrews 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Interesting that this word shares a context of “reward.”

1 Peter 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Again, the word is in a context of receiving rewards. In this case the reward is a “crown of glory.”

Back to 2 Corinthians 5:10...

Good. *Agathos*. Divine good produced by the Holy Spirit in the believer who is depending upon the Holy Spirit by faith.

Bad. Worthless. It can also mean evil.

What he has done. This is not the word for doing. It is not the word for working. It is the word for practicing. This is an important distinction. We are to walk by faith. This is what we should be practicing. It is in the aorist for individual instances of what you practice. Paul is not talking about a one time work. He is not talking about being in fellowship for a few seconds. This is a sustained dependence on God the Holy Spirit.

As a new believer, you might only be in fellowship for short periods of time. You acknowledge your sin and go back to faith. As you grow and mature, you will stay in fellowship for longer periods of time. It will be your practice to remain in faith dependence upon the Holy Spirit. It becomes a habit.

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Judgment Seat. One word in the Greek. “Bema.” From Biblehub.com:

“In the Greco-Roman world a βῆμα was a raised platform approached by one or more steps. In civic life it served as the public tribunal where magistrates rendered decisions, announced edicts, or addressed assemblies. Synagogues sometimes copied the idea with an elevated reading desk, and Hellenistic kings adapted it as a royal dais. Because it was both conspicuous and authoritative, the term naturally became shorthand for the “judgment seat⁷.””



What is left of the Corinthian Bema (my photo)

⁷ <https://biblehub.com/greek/968.htm>

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Here are some points from Robby Dean that explain the situation at the Judgment Seat of Christ⁸.

1. “There will be an evaluation of every believer’s life.
2. The issue isn’t sin or salvation, but to reward faithfulness.
3. The Judgment Seat of Christ is only for believers.
4. The Judgment Seat is described in cultural terms: A Bema seat could refer to either the place of civil adjudication or the seat of the judges in an athletic contest.”

“In a similar way you and I as members of the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, will be resurrected and raptured before the Tribulation. We are going to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever. Immediately after the Rapture we go through an evaluation known as the judgment seat of Christ. At that point rewards will be given out. Some who have not lived the Christian way of life will lose rewards (1 Cor. 3) but they won't lose their salvation. They will not be full participants in the ruling and reigning privileges in the kingdom.”⁹

“This word is used to distinguish this event before JESUS CHRIST by believers of the Church Age and the final judgment at the Great White Throne Judgment, where every unbeliever will stand before JESUS CHRIST and be judged. The unbeliever will not be judged in regards to sins but they will be there because they have refused to believe in JESUS CHRIST as Savior. (Revelation 20:11-15)¹⁰”

8 <https://www.deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2015-1Peter-123b.pdf>

9 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/philippians/message/45-judgment-b/read>

10 https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Colossians/notes/2017-11-19Sunday_Morning.pdf

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The Flow of History that affects us... (from Herman Mattox)¹¹

1. **The Incarnation**, that is God becoming man—First Advent of Jesus as the Christ, the promised Messiah
2. **The sinless life of JESUS CHRIST** qualifying Him to go to the cross for all mankind.
3. **His death on the cross**, bearing the judgment for all the sins of the world—unbelievers and believers
4. **His resurrection**—guaranteeing our own resurrection
5. **His Ascension and Session** to the right hand of God the Father where He (a member of human race) now sits in glory
6. **Day of Pentecost** (Acts 2) beginning of the Church Age, where everyone who believes in JESUS CHRIST as Savior receives 34 things from God including the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit
7. **The Church Age** We now live in the Church Age where everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior is forming the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ and it is while here on earth during the Church Age that we can win rewards for after death
8. **The Rapture**—removal of everyone who believes in JESUS CHRIST at the regathering before JESUS CHRIST. This is where everyone who believes in JESUS CHRIST as Savior is resurrected and receives a Resurrected Body, minus the Inherited Sin Nature Philippians 3:20-21
9. **Judgment Seat of Christ** where every believer will stand before JESUS CHRIST who will judge our time while here on earth. We can give thanks that we will not stand before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment but we will stand before JESUS CHRIST after the Rapture.

¹¹ https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Colossians/notes/2017-11-12Sunday_Morning.pdf

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The rewards awarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ are not just an amount of something. Paul describes some of the rewards as wreaths or crowns. The verses are quoted merely as references. There are no explanations of these rewards, just that they exist for qualified believers.

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

1 Corinthians 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (*wreath*).

Rejoicing - 1 Thessalonians 2:19

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

1 Thessalonians 2:20 For you are our glory and joy.

Righteousness - 2 Timothy 4:8

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

2 Timothy 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on

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that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Life - Revelation 2:10

Revelation 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Glory - 1 Peter 5:4

1 Peter 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Now here is the shame. The implication of some passages indicates that these rewards already exist. If we do not earn them, then we lose those rewards. We do not lose our salvation.

1 Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.