

FULLY FURNISHED

or

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S EQUIPMENT

by

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE WORKER'S JUDGMENT

“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (II Corinthians 5:10).

IT has been said: “A careless reader of the Scriptures never makes a close walker with God.”

For instance, take the name and title which are given to believers. If these are not distinguished, we shall neither see our privileges, nor apprehend our responsibilities.

By way of illustration, let us briefly note the following – The title:

- As **“sons,”** or **“children,”** reminds us of our filial relationship to God (John 1:12);
- As **“stones”** in God’s building we see our oneness with Christ in His life and preciousness (I Peter 2:4-7);
- As **“sheep”** in the flock of the good Shepherd, we show we are such by hearing His voice, and following Him (John 10:27);
- As **“strangers”** we manifest we are not at home in and with the world, our pilgrim character separating us from evil (I Peter 2:11);
- As **“stewards”** we recognize our responsibility to the Lord, in faithfully discharging the trust committed to us (I Corinthians 4:2);
- As **“soldiers”** we have a defensive warfare in resisting evil, and an offensive conflict in putting it down (II Timothy 4:7; II Corinthians 10:4); and
- As **“servants”** of Christ we are told we are not our own, and that we are responsible to follow the directions of Him whom we call **“Master and Lord”** (John 13:13).

The judgment of the believer at the judgment seat of Christ, must not be confused with the judgment of the nations mentioned in Matthew 25:31 to end of chapter.

They who are judged there, are judged according to their treatment of the Jews - The **“brethren”** mentioned - whose testimony concerning the coming Messiah, they have received or rejected. This judgment takes place before the reign of Christ, on or over the earth for a thousand years. Before Christ can reign, He must send forth His angels to gather out everything that offends, according to Matthew 13:39-42.

But someone says this takes place at the end of the world. No; the word “**world**” is rightly rendered in the margin “**age**;” it means at the end of this dispensation.

This throws light on the passage in Matthew 24:40, 41: “**One taken and the other left.**”

One taken away by judgment, and the other left on the earth for blessing. As it was in the days of Noah and Lot.

- The antediluvians were taken away by judgment, and Noah and his family were left for blessing.

- The Sodomites were taken away by the judgment of fire, and Lot was left.

The judgment seat of Christ must not be confused with the judgment of the great white throne (Revelation 20:11) either.

There, only “**the dead**” are judged, that is, those who died in their sins. This judgment takes place at the end of the thousand years of millennial glory on the earth.

To come to the subject before us. It will be well to put it in the form of question and answer.

I - Who will stand before the judgment seat of Christ? - “We.”

To whom is the apostle writing? To the Church at Corinth. To saints, not sinners (II Corinthians 1:1). From this we must infer that only believers will be there.

When, therefore, the plural pronoun “**we**” is used in the Epistles, believers, and believers only, are meant, as Dr. Denny says: “It is Christians who only are in view here.”

This is further seen if we note the connection of the “**we**” in II Corinthians 5.

Let us look at seven places where it occurs:-

Knowledge. “**We know**” (verse 1).

Possession. “**We have**” (verse 1).

Groaning. “**we groan**” (verses 2, 4).

Walk. “**We walk**” (verse 7).

Confidence. “**We are confident**” (verse 8).

Labour. “**We labour**” (verse 9).

Acceptance. “**We may be accepted**” (verse 9).

The knowledge of a glorified body which is in reserve for us, the earnest longing to possess it, the walk which corresponds to it, and the confidence, the labour, and the aim in relation to it, can only apply to those who are saved by Christ (II Corinthians 1:10), sanctified in Him (I Corinthians 1:2), and sealed from Him (II Corinthians 1:22).

Yet even these are to be made manifest at the judgment seat.

A simple illustration may further elucidate the meaning. A son who is in his father's business, who has a special department under his control, has to give an account to his father and his father's partners at the end of the year, as to the discharge of the trust committed to him. The reckoning is not to determine whether he is the son of his father, but to see how he has acted as a servant to the firm.

Thus we stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It is not to determine whether we are sons or not, but to reckon with us as servants, as we gather from Matthew 25:19, where the Lord comes to reckon with His servants as to their work.

II - *Where shall we stand?* - Before the judgment seat of Christ.

The "*Bema*" or judgment seat was the raised place where the judge sat, and witnessed the Grecian games, and determined who were the successful competitors, and from it he gave the prizes won.

It was also the place of judicial authority, for the word is used to describe the seat where the judge sat when he had to hear cases upon which he had to adjudicate. Its use in the following Scriptures will determine its meaning: - Matthew 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 12:21; 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17.

The word is only used twice in connection with believers (Romans 14:10; II Corinthians 5:10); but from its use it will be seen that it is a place of judicial authority and discrimination, from whence Christ tests the service of His servants, and rewards them according to their faithfulness.

III - *When will believers be manifest at the judgment seat of Christ?*

After Christ comes for His people (I Thessalonians 4:13-18), and before He comes with them (Jude 14). We infer this from Christ's own words, for He says that the time for recompense is at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14). Now the recompense of the just must be before the return of the just with Christ, for when He and they are manifest to the world they are seen coming forth as an army (Revelation 19:11-14); and this speaks of diversity of rank. The question arises, "Where did the saints get their appointments?" It must have been at the judgment seat, for that is the time when rewards are given.

IV - *How will the saints be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ?* - In glorified bodies.

The first sight of Christ shall transform us, for when we see Him we shall be like Him (I John 3:2; Philippians 3:21).

Mark, believers will not have merely resurrection bodies, but glorified bodies. The ungodly will be raised, but their resurrection is spoken of as the "**resurrection of the dead**" (Hebrews 6:2), whereas believers are said to be raised "**from the dead**" (Acts 4:2; Romans 6:5); and not only so, but "**changed**," as we read in Philippians 3:21.

The word “**changed**” is translated in I Corinthians 4:6, “**transferred**,” and in II Corinthians 11:14, 15, “**transformed**.”

The use of the word suggests a change of place, and a change of body. That change shall make us forever like Christ Himself in outward form and fashion.

V - *Who will be the judge? - The Lord Jesus, as Lord.*

There are several different characters in which Christ is seen as the Coming One.

- *As the Man of war* He comes to dash in pieces His enemies (Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 19:11-21).
- *As the King of kings, and Lord of lords*, He comes to judge the nations (Psalm 2; Matthew 25:31-46; Zechariah 14).
- *As the Saviour, King and Priest*, He comes to Israel (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 110).
- *As the King* He comes to reign on and over the earth (Isaiah 32; Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:6-9).
- *As the Bridegroom* He comes for His bride (Ephesians 5:25-32; Revelation 19:7).
- *As the Son of Man* He comes to judge the wicked (John 5:27).
- *As the Redeemer* He comes to complete our salvation (Hebrews 9:28; Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:20,21).
- *And as Lord* He comes to reward His servants (Luke 19:11-24; I Corinthians 4:5).

The Lordship of Christ is a much-forgotten truth now, hence, the questionable methods adopted in so-called Christian work, and the setting up of man’s opinion in the place of God’s truth; but Christ’s Lordship will be recognized then, for His eyes will be as flames of fire to search into the motives of things.

Everything that applies to our service will stand out in unmistakable plainness then, as seen by Him now.

VI - *What will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ?*

Before we seek to answer this question, let us note what will not be judged.

Our past life before our conversion will not be brought up, for the Lord has not only forgiven our sins, but He has forgotten them.

This is very strikingly illustrated in Hebrews 11. In the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we have an account of what faith in God did for the Old Testament saints, but not a word have we as to their failures. Why is this? Because in the previous chapter God had said, “**Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more**” (10:17). Now if He had recorded them in the eleventh chapter, it would have shown He had not forgotten them; therefore, since our sins are forgiven and forgotten, they cannot be brought up at the judgment seat of Christ.

Our sins confessed as children of God will not be brought up against us.

Sins confessed are sins forgiven. If we do not confess our sins, the Lord deals in chastisement with us. Still we need to remember that sin in a penal sense will never be opened, for that was settled for us at the Cross.

First. *The believer is to be made manifest at the Judgment seat of Christ, as he was known by the Lord in this present life.* **“I judge not mine own self . . . He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God”** (I Corinthians 4:3- 5).

As the electric light thrown upon the fortifications of Alexandria, when our troops were bombarding it, revealed the Egyptians at their work, so the light of the Lord’s presence will illuminate our life, and reveal every secret of our heart; for the counsels of the heart will be revealed, and the hidden things will be seen in the light. What a revelation it will be!

- *Ambitions*, not of the Lord, will be seen.
- *Black bitteresses* against others will be detected.
- *Covetousness* of the heart will be unmasked.
- *Deviations* from the truth will be discovered.
- *Envyings* of others will be revealed.
- *Fault-finding* with our brethren will be discerned.
- *Grumbings and murmurings* will be disclosed.
- *Heart backslidings and secret faults* will be made known.
- *Indulgings of the flesh and selfishness* will be unearthed.
- *Judging of others* wrongfully will be unfolded.
- *Love of money, ease, and the world* will be descried.
- *Mixed motives* in work for Christ will be ferreted out.
- *Opportunities lost* for doing good and confessing Christ will be shown up.
- *Perverseness of heart, and pleasures* not of God will be apparent.
- *Quarrellings, backbiting, anger and malice* will be seen.
- *Rebelliousness and repinings* under God’s chastening hand will be distinguished.
- *Selfishness, slanderings, and self-will* will be observed.
- *Tremblings before the world* will be palpable.
- *Uncleanness of heart* will be recognized.
- *Willfulness and wanderings* will be visible.
- *Yearnings for the flesh pots of Egypt* will be evident; and
- *Zealousness to be had in honour of men* will be made plain.

We shall be heartily glad for the fire to burn up all this heap of rubbish, and shall adoringly praise the Lord for His grace and love toward us.

Second. *The believer is to give an account of himself to the Lord as to his conduct towards fellow-believers.* **“Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ”** (Romans 14:10).

In the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Holy Spirit speaks of meats, and drinks, and days.

There was one of two errors into which the Christians at Rome were likely to fall.

For instance, there was one brother who could eat and drink anything, and the weak brother was apt to judge him and say he was not the Lord's. On the other hand, the strong brother was only too ready to go to the opposite extreme and despise and look down on the weak brother, because he could not eat and drink as he did. Now both are rebuked.

To the weak brother the word is, "**Why dost thou judge thy brother?**"

To the strong brother the word is, "**Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?**"

It is to our Master we stand or fall, and are responsible. If we look after our own estate, we shall have enough to do, without throwing stones over the wall at our neighbour. Besides, very often when the mote is seen in the brother's eye, it is but the reflection of the beam that is in the eye of the beholder.

We need to be as the Nehemiahites, who were each concerned in repairing the wall "**over against his house**" (Nehemiah 3:10, 23, 28, 29, 30).

If we repair our own conduct, we shall be well and continually occupied. We are too ready to judge each other by what seems to be instead of getting to know the facts.

Fourteen times in the New Testament we are told to love one another (John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; I Thessalonians 4:9; I Peter 1:22; I John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; II John 5).

Love is the one essential which shall deliver us from unjust judgment; and keep us from unkind strictures. Peter the Great once said, "It is easy to splash mud, but I would rather help a man to keep his coat clean."

That's what love does. It cannot always understand the reason of a brother's action; but it gives the brother credit for a good motive till it finds out the contrary.

As to the judgment of our conduct towards fellow-believers, and as to the judgment generally, Principal Moule says, on Romans 14:10, "We have here, as in II Corinthians 5:10, and again, under other imagery, in I Corinthians 3:11-15, a glimpse of that heart-searching prospect for the Christian, his summons hereafter, as a Christian, to the tribunal of his Lord. In all the three passages, and now particularly in this, the language is limited by context, as to its direct purport, to the Master's scrutiny of His own servants as such. The question to be tried and decided (**speaking after the manner of men**) at His '**tribunal**,' in this reference, is not that of glory or perdition; the persons of the examined are accepted; the enquiry is in the domestic court of the Palace, so to speak; it regards the reward of the King as to the issues and value of His accepted servants' labour and conduct, as His representatives, in their mortal life. '**The Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them**' (Matthew 25:19).

“They have been justified by faith. They have been united to their glorious Head. They shall be saved’ (I Corinthians 3:15), whatever be the fate of their **‘work.’** But what will the Lord say of their work? What have they done for Him, in labour, in witness, and, above all, in character? He will tell them what He thinks. He will be infinitely kind; but He will not flatter. And somehow, surely, **‘it doth not yet appear’** how, but somehow, eternity, even the eternity of salvation, will bear the impress of that award, the impress of the past of service, estimated by the King, **‘What shall the harvest be?’** “

If we do the Lord’s bidding, and love each other as He has loved us, there will not be much to test at His judgment seat on this score.

Third. *Believers will have the quality of their work judged.* **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”** (I Corinthians 3:11-15).

Some have thought the material built on the Foundation refers to character, hence one has said, “Some build with the gold of faith, with the silver of hope, with the imperishable costly stones of love, - others, again, with the dead wood of unfruitfulness in good works, with the empty straw of a spiritless, ostentatious knowledge, and with the bending reed of a continually doubting spirit.”

Undoubtedly, this is true, but another seems to be nearer to the truth in the text when he says, “Believers have to take heed what superstructural doctrine they build upon Christ in themselves, and in those whom they influence.”

The context plainly tells us that the material built on the foundation has reference to doctrine, or what believers, as workers for Christ, add to Him as the Foundation.

Let us look at the different kinds of material mentioned, and note their symbolical meaning.

1. **“Gold.”** *Gold is typical of the Divine nature of Christ as the Son of God.*

When the Holy Spirit speaks of Christ, as to His eternal Sonship, He speaks of Him as the **“Ancient of Days,”** and says in describing Him, **“His hair is as white as snow and wool”** (Revelation 1:14; Daniel 7:9); but in the Song of Songs the bride says **“His head is as the most fine gold”** (Song of Songs 5:11), plainly denoting the same thing, with the added thought of preciousness.

- All that pertained to the Lord and His worship is associated with gold.
- The vessels of the Tabernacle were all of gold, and these are typical of Christ (Exodus 25-28).
- The whole building of Solomon’s Temple was more or less covered with gold (I Kings 6, 7),

- With regard to the new Jerusalem its streets are said to be of “**pure gold**” (Revelation 21:18, 21).

Gold is frequently used to express Divine glory. We may, therefore say, that the gold which believers are to build on the foundation of Christ’s atoning work is the gold of His Divine glory as the Son of God.

If the gold of Christ’s Deity is taken away, we have only the leaden hue of mere humanity.

There is no hand strong enough to pluck us from the waves of sin and despair into which we are sinking but the hand of God, as Browning says:-

“I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it.”

And as he further says, in praying for one who disbelieved in the Christ Deity:-

“May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation.”

2. “**Silver.**” *Silver is typical of Christ’s atonement.*

When the children of Israel were numbered, they had to bring the half shekel of atonement money to ransom themselves (Exodus 30:11-15).

To this the apostle refers when he speaks of not being redeemed with silver and gold (I Peter 1:18).

On one occasion, Tennyson, when sojourning in an out-of-the-way country place, asked an old Methodist woman “after news,” in seeking to ascertain if there was anything fresh. She replied, “Why, Mr. Tennyson, there is only one piece of news that I know, and that is, Christ died for all men”

He responded, “That is old news, and good news, and new news.”

“**Christ died for our sins,**” is the Gospel, the good, new news of God’s gracious provision for guilty man.

3. “**Costly Stones.**” *In Exodus 28:15-21, we read of the precious stones that were in the breast-plate of the High Priest, which are typical of the moral perfection and variegated glory of our Divine High Priest, yet perfect Man, as He appears in the presence of God for us.*

The different stones may be taken to represent Christ in His personal worth and work.

There is:

- The *red sardis* of His all-sufficient and God-glorifying death;
- The *golden topaz* of His beautiful and holy life;
- The *yellow fiery carbuncle* of His patient and lowly suffering;
- The *pure green emerald* of His righteous and perfect character;
- The *sky blue sapphire* of His heavenly and gracious humanity;
- The *brilliant diamond* of His unflinching and becoming immutability;
- The *variegated agate* of His true and manifold graces;
- The *purple amethyst* of His kindly and kingly glory;
- The *sea green beryl* of His unchanging love and sympathy;
- The *Pinky white onyx* of His adaptedness and ability to keep;
- The *bright sparkling ligure* of His devoutness and devotedness; and
- The *crystal jasper* of His purity and preciousness.

Tennyson, in speaking of the work of a true artist, says:-

“As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely, thro’ all hindrance, finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face
The shape and color of a mind and life,
Lives for his children ever at its best.”

Thus the Holy Spirit has given to us in Holy Writ the beautiful and unsurpassing lineaments of the character of Christ, as we are fellow-workers with Him, and as we in His power unfold the truth and attractiveness of Christ’s personal worth.

4. **“Wood.”** *Wood is the product of earth, and is typical of man in his self-conceit and fancied greatness, as Jeremiah indicates when the Lord says to him that he is to be an instrument of judgment in His hands, because the people and the prophets have inclined to their own thoughts, instead of hearkening to His warnings.*

The Word is, **“And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, because ye speak this word, behold, I will make My words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them”** (Jeremiah 5:13, 14).

To build wood on the foundation, signifies a Christian worker adding to the truth of God the deductions of his own reason.

A case in point is found when Peter would not associate with Gentile believers, because they would not put themselves under the bondage of a law which was done away with in Christ. When Paul got to know this he blamed Peter, and said if he were to act in a like manner, he would have to build again the things which he had destroyed (Galatians 2:11-19). When, therefore, a Christian worker builds on Christ the Foundation the legalism of the law, instead of the liberty of the Gospel, he is putting wood into the building, which will be consumed at the judgment seat of Christ.

5. “**Hay.**” The Greek word, *Kortos*, rendered “**hay**,” is elsewhere given “**grass**” and “**blade**,” and is used in James 1:10, 11, and I Peter 1:24, to denote the frailty of man and the mutability of his greatness.

It is not without significance that in the latter passage the uncertainty of man is contrasted with the certainty and stability of God’s Word.

Therefore, it may be said we put hay into the building when we incorporate the earth-thoughts of frail man with God’s eternal truth.

When the man of God out of Judah listened to and acted upon the self-conceived thought of the old prophet of Bethel, he built into the Divine message which came to him the hay of man’s opinion, and suffered loss in consequence (I Kings 13).

6. “**Stubble.**” *The stubble mentioned is the stalk of grain after the ears are removed.*

Stubble, when used in a symbolical sense in the Scriptures, signifies that which is useless and unworthy of notice (Job 21:18; 41:28,29; Isaiah 33:11; Jeremiah 13:24); hence Job says, “**Wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?**” (Job 13:25).

What does it mean to build stubble on the Foundation? May we not take it to signify a Christian worker who is occupied with the mere stalk of religious ordinances, and who has left out the grain of truth with which they are associated?

For instance, take the subject of baptism. Bishop Lightfoot, in speaking of baptism, says: “Baptism is the grave of the old man, and the birth of the new. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters, the believer buries there all his corrupt affections and past sins; as he emerges thence, he rises regenerate, quickened to new hopes and a new life. This it is, because it is not only the crowning act of his own faith, but also the seal of God’s adoption and the earnest of God’s Spirit. Thus baptism is an image of his participation, both in the death and resurrection of Christ.”

Looking broadly at the above quotation, without going into the question of the mode of baptism, we see that Dr. Lightfoot draws attention to its spiritual meaning; hence, to the grain of truth. But let any worker call attention to the water alone, saying there is efficacy in it to regenerate, and omit its spiritual significance, then he is building on the Foundation the stubble of error which will be consumed in the day of the fiery trial. All this goes to show how careful we should be to build upon Christ the Foundation the doctrines of Grace, for if we build with the stubble of self-assertion, the hay of self-opinion, and the wood of self-deduction, these will all be destroyed, although we ourselves are saved as through fire.

~ end of chapter 34 ~

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