

04 – JUDGED BY FIRE

- ✓ We've been discussing the three phases of the Judgment Seat of Christ. The first phase is "The Books". (There are five books in Heaven that contain information about you: The Book of Life, the book of "you", the book of tears, the book of remembrance, and the book of works.)
- ✓ The second phase is a Verbal Account of our Stewardship. The truth is, you and I don't own anything. Our time, our talent, our treasure, our relationships, the opportunities that come our way ... even life itself is part of our stewardship. At the Judgment Seat, Jesus will ask us to give an account of how we've used those things to further the Kingdom. Before we look at the third phase, let me say this ...
- ✓ Disclaimer: Up to now, we've been focusing on the *positive* side of the Judgment Seat of Christ. That was intentional. (I said one of my goals for this series was to take the fear out of this for you.) Overall, the Judgment Seat of Christ is designed to be a blessing. But that doesn't mean there aren't negative consequences for those who have lived carelessly.
- ✓ Those who squandered their earthly opportunities will, no doubt, experience regret as they stand before the Lord. John mentions those who will be ashamed at His Coming (1 Jn. 2:28). Others will, no doubt, be disappointed when they see the outcome of their judgment. Probably the worst experience of all will be not hearing the words, "Well done". In this next section, we'll see that it's possible for your efforts to "go up in smoke".

III. Trial by Fire

1 Corinthians 3:6,8-13 (NKJV) – "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to

me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare (expose) it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

The Key Points

1. When you got saved, a foundation was laid in your life (Jesus).
 2. You've been building on that foundation every day since then.
 3. There are two sets of materials you can build with. Everything you *do* in life, goes on that foundation as "gold, silver, precious stones", or "wood, hay, and stubble".
- ✓ When I first got saved, I thought like this: "When I do something good – like go to church – it's 'gold, silver and precious stones'. And when I do something bad – like kick the dog or say a bad word – it counts as 'wood, hay, and stubble'." But it's not that simple.
 - ✓ See, it's not just the outward action that matters. God considers your motives as well.
 - ✓ Just for the purpose of illustration, suppose Bev and I had a fight on the way to church. As people are coming in, we put on a smile, but inwardly, we're still upset.
 - ✓ When the worship starts, Bev has a change of heart. She prays, "Lord, I can't worship you like this. Please forgive me", and she repents. With that out of the way, she worships God with all her heart. I, on the other hand, am just going through the motions. (I might be singing *outwardly*, but inwardly I'm still stewing.) To be honest, I'm not even thinking about God.

- ✓ Then comes the offering time. Bev pulls out her wallet and says, “Lord, I was saving this birthday money for something special. But I love You so much, I want You to have it.” And she drops \$100 into the basket. I see that and think, “A hundred bucks! Who does she think she’s kidding? Well, I can beat that!” So, I put \$200 into the basket. She just laid up \$100 worth of gold, silver, and precious stones. I just laid up \$200 worth of wood, hay and stubble.”
- ✓ If you do a good thing insincerely, or with a bad attitude, it won’t be considered acceptable. *That’s why it takes the fire of God to identify your works. You can’t tell by looking!* (We both “worshipped”, and we both gave. Outwardly, it looked exactly the same. But our hearts were worlds apart.)

Some Good Works Will Be Considered Worthless

2 Cor. 5:10 – *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive a reward according to the things he has done, whether it be good or worthless.* (Or “unworthy of a reward”.)

- ✓ Now here’s the good news: Nothing is said about the wood, hay and stubble being held against you. When the fire hits it, it burns up, and you’re rewarded for whatever’s left.

Do the Building Materials Represent Anything Specific?

- ✓ I’m asked this all the time, so we might as well talk about it. Personally, I don’t see that gold represents *one specific thing*. (And silver *another* thing. And precious stones, something *else*.) I see it as more generic than that. Together, “gold, silver and precious stones” represent the things we do for God that are deserving of a reward. Likewise, the “wood, hay and stubble” represent the things we do that are *unworthy* of a reward. There’s no deeper meaning than that.

How Can We Be Sure Our Works Won’t Burn?

- ✓ I don’t think we can be *absolutely* sure they won’t burn, because

we don’t always know our own heart (and motives). I think the goal is to try to *minimize* the burn. We can do that by asking ourselves a couple of questions as we’re doing Kingdom work.

- Is This Work Coming from the Energies of the Flesh, or Is It Energized by the Spirit?

John 6:63 – *“The Spirit gives life; human effort accomplishes nothing ...”*

- ✓ If something is a *work of the flesh*, it’s not going to have any eternal impact (and it will probably be found unworthy of a reward). So, *how do our works become energized by the power of the Spirit?* By spending time with Jesus and “bathing” your work in prayer.

Spending Time with Jesus

Mark 3:13-15 – *“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.”*

- ✓ When I was a Bible College Dean, I opened every year with this passage. I’d say, “As people training for the ministry, I’m sure the idea of ‘preaching’ and ‘having power’ excites you! But look at the passage again. There’s something that comes *before* the preaching and the power.”

“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him ...”

- ✓ I told them, “If you focus on the preaching and the power, you may never get there! But if you’ll take the next several months and concentrate on just *being with Jesus* – sitting at His feet, worshipping Him, and learning His Word – the day will come when the preaching and the power will be a reality for you. But it *starts by spending time with Jesus.*”

- ✓ And that doesn't end when you finish Bible school! Everyone wonders why the early church was so much more effective than we are. I'm convinced that this is one of the reasons.

Acts 4:13 – “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, **that they had been with Jesus.**” (KJV)

- ✓ The time they spent with Jesus gave life (and power) to what they did. That's one of the keys to fruitful ministry.

John 15:5 – “I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you **stay joined to me**, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.” (CEV)

- ✓ I like to say it this way: “Without Him, you can't do anything of lasting value.” (Oh, you may get something done *in the natural* through human effort, but it won't last into eternity. It will go up in flames at the Judgment Seat of Christ.)
- ✓ In closing, let's consider *this* verse:

1 Cor. 3:8 – “For we are laborers together **with God** ...”

- ✓ Notice how that's phrased. It didn't say that we're called to work “for” God. It said we're called to work “with” Him! The greatest rewards come when we become a channel for the Spirit to flow through. Stay connected to Him. Stay in communion with Him. Then, let His love flow through you to a lost and dying world.

- ✓ The second question we can ask is:

b. Are My Motives Right?

- ✓ That's a huge area to consider. We'll deal with it next time.