

## 116. The Book of Romans 14:10-13

*Paul's Epistle to the Romans*  
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(3-4-26)

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This evening in our study in Romans we are in Chapter 14 where Paul is dealing with division in the church in Rome—division that was due to legalism.

### Romans 14:10–13 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. <sup>11</sup> For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." <sup>12</sup> So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

The Greek word translated 'judgment seat' in verse 10 is the word 'bema'.

This word was commonly used of the judgment seat at an athletic event where athletes would appear before the judge to receive their award, their 'crown' (laurel wreath) for winning their event.

Paul no doubt had this in mind when he said in 1 Corinthians 9:24—

### 1 Corinthians 9:24 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

Of course, the context is that Paul is admonishing all believers to go all out in their 'race' (ministry) for Christ so that someday they may receive a great reward.

Now many pastors teach that this judgment seat judgment is *only* for believers to receive their rewards—and therefore isn't punitive (punishment for breaking laws and condemning a person to hell). However, the word 'bema' was more commonly used in the New Testament to describe a judicial judgment seat as in a court of law.

It was used of the judgment seats of Pilate (Matthew 27:19; John 19:13), Herod (Acts 12:21), and Festus (Acts 25:6, 10, 17).

There was also a *bēma* at Corinth, where unbelieving Jews unsuccessfully accused Paul before the Roman proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16, 17).

Now I bring this up because I believe that Paul has more in mind when he said in 2Corinthians 5:10—

### 2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

I believe when he said, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” he has in mind all humanity not just believers in Christ.

I believe that because he says people are going to have to answer for the things they have done while on the earth whether “good or bad”. Those who will be judged for the good is a reference to Christians for which the Judgment Seat of Christ will only be for the handing out of rewards.

There will be no punitive action taken against us there since all of our sins were paid for by the blood of Christ—so it’s all good. However, the word ‘bad’ is the Greek word ‘*kakos*’. In the New Testament, *kakos* is translated, “*evil or wicked*” and refers to one who is “evil in himself and, as such, leads others into evil.”

In a moral sense the word means, “*wicked, vicious, bad in heart, conduct, and character.*”

I believe that this Judgment Seat of Christ is the judgment of unbelievers called the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) where Jesus will be the Judge (John 5:22). This judgment of course *will be* punitive and all who appear before it will be sent to hell aka. the Lake of Fire.

Jesus talked about these two judgments in John 5:24-30—one for the *righteous* and the other for the *unrighteous* in verse 24-30:

**John 5:24-29 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. <sup>25</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, <sup>27</sup> and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice <sup>29</sup> and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Jesus is teaching here about the 2 great resurrections leading to the 2 great judgments—the resurrection of life (believers); and the resurrection of condemnation (unbelievers).

In Revelation 20:5 we learn that they are separated by at least 1000 years. The resurrection of the righteous (believers) where they are rewarded for their service to the Lord is called the Rapture.

The resurrection of the unrighteous (unbelievers) happens at the end of the 1000-year Millennial Kingdom where all those who rejected Jesus as their Lord and Savior will appear before Him in complete nakedness where every thought, word and deed will be made manifest and they will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment and punished in hell forever.

And that is why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:11—“*Knowing, therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...*”

I believe Paul has in mind the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell in this verse which is why he was so zealous about reaching them (unbelievers) for Christ.

Again, that’s why I believe Paul had in mind the judgment of both the just and unjust in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11.

The reason Paul gives for making it our goal to always live in such a way as to be well pleasing to God as Christians (2 Corinthians 5:9) is because—someday we’re “*all going to have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The word 'appear' actually means, "to make manifest, to make visible or to reveal".

One author put it this way,

*"To be made manifest means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward façade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one's character."*

#### **Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)**

<sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Now with regard to Christians Paul said—

#### **1 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise [and rewards] will come from God.

### **A Look at the Judgment Seat of Christ for Christians**

#### **Colossians 3:23–24 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

#### **Romans 14:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand [all believers in Christ] before the judgment seat of Christ.

#### **2 Timothy 4:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The New Testament reminds believers over and over again that someday we are going to stand before Jesus and give an accounting of how we lived our lives on the earth as Christians. This will take place at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

If we Christians really believed in and understood what the Judgment Seat of Christ is all about it would radically change the way we live our lives upon the earth.

### **What is the Judgment Seat of Christ and What Purpose Does it Fulfill?**

#### **1. What the Judgment Seat of Christ is *not*—**

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not the **final exam** where Christians are tested one last time and if you pass you get into heaven and if you don't you go to hell.

This is a judgment for believers who have *already* received forgiveness for our sins through the blood of Christ and have *already* received our glorified bodies.

McGee—*"If you stand before Jesus at this Judgment Seat—you've already made it into heaven!"*

## 2. What the Judgment Seat of Christ is—

The word “judgment” used in the phrase “*Judgment Seat of Christ*” is the Greek word ‘*bema*.’

The word *bema* was used of the judge’s seat at an athletic competition—such as the Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

The judge’s seat was located in the arena where the games were being conducted, on a raised platform where the ‘judge’ (aka. the ‘*president*’ or the ‘*umpire*’) of the games would sit.

The judge would oversee the games to make sure the athletes were competing according to the rules and to present the athletes (who would stand before him) with the laurel wreaths (the crowns given to the winners)—which is why it was called the ‘*rewards seat*.’

For the Christian, the Judgment Seat of Christ will not be like standing before a judge in a criminal court to receive justice for crimes committed—it will be a place where we are rewarded for faithfulness in service to our Lord—

### **1 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

As Christians we are not going to be rewarded based on how big, or successful, or how important our ministry was—we will be rewarded based on how *faithful* we were in doing whatever the Lord gave us to do.

This means that a faithful Sunday School teacher will be rewarded as much as Billy Graham.

The ‘*Bema*’ Seat of Christ is where we will receive our *crowns* (eternal rewards) not like the laurel wreaths that Olympic athletes received—‘crowns’ that quickly withered and died—

### **1 Corinthians 9:25 (NIV)**

<sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Just because this will not be a *punitive* judgment doesn’t mean that it will be without sorrow and tears—sorrow over wasted time and opportunities and tears over lost rewards and the shame of unfaithful service for Jesus.

As someone has said, “*At the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be both tears and cheers.*”

It will be a time of receiving rewards and the loss of rewards—and every Christian will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account.

## When Will the Judgment Seat of Christ Take Place?

### **Luke 14:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”  
(Rapture)

### **1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...[Rapture]

### **Revelation 22:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> “And behold, I am coming quickly [in the twinkling of an eye—Rapture], and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

The Judgment Seat of Christ will take place after the Rapture of the Church and before the Second Coming of Christ to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

Revelation 19:8 says that when the Church returns with the Lord to the earth at Jesus’ Second Coming they (the Christians) will be clothed with ‘fine linen’—

### **Revelation 19:8 (NIV)**

<sup>8</sup> Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

Where did they receive these rewards for righteous acts of service?—at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

While the Tribulation Period is taking place on the earth judging unbelievers for their rebellion— the Judgment Seat of Christ will be taking place in heaven rewarding believers for their faithful service.

### **What Will Christians Experience at the Judgment Seat of Christ?**

What will your experience be at the Judgment Seat of Christ—sorrow or joy?

If your experience is going to be *joyful* it will depend on three things—

#### **1. Diligence in service**

### **2 Peter 1:10–11 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV)**

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

### **Romans 12:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> ...not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord...

#### **2. Perseverance and faithfulness to the end**

### **2 John 8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward.

### 1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV)

<sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified [from receiving a full reward for faithful service].

### 3. The motives of your heart

### 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels [motives] of the hearts. Then each one's praise [and rewards] will come from God.

### 1 Corinthians 3:12–15 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation [Jesus Christ] *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The '*Day*' that Paul is referring to here is the day we as Christians stand before the Lord Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Again, this will not be the 'final exam' to determine whether or not we are worthy to enter into heaven—that worthiness is based on the blood of Christ shed for our sins.

So, this verse is not teaching that Christians can lose their salvation—in other words, this is not the '*fire of hell*' that is in view here but the '*fire of testing*.'

The fire does not test the *worker* (though Roman Catholics use this passage to teach purgatory)—it tests their *work* or *workmanship*. This will be the day when each of our works will be tested to determine of what 'sort' they were. In other words, we won't be judged and rewarded based on the *size* or *importance* of our earthly ministries but based on what *motivated* our service for the Lord—was it His glory or our glory?

God doesn't just reward us based on what we *did* for Him (although that's important)—but He will mainly judge our works according to the *motives* of our hearts in each of the works we did for Him.

The distinction isn't between the lost and saved, but between those saved who have built well and those saved who have built poorly (or not at all—verses 14-15).

As one commentator put it—

*"Some will be saved, but with a life that was wasted, and receive no crown to give to Christ, for His glory. And those who have served will be judged as to whether their service was self-directed or Spirit directed; and what was the motive of their hearts when they offered their service to the Lord."*

Once again, if your experience at the Bema Seat of Christ Judgment is going to be *joyful* it will depend on three things—

- **Diligence in service**
- **Perseverance and faithfulness to the end**
- **The motives of your heart**

So, for the Christian, it begs the question—are you living for the eternal or the temporal?

What is really important to you—what are you investing your life in?

**Luke 12:15 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

**Matthew 6:19–21 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NKJV)**

...He has put eternity in their hearts...

Author Brian Edwards in his book, ‘Revival: A People Saturated with God’—

*“Whole books can be written analyzing what is wrong with the church today, but there is hardly a need for this. We must simply admit that we are not an eternity-minded people. We live like the world we are supposed to be saving: for the things of time rather than for the things of eternity. Our priorities are world-related rather than heaven-directed; our treasure is on earth. Revival always begins by putting eternity back into the minds of the Christians, and only when the church takes eternity seriously can we expect the world to do so.”*

Let me close with a word of encouragement.

As we serve the Lord in these difficult last days, it is easy to become discouraged at times and to grow weary—Paul encouraged us not to let that happen:

**Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

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