

Judgement Of Believers

'Truly I tell you; the person whose ears are open to My words and believes on Him Who sent Me has eternal life, and he does not come into judgement but he has already passed over out of death into life' (John 5:24).

'Therefore if anyone is in Jesus he is a new creation; the old has passed away and behold, all things have become new!' (2 Corinthians 5:17).

'Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus, who live and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (Roman 8:1).

These scriptures show us there is no judgement for the believer where sin is concerned. We are renewed and made into a new creature the moment we are born again. There is however, judgement for the believer where fellowship and works are concerned. Our relationship with the Father will be judged, not in the future after our death; it is right now in this life. If we judge and examine ourselves we should not be judged, but when we sin and are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined and chastened so that we may not be condemned with the world (1 Corinthians 11:31 & 32). That is self judgement, not judgement of one another. We have no right to judge another believer. We are told to examine ourselves and we must be harsher on ourselves than anyone else is, as far as sin is concerned. Other people may not be aware of our sin but God knows about it. Nothing is hidden from Him. It is our responsibility to judge ourselves, so how do we do it? 'If we freely admit that we have sinned and confess our sins; He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned we contradict His Word and His Word is not in us' (1 John 1:9 & 10). 'He that believes in Him is not judged (or condemned) but he who does not believe is condemned or judged already, because he has not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God' (John 3:18).

Our salvation is two sided. First there is the kindred relationship with God, and then there is the fellowship with God. The two are fundamentally different. The moment we accepted Jesus, we became a child of God and part of the family of God. 'For in Jesus we are sons of God through faith' (Galatians 3:26). God is now our Father and we are His children and we can not get out of that relationship. That is the kindred relationship and nothing can break that relationship. That is not true for fellowship with God. The fellowship is broken if we don't spend time fellowshiping with God or if we have sin in our life. When we come to the judgement of the works of the believer, it is about the fellowship of the believer, not the kindred relationship. For example; our earthy father will always be our kindred father. We can change our name, appearance and location but our father will remain our father; just as God will always be our heavenly Father, and that never changes no matter what the circumstances. However, if we have a disagreement with our earthy father and do not speak for a time, the kindred relationship remains the same, but the fellowship with him is broken. God will always be our Father, but through sin or lack of quality prayer time, the fellowship can be broken. God loves us, and if we do not fellowship with Him for weeks, He waits. The very moment we begin to pray, the Lord's presence is with us immediately, and that is the kindred relationship we have with our Father.

We are saved by faith, but after salvation we must bear good fruit by serving God. 'He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but because of His own mercy, by the cleansing of new birth and renewing of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5). We cannot earn our salvation through works; we must be born-again. 'Unless a man is born-again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven' (John 3:5). 'For by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body made up of many parts' (1 Corinthians 12:13 & 14). The moment we are born-again, the Holy Spirit put us into the body of believers. If we allow Jesus to wash us and cleanse away our sin and forgive us, we will have eternal life, but if we refuse to allow Jesus to wash us, we will be headed for judgement as a non-believer.

Fellowship with God needs constant attention; daily prayer time; constant renewing by the Holy Spirit. Our sins were taken on the cross, judged and found guilty and paid for in full by the Lord Jesus. Since He paid for our sins in full, that means we cannot pay for them, but we have a debt to serve God. Judgement does not come to the believer and no believer will ever be judged for sin but we will be judged by the works that we must do after salvation. God loathes sin and if we confess it then we are telling God we loathe sin too. Once we see there is sin, we must repent of it, stop doing it and be washed. The consequences of not confessing or recognising sin can be dire for us. Sin doesn't hurt God, He's bigger than that, but it hurts us and causes a rift or broken fellowship between us and our heavenly Father. Confessing, repenting and being cleansed reconciles us to God, and this can only be done through the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Confessing and forgiveness goes on and on throughout our lives, and the more sin we deal with through self examination, the less God has to purge painfully. We need to ask the Holy Spirit what the sin is in our lives and He will reveal it bit by bit. We must be eager to have sin cleansed. We must be in the constant state of facing up to sin and having God deal with it. This is judging oneself. We must be in such deep fellowship with God, we can't bear to have the sin shatter that closeness of fellowship. The Lord can do what we can never do for ourselves; that is to give us a sense of purity, cleanness and peace. We battle with sin every day because we have the sin nature that is always there. Apostle Paul battled ferociously with the sin nature within him. 'I delight in the law of God in my innermost self, but I discern in my body a different law at war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in me. O unhappy, pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? O thank God He will, through Jesus our Lord! So then indeed I, of myself with the heart, serve the Law of God but with the flesh serve the law of sin (Romans 7:22 to 25).

God cannot have close fellowship with a believer if that person accepts sin as being normal, so we must cleanse sin away. Our lives should be as David wrote. 'My sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart; such, O Lord You will not despise' (Psalm 51:17). We must not have a proud heart; not a heart self-righteously vindicating itself, but a heart that accepts that what God says is true, that we have all sinned (Romans 3:23), and says, "I'm sorry Lord. I don't want it like that. Please by Your Spirit, enable me to walk uprightly so I don't walk in sin." People like this will never criticise sin in others because they are too conscious of their own sin. Occasionally, in humility we must point out sin to another, but we must have the attitude, "There, but for the grace of God go I." If we hold on to the attitude, that what we are doing is not sin and refuse to admit, confess or bow the knee to God, we suffer the penalty of discipline. The scriptures show us the penalty if we refuse to judge ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:32). Some people don't like to talk about God's discipline and like to 'over spiritualise' everything, instead of facing up to, and dealing with, the sin in our lives. God disciplines us, and the Bible states that very clearly. God doesn't want us hiding sin. We must face up to it and confess it. God already knows all about it, but He wants us to see it and own up to it. Sin in our lives is a family matter because God is our Father and by the grace of God we are cleansed. 'I write to you these things so that you may not violate God's law and sin. But if anyone should sin, we have an Advocate (or One Who will intercede for us) with the Father, Who is Jesus and He is the Propitiation (or the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours alone but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 John 2:1 & 2).

God waits for us to confess our sins and He never forgets sin until it is confessed, then it is forgiven then forgotten. But if we don't confess our sins, the chastening gets worse and worse until we are forced to stop. There are people mentioned in the scriptures that died as a result of unconfessed sin. The people took communion unworthily and brought judgement down upon themselves. Some of these people were ill and some actually died as a result of their sin, so we can see that unconfessed sin brings judgement on oneself (1 Corinthians 11:23 to 32). Note: sickness is not always a result of sin and neither is death. We must, however, come into fellowship with God, and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of every sin we can think of, and every sin we can't think of. It is very important. If we choose to hold onto sin, then we must accept God's discipline. 'Do not think it lightly or scorn to submit to the correction and discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage and give up when you are reproved and corrected by Him. For the Lord disciplines whom He loves, and He punishes - even

scourges - every child whom He accepts and welcomes to His heart. You must submit to discipline, for God is dealing with you as His children. For what child is there whom their father does not train, correct and discipline? Now if you are exempt from correction and left without discipline - in which all of God's children share - then you are illegitimate offspring. We have had earthy fathers who disciplined us and we yielded to them, so shall we not much more, cheerfully submit to the Father of spirits, and so truly live? For our earthly fathers disciplined us and it seemed proper and good to them; but He disciplines us for our certain good, that we may become sharers in His own holiness. For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful, but afterwards it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it' (Hebrews 12:5 to 11).

So we can see that although we will never stand before God in judgement for our sins after we die, we are being judged and cleansed while we live on earth so when we die, only our works are judged and our rewards for obedience are given to us. We can view the believer in three main ways; number one, as a sinner; number two, as a son; and number three, as a servant. For every believer, those three are true and all these three have judgement connected to them. Number one and two have been dealt with on these pages already so now let's look at number three; our works.

Our works have a judgement connected to them too, but this judgement is the only one for the future. The moment we are born-again and become a believer and a son, we also become a servant. If our spiritual growth is correct we will start producing fruit. We are as believers, the ambassadors of Jesus and the church is to represent Jesus; He has no other workers. Every believer has a duty to serve the Lord, and our production is going to be judged by the Lord. Every day we should be producing works which is described as fruit (Matthew 13:23). 'For we must all appear before the Judgement Seat of the Lord, so that each one may receive his reward according to what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless' (2 Corinthians 5:10).

We must stress; this judgement is not for sin, it is for works. The good works are the works of the Holy Spirit done through us and the worthless works are the things done in the flesh. A description of our best deeds done in the flesh, are as it is written, like filthy rags (such as we would use to wash a corpse) (Isaiah 64:6), but our good deeds are like pure cloth. 'She (the church of genuine believers) has been permitted to dress in fine linen – dazzling and white – for the fine linen is the righteous acts of God's people' (Revelation 19:8). Those worthless deeds are the ones that will be discarded, and the only works for which we receive rewards are the ones done by the Holy Spirit through us. 'For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is already laid, which is Jesus the Anointed One. If anyone builds on the foundation, whether it be with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, the works of each one will become known, for the day will disclose and declare it, because it will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the worth of the work each person has done. If the work which any person had built on this Foundation survives, he will get his reward, but if any person's work is burned up under the test he will suffer the loss, losing his reward though he himself will be saved – but only as one who has passed through the fire' (1 Corinthians 3:11 to 15). There is no other Foundation on which we can build. Jesus is the only one. The gold, silver and precious stones are an analogy for good works and are eternal; the wood, hay and straw are an analogy for burnable or worthless works. The amount we allow the Holy Spirit to work through us is what really counts. The best works or 'gold' is sowing seeds in order to lead people to the Lord. That is for eternity and will not be burned up. There is a huge difference between filthy rags used to wash a corpse, which then had to be burned, and a beautiful robe made of pure, clean linen.

How does one produce fruit for God? We need to be in right fellowship with God and be doing the right thing. 'Henceforth, there is laid up for me the victor's crown of righteousness for being right with God and doing right which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Great Day – and not to me only but also to all those who have loved, yearned for and welcomed His appearing' (2 Timothy 4:8). Ephesians chapters 4 and 5, deal with many sins that were being committed by the Ephesian church and they were being told to stop such behaviour by the Apostle Paul, and live lives worthy of our calling. We are told not to grieve, vex, sadden or offend the Holy Spirit (Ephesians

4:30), and we must not quench, suppress or subdue the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). When we work in partnership with the Holy Spirit, we will be able to produce much fruit for the Lord and the best thing about that is; we will receive the reward for the good works. When we stand before Jesus on the day our works are judged, He will be handing out our rewards with the words, "Enter into My rest you good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:14 to 23; Luke 19:13 to 19).

'Do you not know that in a race all runners compete but only one wins the prize? So run your race that you may lay hold of the prize and make it yours. Every athlete who goes into training conducts himself with self control. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness that cannot wither' (1 Corinthians 9:24 & 25). Paul had the same confidence we can have, if we too keep the faith and walk uprightly and do good works. God sees all and will reward us in the end. 'So let us hold fast and retain without wavering, the hope we cherish, for He Who promised is faithful to His Word' (Hebrews 10:23).

Amen and God bless you.

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