“And the award goes to…” – the Judgment Seat of Christ

**Introduction:** What do the following have in common? The Oscars, the Etsy’s, the Olympics, the World Cup, Nobel, the Little League Championship. They are all competitions or the awards presented at the competitions.

People make predictions about who is going to win, but in most cases, no one knows. It would be nice if there were a fool-proof way to know the future. Then there wouldn’t be so much anxiety. The downside is you’d miss out on the drama, the surprise. Spoiler alert: we win! It’s like reading a book whose ending you already know. But a good author weaves a story so well that *how* the story unfolds is just as mesmerizing as the way that it ends.

God is a great Author. Imagine reading the Bible for the first time. As you read the pages of the Bible, you’d be surprised, shocked, elated and disappointed with the turn of every page. Along the way, you would find that God weaves into His story hints about how the whole thing is going to turn out. We call them prophecies. The Bible is full of them.

There are two basic purposes for prophecy: to reveal and to encourage. The last book in the Bible is usually referred to as Revelation because it reveals information we could know through no other means. But the complete title of the book is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Four of the five words in this title are easily understood and require no explanation. But the smallest one, “of,” does.

“Of” can mean several different things depending on the context. Among other things, we use this small word to show ownership and to show subject. For example, if I say, “The story of Joe,” you would have to determine if Joe was the author – “Joe’s story” – or the subject – “the story about Joe.” So when John the Apostle delivers “The Revelation *of* Jesus Christ,” does the message originate from Jesus, or is it about Jesus? Both. All true prophecy is a revelation from God about His world. He is the only one who knows the future. Others can make educated guesses and even be relatively accurate at times. But God *knows* the future. We can too as we follow prophecy.

Prophecy is not what we’re really supposed to follow. We follow Jesus. He doesn’t just know the future. He *rules* the future. That means all biblical prophecy reveals a little bit more about Jesus with the hope that we will fall in love with Him and become obedient to Him. It tells us Jesus is going to come back. It tells us that Jesus will judge. It tells us that Jesus will save. It tells us that Jesus will win. Prophecy is not about the world, Satan, or Heaven. It’s not about us either. It’s about Jesus. It’s always been about Jesus.

Encouragement is the second purpose of prophecy. Would you want to know the future? Some people don’t want to know. There are advantages and disadvantages.

What if you could know the outcome of your soccer match? Would you want to? It depends. Do we win or lose? Either way, knowing the future helps to take away the anxiety. But it also takes away the surprise. Spoiler alert: we win! That might not be something you want to know at the beginning of the game. It becomes ever more appealing the further you get into the game and the wider the point spread between you and the team that is winning.

The Church is in the last minutes of the last portion of the game – the last days. We’re down by a seemingly insurmountable number of points. We’re tempted to quit. But Jesus told us that we win. With that confidence, we can keep our heads up. The opposing team can throw out all the trash talk they want. They can attempt to goad us into anger and fear and depression, but it won’t work. We just keep smiling and loving and serving. Nothing can stop us from moving forward. We win!

Encouragement is always a positive, but not everyone takes it that way. It always has your best as its goal and love as its motivation. Even with that, it doesn’t always feel good.

When your son is in the hospital bed, and you encourage him to get up and walk down the hallway even though you know it will be painful and difficult, it doesn’t feel good for him or you. But it’s necessary. It will help him to regain his strength so that he can get home sooner.

Parents encourage their children to get better grades, managers encourage their team to complete the task, and prophets encourage people to turn back to God. They scold. They threaten. Sometimes they yell. If their heart is in the right place, it’s always for your benefit. They want the best for you.

Keep these ideas in mind as we come to today’s subject: the Judgment Seat of Christ. I know the title doesn’t sound pleasant. For some people, for all of us to some extent, it won’t be pleasant. But remember those two purposes for prophecy – to reveal and to encourage.

One day, Jesus will stand before us. We will see all His glory. We will see all His holiness. We will finally love Him the way He loves us now. And we will see ourselves in comparison to Him. It will not be pretty. All pride will melt away. Isn’t He amazing? How could He ever love someone as repulsive as me? We will also see all His rewards that were available to us if we had served more faithfully. It could get a little discouraging. There will be some tears that fall.

*That* day is not *this* day. There is still time to affect the outcome of that day. So as we talk about the Judgment Seat of Christ, let it be an encouragement to you to make the changes necessary for that day to be a great day.

Let’s begin by reading some of the Bible passages that explain the judgment.

*“But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we must all stand before the judgment seat of God.”* (Romans 14:10)

*“Therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 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.”* (2 Cor. 5:9-10)

These verses tell us four facts about the judgment – who will be judged, who will be judging, what will be judged and why it will be judged.

1. **Who will be judged? – Christians**

In both Romans and 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the pronoun “we.” Since Paul wrote both of these books to Christians, the Judgment Seat of Christ is for Christians – *all* Christians. No exceptions and no exemptions. Paul included himself in “we,” and he knew it. Paul had some pretty hefty credentials both before he became a Christian and after. Those that were from his past, he had already jettisoned in favor of the relationship with Christ he now enjoyed (Phil. 3:8). Paul had accomplished much for the Kingdom since the day of his conversion. He had led many to faith in Jesus Christ, planted churches and written much of the New Testament. That did not get him a bye. Jesus was still going judge him. He will also judge you, and He will judge me.

You might be tempted to say something like this: “I thought Jesus took our judgment upon Himself at the cross. You know, ‘It is finished.’ Why are we being judged?” Paul says,

*“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* (Rom. 8:1)

Not guilty! Before Christ, we stood condemned. We were dead in our sins and destined for Hell. But that judgment, better known as condemnation has been accomplished in Jesus. What Jesus will do in the future is not judgment in the sense of condemnation, but of evaluation.

Think of it in terms of a human courtroom. There are two phases to any court situation. In the first phase, attorneys present evidence that determines guilt or innocence. A guilty verdict brings condemnation. The sentencing comes later based on the nature of the crime. Jesus took the guilty verdict that we deserved *and* our sentence. Imagine how you would feel if someone did that for you? What do you think that person would have a right to expect from you? He gave you a second chance. What are you doing with your second chance? Don’t blow it.

The fact that you are at the Judgment Seat of Christ is a good thing. You *want* to be there. It happens in heaven in the presence of Jesus. You’re home. There is another judgment for the unsaved called the Great White Throne Judgment. You do *not* want to be there. You would be safe in thinking of our judgment as an awards ceremony. The *event* is not something to fear. Don’t get too comfortable. There *is* something to fear.

Right after Paul says we must all appear before Jesus, he speaks about his own fear of that day (2 Cor. 5:11). We will not be there as observers but as participants. Imagine you are up for an award at an awards show. Would you be nervous? Imagine the person you most want to please, the person who made it possible for you to get the award is there. Imagine it’s your fault – some decision you made or some scandal that prevented you from getting the award. Nervous now? Just wait until you find out *who* will be doing the judging.

1. **Who will be judging? – Jesus**

Jesus is our perfect Judge. He said that the Father has committed all judgment into His hands (John 5:22). How do you respond to that? Is it a sense of relief kind of like when you see that the judge you face for your speeding ticket is your grandmother? Or is it the same horror you would feel if the greatest opera singer ever was the one who was going to be evaluating your rendition of *Ave Maria*? When you sing in the shower, it’s easy to convince yourself that you are the greatest singer ever. Singing in front of the standard by which others judge greatness is a different story.

Jesus is the perfect Judge because Jesus is the standard of goodness. Everything else is judged by Him, and He has the right to judge everything else. Not only has He never sinned (Heb. 4:15), but He is also the ultimate example of righteousness. He is the *Mona Lisa* of paintings and the Michelangelo of sculptors. He does what He requires of others.

Jesus is the perfect Judge because Jesus knows everything. There is nothing hidden from him. He knows the good no one else has seen. In fact, He promises that His Father will reward us openly for the good acts we do in secret (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18). Nothing goes unnoticed by Him – the good or the bad. He will reveal *everything* (Mark 4:22). Nathan told David that what he had done in secret would be done openly to him (2 Sam. 12:11-12). God had seen it even though no one else had.

Jesus’ goodness and His knowledge make Jesus a just judge. His love makes Him a good Judge. Lady Justice is often pictured holding scales and blindfolded picturing the idea that justice is supposed to be impartial. Jesus is just, but He is not impartial. He’s pulling for you. He wants you to succeed. He’s in your corner. No law is greater than Him telling Him exactly how He has to respond to each person and each situation. Don’t think that makes him a pushover. He loves you more than your greatest advocate does, but that doesn’t make Him weak. It means He has plans for you, and He’s willing to do whatever it takes – sometimes hard things – to get you on the road you need to be traveling.

Let me bring you back to the point Paul makes as he introduces the Judgment Seat.

*“But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?”* (Rom. 14:10)

If Jesus is my Judge, then guess what. You are not. You don’t have the qualifications. You are not sinless (John 8:7). You don’t know the whole story and rarely does human judgment flow out of love. Yes, we are supposed to judge in the sense of discerning. We test the spirits, we stay away from people who are temptations or are bad influences, and we warn people we love when we see they are making bad decisions. But none of those classify the person as worthless which is what it means to treat someone with “contempt.” How could we make that assessment of another Christian (“brother”)? You are not the final judge. Leave it to Jesus to decide worth. No, it is not our job to judge one another. It *is* our job to judge ourselves.

You have probably heard of leprosy. You may be familiar with its symptoms and its comparison with sin in the Bible. But I doubt that you know the inability to feel pain is the cause of leprosy’s symptoms.

Think about what life would be like without pain. At first, it sounds good. What activities could you add to your life if knee, back or shoulder pain didn’t limit you? Then think of how dangerous life would be. You wouldn’t have the warning signals normally provided by pain. You wouldn’t feel it when you cut yourself or when you twisted your ankle, and so you wouldn’t clean the wound or rest the ankle. To protect yourself from infection, you would have to check yourself thoroughly every night and properly deal with whatever you find.

Can you see the parallels? We too need to examine ourselves and go to God for forgiveness and healing for everything we find. Paul even says if we judged ourselves fully or accurately, there would be no need for anyone else to judge us (1 Cor. 11:31). The prodigal son anticipated great judgment from his father, but because it was evident he had already judged himself, the Father welcomed him home with a party (Luke 15:21-23). We have the added aid of the Holy Spirit who enables us to see what needs healing and cleansing (John 16:8). If we are willing to open ourselves up to His examination now (Psalm 139:23-24) and listen to what He has to say (Rev. 2:7), then we will not have to face judgment for those items later (1 John 1:9)!

It is wise to get as much evaluation taken care of now in private because the judgment that will happen one day will be public. It will occur in the presence of Jesus, the angels, and other Christians after we have left earth, probably immediately following the Rapture. Other followers of Jesus (those from the Tribulation and those from the Millennium) will have to face judgment too. There may be several rounds of this judgment to encompass the saints from all time-frames. Personally, I’m not too concerned about the angels witnessing my judgment. But I’m not too excited about the others that will be there. I struggle with which witnesses concern me more.

Are you okay with Jesus judging you in front of other Christians? I guess that depends on how much the opinions of others matter to you. You want to be rewarded in public. You don’t want to be chided, mistaken, or embarrassed in public. Every time you stumble on the sidewalk, you look around to see if anyone was watching. On that day, the opinions of most humans won’t matter to me. I don’t think I’ll even care all that much what Noah or Abraham or Peter think of me. They don’t know me. They had their own weaknesses and failures. What will matter to me is the opinion of the people I have invested in and the people who have invested in me. The more transparent we are about our weaknesses now, the fewer disappointment others will experience then. It will hurt when others see what I have kept hidden from them and even from myself.

It will hurt more when I have to face Jesus with it. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus forgives me. Yes, Jesus already knows everything that I have ever done, said, thought, or ever thought about thinking. There will be no look of surprise on his face. It will *still* hurt.

Do you remember what it was like to stand in front of mom, dad, coach, or some other person whose opinion you highly valued and know you had shamed or disappointed them? When I consider what Jesus has done for me, what He sacrificed, how much He loves me, and the high expectations Jesus had for me – expectations I failed to live up to, it will hurt. It will hurt a lot. The Bible says Jesus will wipe away every tear. I firmly believe that at least for a little while, there will be tears in heaven as we stand before Jesus and see the look of sadness in His eyes. The wonderful thing is we will also see forgiveness and love in His eyes. It is then we will love Jesus with the same kind of love He currently showers on us.

1. **What will be judged? – works and motives**

Do you love Jesus? Jesus said the evidence of our love is doing what He commands. If we love Him, we will do good works because good works please Him.

Most of those who believe in an afterlife where judgment will happen, believe entrance into heaven is based on our good works outweighing our bad ones. This fallacy is partially due to a confusion between salvation and reward. Grace gives salvation. Works give reward. Paul explains the connection between the two in Ephesians 2:8-10.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

Good works won’t get you salvation, but good works are God’s eternal plan for us.

How do you define good works? By the outcome, by the motive, by the amount of sacrifice they required? Maybe *we* can’t define them. Since God is the one who instituted the works, God has the right to define what makes them good. He defines good works as that which pleases Him.

How do you know what pleases God? The Pharisees thought they knew. The disciples were often surprised at what pleased Jesus. They were pleased with large offerings. Jesus was pleased with sacrificial ones. They were pleased by their ability to get demons to fall. Jesus reminded them to take greater pleasure in the fact that they were going to rise. So what pleases God?

God is pleased when we believe Him, especially when we believe Him enough to obey Him. All of us like it when others believe what we say. It annoys us, even angers us when someone refuses to believe us. *We* lie. *We* make mistakes. *We* get the details wrong. We still expect to be believed. God speaks truth consistently. He *is the* truth. He deserves to be trusted and is pleased when we express faith (Heb. 11:6).

It takes faith to substitute God’s way of doing life for the way that seems logical to us. Abraham expressed faith in the promise of God. God granted him righteousness. A Roman centurion gained the praise of Jesus because he had a greater faith than Jesus had found throughout Israel. When Jesus came to His hometown, He was displeased at their lack of faith. Faith pleases Him.

Faith in the plan of God and the person of God leads to faithfulness with the possessions of God. God holds the title to everything you claim as your own. You are a steward of these resources. On the day of judgment, you will have to give an account of how well you used God’s resources. Did you put them to use? Did you use them for your purposes or God’s? For this reason, it is not wise to envy. Nor is it wise to diminish the significance of what God has entrusted to your care.

Faith says that the wise and loving God does all things perfectly. When God gives more *to* you, He requires more *from* you (Luke 12:48). If you use well what He has given, you can earn just as much reward as the person who has been given dramatically more (Matt. 25:21, 23). We are not competing for rewards but cooperating to bring in the Kingdom. We do not need to compete. The reward is available to all. His reward is not based on what He gave you, but based on what you did with what He gave. Focus on using well what you have rather than pining for what you do not have. Satisfaction with His gifts pleases Him. Complaining does not.

The third way to please God is by loving Him and loving others. He commands love, so love is an act of obedience. But it’s more than that. It is evidence you are maturing (1 Cor. 13:11), and you are growing to be like Him (1 John 4:16). Love must be the primary motivation for the actions that you do toward God and toward others.

“*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”* (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Think of all the reasons why one person might serve another – duty, a sense of obligation, the expectation of reward, or simply to stay out of trouble. You don’t want your spouse to give you “the look,” so you wash the dishes and change the diaper. Check your motives. Are you doing it for love? Jesus doesn’t just evaluate what we do but why we do it (Heb. 4:12).

There is no reward *to us* for the actions we do that are not motivated by love. There *is* a reward. *They* get benefited by your actions, but you do not. Don’t stop doing good things simply because you’re not feeling the love. It’s always right to do right even if your motives aren’t where they need to be. Besides, my experience has often been that when I do the actions without the feeling, the feeling comes as a by-product. So humble yourself, and serve.

Humility is another means we have of pleasing God. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things God hates. At the top of the list is a proud look. Pride was the first sin, and it got Lucifer kicked out of heaven. Pride continues to keep people out of heaven today.

Because I have a sin nature, I still struggle with feelings of pride when I do good works. It’s hard to separate taking pride in your work from being proud of your work. I also struggle with letting the opinions of others be the motivation for my actions. I want others to see what I do and affirm me for it (Matt. 6:2). That’s the problem. I’m looking to others for affirmation instead of looking to God for it. In the process, I’m trying to get people to look at me instead of pointing people to Him. He deserves the glory, not me (1 Cor. 10:31). He gives us a choice. Either we can exalt ourselves now and be humbled later, or we can humble ourselves now and let Him exalt us in front of everyone (Dan. 4:7; James 4:10).

Humility has an added benefit. It forces me to acknowledge my weaknesses. I can’t do what God requires on my own. Humility causes me to depend on Him.

Jesus says it this way: “Without me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Jesus wants us to depend on Him. Most of these other means we have of pleasing God make sense. This one is counter-intuitive. It goes against what we expect in everyday life. The employer is pleased when her subordinate can make decisions on her own and doesn’t feel the need to come to her with every situation. As parents, we like the stage of life when our kids depend on us for everything. We like being needed. But we know that if they never gain independence, something went wrong. It’s our job to get them to where they can survive on their own.

God, however, wants us permanently dependent on Him, not because He needs to be needed, but because He knows that we will never have what it takes to succeed or survive without Him (Romans 8:4-8; Is. 40:29-31). Relying on ourselves will lead to failure and disappointment.

You may notice that faith, faithfulness, love, humility, and dependence are not good works. They are character traits. God’s pleasure is based more on who we are than on what we do. What is it you want for your kids as they mature? I imagine your greatest desire is for them to grow in their character. You want that more than you want them to succeed in sports, academics or socialization. You want them to be *good* more than you want them to be *good at*. Good character results in good works. Being good leads to doing good. And that is worth rewarding.

1. **Why will it be judged? – rewards**

The original audience for Paul’s message about the Judgment Seat understood Paul’s reference. The Greek term translated “judgment” is “Bema.” The Bema seat was a raised platform from which a person of importance would view and speak. It was originally used by the Greeks during the time of Alexander the Great to deliver accolades to victors in the Olympics. The ruling force in the world at the time of Paul’s writing was the Roman Empire. When Rome’s army returned home from a victorious battle, they would parade through the streets of the capital. Caesar and other important officials would sit above them to view with pride their victorious soldiers.

One day, we are going home to our capital city. We will arrive as a glorious Bride and a victorious army, having completed our race successfully. We win, not because of our efforts but because of the victory Jesus gained through the bloodied cross and the vacant grave. The struggle will be over. No more temptation, no more sorrow, no more opportunities to improve. Our accomplishments will be a completed work, and we will present them to Jesus for His evaluation. But why? What’s the point? We’ll be in heaven, so who cares about the rewards? Jesus cares. That means we should too. Jesus cares enough about the rewards to judge the works.

1. To determine the worth of the work.

Know this. It is the worth of your works that are being judged here, not the worth of the worker. Your worth has already been determined. Jesus created you in the image of God. That gives you worth. Jesus paid for you with His blood. That shows your worth. An item’s worth is determined by how much someone is willing to pay for it. Jesus is a savvy shopper. He would not have purchased you if you did not have worth to Him. It is not your actions that give you worth but what God has done that gives you worth. There is nothing that you can do to positively or negatively affect your worth to Him. You *can* affect the worth of your actions.

Take a look at how Paul describes the worth of our actions.

*“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.”* (1 Cor. 5:10)

Not every work presented for inspection will survive testing. Some works are “bad,” and others are “good.”

Think about walking through the fruits and vegetable section of the grocery store. You pick up two apples and examine them to see which one you want. You consider the color, the firmness, and the freshness. Some of the fruit in the bin looks bad. It’s not evil; it’s just not edible. The issue is quality. You also consider which piece is worth the price you would have to pay. Jesus has already paid the price for us and our works. The worth of that price is inexpressible. None of us likes having to pay more than the worth of what we receive. Do your works live up to the expectations of Jesus? Are they worthwhile or worthless?

There is another passage that communicates this idea of worth to our works.

“*According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”* (1 Cor. 3:10-15)

Some works are rare and durable – “gold, silver, precious stones,” – and some works are common and temporary – “wood, hay, straw.” Would you rather have five toothpicks or five gold bars? The factors that determine the quality of our works are those we have already discussed – faith, faithfulness, love, humility, and dependence. It’s about what we’ve done and why we’ve done it.

Before anyone gets the idea that it is more important to have depth (quality) to our works than breadth (quality), know that Jesus values both. Jesus told the story of the talents twice, but He varied the details. In the first one, the Master gave the same reward to both of those who invested His resources. But in the second one, the servants got different levels of reward based on what they had accomplished. The quality of the work will determine the quality of the reward (Matt. 25:20-23). The quantity of the work will determine the quantity of the reward (Luke 19:16-19). Do you want quality or quantity?

1. To determine the reward for the worker.

To answer that last question, we need to deal with another one. What is the reward? We’re not talking about salvation as the reward. Jesus already accomplished that. He laid the foundation. We’re building on top of that foundation. We’re not adding anything to our salvation; we’re adding something to our reward. Jesus says that we are to lay up “treasures in heaven” knowing that they can never be taken from us through natural means (Matt. 6:20).

Paul describes the rewards we receive as crowns. In one place, he compares our crowns to the wreaths athletes received in the Olympics. Theirs will decay, but ours will not (1 Cor. 9:25). The implication is that whatever these rewards are, they will affect our lives forever. Other crowns we can gain are the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), the crown of life (Rev. 2:10; James 1:10), the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4), and the crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19). For just a second, forget the “crown” part. How do righteousness, life, glory and rejoicing sound to you? They sound incredibly good to me! But we still have to deal with the crown part.

What kind of crowns? Regal or athletic? Both. One is because of relationship, and one is because of accomplishment. One enables us to rule, and the other gets us praise. If the crown is regal, then by throwing them at Jesus’ feet, we are showing our submission to His authority. In essence, we are putting our heads – the place where the crown goes – at Jesus' feet, permitting Him to step on us if He so desires. If the crowns are athletic, then whatever praise we would get because of our accomplishments, we direct toward Jesus. We couldn’t have done it without Him anyway. We did it in His strength (“without me, you can do nothing”). It only makes sense to give the praise back to Him.

I can’t say for sure what the nature of our rewards will be. But think about the nature of the One who will be dispensing them. He is all-loving. He is motivated to give you the universe – to give you far more than your works deserve. He is all-powerful. There is nothing outside the possibility of Him providing it for you. He is all-creative. You can’t even imagine what God has in store! Do you really want to look back at that awards ceremony and your earthly life that preceded it and walk away with regret? Some of the saddest words ever spoken are, “If I’d only known.”

We don’t know the full extent of the reward. If we knew the reward’s actual nature, it might not excite us right now. A three-year-old doesn’t get excited about a promotion that comes with a doubled salary, a reserved parking space, and a club membership. But her daddy does. We’ll finally be mature when we stand before Jesus. The things that excite our Daddy will finally excite us! Don’t you want to have a lot to be excited about?

**Conclusion:** We began today by mentioning several different awards and the ceremonies that go with them. You immediately recognized many of them because they are common knowledge. They are the subject of conversation. Some of you knew far more about them than you knew about the Judgment Seat of Christ before today. You now have a better idea of what is coming. Knowing the future either has helped to alleviate your anxiety, or it has increased it.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not something to fear if you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and you have been faithfully serving Him out of pure motivations. This will be an awards ceremony. In front of everyone, Jesus is going to crown you and invite you to rule and reign with Him. All the suffering will be worth it. All the questions will fade away. We will be in the presence of Jesus for the rest of eternity.

Judgment day will be a fearful one if you haven’t spent any time preparing for it. An awards ceremony is not a pleasant scenario for those who receive no rewards. Yes, we will be different by then. There will be no envy. We will truly be able to celebrate the accomplishments of others with enthusiasm. But imagine the scene.

There is a line that seems to stretch into eternity where people are lined up parallel to each other. Jesus stands before each one successively as Jesus recites their worthwhile works from the records. The look of pride on His face beams as He places the crown on each one’s head. You get increasingly nervous as He gets closer and closer to you.

And then He stands before you. Silently. There are no worthwhile works that survived the fire. There is no reward. You’re home, but there is a look of disappointment on Jesus’ face. In those other award scenarios, you can always console yourself over your loss with the hope that you will do better next year. The Judgment Seat of Christ is a one-time shot. There are no second chances.

Your chance to change what will happen on that day is here on this day. You can’t change the ending of the story, but you can change your part in it. You today are deciding what kind and what number of rewards you will receive when you stand before Jesus. Live a life of faith. Be faithful with what God has placed in your hands. Love God and people. Give God the glory for whatever you accomplish, and rest wholeheartedly in His strength for each day. Let Him guide you and empower you. If you do that, Judgment Day will be a good day.