

Before Christ's Judgment Seat



No Neutrality (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "No Neutrality." Has it perhaps been challenging you?

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests. Each month our listeners write in to tell us of prayer requests that have been wonderfully answered.

Now, back to our theme, "No Neutrality."

In my talk yesterday I referred to Joshua's closing address to Israel when he took his farewell of them and commended them to God. He said in Joshua 24:15:

> "Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve."

And then he said you can serve the true God or you can serve various different false gods. I pointed out that this is true as much for us as it was for Israel. We have to choose and our choice is not whether we will serve but only whom. Because, man was created to worship and to serve and he cannot change that in his nature. The only choice he has is whether he will worship and serve the true God or false gods. If we refuse to worship and serve the one true God then we will end up worshiping and serving some false god. Even if we call ourselves atheists or agnostics we really have a god whom we worship and serve.

Today we're going to look forward to the awesome moment when we stand before Christ's judgment seat and answer for our lives on earth. This theme is presented to us by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:10. He says:

> "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due for him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (NIV)

Notice when Paul says "we all" he's speaking as a Christian. This is the judgment that awaits all Christians. It's a judgment that takes place before the judgment seat of Christ. For the rest of mankind there will be another, later judgment that will have a different setting. It will take place before the great, white throne of God. This is described very vividly in Revelation 20. But we're not speaking about the judgment of unbelievers, we're talking today about the judgment of believers. Bear in mind that the New Testament says judgment must begin at the house of God. That's with the people who believe in God and claim to serve him. And Paul says "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." We have no option. This is an appointment that we cannot refuse to keep.

And then he describes the purpose for which we must appear before Christ's judgment seat, "that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." It's important to understand that this judgment is not a judgment for condemnation. If we have truly believed in the Lord Jesus, committed our lives to him; then there is no condemnation for us. Paul says that very clearly in Romans 8:1:

> "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (NIV)

If you are truly in Christ Jesus as a believer, born again and walking with God, then you do not need to fear condemnation—ultimate, final rejection from the presence of God. That is not the issue. The issue is how have we served the one whom we claim to be our Savior and our Lord? And we will either be rewarded for faithful service or we will be deprived of our reward if we have not been faithful in serving. But all of us will have to give an account, Paul says, of the things done while in the body, the way we have lived in this earthly life.

And he says—and again you seen this theme of no neutrality occurs again and again in the Bible—he says we must give an account for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. What are the possibilities? Good or bad, nothing in between.

How are we to understand that? Well, it's very simple. Anything that is not good is bad. Let me give you a simple illustration. How do you define crooked? The answer is you simply have to define straight. And once you've defined straight you can say anything that is not straight is crooked. Once you've defined good then you can say anything that is not good is bad. We have to see the positive, then the negative is obvious.

Let's ask ourselves, therefore, what actions qualify to be called good? I want to suggest to you there are two main criteria. First, obedience to God's word. And second, the motive with which we do things. Let's consider the issue of obedience first. In Matthew 7:21-25 Jesus says this:

> "Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven: but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."

What's the acid test? Doing the will of God. Not what we say with our lips but what we do in our lives. And then he gives us this terrible warning:

> "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"

I believe those people will be speaking the truth. They really did do all those things but they were not accepted on that account because Jesus goes on to say:

> "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you: Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

What's the key word there? Lawlessness. It's possible to work miracles in the name of Jesus. After all, the power is in the name of Jesus, it's not in us. It's possible to cast out demons in his name and yet to be basically and fundamentally lawless in our attitudes. How do I know? Well, I've seen many miracles performed through my ministry. I've cast out thousands of demons. But that doesn't exempt me from the obligation to deny and renounce lawlessness in my own heart and life. That's present with me continually. It's not an issue that's resolved once for all, it's a question of how I walk daily. Jesus goes on:

> "Therefore every one who hears these words of mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock."

Notice the words "acts upon them." It's not just hearing sermons, it's doing what the word says. Then Jesus says the test will come.

> "The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house: and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock." (NAS)

The rock which is the Lord Jesus and the word of God. Obedience can be simply defined. It's hearing and doing God's word. And anything else is the opposite, it's lawlessness. It's like straight and crooked, good and bad. Obedience or lawlessness—nothing in between.

Then let's consider for a moment the issue of our motive. What is the overriding motive with which Christians should do all that they do? The answer is very simple, for the glory of God. That's the only acceptable motive in the sight of God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31:

> "Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (NAS)

"Whatever" is all inclusive there. It includes even everyday simple acts like eating or drinking. Consider just for a moment what does it mean to eat to the glory of God. I suggest it involves three things which apply to every other kind of action, too. First of all, we acknowledge God as the source of our food. We see that it comes from him. Secondly, because when we do that we give God thanks for our food. And Paul says about food, it is sanctified by means of the word of God and by prayer. And third, we use the strength we gain from our food to serve God for his glory. I pointed out in my first talk that strength, physical strength, is one of the talents for which we have to give account to God. I believe the key word in this whole issue is the word "wholehearted," which is the opposite of being doubleminded. I pointed out that if you try to serve two masters you're doubleminded as Israel were in the days of Elijah. They were wavering between two opinions. James says a doubleminded man will not receive anything from God.

Let's then consider the outcome of this judgment seat of Christ which is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. He gives a vivid picture.

> "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives [the fire], he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss: he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." (NIV)

You understand? Condemnation is not the issue. The issue is the assessment of our service. What have we done for God?

And again, there are two totally different categories. There's gold, silver, costly stones on the one hand. Wood, hay or straw on the other. Let me point out to you it's easy to pile up masses of wood, hay and straw. It's not easy to pile up masses of precious stones or gold or silver. The fact that we have produced terrific quantity is no guarantee that our work will stand the test. In fact, it's something of a warning that maybe it won't. Paul says therefore we've got to be prepared to submit our service and its results to the test of the fire. There's going to be a fire. I believe it will come forth from the eyes of the Lord Jesus that will just burn up everything that is not acceptable in His sight. There are just these two categories: precious or worthless. There are just these two criteria: obedience and motivation.

I want to close by praying for you today that God will show you the nature of your service, whether you are amassing must wood, hay or straw; or whether it's precious stones that you're amassing that will stand the test of fire. Remember, if it's the worthless, you'll be saved but just like someone escaping through the flames. That's not God's will.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about another critical choice we all have to make.

My special offer this week is my book, Repent and Believe. It describes the first two steps you have to take in order to escape from the snare of neutrality. It will open to you the way to a life of fruitful and effective service. Also, my complete series of talks this week on "No Neutrality" is available in a single, carefully edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

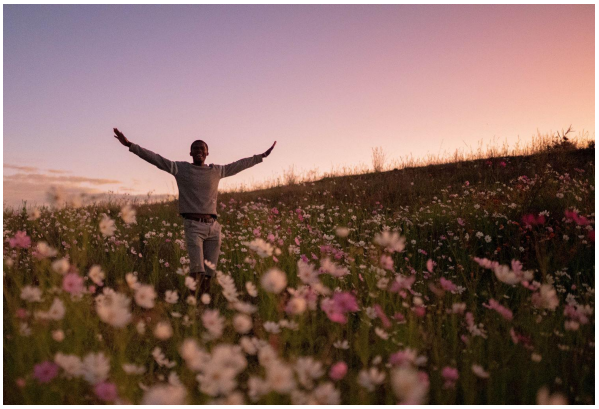
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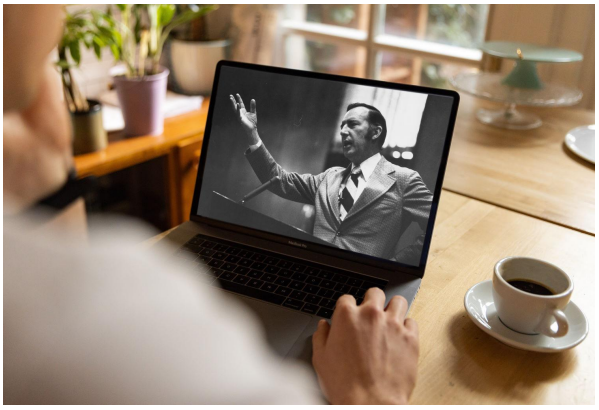
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