

The Time to Prepare for Tomorrow is Today

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What if you discovered that how you live your life has significance for all eternity? I am convinced that this is true, and this understanding has radically altered the way I live each day.

At a young age, I believed the truth that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I continued to affirm this truth as I grew up, yet my life demonstrated little change. My lifestyle and behavior looked very much like my peers.

Twelve years ago, I began to study the Bible. In the course of my study, I came across a fascinating topic: The Judgment Seat of Christ. This is a future day when every believer will appear before Jesus Christ and give an account of his or her life (Rom 14:10–12; 2 Cor 5:9–10). On that day, Jesus will evaluate how we lived our Christian lives. He will take a close look at our deeds (Rom 2:5–6), our words (Matt 12:36–37), and our thoughts and motives (Heb 4:12–13). He will consider how well we have managed the resources He has given us: Time, talents, treasure, truth, and relationships (Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27). After this review, Jesus will reward us according to what we have done (Rev 22:12).

It is essential that we recognize that the Judgment Seat of Christ is *not* about our salvation; it is about our service. Heaven is a free gift given to us by the grace of God (Rom 4:5; Eph 2:8–9). If we simply rely upon Jesus to rescue us from our sins, God assures us that our sins are forgiven, forgotten, forever (Ps 103:12; Micah 7:19). There is no condemnation for the Christian (Rom 8:1). However, the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we become responsible for using the gifts God has given us (Matt 20:1–16).

What should our response to this subject be? The topic of eternal rewards ought to elicit two responses: First, we should be overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude. God graciously offers heaven as a free gift; and He also gives us eternal rewards for our obedience to Him. Second, we should be motivated to live for Jesus because we recognize that we are accountable for how we live. When it is all said and done, Jesus is seeking faithfulness from His followers (1 Cor 4:1–5). If you will love Him (2 Tim 4:7–8), serve Him (Matt 10:42), work for Him (Col 3:23–24), suffer for Him (Jas 1:12), and tell others about Him (1 Thess 2:19–20), one day you will hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:21).

Although we hear and read very little about the Judgment Seat of Christ, I have found that this biblical teaching has motivated me to ensure that my life counts for Christ. Martin Luther, the great German reformer, said that on his calendar there were only two days: “Today” and “that Day.” May we invest all that we are and have today in light of that Day. When we stand before Jesus, we will be glad we did.