

INTRODUCTION

As ambassadors for Christ each of us has been entrusted with the message of the King. It is the message of salvation; a salvation that is entirely the work of God from beginning to end. Because of our sin, we are spiritually and morally incapable of producing anything in any way to earn, merit, or achieve God's forgiveness. We are totally and absolutely spiritually and morally bankrupt. It's only by God through the work of His Son at Calvary, and through faith in His work, that you and I can be reconciled to holy God, be forgiven of our sins, and stand before Him justified (declared righteous). Again, please keep in mind, although our sins have not been imputed to us as believers (v. 19b), they were, however, imputed to someone: Christ (v. 21a). And through faith in Him, His righteousness is imputed to us (v. 21b). We become "a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (v. 17).

1. As Christ's ambassadors we speak in behalf of God, "Who is pleading and begging through us" (v. 20), to a lost world where there is hatred, war, and rebellion against the very God and His Christ which we represent.
 2. As Christ's ambassadors we speak from first-hand knowledge. How can we possibly and effectively represent someone *we* do not know personally? How can we possibly speak to a lost world about reconciliation, if *we* haven't first been reconciled to God ourselves? How can we effectively speak about things of the Kingdom if *we* aren't even familiar with the things of the Kingdom?
 3. Again, there will be resistance and opposition. We do live alongside a hostile world system. Being a true follower of Christ is becoming less and less acceptable. Proclaiming that there's only one way to God (and that through faith in Christ), is drawing more and more fire from a godless world system.
 4. It remains imperative for our conduct and behavior to remain honorable and honest before an unbelieving world (1 Pet. 2:11, 12). This gives credibility to our witness. They must see the transforming grace of God through our own lives; they need to see the Christian life in shoe leather, not just in the Bible (Rom. 12:2). They need to see an unwavering and unified faith even in the face of adversity and opposition (Phil. 1:27-29).
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This brings us to our final point:

THE MOTIVATION

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST (vv. 10, 11)

Before we go too far, let's cut to the chase and get to the crux of the matter: God is, and has always been, most interested with what's in the heart. Remember what the LORD said to Samuel as he went to Jesse's house to anoint the future king of Israel? "For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

And let me also say that when it comes to the work of the Lord, the end does not justify the means. Pragmatism has its very roots in Darwinism and secular humanism. It rejects the notion of absolute right and wrong, good and evil, and truth and error. Pragmatism ultimately defines "truth" as to what is useful, meaningful, and helpful. Ideas that don't seem workable or relevant are rejected as false. Pragmatism emphasizes methodology over theology. Although there are times we might review, re-assess, revive, or even replace certain ministries, it should always be on the basis of the Scriptures. The Word of God forever remains our standard, our compass, our North Star, and our only unchanging and unwavering point of reference.

Now concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ. Because of the finished work of Christ, the believer will not have to face his sins in judgment, but each of us will give an account of our works and service for the Lord; the character and motive of the heart. It really does matter how, why, and what materials we use to build on the foundation of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

The Judgment Seat of Christ comes from the Greek word *bēma* ("seat"). *Bēma* was used to describe a "raised place or platform reached by steps, originally that at Athens, where was the place of assembly; from the platform where [speeches] were made. The word became used for a tribune, two of which were provided in the law-courts of Greece, one for the accuser and one for the defendant; it was applied to the tribunal of a Roman magistrate or ruler" (Vines Expository Dictionary, W.E. Vine, Revell Publ.). The *bēma* was also the platform where the judges stood and viewed the contestants during the Greek Games, making sure all played by the rules. It was also the place where the awards were given out to those winning contestants.

Now please keep in mind that according to our text, "all" believers must stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ; no one is excluded. And "each one" will be recompensed accordingly. The word Paul uses for "appear" (v. 10) means much more than to make an appearance. Paul E. Hughes comments on the Greek meaning of the word: it means, "To be laid bare, stripped of every outward facade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one's character."

So to get a fuller view of the Judgment Seat of Christ, let's take a look at further scriptures:

1. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
2. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
3. Romans 14:10-12
4. James 3:1

Attitude and motive are at the very core of all that we do in our service to the Lord. Do we serve out of pride: to be seen, heard, or known? Jesus was explicit when He said that if we pray or give to be seen by men, then we have already received our reward (Matt. 6:1-5). Do we serve out of obligation, half-heartedness, resentment, or jealousy? Do we try to serve when there are unreconciled differences with a brother or sister in Christ? Jesus said before we ever offer our gift (of worship), which includes every aspect of the believer's life, we must first be reconciled to our brother (Matt. 5:23-24). When it comes to ministry, God isn't necessarily looking for quantity; He's looking for quality. He truly is worthy of our best!

What man may see and call "gold, silver, and precious stones," God may see as "wood, hay, and stubble." On the other hand, what man may see and call "wood, hay, or stubble," God may see as "gold, silver, and precious stones." Only He can give a fair and honest assessment of our hearts and motives. When done from a pure heart, even the smallest deed, such as giving a cup of cold water (Matt. 10:42), or the smallest gift, such as the widow's two mites (Lke. 21:1-4), will not go unnoticed or unrewarded by God. In that case, "Little *is* much, when God is in it."

Paul knew that one day his works would be evaluated by the King of kings. What an awesome and solemn occasion! But such a thought and reality enabled Paul to persevere even in the face of hardships and criticism. No matter what, Paul's ambition was to be well pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9).

Not only is the Judgment Seat of Christ motivation for our ambassadorship, so is:

THE LOVE OF CHRIST (v. 14a)

Paul channeled everything through the love of Christ. The love of Christ (i.e. Christ's love for Paul) compelled Paul to service.

CONCLUSION

What motivates you to Christian service? Or maybe the question should be asked another way: What keeps you from Christian service?

- Criticism? (2 Cor. 5:13)
- Lack of Commendation (2 Cor. 5:12)
- Conflicts (2 Cor. 11:23-28)

If these keep you from Christian service, then your motivation is wrong. By how you answer, you can tell if your motivation is to please God, others, or yourself.

I would like to close by reminding us, that there are certain immunities provided for each ambassador.

1. The ambassador is exempt from the local jurisdiction.

As ambassadors for Christ, we are also free from the jurisdiction of Satan. Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death. Although we live alongside a hostile world in rebellion against God, Satan or this world has no right to govern, legislate, or dictate our lives. We have been set free!

2. The ambassador's possessions cannot be violated. They cannot be searched, seized, or destroyed.

Satan or this world cannot rob us of our riches in Christ.

3. The ambassador is exempt from taxation

All that you and I have belongs to God. As Paul said, "I will gladly spend and be spent for the cause of Christ (2 Cor. 12:15).

4. Liberty of worship

As children of the King, we have the right to enter into His presence—anytime or any place. In spite of the humanistic and antagonistic philosophy of this world system, nothing can-or-should hinder us as we worship God in spirit and in truth!

What a blessed privilege we have! What an awesome responsibility! We have nothing of which to be ashamed or embarrassed. We are ambassadors for the King of kings!