

# The Judgement Seat of Christ

by Erwin Lutzer

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*The Judgment Seat of Christ is a serious matter where born-again Christians will receive their eternal reward based on their works since their salvation, and the motivation to please God should drive us to do good works.*

**Duration:** 43:24

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 19:17, 1 Corinthians 3:13, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 11:10-12

**Topics:** "Eternal Rewards", "Divine Judgment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that our faithfulness on earth will determine our position in the eternal kingdom. He highlights the importance of being faithful in all aspects of life, including finances. The speaker also emphasizes that we will be judged individually and thoroughly by God, who will reveal the motives of our hearts. The sermon concludes by reminding listeners that even small acts of love and kindness will be rewarded by God.

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## Transcript

Well, you know, normally I keep my Canadian citizenship a secret, but Dr. Stoll has told you and basically told the world now that I am a Canadian citizen. Even though, yeah, thank you, thank you. But I do need to say that in my heart, I'm an American.

I married an American. My children are Americans. My brand new grandson is an American.

I needed to work that in somewhere. So people always ask me, what is the difference between you Canadians and Americans? Well, I should be in a position to be able to tell you that you Americans are very forward. We Canadians are rather shy and bashful.

I was about 21 years old. I went to Dallas, Texas and met this young woman. And coming from Canada, I was very formal as we Canadians are.

I always called her Miss Westerland. One day, the perspiration came to the palms of my hands, and I said, Miss Westerland, do you mind if I call you by your first name? She looked at me and she said, why, no, she said, as a matter of fact, I wouldn't mind if you called me by your last name. Ever since that time, I learned it only takes two to get married, an eligible daughter and an anxious mother.

And just so that I have a good ride home tonight, I do need to tell you that my wife's maiden name is not Westerland. And of course, to have the friendship that we have with the Moody Bible Institute here at the

church and the friendship of Dr. Stoll. And I just need to say this, and I say this in all sincerity, that no one I've ever met seems to have the gift of leadership and the gift of being able to minister to people like you do, Dr. Stoll.

And I know I should call you Dr. Stoll, but for the purpose of this story, Joe is going to have to do. Where did Joe learn all this? Well, you heard it tonight, didn't you? Hackensack, New Jersey. Hackensack, New Jersey, in a jewel store.

First year of college, stacking stuff on the shelf, a woman came in and insisted that she buy a half head of lettuce. He got into a real argument with her, was very, very upset, marched into the manager's office and said, you know, there's a crabby old woman out there that wants to buy a half head of lettuce. And he just said that, and suddenly he noticed that she had walked into the office with him and it was standing right next to him.

So he turned to her and then said to the manager, and this charming woman would like to buy the other half. Later on, the manager commended him for his ability and his great sense of friendliness and ability to work with people. And he said, you know, Joe, because of your gifts, I'd like to promote you as manager in our store in Detroit.

Joe said, Detroit, Detroit has nothing but wicked women and hockey players. Manager said, wait a moment, my wife is from Detroit. Joe said, oh, really? Well, which hockey team was she with? He said, diplomacy, diplomacy.

Well, tonight, in keeping with the theme of Founders Week and our hope that is referred to in the Gospel of John, I would like to speak on the topic of the judgment seat of Christ, specifically your eternal reward, the bema, the judgment seat of Christ. The Bible says in the book of Revelation that there will be tears in heaven, but God shall wipe away all their tears. Many people read that passage of scripture and they say that that seems to be inconsistent.

Tears and heaven simply do not go together. And oftentimes we've speculated as to why there might be tears in heaven. We may not know for sure, but it is my conviction that the reason that there will be tears in heaven is when we begin to think of the way in which we lived in light of all of the blessings that God has given to us.

Well, might we weep on the other side of the celestial gates? When you speak of the judgment seat of Christ, and now to be clear, and I'm going to be clarifying this throughout the message, I'm talking about born-again Christians standing in the presence of God. If you are listening today and you've never consciously trusted Christ as your Savior, you will not be at this judgment. You will be at another one that is described in the book of Revelation as a terrifying, terrifying judgment.

But this is for believers. But I discovered throughout the years that it is very difficult to speak on the judgment seat of Christ because we have so many misconceptions that have been built up throughout the years that it's almost impossible to get people to take this seriously. For example, one misconception is people say, well, when I accept Christ as Savior, doesn't Calvary cover it all? And the answer is yes, Calvary does cover it all legally and judicially.

When you receive Christ as Savior, you are credited with a righteousness of Christ that is yours as a free gift, and Calvary covers it all. But that doesn't mean that God does not deal with us still as his children and

discipline us. There was a couple in the New Testament called Ananias and Sapphira.

They schemed to lie and God smote them dead. I believe that they were Christians. I can imagine them arriving in heaven and saying, why all this? We thought that Calvary covered it all.

David in the Old Testament committed sin and was even forgiven by God. But after he was forgiven, he was still judged for his sin. He might say, well, doesn't Calvary, doesn't the blood of Christ? Of course, in those days, it was the blood of goats that represented the blood of Christ.

But he could have said, well, I thought that this was taken care of. What's the big deal? Could I simply say that God judges justified sinners? And when we sin deliberately and when we live our lives the way we want to live them without reference to him, we are thereby disciplined by God. Let me give you a second misconception in some people's mind.

They say, well, you know, our good works can't have any possible value because they're always mixed with doubtful motives. And that's true, isn't it? There are very few things that we do with an absolutely pure motive. One day I was walking or I should say I was driving along the street and there was this car off to the side of the road and a woman was walking along the street.

So I stopped to ask and her car was out of gas. And I said, I'll take care of it. And I went to a local garage filling station and got some gasoline, had to actually buy the can in which it was placed because, of course, they wouldn't trust me to bring it back.

And when I took the gasoline there and began to pour it into her car, standing there in my suit, I have to tell you, in all honesty, the thought crossed my mind. You know, I wish all of the people at Moody Church could see me right now. You see, we always have these doubtful motives.

But I want you to know today that our works after our salvation are precious to God because Jesus makes them acceptable to God the Father. Now, listen to this carefully. If you've never trusted Christ as Savior, it is true that our works are completely non-meritorious.

It is not by works that we are saved. Don't ever think that you can be saved by works. But having believed in Christ and having trusted him, we are saved unto good works.

And these good works are precious to God. So let me give you a third misconception, and this one probably is the most popular of all. I can't tell you the number of times I've heard something like this.

People say, well, isn't it selfish to even talk about receiving rewards? After all, we should serve God just because we love him. And then always this follows. Aren't we just going to take our crowns and cast them at the feet of Jesus anyway, implying it really doesn't matter whether we do well or poorly at the judgment seat? My dear friends, I do not believe that the crowns that are mentioned in the New Testament are medallions.

They are actually metaphors for positions of responsibility in the coming kingdom. And furthermore, in the text that we're going to be looking at tonight, it expressly says these words, we should please the Lord for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The real motivation is to please Jesus.

That is the real motivation. But in light of pleasing him, we are honored, as we'll see tonight. One day, a man said to me who was not living for the Lord, though he claimed to be a Christian, he said, you know, if I

get to heaven and if I can just sit in the back seat, I'll be happy.

That sounded so pious. I said to him, what if God wanted you to sit in the front seat, to use your analogy? But the reason that you're in the back seat is because you were displeasing to Christ. You wouldn't want to sit there then, would you? You know, it's interesting, whenever you find a person who says, so many people who say, well, you know, when I get to heaven, I'll be content to just live in a shack.

Many of those people are not at all content to live in a shack on earth, but they're convinced that they're going to be satisfied with a shack in heaven. Let me tell you something. The motivation to do well at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ bleeds from the pages of the Bible.

You find, for example, Abraham looked for a city which have foundations, whose builder and maker is God. You find that Moses, who for the hope that was set before him and enduring all of the afflictions of Egypt, it says, because he looked forward to the reward, seeing him who is invisible. We look at Jesus.

The scripture says he was willing to suffer, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. Why? Because you see, having a reward and doing well at the judgment seat is so tied in with pleasing God. Now I want you to forget that someone is sitting next to you, and I want you to just have this little dialogue with me, because I want to ask you a question.

You really do want to please Christ, do you not? Wouldn't it be wonderful if he were to say to you, or to me, well done, thou good and faithful servant? Now I'm convinced that not all Christians will hear that, but I hope that you're among those who say, at all costs, that is exactly what I want to hear. We're not going to turn to this passage, I have another one in mind, but do you remember 1 Corinthians chapter 3, where the apostle Paul says that, he says it's like a building, and he says there's gold, silver, and precious stones, and wood, and hay, and stubble, and what he's saying is, is that our lives and our ministries, and the context there is ministry, our lives and our ministries are, as it were, he's using the analogy, going to be turned into these substances, and then it says that the fire will come and test every man's work of what sort it is, and he says that there are going to be some who are going to find gold, silver, and precious stones, and others will be shown, their lives will have been shown to be nothing but rubble. Now when you think about that analogy, you realize a number of things.

First of all, the difference in size between wood, hay, and stubble. You could have this whole auditorium full of wood, hay, and stubble, and it would be not nearly as much valuable as a handful of gold, silver, and precious stones. So it isn't just a matter of quantity, how much we do.

It has to do with our motivation. That's the first thing we learn. The second thing you realize is that the naked eye sometimes can't tell the difference.

You and I don't really know how much gold or silver there is in a person's life. It's very difficult for some of us to really tell the difference between gems, or also on the other hand, such things as junk. It's hard for us to know the difference, but the fire is going to declare it, the scripture says.

You can imagine how all of our works, all of our motives, all of our actions, translated into wood, hay, and stubble, they're torched. And then the passage says, there will be some people saved, and the NIV, which I'm going to use tonight, uses this terminology. It says they will be saved having just come through the flames.

They will arrive in heaven and have nothing to show at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Now before we turn to the text tonight, I want you to realize that if standing before Jesus, and the recognition that we will give an account to him, if that does not motivate us to holy living and diligence, perhaps nothing else will. Now with your Bibles, I want you to turn now to 2 Corinthians actually, the text for tonight, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 10.

2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 10. It says in verse 9, so we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it, verse 10, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Wow.

Three characteristics of the judgment seat of Christ. Three characteristics. First of all, I want you to notice that we will be judged fairly.

We'll be judged fairly. You say, well, where is that in the text? I want you to underline, if you're in the habit of underlining your Bible, the name of Christ, the word Christ, we will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ. Why do I say that? Isn't it wonderful to know that the one who is going to judge us is the very one who saved us, the one who loves us.

I am comforted to know that Jesus is going to wish us well at the judgment. He is not there to condemn. He is not there to fall fine.

He really does want to offer us praise and he does want us to be very generously rewarded. And so the Jesus who loves us, and he's going to be fair because he's our brother. You know, the scripture says that he said to Mary Magdalene, he says, I go to my father and to your father and to my God and your God.

You know that God had one son, the Lord Jesus, and there is none like him. He is the unique son, but the Lord wanted to bring many sons into glory. The scripture says, and just like Adam and Eve were to rule over the world.

So God wants Christ to rule with a bride, which is the church. And Jesus loves the church. And we can be assured therefore, that because our judgment is done by him, it will be exceedingly fair.

Remember the scripture says that all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do what a sobering thought. Do you realize that standing there in the presence of Christ, everything will be known. There will be nothing that will be hid from him.

Nothing. All of the contexts of life will be understood. The person who abused a child, as well as the child who misbehaved because of the abuse, all that will be taken into account because there will be no extenuating circumstances.

The judgment will be done by Christ and it will be fair. Some of you are asking the question, well, does this include all the things that we ever did in our lives? The judgment seat of Jesus Christ is based on what you have done since your second birth, since you have been born again, rather than your first birth. One day a woman wrote to me and told me how she was involved in pornographic things that even now continue to have bad and harmful and sinful repercussions.

And she said, can I be rewarded to at the judgment seat now that she was converted and out of that lifestyle? And the answer is yes, because even the apostle Paul, who was really a murderer of the church,

he expected to do well at the judgment because what Jesus is saying, I'm going to judge you on the basis of what you did with your time and your talents and your treasure since you came to know me and since I saved you. So first of all, it will be a fair judgment, will be judged fairly. But secondly, notice we're going to be judged individually.

And there is a phrase now I want you to underline in the middle of verse 10, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that. Each one may receive what is due him for the things done in the body, whether good or bad, it is individual. In the book of Romans, chapter 14, the apostle Paul says, why do you go on judging your brother or why do you condemn your brother? For each of us shall give account of himself.

Could it be any clearer than that? Give account of himself to God. It will be very individual. Now that you know that I came from Canada, I need to tell you that I attended a Bible college in which listen up now, Jerry Edmonds, in which all of the student body was in the choir.

You did not have to go through any kind of an audition to get into that choir. And that's how come I made it now. Actually, I can carry a tune.

Mr. Edmonds will confess to that. We sit together, but you don't want to hear me sing a solo. You really, really, really don't want to hear me sing a solo and relax.

You're not going to ever. You know, we think of ourselves as being judged as a church. We think of standing in the presence of Jesus Christ and somehow hiding behind someone else.

And you can get by with that if you're not a very good singer, if you have a big choir. But I want you to know today that when you stand before Christ, my friend, you're going to sing a solo. You're on your own.

No attorney to put the best spin you possibly can on it. No use trying to rationalize. No use trying to explain, not because you're not allowed to, but because you will not want to.

Because at that moment, you will realize it is all reality. It is you and Jesus. And there you are individually judged without an excuse, because everything is so thoroughly investigated.

You say, well, is it going to be a public judgment? Boy, when I think about that, you know, Jesus did tell some parables in which he talked about a public judgment. He said, you know, take the talents from this man who has been unfaithful and give it to the bystanders. And we say, well, that would be terrifying.

Imagine being humiliated in the presence of our friends and in the presence of all these people who are watching. I want you to know that I've given that a lot of thought. I'm not sure that it is public, but I do want to tell you this, my friend, from my heart to yours, just take it.

First of all, of course, we'd be all in the same boat. But second and more important, I really don't believe it will matter. It will not matter.

The only thing that will matter in that day is the look on the face of Christ. What others have said about us, whatever others believe about us, whatever embarrassment there is, whatever hypocrisy, none of it will matter that we are standing in the presence of the Redeemer who loved us, who gave himself for us and now is judging us. And like someone playing the piano who cares only what his teacher really thinks, what Jesus thinks will be the only thing that will matter.

Perhaps it will just be his look. We will be judged fairly. Take heart.

We will be judged individually. But third, we will be judged thoroughly, thoroughly. Now let's look at the text again, where we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body.

Catch this now, whether good or bad. Wow. The Greek here, when it says we shall appear, is phanero.

A scholar likened it onto being made manifest, being turned inside out. The imagery is, and you remember at least some of us do when we were children, somebody would say, do you have a penny in your pocket? No, I don't have a penny. Oh, come on, you do.

And in order to prove that we didn't, you remember how we as little boys at least would pull out our pockets and turn them inside out and reveal every last little piece of lint. We shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We shall be made manifest.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, it says that all of our works will become evident. The day shall show it. It will be revealed by fire.

It will be a thorough judgment. You say, well, Pastor Lutzer, will we see our sins? I don't know whether or not we will see our sins. Certainly if we do, they will be represented to us as forgiven, because this is not a time when Jesus is angry and he is judging us in that sense, because there is no condemnation to them which are in Jesus Christ.

But I'll tell you the issues that I believe are going to be the big ones at the judgment seat. It isn't so much the sin that we ourselves have judged and we've taken care of. It is all of those loose ends that we have allowed to be on earth, where there has not been reconciliation, where there has not been restitution, where there has not been repentance.

And you can't really go into heaven into eternity until all these things are made straight. The respected theologian John Murray said that believers will want they will desire such a judgment to magnify the salvation of Christ. Here are two people.

They're Christians. They get a divorce. Bitter feelings develop.

Later on, the husband goes somewhere else, perhaps lives with someone else, does not pay child support. You have all kinds of anger that begins to go there. And these are believers, but they can't even be reconciled in any way, shape or form.

And they die and they go into eternity with all that anger and with all those loose accusations and those false accusations all still floating around. Do you mean to tell me that standing before Christ, they're going to march into heaven hand in hand, sing in the heavenly choir and pretend that everything is OK? No, I've known instances where Christians have slandered other Christians, where Christians have stolen property that really belonged to someone else. It is absolutely a shame when you think of what Christians sometimes do to Christians.

And there is separation and there is non reconciliation and no attempt to make it right. And when the judgment seat of Jesus Christ takes place, that's where it's all going to have to be dragged out and adjudicated. That's why it says that if we do not judge ourselves, we shall be judged.

This is serious business, very serious. The Apostle Paul said in First Corinthians, chapter four, verse three, and take it by faith, it is there. He sees discussing various things within the church where you always attempt reconciliation, but sometimes you don't get it.

And he said, judge nothing before the time because the Lord is going to come who is going to reveal the motives of men's hearts, who will judge all things and reveal the motives of men's hearts. And then he says, all men will receive their praise from God. We're talking here about a thorough judgment.

You know, when the Bible says, for example, dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, the Lord will avenge. It's not just talking about him avenging unbelievers. That's actually truth for Christians.

That's why those of you who have been hurt by other Christians, those of you who are in situations where the wrongs have never been made right, where there has been no attempt to find truth and reconciliation and restitution and forgiveness. I want you to know that someday the truth will come out and justice will be brought to the situation. Now you understand that I'm preaching things that many people either ignore or disbelieve.

But I find it very interesting that many people want to take that little word judgment out of the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. This is a time of adjudication. And the best thing we can do is live our lives for God and make sure that in all of our relationships and in all that we have done, we have tried to keep things up to date because if we judge ourselves now, we will not have to be judged.

Notice how far we've come. We're going to be judged fairly. We're going to be judged individually.

We're going to be judged thoroughly. And by the way, I've emphasized the negative. I just marvel at all the things in the scripture.

For example, it says a cup of cold water given in my name, Jesus said, and you will not lose your reward. If you ask the question of what Jesus will be looking for, all that we need to do is to go through the scriptures as I have in another context and look at all of the times when it says your reward shall be great. Has God ever put you in a position where you have to love somebody who's unlovable? Did you rejoice over that? You should because then you'll be like your father who is in heaven, who loves the unlovable, it says.

And furthermore, your reward shall be great. Have you ever been fired because you love Jesus Christ and because of on the job, your witness for Christ got you into trouble? Rejoice because it says if they say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice for great shall be your reward in heaven. I don't have time to say it all, so I'm just throwing it out here for you to just pick up on as quickly as you are able.

But you know, when I talk about rewards, it's not as if God is going to give us, you know, a day's wage for a day's pay or a day's pay for a day's work. Not bad at all. He is going to be so generous.

He's going to be giving us things that we could never possibly have earned or deserved. But this life is like a college entrance exam where Jesus is testing our faithfulness to see where he will slot us in the eternal kingdom. You are faithful in that which is least, you will be given more responsibility.

You are unfaithful here on earth in terms of your finances. Who will entrust the true riches to you, Jesus says. So God is, this is the test to know the extent to which you'll be trusted in the eternal kingdom.

Now, what I'd like to do tonight, I've emphasized that will be judged fairly individually and thoroughly. I would like to leave you with three explosive, hopefully life changing lessons. Let me give you the first.

Remember that every day is either it is either a loss or a gain so far as eternity is concerned and the judgment seat of Christ. Every day is either a loss or a gain. George Whitfield, the great evangelist, who by the way is buried here in the United States and I want to get to his grave sometime, but he was criticized greatly when he was preaching.

I mean, he was criticized for preaching outdoors. He had a conflict with John Wesley. He was, the paper sometimes wrote against him and he said this and this is what he wanted on his tombstone.

I understand it never was written on his tombstone, but he wanted it there. The man George Whitfield was that day shall declare. Wow.

The man Erwin Lutzer was that day shall declare. Suddenly nothing but reality. Some of you maybe saw the interview with Diane Sawyer that Diane Sawyer gave to evangelist Billy Graham.

This was maybe two or three years ago. She said, Billy, how would you like to be remembered? And Billy didn't really answer the question. There was something else that was on his mind.

And I remember in some of you maybe saw it, he said, well, you know, I would like to hear well done, thou good and faithful servant, but I don't think that he will, that I will. And with that, he turned around with great sadness and that was the end of the interview. I mean, I was watching and I had a couple of thoughts, the same thoughts that you would have if you had seen the interview.

The first is, well, Billy, you know, you're being more humble than you ought to be. Humility is good, Billy, but you're overdoing it just a little bit. That's the first thing I thought of.

The second thing I thought of was, well, Billy, if you're not sure whether or not you're going to do well, you can fill that one in. You know, if the rights is scarcely besaid, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? How are the rest of us going to do? My dear friend, in this respect, Billy was absolutely right. The fact that he is famous or that thousands of people came to know Christ through his preaching will not enter into the calculation at all, because he was gifted to do this.

He was called to do this. God supplied the grace that he might be able to do this. This was his calling in life.

And what God is going to do is to judge us for the time, talents, and treasures we use, even those of us who do not have wide ministries, those of us who have not had the privilege of preaching to large crowds. All of that will be irrelevant, because the issue is faithfulness. And that's why we can take a woman like Elaine, whom we honor tonight as alumna of the year, and that's why we can say to her with integrity that in the day of judgment, she's going to be ahead of a lot of us because she served faithfully in obscurity.

That's going to be the issue. And character is going to be the issue. One day I was riding out on the East Coast, and somebody took me to the airport, and he was telling me about a wife, his wife, who had a severe disease, which meant that almost nothing that he did was ever done right.

He lived with a terrible amount of hostility and criticism. And as he was sharing all this, as we got to the airport, I turned to him in the van, and I said, you know, I don't expect to see you in heaven. Well, he

looked around like this.

I thought he was going to hit the cab that was just in front of him. And I said, I'm serious. I don't think that I will see you in heaven.

And he was quite shocked because he was a born-again believer, and I knew it, and he knew it. And I said, you know, in the day of judgment, you're going to be so close to Jesus, and I'm going to be so much farther back. I really don't know whether I'll see you in heaven.

Well, some of you may know historically that actually that's what, who was it, Wesley Sitt of Whitefield, when he preached Whitefield's sermon. But I meant it. There are people who serve in obscurity, who serve in difficult circumstances, and Jesus will say to them, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

You have responsibility over ten cities, because I put you through the crucible of suffering, and you came out like gold. What an experience for those who are faithful in the midst of suffering and difficulty. But every day, students, every day, every one of us, it's either a loss or a gain, so far as the judgment seat is concerned.

Secondly, what can we gain, really, if we are faithful? What can we gain? Well, I think that the greatest thing that we can gain is rulership with Christ. Now, you know that this is a theological controversy, which I'm going to avoid, because I take the minority view in terms of the interpretation of the book of Revelation. Some people think that all Christians are overcomers, and since the great scholars are on that side, I need to tread carefully here.

But I have this view that not all Christians are overcomers. Now, it says in Revelation 3, verse 21, he who overcomes, to him I shall grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and sat with my father on his throne. Did you follow that? I need to say it again, because this is breathtaking.

I'm not making this up. He who overcomes, says Jesus, he shall sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and sat on my father's throne. That really means that we're going to be sitting on the throne of God.

Not because of any New Age nonsense about the perfectibility of human nature or the potential of human nature. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with the incredible, undeserving grace of God.

But notice what it says, he who overcomes, to him I shall grant to sit with me on my throne. Now, all of us want to be overcomers. I don't believe that you would be here tonight if you didn't want to be an overcomer.

Those of you listening by radio, I don't think that you would be listening to this message unless you wanted to be an overcomer. The problem is we all want to be overcomers, but we do not want to have anything to overcome. And the minute God gives us something to overcome, we immediately complain and we say no.

God says, don't you understand? I want you to rule with me in the coming kingdom, and you have to be an overcomer. So I'm giving you something to overcome. Did you know that at the marriage supper of the lamb, it says that the bride is arrayed in white linen, which is the works, the good deeds of the saints.

And there are two different garments you need to make it to the marriage supper of the lamb. One is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, without which one can enter into heaven. And then the second is the good deeds that allow you to have the privilege of having something to wear at that marvelous wedding feast.

Yes, my friend, we can inherit the kingdom. We can rule with Christ. What can we lose, you say? Well, that's a long discussion and a controversial one, but I'll simply say this.

Minimally, I believe that we can lose the approval of Christ. I do not believe that every Christian is going to hear well done. Some are going to see disappointment on the face of Jesus, not anger.

No, we're not talking about that. The disappointment. Yes, I gave you so many abilities.

I gave you so many opportunities. And look at what has happened to you. Look at how you lived for yourself rather than for me.

I cannot conceive of a situation in which Jesus would say well done to everyone when so many of us live so selfishly in light of all that he has done for us. There is a story that comes to us from India. It's a legend about a wealthy Raja who was riding along in the chariot, and suddenly there was a beggar along the way, and the beggar thought to himself, I wonder if this wealthy man would stop and give me some money.

So the beggar held out his bowl, and much to his shock, the Raja got off of his chariot and went over and said, beggar, give me some of your rice. The beggar was incensed. I'm supposed to give him, this wealthy man, some rice? But the beggar did decide to at least give him one kernel.

Raja said, beggar, give me more of your rice. And so the beggar, in anger, gave him another kernel of rice, another grain of rice. And then the Raja said, give me more of your rice.

Now the beggar was just exceedingly in a furious huff. He took one more grain of rice and gave it to the wealthy Raja, and then left. A little later, after the Raja had gone, the beggar looked into his bowl, and he noticed something glitter.

It was actually a grain of gold the size of a grain of rice. He looked more carefully. There were just two more.

For every grain of rice, a grain of gold. And that's the gold that will survive the fire. As we say, Jesus, I want you to have this, and Jesus, I want you to have that, and I want you to have my mind and my time and my talents and my treasure.

I live for your glory. Glory. And for every grain of rice, a grain of gold.

Now, because this message could be misunderstood by some of you who have never trusted Christ as Savior, I want to end by a quick flash look at the final judgment of those of you who have never trusted Christ. There is a judgment referred to in the book of Revelation as the great white throne judgment, and listen carefully to its description. I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, before whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was no found no more place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of the things written in the books. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged, every man according to his works. And death and Hades was thrown into the

lake of fire.

Do you say they were judged according to their works? Absolutely. And you know what was discovered? That their works could not save them. And what happened in that judgment was, as they stood there, and you can imagine the religious types stand with the atheists, the committed people and the uncommitted people, but they had one thing in common, they were not good enough to enter into heaven, and that judgment only determined the degree of their eternal suffering.

What did they lack? They lacked the only goodness that God can supply as a free gift, the gift of eternal life to those who stop trying to think that they can go to heaven by being good. Of course it's better that you be good than you be bad, but no one has ever gotten to heaven by being good. They've gotten there because they realize that the only goodness that they can receive is the gift of righteousness from Christ, humbling themselves and freely receiving it.

And you today in this auditorium and listening on the radio or driving along in your car can say at this moment, Lord Jesus, I transfer all of my trust to you and receive your goodness. And when you do that, you will begin to do good deeds and you will be at the judgment that we described this evening. Would you join me as we pray? And now Father, fully aware that someday we shall see you face to face, to give an account for the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad, help us to be faithful people, help us to be dedicated people, help us to be generous people.

And Father, deal with us as seems good in your sight, and let us not go until we have met you on every single issue that you bring to our attention. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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