

...but after this, the judgment.

By Leon King

The Bible says that it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this, the judgment. With the prospect of judgment in mind, we think of Romans 16:19, Paul said to the Roman Church, *"but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."* In light of what we know about our carnal self, God's word gives blessed direction here. The "old man" is ever seeking for that which is opposite of good. We need to be wise unto good, but simple concerning evil. What does it mean to be simple concerning evil? When one is simple, he is considered to be naive by those who are "in the know." Yes, beloved, naive about the things of evil is a blessed way to be. The less we know of it, the better off we are spiritually.

I believe this is a practical lesson for separation from the world. When we expose ourselves to wickedness in order to learn about it, we allow our carnal self to grow in ungodliness. The battle with self is difficult and will grow more intense if we make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Besides, we will have to face all of those deeds again which we, as believers, have done in our body. Where? We will face them at the judgment seat of Christ. This brings us to our text. Please turn with me to the book of Second Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 10. Here is our text:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. -- 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Some years ago, this preacher was listening to another who seemed to make an issue out of the fact that the Greek word for the "judgment seat" of Christ was bema (bay-ma). His words prompted me to study this out. Here is what I found. Bema seat is merely a throne or judgment seat where judgment is done. Bema seat includes the judgment seat of Christ, but is not limited to that.

Here are some examples where the same Greek word is used in the New Testament speaking of other thrones or places of judgment:

- **Of Pilate's judgment seat.** *When he was set down on the judgment seat <bema>, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. -- Matthew 27:19.*
- **Of Herod's Throne.** *And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne <bema>, and made an oration unto them. -- Acts 12:21.*
- **Of Gallio's judgment seat.** *And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat <bema>, -- Acts 18:12.*
- **Of Festus' judgment seat.** *And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat <bema> commanded Paul to be brought -- Acts 25:6.*
- **Of Caesar's judgment seat.** *Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat <bema>, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. -- Acts 25:10.*

Here are five examples, which prove that a bema seat is merely a place of judgment. I have placed the word <bema> within the arrows beside the word or words the translators used to convey the meaning of this Greek word. I do not mean to minimize, in any way, the seriousness of the judgment seat of Christ, but wish to emphatically point out that it is not a place of relaxed or wrested judgment. Let us now turn to the text and expound it in the three parts.

I. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;

Paul uses the plural personal pronoun "we" which would include himself and the ones to whom this letter is written, that is, the Church of God in Corinth. This points to the fact that believers are the ones in question - the ones who must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. This stands in contrast to the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20.

That you and I as God's children **must** appear before the judgment seat of Christ is a truth that cannot be denied. It is as much an appointment for us all as the appointment to death is sure for all.

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, **but after this the judgment: -- Hebrews 9:27.***

There is only one other place where the judgment seat of Christ is mentioned in this same terminology. That is in Romans 14. We read verses one through twelve as follows:

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth:

*for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before **the judgment seat of Christ.** For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

As you can see, I have underlined and made bold the appropriate part of the passage from Romans 14:1-12. Indeed "*we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*" In light of that fact, we can say that judgment is sure for you and I who are God's children. Yes, our sins were judged at the cross, and we shall never come into condemnation. We were crucified with Christ and as He died *for* sin, we died *to* sin so that henceforth, we should walk in the spirit - in a new resurrected life.

Solomon warned about the surety of judgment in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the

sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. ...For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. -- Ecclesiastes 11:9,14.

God, the Father ordained our Lord Jesus Christ as the judge of the quick (living) and the dead. And so He will be. The judgment seat of Christ is rightly named such because of the presiding judge, the Christ, our Lord.

And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. -- Acts 10:42.

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. -- Acts 17:31.

II. That every one may receive the things done in his body,

Our body is the tabernacle in which we live. The soul of man, that part of man which is his essential self, is domicile in the body - the tabernacle. That is the reason for the references to "this tabernacle" in 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, where Paul speaks about groaning in this - earnestly desiring to be clothed upon, etc. He is speaking of the body. Regenerate man will receive for the things done in his body. Our body is a trust. So, as part of our stewardship, we must give account for the use of it.

We have a treasure in an earthen vessel. The treasure is the redeemed soul, which resides in the earthen vessel, the body.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. -- 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Our duty is to walk in the spirit. We are told to *"make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof."* We are alive through the Spirit, therefore we are to walk in the spirit if we expect not to fulfill the desires and lusts of our flesh.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. -- Romans 8:12,13.

Our whole person belongs to God. Spirit, soul, and body are God's. Therefore, we are to honor the Lord in our body as well as the other parts.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. -- 1 Corinthians 6:19,20.

There can be little doubt in the mind of any believer that the battle to subdue the passions of the body is difficult and continuous. Extreme measures are called for in bringing one's body into subjection. Athletes learn discipline so that they can keep their body toned, taunt, and healthy for the race or contest, which lies before them. I remember many years ago how, as young aspiring soldiers, we were put through the rigors of harsh physical training. Many a time I thought the next step would be my last - and so did many of the other men. We pushed ourselves beyond what we thought was our level of endurance. In other words, we buffeted our bodies. What was the purpose? As with the athletes, it was for a corruptible

crown. Such experiences prick us and shame us in our lack of buffeting self for the glory of God. The illustration Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 is clear and thought provoking.

*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. -- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27.***

For the apostle, the battle was not an uncertain one. There was a high objective in mind - a lofty goal to be pursued. It certainly was not temporal or carnal. Paul said, *I keep under my body*. What does he mean by that statement? According to the *Strong's Concordance*, this Greek word means to "weary" as well as "keep under." The idea is to "beat black and blue, to smite so as to cause bruises and livid spots." My, that sounds harsh. Would one do such things to his body? Yes, we ought - it is the temple of the Holy Ghost and is holy unto God.

Harsh treatment of the body is called for in order to keep it under. This is precisely the same idea presented in Romans 8:12,13, where we are told to "*mortify*" the deeds of the body. Mortify means "to put to death." Putting to death the deeds of the body is a drastic measure, but it is a needed one. We cannot expect to gain the mastery in any other way. Athletes do this to win a corruptible crown. We do it for an incorruptible. The corruptible crown fades away - the incorruptible never fades away.

There is a strong reason in this passage for buffeting the body; *"lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* The word "castaway" ought to strike terror in our hearts. What does it mean. Again, *Strong's Concordance* shows that the Greek word here translated "castaway" is also translated as "reprobate" and "rejected." One may allow himself indulgence in the wrong things thereby bringing himself to being reprobate or rejected. When is that realized? I am persuaded it comes at the judgment seat of Christ, though the spirit of the person has probably already come to realize that he has passed the point of no return.

I heard a man say "castaway" means "ship wrecked," but I have never found a reliable source that shows this exact meaning. The words reprobate and rejected seem to have stronger meanings than ship wrecked anyhow. What believer would want to be considered reprobate or rejected? Obviously, this is a strong warning and earnest plea for God's people to buffet their bodies - for each individual shall give account for the deeds done therein.

III. According to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

We will receive for the things done in our body according to that we have done, not according to what we said we would do. Somehow, our intentions never become fully realized. We intend good, but evil finds us. We all understand that when we would do good, evil is present with us. This illustrates a law just as surely as the apple falling from a tree illustrates the law of gravity.

So we will receive according to that which we have done, whether it be good or bad. Beloved, it matters greatly concerning the stewardship of our bodies. We will not only receive for the good done in our bodies, but for the bad. This makes me think of the passage from 1 Corinthians 3.

We all begin our lives as God's children upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Each of us is building a life. It is much like laying a foundation and framing a building on it. The foundation remains sure and steadfast, but the building may or may not stand the test of fire. Every life consists of materials, which may or may not stand the test of judgment. This passage refers to the building as our work. We believe this has to do with reward, not with our soul's salvation since reward is directly mentioned.

*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; **Every man's work** shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a **reward**. If **any man's work** shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. -- **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**.*

This passage particularly applies to ministers of the gospel who build on the foundation of Christ. They are warned about how they build on that foundation. The principle, I believe, can and should be applied to all of God's children. One thing we know in connection to this – there are rewards and loss of rewards for God's children. I call attention to two particular things in this passage. First, work not works is mentioned which seems to indicate all of a man's life spent in the body after regeneration. The second thing is reward. We are building day- by-day, hour-by-hour. What materials are we using? Are the materials things that will stand the test of fire? Are they gold, silver, precious stones - or - wood, hay, and stubble? One can readily see the difference and what would happen if all were tested by fire. The former three will stand the test of judgment; the latter three will burn up. Just as the former represents works that are good and durable; the latter stands for the opposite.

*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. -- **1 Peter 4:17-19.***

Yes, beloved, we are to be the first in judgment - at the judgment seat of Christ that we may receive the things done in our body - whether good or bad.