

given more general credence and popularity by John Bunyan in the seventeenth century, by Charles Spurgeon in the nineteenth century, and, in the twentieth century especially, by the worldwide evangelist Dr Billy Graham. But it is only on the basis of a false understanding of the way God works in saving sinners that it is possible to put upon a restricted number of carefully chosen New Testament passages¹¹ a construction which in any way favours the concept of 'eternal security' for the saints.

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11. 'Favourite' passages include John 3:15,16; 10:28,29; Romans 8:38,39; Ephesians 4:30; and Jude v. 24. None of these passages, however, when rightly interpreted, runs counter to the overwhelming teaching of the rest of the New Testament, as partially illustrated in this article. Readers wanting to look further into the historical development of the doctrine of eternal security are recommended to look at a number of well-written and informative entries in *Wikipedia* (<http://en.wikipedia.org>), especially those on 'Irresistible grace', 'Arminius', 'Limited atonement' and 'Strict and Particular Baptists'.

The full assurance of faith

Stephen Whitehouse

Although we are accountable to Christ at the judgement for our conduct as believers, we need not fear the judgement seat if we maintain our faith to the end and seek forgiveness for our sins.

THE APOSTLE PAUL reminds us all of the solemn reality of our future: "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 Cor. 5:10). In fact, the presence of our brethren and sisters in Christ at the judgement seat is the one and only certainty in our lives. Even death itself is not guaranteed, as our Lord and Saviour may have returned before death has asserted its power over us. Yet do we really believe this? Or do we like to dismiss the thought to the back of our minds, and so avoid pondering the reality (and implications) of coming face to face with the Son of God at the judgement?

The judgement seat

Not only will we be confronted with the Lord Jesus at the judgement seat, but we will have to provide a verbal account of what we have done with our lives, for "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12), says Paul. Of importance, the Greek word for "account" is *logos*, which can be interpreted as 'a word, uttered by a living voice'. It commonly refers to a 'word', 'saying', 'account' or 'speech' in the Scriptures. This suggests two important principles. Firstly, we, personally, will be actively involved in the

judgement seat as we will be asked to provide a verbal "account" of our lives; and, secondly, the format of this judgement is something akin to a tribunal, where the Lord Jesus will act as supreme judge.

Indeed, the prophets all confirm that the Lord Jesus will act as judge during the judgement. For instance, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a future judge who would possess the spirit of God Himself—being just, righteous and faithful—and would with "righteousness . . . judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek", but "with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Isa. 11:4). The Lord Jesus himself had no doubt about his future role, for he declared, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son . . . and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (Jno. 5:22,27). Because the Lord Jesus Christ is both Son of God and Son of man he is uniquely qualified to be judge.

So, if we look at the Scriptural facts, there is much to consider and meditate upon. However, it is also helpful to bring to mind other words of the apostle regarding this future meeting with Christ. Paul makes it clear that the time of Christ's second advent is one that is very much related to the hope of eternal life for the faithful: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:4). Indeed, this is our earnest hope: "that mortality might be swallowed up of life".

The great apostle goes on to say, "And all things are of God, Who hath *reconciled* us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of *reconciliation*; to wit, that God was in Christ, *reconciling* the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of *reconciliation*. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye *reconciled* to God" (vv. 18-20). Just observe the number of times that the word "reconciled" or "reconciliation" is used in these three verses; five times in total, the number of grace! Therefore, this fundamental principle should not be overlooked: the judgement seat is the final stage of *reconciliation* for the true believers in Christ. This is the hope and confidence that we all have, "For by *grace* are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8).

What will we be judged on?

But what are the principles of this judgement? What will our lives be held up against? What is the standard? Well, of course, the standard has been set in Christ. We are to be Christlike now in the way that we live our lives, so that in that great day of reckoning our Lord will look upon us and "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). We are to be like him as best we can.

However, further details are given regarding what Christ will be looking for on that great day, "the day", says Paul, "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16). So, according to the gospel that was preached by Paul and the apostles, King Jesus will judge not only people's actions, but their motives and secrets as well. This is further reinforced elsewhere: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). How sobering!

Whilst believers all enjoy the thanks and praise of their fellow brethren and sisters, the ultimate judge on all matters relating to our lives is the Lord Jesus himself. He alone is both able and worthy to judge; and not only regarding things that are seen by the eye, but also the motives of our hearts, not only regarding *what* was done but *why* it was done. He will reveal the counsels of our hearts; and, needless to say, anything that was done for self-display or self-glory will fail to receive a reward. For that reason we should

not get wrapped up or preoccupied with the assessments of those around us, or even our own self-assessment for that matter. We need to please our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and let the standard of the Word of God evaluate and assess our lives.

Thus the whole notion that we can be saved by works is simply unfounded. Though we know that "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:20), we are also acutely aware that "without faith it is impossible to please Him"; for, the writer stresses, "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is central to any believer in Christ and, critically, any acceptable believer in God's sight. Having said all this, how many of us truly believe that our sins are forgiven if we confess them to God in prayer? How strong is our faith in this matter?

Seeking forgiveness today in prayer

All of us are aware that we are sinners. So what a comfort it is that whenever we sin we can be forgiven, immediately, if we truly repent and seek forgiveness! "If", says the Apostle John, "we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jno. 1:8,9). True fellowship with God requires that we acknowledge the truth concerning ourselves, that we are weak and erring creatures and in need of forgiveness and saving. To deny that we have a sinful nature is self-denial and an open refusal to acknowledge that God is supreme and that we are merely dust, of the ground and earthy. In order for us to walk in fellowship with the Almighty we must daily confess our sins. We must haul them out into the open before God in prayer, name them one by one, and forsake them and beseech forgiveness. Indeed, true confession involves the forsaking of our sins: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

Until the Master returns and changes "our vile body" to be like "his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21), we carry, in Paul's words, "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24). Our frail and mortal frames will have to be transformed so that we are able to enter into the Kingdom of God, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:50). However, in the purpose of God and His glorious work of reconciliation with His sons and daughters, the

children of light, baptism into the saving name of the Lord Jesus forgives all past sins of a believer and any subsequent sins, if forgiveness is sought in prayer. Therefore, though the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished a means of salvation for all of us through death, our salvation will ultimately be determined at the judgement, at the hands of the Great Judge.

The full assurance of faith

As we can see, our future destiny as believers in Christ is very much in our own hands. We can either advance or thwart the work of our ultimate redemption from this body of death. Today is the day of opportunity. Yesterday has gone and tomorrow may never arrive. The judgement seat is inescapable, and so it behoves us to prepare ourselves now for that future day. But will what we do today stand up to the scrutiny of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will our faith measure up to what the Lord Jesus desires of us? Will our characters have been sufficiently developed so that we please him? Will we have so loved our brethren as he loves us?

So what should we do? The writer to the Hebrews anticipates this very question: "let us

draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22). We have great confidence when we enter into the presence of God, for we have a great High Priest in Christ, and his ministry assures our continued welcome before him if we are faithful. If we maintain the faith, we have the assurance that our sins are forgiven through the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer.

In this confidence none of us should fear the judgement seat, but instead view it as the most brilliant moment in our lives, when we are summoned with all the saints, both those that are asleep in Christ at his return and those that are alive, to meet the Lord, the Saviour of the world! And we all pray that in that day we will hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Mt. 25:21,23). Our ultimate salvation depends upon what we do today, and we have the "full assurance of faith" that if we maintain the Truth there is nothing to fear, for if we continue in faith our sins will be forgiven.

The real meaning of baptism and the Breaking of Bread

John Benson

Only two rituals are commanded of us today, baptism and the Breaking of Bread, and they must be undertaken with an understanding of their meaning in order to be acceptable in God's sight.

"TO WHAT PURPOSE is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts?" (Isa. 1:11,12).

These words from the opening chapter of Isaiah are among several passages in the Old Testament which emphasise how vital it is to approach God

and worship Him with the right attitude. Isaiah's concluding chapter has a similar message: "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if

he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations" (66:3). Note the phrases used:

- "as if he slew a man"
- "as if he cut off a dog's neck"
- "as if he offered swine's blood"
- "as if he blessed an idol".

Such phrases powerfully demonstrate to us what an abomination it is in God's sight when a supposed obedience to God's commands devel-