

Sailing With Paul

Simple Papers for Young Christians

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Chapter 17

The Voyage Ended: The Judgment-Seat of CHRIST

Soon those who sail with Paul will have weathered the last gale, endured the final storm; and, the voyage over the sea of Time completed, will have reached their desired haven. Even though the vessel of testimony may seem to fall to pieces, still, either swimming to shore, or "**some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship,**" all shall escape safely to land - and not to find themselves among strangers either, needing what Charity's kindness might bestow, but welcomed there by all their brethren of all ages, and above all by Him whose loving care had watched o'er all their way, and whose grace will have safely brought them home.

Depend upon it, no self-denial for His name's sake will then seem to have been too great;

no trials because of His truth will appear to have been too many;

no suffering or toil for the spreading of His Gospel too much, in that day.

Nay, on the contrary, how many will there be who would then gladly give the wealth of a world, were it theirs to offer, if they had only been more devoted to Him in the day of His rejection, more unworldly, more Christ-like, and more concerned about the dire need of the perishing thousands about them. But the day for faithfulness to an absent Lord will then be over, and the hour of manifestation will have arrived.

Paul himself looking on to this solemn time could write: "**For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my**

course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but also unto all those that love His appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8). It was not the final "**day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men**" that he had in view. Paul had no thought of every being judged for his sins. He knew all that had been settled in CHRIST's Cross. Hence for him, as for all believers, there could be no judgment in the future, so far as the question of sin was concerned. But elsewhere he tells us that "**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**" (II Corinthians 5:10). And he shows us that, for the Christian, this will mean a complete manifestation of all his works and motives, that the Lord may express His own mind regarding them, and reward all that was of His SPIRIT in the life of His people after His grace had saved them.

The third chapter of I Corinthians is most instructive in this connection. In its primary application, the subject under consideration is the building up of the assembly of GOD in its local aspect. But the principle involved applies to all Christian work and service. Every believer is building on the rock-foundation which is CHRIST Himself. "**Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious (or costly) 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**" (I Corinthians 3:12, 13). I have little doubt that an historical incident was in Paul's mind as the SPIRIT led him to pen these words.

Among the "seven wonders" of the ancient world was the magnificent temple of Diana, outside the city of Ephesus. It was built on marshy ground, and before the building could be erected, a great rock foundation had to be laid - the work of years. On this foundation the superstructure was reared under the direction of the most famous "master-builder" of his day. The building was entirely composed of gold, silver and costly stones. But the roof and the rooms adjoining the main sanctuary, used by the priests and priestesses of Diana, were made of wood, hay and stubble. On the night that beacon lights on every hill-top of Greece and Asia Minor flashed the news of the birth of an heir to Philip of Macedon (who became celebrated as Alexander the Great), Erostratus the Ephesian set fire to this temple of Diana. In the morning it was found that the gold, silver and costly stones remained unharmed, while the wood, hay and stubble had been devoured by the flames.

Now every Christian is building upon the foundation laid through the Gospel. All that is in accordance with the Word of GOD is likened to gold, silver and costly stones. That which is of the flesh is pictured by the wood, hay and stubble. At the judgment seat of CHRIST all will be tested by the fire of infinite holiness. Then everything that was not the fruit of the Spirit will be destroyed. Notice, that "**the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.**" It does not say, "how much it is." It is not quantity, but quality that is in question. A vast amount of so-called Christian work will be destroyed in that day; but all that has really been for CHRIST will stand the test. "**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**" (verses 14, 15). This last clause supposes an extreme case where, if even not one thing is found that can be rewarded, still, so absolutely is salvation of grace that "**he himself shall be saved**" though all his works be burned up. But verse 5 of chapter 4 shows us that there will be none in that day who will fail utterly of reward. "**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.*" (The context, however, seems to show that it is a question of the *source* from which the praises comes, rather than an affirmation that all will have praise. The apostle tells the Corinthians that it is a very small thing with him to be judged of them or *of man's* day, in contrast to the *Lord's* day when praise will come from none other source, but from *GOD*).

The rewards are pictured in other Scriptures as "crowns." These crowns should never be confounded with salvation, which is entirely of GOD's sovereign grace; while the crowns were given for individual faithfulness. There are five different designations used, as follows:

The "**incorruptible crown**," promised to all who in godliness and self-control run the Christian race:

"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" (I Corinthians 9:25-27).

The "**crown of rejoicing**" for the winner of souls:

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (I Thessalonians 2:19-20).

"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved" (Philippians 4:1).

The "**crown of righteousness**," for all who love CHRIST's appearing, and labor now in view of that day:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:8).

The "**crown of life**," for those who witness amid trial with unyielding perseverance:

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

The "**crown of glory**," for faithfully shepherding the sheep and lambs of CHRIST's flock:

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the

sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Peter 5:1-4).

In Revelation 3:11 the Lord JESUS says: "**Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.**" This is an exhortation we may all take heed to, remembering that the Lord's work will be accomplished according to His purpose, whether we have a share in it or not. But it is our happy privilege to be "**labourers together with God,**" working in subjection to His Word, to be rewarded when our SAVIOUR comes again. The opportunity to serve will soon be over. May grace be mine and yours, dear reader, to labor on in hope, remembering that "**if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.**"

With this paper, our present series comes to an end. Let me, in closing, urge each young Christian to live alone in view of the end of the voyage, so fast approaching, heeding the farewell message of the ascended Lord: "**Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give each man according as his work shall be**" (Revelation 22:12).

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