

EVERY TRACK EVERY WEEK

WEEK 31: Leader Study Guide

A Second Judgment After Death?

-Welcome!

-Intro: Introduce yourself, Say THANK YOU for being here! Revisit last week's points

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***Encourage group participation** as necessary for a quality bible study.

***Exchange numbers** or invite attendees to join your ETEW Facebook group.

INTRO:

This week's discussion is based upon episode #51 of our podcast, "The Gospel Driven Athlete," titled "A Second Judgment after Death?". This week we will take a look at the question of whether or not there will be a second judgment for Christians after death to assess how well we lived the Christian life. If so, are there rewards and/or punishments given in proportion to how well we lived this life? In short, we conclude that the Bible has made it clear that since through Christ, God sees us as perfect law keepers who have merited eternal life, no sense can be made of a second judgment after death for Christians. We are robed in Christ's righteousness and through the gospel all of God's children will enter into eternity hearing "well done, good and faithful servant." This really is good news, and we pray you are encouraged today!

-Ice Breaker Question: Have you ever had to pay for something twice? (this could be monetary or relational)

Leaders Read

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Question 1- What does it appear that this passage is teaching us that we will be judged based upon after death?

***Answer:**

-The passage, taken by itself, seems to teach that we will be judged upon the things we did or didn't do when we were alive (i.e. by our works).

Question 2- How do we reconcile this passage with the rest of Scripture that clearly teaches that salvation does not come from our works?



***Answer:**

To name just a few of the dozens of verses, not to mention the overarching theme of the bible:

- Gal2:16, *“yet we know that a person is not justified^[b] by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”*

-2 Cor5:21, *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

-1Pet 1:3-5, *“³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

- Heb10:1, *“For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.”*

-We have to interpret the unclear things in Scripture in light of the things that are clear. The passage in question for instance (known as the “Bema Seat” or “Doctrine of Rewards”), when not taken in context of the entirety of Scripture, seems to say (and it is often taught in popular Christian circles) that there is some sort of “second judgement” after death, that Christians will face. The first judgement being for our salvation, and the “second judgment” being where Christ will weigh out a Christian’s performance and give eternal rewards for the good he/she has done while on the earth. For those that espouse to this view it becomes a source of motivation in the Christian life. They do good things to earn favor from God...

-This text is actually pretty vague and is one of the only texts used in support of a “second judgement” of Christians.

Question 3- Why do you think it is so easy to read this text and come up with a doctrine of rewards based upon our works?

***Answer:**

This conclusion often arises because we bring doctrinal assumptions to the text that are incorrect. When we read this text through a reformed (or redemptive-historical) lens, or more specifically a law/gospel lens, where clear distinctions between Gods covenant of grace and covenant of works are made, we will read this text quite differently and be drawn closer to the actual meaning of the text.

To assume that Christians face some sort of second judgment is incorrect and harmful because it places those that come under Christ’s covenant of free grace (all Christians) back under a covenant of works, where they are graded according to some sort of Christian performance.

The main cause for misinterpretation, it seems, is that the assumption of what motivates the Christian is wrong. In modern evangelicalism various forms of law are used to motivate holy living, rather than teaching the accomplished work of Christ alone (The Gospel) and allowing that to motivate our lives. This is simply a craftier form of that.

A misinterpretation of the text leads to a conclusion similar to this-



“Jesus is going to judge how well you behave now that you’re a Christian. And he’s going to reward your good deeds. Now this doesn’t mean that you’re condemned to hell... but you better behave; otherwise you will be residing in a small hut for all of eternity while the good Christians will have a mansion.”

When you play it out like this it becomes quickly clear that this “second judgement” idea is nonsense.

Question 4- In light of the overarching redemptive theme of the entire Bible, and the fact that scripture explicitly teaches that our salvation and rewards do not come from our works, how should we interpret this passage?

***Answer:**

We have to remember to interpret the unclear in light of what is clear. In addition to all the verses we listed at the beginning, Romans 8:1 teaches us that, *“there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ...”* Paul literally means NO condemnation.

Lets go back and read the first part of the 2 Corinthians 5 text. This shows us how our motivation is the gospel alone, as it always is and always should be.

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, *“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord”*

Again we see the gospel front and center. The good news that we can have good courage because Christ covers us in His works and His righteousness. This is the only true motivator in the Christian walk.

Paul was not saying look there’s actually a second judgment; one where Jesus is going to give you some cool stuff for being a better Christian than your friend Bobby over there...what? No!

We know that our best works are filthy rags and that we will “lay our crowns at Christ’s feet” because all of the good works we perform were done by his grace and mercy.

Question 5- So can our works merit us any kind of eternal rewards?

***Answer:**

No. Jesus merited our eternity with God. When we teach a verse like this or read it incorrectly we are driven to start looking inward. Be on guard for any doctrine that does this.

If the doctrine of rewards was what was meant to motivate us, don’t you think it would be more present in the New Testament? It is not. The common evangelical interpretation of this text is so poor, has so many wrong assumptions behind it, and ultimately leads to burdens and law heaped on the Christian’s back rather than the freedom that Christ won for us.

Here is all you need to know. Anything left up to our works (even as a Christian) is bad news. Because we are still underperforming wretches. All of us. The good news is that Jesus Christ merited eternity for us, all the reward that comes with it, and He gives us His accomplished



works by grace alone through faith alone. That is the covenant of grace. For those who rest in Jesus and his work they can be of “good courage” because it is finished. The “bema” or judgment seat of Christ is a glorious day for us. The best day of our existence because we get to meet our Lord and hear “well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.” because of the accomplished work of Christ imputed to us.

This is why “we make it our aim to please him”. Because he is faithful and has been gracious to us.

Question 6- Why does it matter to talk about this? How should the right interpretation of this text inform our attitudes, our actions, and our lives?

***Answer:**

It matters because we have to be on guard from confusing law and gospel and losing our focus on Jesus. The wrong view of this text works very well in a broken system where the gospel is something for unbelievers only instead of something for all Christians at all times (as it should be). However, in the reformed view where the gospel is the air we need to breathe, the fuel in our tank, our motivation, our hope, that interpretation of this text is way off.

Be encouraged! In Christ there is no condemnation for you. God’s wrath was spent on Christ and because he accomplished all righteousness and credits it to you. You are legally the same as every other believer. This means that any crowns you receive in heaven will be laid right back down at Jesus feet because we didn’t deserve any of it.

-Lets pray. We will meet right here next week! Same time!

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