

Biblical Christianity vs. Churchianity summary.

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Date: 02 August 2009

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[0 : 00] Good morning. I would like you to please turn to one of Paul's letters after Romans.

This would be 1 Corinthians. And this morning we'll be taking a look at some verses in chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians.

We'll be reading verses 18 through 25 in chapter 1.

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.

[1 : 08] We'll come to know God.

God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed, Jews ask for signs. And Greeks search for wisdom.

But we preach Christ crucified. To Jews a stumbling block. And to Gentiles foolishness.

But to those who are the called. Both Jews and Greeks. Christ, the power of God.

[2 : 24] And the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And the weakness of God is stronger than men.

So let's just go with the pulpit mic.

and we'll forget it, okay? The passage that Gary just read from 1 Corinthians 1 perfectly explains the first point that we want to consider in our message for this morning.

And we are dealing with an encapsulation of the three reasons that we have been presenting for the great amount of confusion that exists in the world. As regards biblical Christianity, despite the fact that it has been around for over 2,000 years, one would think for something to have had longevity of 2,000 years, everybody ought to pretty much know just about everything about it.

And yet, the confusion that is out there as regards what biblical Christianity is, is rampant. What are the reasons for that? And you will recall that I have put forth three reasons.

[4 : 01] I'm sure there are many, many more that I haven't considered. But these are the three that occur to me as contributing probably the greatest amount of confusion to the whole subject of biblical Christianity.

And the first has to do with the essential innate nature of humanity as opposed to deity. All I am saying is that the distance that separates the thinking of God from the thinking of man is virtually infinite.

We do not think like God thinks. There is a verse in the Old Testament wherein God chides His people by saying, Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.

Big mistake. God is not just like us. He isn't even close. It is true, we are made in the image and likeness of God.

But that does not mean that the gap does not exist. It simply means it has been narrowed somewhat. God has given us a capacity and an ability to appreciate Him that none of His other creatures have.

[5 : 11] Yet that which separates the way He thinks from the way we think is vastly different. I likened it to the possibility of thinking in terms of facing all of life and its issues with a deck of cards.

Fifty-two cards in a deck. If you're going to play certain card games, you need all fifty-two cards. Man doesn't have fifty-two cards in his deck.

We do not play with a full deck. God does. God has all of the issues, all of the situations, all of the possibilities, all of the history, all of the present, all of the future, all together in His deck.

God doesn't have any cards missing. It is nothing but human arrogance to think we have fifty-two cards in our deck. We don't. Part of the embarrassing truth is we have little or no idea how terribly

ignorant we really are because we spend so much time touting our accomplishments and our intellect and our brilliance.

We do not begin to know as we ought to know. That is one of the very principal reasons why there is so much confusion.

[6 : 40] We do not have all that we need to think with in order to correctly arrive at truths regarding God and His Word. We need to keep that in mind.

There is a great disparity. We looked at Isaiah 55 that talks about your thoughts are not my thoughts, saith the Lord. Neither are your ways my ways.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. We need to recognize that. And it is only because God has been pleased to reveal Himself to the degree that He has that we are able to understand about Him what we do.

We know God on the basis of what He has revealed to us. We do not know God on the basis of our logic and reasoning. In other words, you cannot reason your way to God.

We are dependent upon His revelation. And this is what makes the Bible so absolutely critical. Because the Bible, and the Bible alone, reveals what God thinks about everything.

[7 : 53] It reveals His plan, His program, His character, His nature, His demands, His provision, everything. Only in Scripture do you get that.

That is why we make such a big deal of the Bible. And some would come back and say, Oh! You're one of those Bible worshippers. You worship the Bible.

Nonsense. What I am saying is, there is no such thing as intelligent worship apart from the Bible. because only in it do we know the God who is to be worshipped. We are not engaged in bibliolatry, where we worship the Bible.

But we know there is no such thing as acceptable worship to God apart from the revelation that He has given us. I have here a fascinating book.

[8 : 52] I've read it with great interest. It's called Basic Teachings of the Great Philosophers. The word philosophy comes from a compound Greek word, philo in sophia, which simply means the love of wisdom, the love of knowledge.

And these are men who wrote the book. I counted them. Their biographies, brief bios are given of each of them, going all the way back to Aristotle, Plato, even prior to them.

And these men were absolutely brilliant. These represent the powering philosophical minds of the ages.

Utterly, utterly brilliant men. Only problem is, they disagree with each other.

Now, this is the best that human wisdom has to offer. But they can't get together and reach a conclusion.

[10 : 06] Oh, there are several of them that agree one with another, but they vastly disagree with certain others. And some of the men in here, like, for instance, Bacon, Decar, Blyce Pascal, and others, I'm sure, were thoroughly committed believers to the integrity of the word of God.

And yet, they disagreed with others. They disagreed with other believers. And this always brings us back to our north star, to our compass, which is the scriptures.

It is only in the scriptures that we find the mind and program and plan of God. And all the best that men's minds can provide is interesting intellectual content.

It may impress us. It may wow us. We stand in awe at the utter brilliance of some of these individuals. But they do not begin to have the final word.

And they cannot get together on hardly anything. So, which of them is right? I'm glad I don't have to pick them out and tell you which one is right. I can just point to this one book and say, this you take to the bank.

[11 : 26] All scripture is given by inspiration of God. Men, men have always been more impressed with what their fellow man has to say than they are with what God has to say.

that is just systemic to human nature. That's the way we are. It's tied up with the human ego and it's tied up with our being impressed with our own brilliance.

So, when you realize that man shortchanges himself and creates confusion by not going to the source rather than appealing to men's minds, that's what creates all the confusion.

And when someone comes out with a new book and he is a graduate with a PhD from one of the leading universities, everyone stands in awe and this is the most brilliant thing that has ever been

written and so on and so forth.

And people are really impressed with that and they write grave reviews about it and everything. And the book may have some good stuff in it, but it does not come with the authority that we need. None of these books do.

[12 : 40] They are at best a help. They are an aid. Some of them are even detrimental and some of them are complimentary and helpful.

So, you have to read with discernment and when you come to the scriptures, you can take it at face value and that's probably the greatest reason for confusion about what biblical Christianity is.

we ask too many people rather than asking the one who wrote the manual. That's the only reliable place you'll get the information. And then, the second reason I think that is responsible for their existing so much confusion is that religious institutions have intentionally or unintentionally put themselves as an institution in the place of authority that they do not deserve.

And this happens across the board. It happens because it is possible. It is capable of happening. And what I'm talking about is this.

man has a penchant, a drive, a tendency to want to acquire power, authority, dominance.

[14 : 11] It has always been that way. It always will be that way until God himself intervenes and changes it.

This is a really, really important point. And those who find themselves in positions of religious authority in a hierarchical kind of organization are greatly tempted to abuse that authority and to instill themselves as the authority virtually replacing God with their religious organization religion. The Jewish ecclesiastical system under the Mosaic law did that very thing. Why did they do that? Because they could. Because it is within the desire of man to ascend to a position of power and authority and have others under them.

It is an ego trip. it is systemic to all of humanity. We want to be in charge. We want to dominate.

[15 : 29] We want to control. They even have a name for these people today. What do they call control freaks? Some people are married to one. And it presents a real problem because they want to be in charge of everything.

And when you transfer that to religion and religious authority, you can use it to your own advantage in a way that manipulates, dominates, intimidates those who are under you.

This is exactly the thing that Jesus Christ chided the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the scribes for. Who were these people? They were the religious establishment.

And what did Christ charge them with? Gross hypocrisy. You bind up men and women and you put your petty demands upon them and you put them under your laws and your regulations and your interpretations so that these poor people can hardly breathe.

And you tie them up in knots with your religiosity. You use it. You dictate to them. You manipulate them. You intimidate them.

[16 : 46] Why do they do that? They didn't do that because they were Jews. They did it because they were human beings. They had an opportunity to do it and they took it.

And we read in Isaiah chapter 1 and 2 the scathing denouncement that Jehovah provided through Isaiah his prophet in reading out these religious authorities.

Telling them I'm sick of your sacrifices. I'm sick of your burnt offerings. Because it was all offered as show and sham and manipulation and all the rest of it. And you move up a few centuries and you come to the Roman Catholic Church.

And what did they do? Same thing. They established the priesthood, a system of sacerdotalism, which meant that you had to come to God through various sacraments.

grace is imparted through baptism, through confirmation, through confession, through marriage, through all of the...

[17 : 53] In other words, you get to God by jumping through all of these hoops called sacraments. And it became a sacramental religion. It held sway over people.

Why do you think they called this the dark ages? It was a time of deep, dark, oppression. A time of illiteracy among the masses.

The only people who were educated was the clergy. They used it to their advantage. They abused their authority. They didn't abuse their authority because they were Roman Catholics.

They abused their authority because they were human beings. They had an opportunity to do it, and they took it. And when you tell people, they believe you because you are the authority.

You are the one who is to be unchallenged and unquestioned. And you tell them, you give money to the church, and you provide this special offering for the church, church, and it will enable your dear departed mother to get out of purgatory and the torture she is suffering now for her sins two years earlier.

[19 : 19] And you really believe that? What are you going to do? This is the voice of God that is telling you that. Well, it isn't the voice of God.

It's the voice of man who has usurped authority that he shouldn't have. This is the thing that touched off Martin Luther. It was the selling of indulgences, and it was the straw that broke the camel's back.

This Augustinian Roman Catholic priest named Martin Luther said, enough. That's enough. And you know the rest as history.

This goes on in the Protestant Church. The Jews don't have a corner on this. The Old Testament doesn't have a corner on this. Roman Catholic Church doesn't have a corner on this.

It invades and infects Protestantism as well. Where there is churchianity provided in place of Christianity. Where your name being on the church roll is as good as your name being written down in heaven.

[20 : 29] Especially if you give regularly to the church. And if you can't be here, that's okay. Just send in your money. And people take comfort in that.

My name is on the church roll. I'm a member in good standing of such and such a church. Down on the corner. Doesn't mean a thing. But churches can use that and intimidate that and manipulate people because after all, they are in the position of authority.

And when the church, the priest, the pastor says something, they take it as if it was from God himself. That's how people are used, manipulated and intimidated.

And I've often said, people need to be needed, but they don't want to be used. And there's a world of difference.

This is across the spectrum. racism. It exists in every area. Take Islam. If you take some impressionable teenagers, young people in their twenties, these are people who tend to be idealistic in their thinking.

[21 : 40] They simply haven't lived long enough to know how the real world works. And they are ripe for picking. and you take one of these idealistic young people and pump them full of religious doctrine and tell them, listen, you strap this bomb on your body and you go into a public place that is rife with Jews or American soldiers or whatever, and you detonate that.

You blow yourself to smithereens. Allah be praised. You have just assured yourself by a martyr for jihad.

You have just assured your place in heaven. And when you get there, 72 dark-eyed delectable virgins are awaiting you to serve your every pleasure.

And the fruits and the delights of heaven are your for eternity. And Allah will smile on you with approval. Now, it doesn't make any difference whether that is true or not.

What matters is whether you believe it and follow up with it. This religious intimidation and the usurpation of authority that is not yours is systemic to all religions and it tends to infect all religions.

[23 : 23] And do you know what? There are a lot of people who can see through that and it confuses them. They say, why should these people who claim to be representing God, why should they use people like that?

And how can they take advantage of people like that? And it leads some of them to conclude an atheistic point of view is the only one that makes any sense.

You can't put any confidence in all of this religious baloney. Look at how these people treat one another. Look at how they treat others. And if there were really a God, would he put up with that?

I think not. Therefore, there must not be a God. And this is exactly how they conclude. It creates incredible confusion. It goes on in virtually every religion.

Mormonism is full of this. Jehovah's Witnesses are full of it. Judaism is full of it. Roman Catholicism is full of it. Protestantism is full of it.

[24 : 30] Islam is full of it. Every religion has this because the temptation is there. What do people respect? Power. Authority. If you've got it and you can convince them that you've got it, they'll do whatever you say.

That's exactly the way it works. What's the safeguard? Back to the book. That's the only safeguard you've got. The entrance of thy word gives light to the Bible will enlighten you. It will not use you. It will not intimidate you. It will not manipulate you. It will give you truth. Nothing else will.

Nothing else will. Third area of confusion, somewhat tied to the second, and that is, those who profess to be believers sometimes live a lifestyle and reflect an attitude that is anything but Christian.

And that confuses people who are looking on, because they think a Christian ought to be somebody who does nothing wrong, says nothing wrong, thinks nothing wrong.

[25 : 43] A Christian is supposed to be a spiritual goody two-shoes who has a halo about them, and if you look closely, you can see it. Well, they have an unreasonable expectation of what a Christian is, because that's not a Christian at all.

A Christian, a true, born-again, believing Christian, is nothing more than a plain, old, ordinary, garden-variety sinner saved by grace, who still has in his flesh foibles, flaws, shortcomings, misgivings, sin, disobedience, all the rest of it.

No Christian is perfect, or even close. We are just forgiven. The world doesn't understand that. Now, true, to be forgiven, to be a Christian, certainly ought to be reflected in your lifestyle.

It ought to affect a change. There ought to be a difference. And the difference is the result of the dynamic of the Spirit of God living within you.

[27 : 03] But, you do not have to walk according to the Spirit. You should, and you have no excuse for not doing so.

You don't have to. you still have a will. You can still rebel against biblical truth as a Christian. Go your own way.

Christians do this all the time. There's no justification for doing it, but there are times when we just want to do our own thing. And we just tell God, so long, I'll see you later.

Don't call me, I'll call you. And we can slide right off into rebellion and living a lifestyle that is anything but Christian, in attitude and in actions.

And the world looks on at that kind of behavior, scratches its head and says, I thought he was a Christian. I thought she was a Christian.

[28 : 07] Didn't she say something about being born again? Wasn't that something? What happened? Maybe this stuff doesn't really work. maybe it didn't take or maybe you become a Christian and it only lasts for a year or two or something like that.

They're confused. And we as inconsistent believers are sending them mixed signals so that they don't know what to make of it.

Every believer, I think, without exception, has a certain degree of hypocrisy. all Christians are hypocrites. Did you know that? A hypocrite is somebody who says one thing and does another. Is there any Christian here who has not done that? May I see your hand? Because if you raise your hand, I'm ready to label you the biggest hypocrite of all.

we're all flawed. And while we as Christians ought to reflect a consistent spiritual godly lifestyle, we don't always do that.

[29 : 22] We can be nasty, can lose our temper, fly off the handle. We can even commit adultery.

A Christian can't do that. Oh, wake up! Go back to the Psalms. Look at David.

Messed up his life royally. And then he compounded the lie and the adulterist relationship with Bathsheba with murder.

Set up Uriah the Hittite. Make certain he'd be killed in combat. Cover your tracks. Is David a believer? Oh, yes, he was a believer.

How could he do such a thing? Indeed, how? He was a human being and his old nature remained intact. You do not have to live an obedient life to God as a Christian.

[30 : 33] You don't have to. You have no excuse for not doing that. You have no justification for not doing that. But you don't have to do that. You see, when God saved you, when God saved you, he did not invade your will and take it over and say, from here on out, I'm the boss and you will never be able to do anything that displeases me.

that's nonsense. I'll tell you what that is. That's heaven. This ain't it. Have you got that?

We still live in the real world. We still live in a body of weakness and flesh that sometimes wants to serve self. And we do.

And that sends mixed signals to people who are not Christians and they say, that's not very attractive. That's not very appealing.

I can live like that the way I am. And they're probably right. So, these are principal areas of difficulty and confusion for people looking at something that has been around for over 2,000 years and they still have difficulty understanding what it's all about.

[31 : 56] Well, I told you I was going to allow some extended time for Q&A; this morning and I intend to do so. So, get your questions ready and while you're getting them ready, I just want to give you a little update as to where we're going from here.

There will be a couple of messages on the dynamic of the gospel and we will put that together over the next two Sundays. and then I am going to launch a series that will address the issues of why is there so much confusion about Christianity among Christians?

how is it in the body of Christ? Those who name the name of Christ, there's still so many differences.

What about all of these denominations? Where did they all come from? how do all of these different churches get started? And why can't we just all get together?

After all, we're all Christians, quote unquote. Why are there so many differences and variations within Christianity and the only thing they have in common is this.

[33 : 22] Each one claims to be true. Yet many of them are diametrically opposed to the others. And we'll look at some of the laws of logic, one of which is the LNC, the law of non-contradiction.

Every logician demands that and starts out with that, and we'll talk about some of these things. And there is no way that you can address these issues of why there are so many different denominations, different churches, different this and different that.

There is no way that you can address that. from a biblical point of view, other than pointing out some of the major distinctions that the Bible makes that Christians as a rule do not make.

And that creates tremendous amounts of confusion. There are certain things that the Bible delineates, segregates, separates, distinguishes between.

And if you don't get with the program, you are going to be up to your eyeballs in confusion.

[34 : 36] Oh, you're still going to heaven because your faith and your trust is in Jesus Christ. And you can be thankful that that's all that's required for your salvation is that you don't have to understand all of these things to go to heaven.

all you have to understand is that you are a lost sinner apart from Christ and Jesus Christ died to save you and you put your faith and trust in him.

That's what saves. But from there on out, the confusion is rife and we will be dealing with some of the principal reasons for that confusion and it all has to do with the way this book is approached.

I promise you it will be eye-opening. I hope it will be as eye-opening to you as it was to me because for me it was absolutely life-changing.

I'll never be the same and I'm grateful. Okay, now who has questions or comments? We've allowed ample time and we've got a roving microphone out there so Ruth back here.

[35 : 46] I'm interested in the 24th verse in this 1st Corinthians where the phrase the called and then going back to Romans 10 17, faith comes from hearing, hearing by the word of Christ.

The called would be those who have heard that word and responded positively to it. Yes, I would say so.

I would say that that's what the context would demand. Okay, and then sometimes it's associated with the elect and that makes one think that God called the elect and the elect had no choice but to come and it kind of makes a puppet out of people and I don't think that's what it's meant.

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. There is that view of the elect and of the called and some do equate that but I think that let me put it this way.

I think that all are called. All are called. All do not respond. And the issue of election for me personally and this has been a journey for me because I remember as a young Christian and I'm talking about maybe my sophomore year at Cedarville College I was ripe old age of about 23 or 24 years of age.

[37 : 37] That was back when I knew everything. And I remember hearing for the first time the doctrine of election and I just completely rejected it as completely unacceptable and an ungodly idea that God chose some, didn't choose others.

If you were chosen you would believe. If you weren't chosen there's no way you could believe. so you are consigned to an eternal hell for not choosing and choosing was something you couldn't do anyway.

And I thought that was the weirdest, dumbest thing I ever heard and rejected it out of hand. But there were several much smarter than I who continued to prevail upon me and they had several passages of scripture that they used.

And eventually over the next year or so I became convinced that they were right. And then I found myself siding with great pulpit giants like Charles Haddon Spurgeon whom I still greatly admire. He's probably the greatest preacher who ever lived next to our Lord and the Apostle Paul. And he took this position, this five point Calvinism and I felt that I was in pretty good company although I did have trouble with the fifth point and the limited atonement.

[38 : 51] But I ended up buying the whole thing and for a few years I preached it and taught it. And I must say that I have reversed myself again after more extensive study of the scriptures.

By that I'm saying adding 40 years of scripture to it. I have come to the position that the Calvinist doctrine of election which indicates that God is sovereign and he makes the choice as to who is going to be saved.

If you are not one of the chosen, it's too bad for you, there's nothing you can do about it, God didn't choose you, and you are consigned to an eternity apart from Christ. You had no say in the matter. This, in the Calvinist point of view, puts God absolutely in control as the sovereign. And man and man's will doesn't play any part in it at all.

God, and I'm confessing that I bought that for a number of years, but I have since repudiated that and I am convinced that we are elect.

[40 : 03] If you are a believer, that Jesus Christ is the elect of the Father. Christ was the chosen one. He was chosen by his Father.

Father. Christ is the elect, and he came to earth to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. And in Christ dying for the sins of the world, he made everyone savable.

That doesn't mean everyone is saved. That means everyone is savable. Because the death of Christ was as great in its scope as was the disobedience of Adam and the death that passed upon all humanity because of Adam's disobedience.

So Christ effectively redeemed all of humanity. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. And if you are a believer in Christ, you share everything Christ has.

We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. That means you are crucified with Christ, you are buried with Christ, you are raised with Christ, you are enthroned with Christ, and you are elect in Christ.

[41 : 25] We share his election. He is elect and we are in him. We are elect. And that's the extent of election as I now see it. And this is a position that I've come to probably over the last five or seven years.

And it is a result of just the overall tenor of Scripture. And I come to positions like the obedience of faith that Paul says he was called upon to bring about.

When he opens Romans and he closes Romans and he talks about making the Gentiles obedient to the faith. And that simply means, that simply means, dear friends, and I'm going to follow up on this in the next couple of messages, that man, mankind, and individuals have a responsibility placed upon us by virtue of our humanity and by virtue of our being made in the image and likeness of God.

And among other things, that includes the ability to relate to God and to comprehend God, even though it is to a very limited extent, we have a comprehension of God and appreciation of God that no lower life form has.

And we are responsible for what we do with that. Let me tell you something. This is as bottom line as I can put it. It is a really, really serious business to be a human being.

[43 : 03] You are going to be held accountable for the life you have been given. Each of us is. And we need to take that seriously.

You were not put here just to have a good time and entertain yourself. You were put here with intentionality and purpose and accountability. And one day, the curtain is going to run down and we are going to give an account, either at the judgment seat of Christ, the award throne of Christ and 1 Corinthians 3 or the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20.

Everyone is going to give an account. It is a serious business to be a human being. And the scriptures make it very clear that we have a moral responsibility to God. He's going to hold us to it. This is serious stuff. Other comments or questions? Sorry, I didn't. I didn't mean to get involved in that lengthy an answer. Anyone else? Comments or questions? [44 : 13] Yes. We're going to be held responsible for all the choices we make. Before we get to know God, before we come to an accurate or a knowledge of Jesus Christ, are we held accountable for what we did?

Like if I died tomorrow and didn't know Jesus or God, would I still be held accountable? Well, I think we are accountable for every word, thought, and deed.

And when we come and place our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ, one of the first things that we receive, and I'm not sure that they're in any particular order, I think, and the point has been made that when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, there are 30 plus things God does for you instantaneously, and you're not even aware of hardly any of them, but he does them anyway.

And one of those principal realities is we are forgiven. We are forgiven.

Our past is absolutely obliterated, will never be held against us. God has removed our sin as far as the east is from the west.

[45 : 47] They are sought for and not found. They're buried in the depths of the deepest sea. He's cast them behind his back, he will remember them no more. We are pardoned, we are cleansed, we are forgiven, all of these things.

And that is because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for them, so God no longer has a basis to hold you accountable. They've already been paid for.

You are released from your sin. That is an exhilarating thing. And I don't know if that adequately answers your question, but if it doesn't, feel free to elaborate.

any other comments or questions? Anyone? Harleen up here has a comment or question. Wait for the microphone, please.

Oh, okay. Isn't it so, though, that when you receive Jesus Christ, your slate is wiped clean. That's the way I've always felt.

[46 : 50] And no matter what happened before, you are just like you're reborn. You are. Yes. You are reborn. And the slate is wiped clean. Just wiped clean.

Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. And by the way, let me add to that. It's very, very true what you say. But, and here's an important caveat.

Your forgiveness does not eliminate the consequences of your sin. We can engage in some behavior that is very, very detrimental to our own well-being.

And we can be fully, freely, forever forgiven of that. Because Christ died for us to pay the penalty for that sin.

But God does not wipe out the consequences that ensue from that sin. You will live with those consequences. Doesn't mean you're not forgiven.

[47 : 55] It just means that forgiveness is one thing and eliminating the consequences of your actions is another thing. And these are two different things.

And it's important to make that distinction. Did I see another hand? Yes. Shelley? If our slate is wiped completely clean, why are we still judged? I'm not sure I understand.

In what sense are we judged? Everything has been wiped away that we've done. Right. So, we are still judged? We still go before the judgment seat?

Well, if we are a believer, if one is a believer, we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that's 1 Corinthians 3, that is exclusively for believers.

The issue there is not sin, the issue is rewards. And I think the passage in 1 Corinthians 3 makes it quite clear that behavior we engage in, and activities, deeds we do, are either likened to gold, silver, and precious stone, which are valuable things, will stand the test of time.

[49 : 07] these are good things. And those are good deeds that believers do. We are not saved by our works, but we are saved to do, or saved unto good works.

So, our works matter a lot. Not for our salvation, but because of our salvation. And those works are going to be evaluated.

They will be weighed against our motivation. There are going to be a lot of believers who did a lot of great things, but they're not going to be rewarded for it.

Because the reason they did those things was just to fulfill an ego trip, was just to gain the acclaim of men, and to gain the recognition that they were after.

And they will not be rewarded, because God is concerned not only with what we do, but why we do it. What's our motivation in doing it?

[50 : 13] You can do the right thing for the wrong reason, and that is wood, hay, and stubble. So, the issue at the award throne of Christ is not heaven or hell.

If you're a believer, the destiny is already established as heaven, but there are going to be rewards that God is going to give out. And these awards are going to be on the basis of why we did what we did.

And if we did it out of selfish desire or to gain recognition, then it is called wood, hay, and stubble. And all of this stuff is flammable, and it will just burn up in smoke, and that's it.

And you will be saved, yet so as by fire, but you will not have the reward that you could have had, had you engaged in those behaviors with the right motivation.

It makes a world of difference. And the judgment seat of Christ, or the award throne of Christ in 1 Corinthians 3, must not be confused with the great white throne judgment, which is Revelation chapter 20.

[51 : 18] For the award throne of Christ, there will not be anyone there but believers. That is strictly for believers. But the judgment seat, the great white throne judgment, there will not be anyone there but unbelievers.

And they will be judged at the great white throne. The books are opened, and everyone whose name was not found written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire.

This is what I mean when I say it's a serious business to be a human being. Someone else? One more, and then we'll have to dismiss. Carolyn? Marv, you mentioned a minute ago about your past is wiped away as far as deeds done in the past.

Many people will say, well, what about my today's sins and my tomorrow's sins? Do you want to add that to? Well, I'd really like to, but I'm trying to be disciplined on our time.

I'm already seven minutes over. Can I deal with that next week? I promise you I'll deal with that next week and we'll take these issues about what about our present sin.

[52 : 39] And that's a whole other issue, but it's a very, very important one, and it is related. So we'll treat that now. But what I'd like to ask you in this closing moment is, do you enjoy a knowledge that your sins are forgiven, that you are in Christ, that you enjoy God's favor and God's blessing?

Or are you here saying, boy, I sure wish I knew that. I don't know, but I want to know. Well, would you stand right now, all of us let's stand.

I want to close with a word of prayer, especially for anyone who may be here like that. Let's pray. Father, we recognize that there is so much error out there, and we recognize that we ourselves have the potential to contribute to that error.

We labor strenuously to try and prevent that. Sometimes we don't always succeed, but you know our heart. And we pray even now if there is some man or woman, boy or girl here, struggling with these issues and saying, I really wish I knew that God had forgiven me.

We pray for that individual, and we pray that you may tenderly reveal yourself to them in such a way that they can understand and see their deficiency.

[54 : 13] They fall short of what you demand. we all do. But maybe for the first time they've come to a real realization of that. And we thank you for those who have because you've made provision for them.

You sent Jesus Christ to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. Otherwise, there was no point in his coming that he came to be our Savior, and he wants a personal response from us.

So we pray that this individual who may be here one or more may be willing to say even now, Lord Jesus, much of this I never understood before, and a lot of it I still don't understand, but I do understand that you were sent by your Father, and you came to this earth, and you died a death that you did not deserve because you wanted to save me and all of humanity.

and you wanted to give your life as a perfect sacrifice for sin, to satisfy your holiness and your justice, so that the sin debt could be paid, and I am now free to come to you through Jesus Christ, and that's what I want to do right now.

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for my sin. I want to, I want to understand and appreciate your forgiveness, I want the release and the freedom that it provides, and I recognize that you have

given us that in your word, and I want to know more about it, and I'm going to pursue this, but for now, I want to trust you, and put my faith, and my dreams, and my hope, and my sin, and everything on you because of who you are and what you did.

[56 : 13] Lord Jesus, I take you for my own. Thank you in his wonderful name. Amen. If you made that decision this morning, be sure to tell someone, and feel free to approach me and let me know.

I've got some literature that you'd find very helpful. God bless you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.