

## **The Judgment Seat of Christ**

**MISSIONS CONFERENCE 2005**

By **Dr. James M. Baird**

### **II Corinthians 5:9-11**

Thank you, Ligon. And open your Bibles, please, to the book of Second Corinthians. The book of Second Corinthians, and as you're opening your Bible, let me introduce the Scripture reading.

On a Saturday night, was a while ago, the basketball season had just ended for my grandchildren. One of my grandchildren played the whole season, had scored two points for the whole season—would never shoot. And so her uncle came up for the last game from Hattiesburg, and he motivated her. It's like Derek had read my mind. What I want to preach about is motivation. And so he said to her, he said, "If you will take five shots, I'll give you five dollars. You don't have to score. Just shoot! I'll give you five dollars. And I'll give you a dollar for every point that you make." And so we called back on Saturday night, we were off somewhere in Georgia, and everybody's OK.

So I said, "Well, how'd the game go?" And my son said, "We won."

"What was the score?"

"Twenty-one to eleven."

"How did my grandchild do?"

"She scored fourteen points."

I said, "I know Knox; he throws nickels around like manhole covers...careful with his money. You must have broke him!"

"No," his brother said, "we only let him give five dollars."

I want to tell you something, beloved: once someone is motivated, especially to do the good and godly thing, all you have to do is get out of the way. But until that motivation comes, they don't shoot, they don't score, they don't do anything. You have to push, and push, and push.

Now I want to tell you something. Missions, particularly world missions, is not easy. It's hard, hard work. How does God motivate? How does God motivate people to give their lives and go, and for those who don't go to pray faithfully, and then to give their money

sacrificially? How do you motivate people to do the hard work of missions? I suggest to you that it's always a combination of three things: there are circumstances that God uses as a sovereign God; there are people—He always brings people to do something. I think this conference is a circumstance. I think these missionaries being here, just their being here...God is going to use people. Finally, God is going to use His word and certain doctrines, and these doctrines motivate for missions. And I have a doctrine in mind for every one of these sermons that I preach to you these three-four days.

The doctrine I have in mind today comes from II Corinthians, chapter five. And as you are turning to chapter five, let me tell you a story. And the story goes like this: Jane and I were in Orlando recently. There was a man preaching there. He is my friend. His name is Jack Arnold. Another basketball story—he's six feet seven. For those of you who are basketball fans, he played for UCLA in the glory years when they won ten championships. He played for John Wooten. He's a PCA minister, taught at RTS in Orlando. Planted a church there in Orlando, was called to mission work around the world to Third World countries. He and his wife, when he was up in his late 50's and 60's, they talked about marriage life for pastors and their wives, and he taught about evangelism, and he did it back in the bush. Jack was brought back to his beloved old congregation to preach on this particular Sunday in January, and Jack uses as his text, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain." And he preaches, and as he's preaching he says, "For me to die is gain, to live is for Christ." And he said, "And when I'm through on this earth, God will take me." And he fell back, and before he hit the floor he was dead.

Now, what happened to Jack when he hit the floor? What happened for the next few moments? I'll tell you one thing: the first part of this chapter, fifth chapter of II Corinthians, talks about the gain that Jack experienced immediately. Exchange! And then beginning in the ninth verse, something else very sobering occurred to Jack, as well. And I want to read this to you. And this is the word of our God, and it's true.

**II Corinthians, chapter five, verse nine:**

"Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent [that means either dead or alive], we may be accepted of Him [God] for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."

Amen. May God give to us the commitment and understanding...may He give me power as I preach, and may He give you, and give me, too, an ear to hear.

All right, the doctrine that I'm talking about that God uses is a doctrine, by the way, that your committee chose when it chose the ninety-sixth Psalm, and Psalm 96 begins like this: this is what your Missions Committee chose for this conference—"sing unto the Lord..." and this is what Ligon preached on Sunday...  
"Sing unto the Lord a new song!

Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.  
Sing unto the Lord, bless his name;  
Show forth His salvation from day to day.”

That's how it begins. Let me tell you how that great Psalm ends:  
“...the Lord, for He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth.  
He shall judge the world with righteousness,  
And the people with His truth.”

**The doctrine that God uses to motivate for missions, one of the doctrines, is the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ.** Here's where we're going in this sermon.

1. Who's to be judged?
2. When are we to be judged?
3. Who is the Judge?
4. What is the basis of this judgment?

### **I. Who is to be judged.**

It's a courtroom scene. Now, first of all, who is to be judged? Our text says this: “For we must all...” written to a church, a congregation just like this.

It's been a while back, but Jane and I were in Alabama preaching, and we got in the automobile after we had been preaching, and we started. We had to be in Knoxville, Tennessee, that night. So I'm trucking down the road, and I turn on the ignition, and Jane says, “Slow down.” So we're going down the road, on this Sunday afternoon, and I see this little sign. And the little sign says, “Ohatchee, Alabama.” And I just begin to smile and chuckle, and I'm thinking...here's what I'm thinking:

It's a story about a man who lived in Ohatchee, Alabama. His name was Tom Sims. He was a newspaperman. He, in the late 1920's and into the '30's, he originated the comic strip *Popeye*. His father was a captain of a boat that went up and down the Coosa River. The Coosa River comes from way beyond Rome, Georgia, all the way down through Alabama, and into the Alabama River. Pretty good sized river. And so out of that experience with his [son], he comes up with *Popeye*, the comic strip.

And he also had in his little newspaper a little weekly column, and it was entitled *Ohatchee USA: Country Humor and Wisdom*. And it was rather popular; so popular that in the early 1930's a group of journalists in New York City called him up to give him this great award, and they just feted him for three days. And at the end of three days, they take him back to Grand Central Station to catch the train back home, and they tell the clerk there all about who this man is, Tom Sims, and what he's been doing up here...that's nice, that's nice...and finally the clerk says, “Sir, where are you going, and I'll get your ticket.” He said, “I want a ticket to Ohatchee, Alabama.” He said, “All right.” Said, “How do you spell that?” He said, “O-h-a-t-c-h-e-e.” Said, “OK.” He opens up a

book, gets a bigger book, opens it up, and finally he said, "Sir, none of us have ever heard of Ohatchee, Alabama, and I'm sorry to say we don't know where it is." Sims says, "Don't be upset, my young friend, there are people in Ohatchee who never heard of New York City and don't know where it is!"

And I'm thinking of that story when I come on Ohatchee, Alabama, and I'm thinking of that story, and the blue light comes in the rear view mirror. And I get pulled over, and I get out and this guy starts to do the whole thing, you know...speeding and everything...and then he goes on, and then he's writing out the ticket. And then he looks over, and he looks at me and he says, "You're a preacher?" And I'm saying, "I'm to get out of this! I'm going to get out of this, you know!" So I said, "Yes, I'm a Presbyterian preacher." He continues writing, and gives me the ticket, and he said, "In Ohatchee it doesn't make any difference."

And I tell you this story for a couple of reasons. The first one, if you're ever going through Ohatchee, watch it! The speed limit goes from 65 to 35 in a blink! And it's going to cost you \$75, as well. I don't care who you are. I don't care if you're a preacher, the son of a preacher, an elder...I don't care who you are. **And so it is in the courtroom of Jesus Christ. I don't care who you are; we must all appear**, and the word *appear* is a Greek word that means *public*, and it means we're going to stand individually. We're not going to stand there and say, "I'm a member of the First Presbyterian Church." We're not going to stand there and say, "My wife is Jane." We're going to stand there individually on that Day of Judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of God."

## **II. When will we be judged.**

This is a sermon on motivation for missions. **When am I going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ?** When you die. When you die. I think the judgment seat... I think the judgment of Christ is endless, but nothing compared to when we die. That's when it's going to occur.

## **III. Who is the judge.**

**The next question is not only who and when, but who is the judge?** We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Once, in 1986, this congregation sent Miss Jane and me behind the Iron Curtain--the Wall was up--to find a congregation that we could link up with as a sister congregation. And we were sent to Poland, and we were sent to Romania, and we were sent to Czechoslovakia, and there were some people who were taking us through, and I could tell you, boy, there were some interesting, interesting stories about all of that. We did find that congregation on a Wednesday night. Walked in...I can still remember what the man preached on. A guy just came up and began to translate. He knew we were American, and his English was very good. That preacher preached on Matthew 15, and when it was all over I turned to Jane and I

said, "God has given us a church—this church."

Well, we did a number of other things. You know, when the Wall finally came down, we had sent some people over there—elders, and Jan Barnett and other people—we brought those two pastors back here. Daniel, you remember? Came over here, and they gave their testimony and report. For the only time that I can remember, you rose as a body and gave a standing ovation. And I remember saying, "You know, they've never done that for me...."

But there was one other thing that happened that really impressed me in Poland. On a cold winter...it was the coldest winter...it was in February...it was the coldest winter since World War II ...they took us to Auschwitz, and at Auschwitz it was so cold and iced that the camp was not open. We went to the door, the gate...the guard there...I told him, "We're Americans." And the guard called and the commandant himself came down. He was a Russian. And because we were Americans, he wanted to show us through for this purpose: he wanted to show the Nazi's enslave; the Communists set people free. That's what he wanted to show.

And so he took us through. We went through that thing...unbelievable! The rooms full of human hair, rooms of little babies' shoes...and the ovens....We came back out and Jane said, "Don't you ever take me to a place like that again." And I said, "I don't either want to go back." But I do remember this most vividly: the signs in German that he translated, this commandant, into English. And they were signs...most of them the words of Adolph Hitler about what he was going to do to the Jews.

Suppose on the Day of Judgment you were Jewish, and you found out that the Judge is going to be Adolph Hitler. How would you feel? I was with a lawyer last week in Alabama. He was a lawyer, a trial lawyer. I said, "It must be a little antsy on your part when you know you're facing a good lawyer, and you have to defend somebody, and you've got a good lawyer chasing you." He said, "Yeah, it does give you a little cause for concern, but I'll tell you what the real cause for concern is." I said, "What?" He said, "When I get the impression that the Judge likes the other guy's lawyer." He said, "That really gives you...."

You know what? On that great day, the Judge is the One who died for you, who loves you, gave His life for you. You see, the rest of this chapter is all about Christ. You're going to be before the judgment seat of Christ, that Christ loved you, He died for you, gave His life that you might be reconciled morally to the heavenly Father. That's who's going to be the Judge on that day.

Who? You. By yourself. Publicly.

When? When I die.

Before what Judge? The Lord Jesus.

#### **IV. On what basis will we be judged.**

What is the basis? What is this trial going to be about? Let me read it to you.

“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, whether it hath been done for good or bad.”

I want to pause right here and make explanation. There is no question that that judgment seat is not the judgment seat of salvation. We are saved by faith. All these people that Paul is writing to, and he uses the word *all*, we are “saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourself, it is a gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” The issue is not salvation by works.

The issue is commitment for those who are saved; and it says that Christ will give on the basis of “good/bad”. Twenty-six times in the gospel, Jesus Christ in the gospels speaks about rewards in heaven—26 times! I think those great rewards are not going to be so much for big-mouth preachers, but for some people that this world knows very little about, but they are manifest to God. He knows. He knows.

**What is it, good or bad? About what, Christ?** Let me read it to you. It says: “...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether be good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also to your consciences.”

He said “we persuade men.” What is he talking about? He's talking about missions. Persuade men to do what? He says in the coming verses there, he said, “God has given to us the mission of reconciliation through Jesus Christ”, and He has given to us not only that the mission of reconciliation, He has given to us the message of reconciliation wherein Christ died for all. He knew no sin, that men who are morally bankrupt....

And he says “the terror of the Lord.” There was a time not too long ago that we stood, Jane and I, at a church building. And on that spot Jonathon Edwards had preached the greatest sermon ever preached in the history of the United States: *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. I tell you, it's a fearsome thing to be a sinner and face an angry judge.

Now, you've got the serum, you've got the message, and you're on a mission to go to those very people; and God will use you to bring men and women to salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ said at the end of every gospel, at the beginning of the Book of Acts, that is the mission of this and every church. Do you know how many churches have a missions conference each year? About ten percent of the churches in the United States. Ten percent.

Well, I want to conclude this sermon.

What does this all mean to us here today, this doctrine in terms of motivating us to do something? It means this: somebody has to go. Somebody has to go. Somebody has to

go and minister. Not all...not all, where missionaries like Paul, or Laura, or the missions to Marseilles or to Colorado...but some are called.

You know, that first missions calling began in this church in the 1950's through Dr. Reed Miller. In the 1950's you started having missions conferences, and missions going out of this church. Then Don Patterson came along and followed in that tradition. And your current pastor, Ligon Duncan, follows in that tradition. This church—you've got people sitting here tonight as missionaries who came right out of this sanctuary as missionaries.

Who will go? Who will go? If God calls you, I believe you'll know it. Call for what? For whatever it is! For Laura, two years, three years now, career missionary. Maybe it's two years, two months, maybe it's two weeks to the Ukraine.

You recall that church that we founded under God in Prague, when the Wall came down and Eastern Europe was opened up to the PCA? Well, when the PCA started the PCA had no missionaries. You know what they did? They went to the church that First Pres reached in Prague. They went to that church, and they went to that pastor, Daniel, and they began. That was the first foray. Who'll go? Who'll go for a week? How about some of you doctors?

There was a school teacher that went out of this church at the age of 65 for four years in Taiwan. As I remember, she went two terms. Maybe it was three, four-year terms. Who'll go?

Who will pray? Who will pray for those missionaries? The Apostle Paul said, "Pray for me." Who will pick out one of these missionaries, or one of the 130-plus missionaries that we send out from this church? Who will pick out a missionary and find out about his or her life and their family, and really pray? And for perhaps that nation? Really, really pray! Now, you've got a chance this week with these missionaries who are here: they've already told you enough to cause many hearts here to say, "I need to pray for that fellow, and that wife who is sick, and who's out there for the sake of the gospel."

And who will give of your money? May I suggest something to you? Every five-year-old boy in this congregation ought to make a *Faith Promise*. Every five...are you listening, Mom and Dad? Grandparents? Every five-year-old boy, every ten-year-old girl, every 16-year-old girl, every 20-year-old single, every 50-year-old man, every 75-year-old woman, every last man-jack of us makes a *Faith Promise*. You help that five-year-old boy make a *Faith Promise* for \$100. And give him the pleasure of praying for certain people with you and watching God give him money sacrificially. Send that boy out! Five years old...ten years old. And for some of you, you have made pledges—I could tell you stories, and Lig could, too, tell you stories of what has happened when one man said, "Lord, I give You this business. If You will bless it, I'll give every last dime this coming year to world missions." He gave one-tenth of all that this church gave that year.

I close with this. There's a layman, for those of you who are Rotarians, this layman is

the one who came up with *The Four Laws for Rotary*, a four-way test. He came out of the beautiful city of Chicago, my hometown. Many people believe that in the last century that man did more to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ into the lives of young people than any other human being in America—and nobody knows his name. All behind the scene, a layman.

Every great national youth ministry across the United States, he was behind it. He came out of World War I, and a great Presbyterian, Howard Pugh of the Pugh Foundation—Howard Pugh Gas, out of Pittsburg, Howard Pugh challenged him and said, “You’re not going to go into the ministry; you are going to be used of God to make money, and by the time you’re 45 years of age, 50 at the most, you’ll give all of your time to missions.” That’s exactly what happened. Exactly what happened. Name is Herbert Taylor. He’s got folks in his family—a daughter—who’s in the PCA.

Herbert Taylor went to his old hometown where his family had some property, on Lake Michigan. There was one parcel right in the middle of it that two elderly women owned and would not give it for sale to him. He went back and said, “Look, we could have this whole thing and it would be a fabulous place for a youth camp...this whole thing.” And year after year, they said, “No.” And finally, he went to them and he begged them again. He said, “I’ll buy the land and then I’ll give it, plus my land. We’ll have a great camp here for youth.” And they said, “No.” He turned, walked down the walkway—they were sitting on the porch—and he turned around and he said, “You’re going to die, and you’re going to give an account before Almighty God for all those young people that you are ignoring. You’re going to give an account.” And he said, “I’d hate to be in your shoes.” He turned and started walking down the walk, and they called out, “Herbie!” They knew him from a child. “Herbie, come back.” They gave the land.

Do you think I’m putting any pressure on you tonight? About giving an account of what you’ve got, what the Lord has given you in time and intelligence? Oh, the gifts that He has given to some of you! And I want to tell you, I stand in awe watching as God takes your gifts...and some of you here I have admired from afar before I ever became pastor of this church, and watched how God used you in such ways that are remarkable; and one day you’re going to stand before God openly, and He’s going to say to some of you in this congregation, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of thy salvation.” That’s exactly what’s going to happen, no question.

But the question is tonight, how about you? How about you? What He’s given you...and will you be serious about this little card for your children? And for you? Maybe husband and wife, even make two *Faith Promise*?

And who’s going to go? Who will go? As we pray together...

*O God, our heavenly Father, we thank You that You remind us that You sent the Lord Jesus because You loved us, and that He died on Calvary’s cross, making substitute, dying for my sins that I may be made whole, and that I may be forgiven, and that I may be included into Thy church, and that I may be commissioned to be a part of the great*



*mission enterprise. We thank You.*

*Now, Lord, there are some of us who find it very hard to say, 'Lord, I just love You. I know that You love me. Lord, You tell me that 'if you love Me, keep My commandments.' We want to do that in this commandment about missions. O God, make this a special week in all of our lives. Hear our prayer. Hear our prayer; speak to us; forgive us. Speak to us, Lord, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

**Dr. Duncan:** Dr. Baird, would you pronounce the benediction for us as we close tonight?

**Dr. Baird:** I've only got one benediction!

Receive His benediction.

*It is now unto the Lord Jesus, who is able to keep you from falling into indifference; it is now unto the Lord Jesus, who is able at your death, able to present you sinless before His throne of grace in heaven, with exceeding great joy. To the only wise God, who is our Savior, unto Him in our hearts may He have glory, may He have majesty, may He have power both now and forevermore. Amen.*

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