

The Final Judgement Of Christ As A Clear Evidence That We Are Saved Not By Our Own Deeds, But Through Faith.

Text: Matt 25:31-46

Suggested Hymns:

463, 486, 492, 368, 458

1) The Evidence We Find In The Judgement
Of Those On His Right

2) The Evidence We Find In The Judgement
Of Those On His Left

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 25:31-46, ³¹ *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

³⁴ *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

³⁷ *“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’*

⁴⁰ *And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

⁴¹ *“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’*

⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’

⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

At the first glance this Gospel seems to flatly contradict the central doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nothing is more clearly and emphatically set forth in the Bible than this doctrine of justification. What did Paul and Silas answer when the keeper of the prison at Philippi asked them, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* They said, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”¹*

In both Testaments, the Old and the New, this doctrine of justification is set forth. The prophet Habakkuk says, *“The just shall live by his faith.”²*

In St. Paul’s epistles we find passages like these, Romans 3:28, ²⁸ *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.* And in Ephesians 2:8–9, ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

And Galatians 3:6, *Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* And Titus 3:5, ⁵ *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.*

In the book of the Acts we read, ¹² *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”³*

Our divine Lord Jesus Himself declares in John 3:16, ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

And what does our Gospel say in the face of all these distinct testimonials, that by faith alone, and not by our deeds, we are saved? It says that Christ will look for deeds when He comes to judge the world, and that He will give eternal life only to those who performed good deeds while they lived on earth.

Does not this Gospel, then, flatly contradict other portions of the Bible? At first glance it seems to do so. However, if we closely examine the text, we shall find that, far from contradicting the Scriptural doctrine of justification by grace through faith, it even proves and most brilliantly confirms this very teaching.

Let us consider, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *The Final Judgement Of Christ As A Clear Evidence That We Are Saved Not By Our Own Deeds, But Through Faith.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Evidence We Find In The Judgement Of Those On His Right

Our text begins, ³¹ *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

³⁴ *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”*

Here we hear a vivid description of the last day. This day shall come as a snare upon all those who dwell upon the face of the earth. While all things are running their regular course, lo! the heavens are suddenly opened and Jesus Christ descends as the Supreme Judge of the world, seated upon a throne of clouds, and attended by myriads of angels.

The archangel sounds the last trumpet, the blast of which re-echoes as rolling thunder around the globe from shore to shore and from sea to sea. The dead rise everywhere, from the earth, or from the sea. As with the rushing of the wind all nations are gathered before the judgement seat of Christ, and in a moment He

separates the vast throng before Him, so that the just are on His right and the unjust on His left hand.

And now the sentence is pronounced which is irrevocable and for all eternity. Those on His right hand are the first whom the King will address. He will speak to them kindly, and on what will He base His final verdict?

He mentions their deeds. Will He give them eternal life in compensation for the good deeds which they performed in life? Certainly not. He says, “*Come, you blessed of My Father.*” “*Blessed of my Father*” — this expression excludes their own merits.

It is as to say, *It is not of your own deserving that you are received into the kingdom of heaven, it is my Father’s doing, He has blessed you, He has favoured you, He has been so gracious and merciful to you, that in spite of your sins you are not cast away.*

Furthermore the King says, “*Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*” “*Inherit*” — what does that mean? Does not this word again exclude their own merits? There is a great difference between that which we inherit, which is bequeathed to us, and that which we earn by our own labour.

How can you inherit the kingdom, and at the same time, earn the kingdom by your own deeds? No; we cannot get to heaven in any other way than by inheritance. Heaven is not awarded to us because we work for it, labour for it, or pray for it. It is the gift of God, a gift of His free grace.

Furthermore the Judge will say, “*³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.*’ ... ‘*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*’

Perhaps you will say, ‘*see, here the Lord plainly states that heaven will be the reward of those who have performed good deeds in their lifetime.*’ But let me call your attention to one little word in our text which forbids such a thought. The word consists of a single letter, the letter “**I**.” The Lord says, “**I was hungry and you gave Me food.**”

What, then, are the good deeds to which the Lord Jesus has reference here? All those deeds which we commonly call good deeds in life? No; He refers only to those good deeds which are done to Him, for His sake, out of love to Him, only to those deeds which proceed from faith in Him.

Now that makes the greatest difference in the world, and plainly shows that those on Christ's right hand hear the praise of their good deeds for the sole reason that these deeds were done in true faith.

Scripture says in Romans 14:23, "*for whatever is not from faith is sin.*" And in Hebrews 11:6, *without faith it is impossible to please [God].* Faith in Christ is not a dreary and lifeless thought in the mind, as some people think. Faith is an active and living thing in the heart.

If a person has faith in Christ, he will perform good deeds wherever he can. He will see Christ in the hungry and thirsty, in the naked and homeless, in the sick and comfortless, and help and assist them for Christ's sake.

As a good tree will bear good fruit, so likewise true faith will abound in good works. The person who does not perform good deeds is void of faith. Christ therefore says to those on His right hand, *You shall inherit the kingdom, for your good deeds were done to Me, they bear witness of the faith which is within you, they show that your faith is true because it brought forth the fruit of love.*

And to remove from our minds every remnant of doubt as to this truth that we are not saved by our own deeds, but through faith alone, a most remarkable incident is recorded in our text.

³⁷ *"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'* What a fine characterisation of true Christians!

True Christians will say with St. Paul, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells."*⁴ When they have done everything that they were commanded to do, they will say, as written in Luke 17:10, *'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'* They see nothing within themselves to boast of.

God's unspeakable love to them, His great and wondrous works for their temporal and eternal welfare — these alone they consider great and glorious, and they are aware that they owe everything to God, even their good deeds which they never could have done without the help of His Holy Spirit.

O let us all be so minded, and on the last day we will be among those who stand on the right hand of Christ.

2. The Evidence We Find In The Judgement Of Those On His Left

Our text says, ⁴¹ *“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Remember that the King said to those on His right hand, *“Inherit the kingdom,”* indicating thereby, as has been shown, that, without any meritorious work on their part, out of pure grace they were to receive heaven, because through faith they had been made God's children and heirs of salvation.

But how does the King speak to those on His left hand? Not like this, *Inherit the everlasting fire, you have not exactly deserved such a great punishment, but you have been foreordained thereto!* No; He says, Depart, you cursed, you have brought down upon yourselves this curse and have fully merited your condemnation.

And on what does the King base His terrible verdict? ⁴² *For I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.”*

Having considered the judgement of the righteous, we can easily perceive what the Lord is saying here. *You have not performed any truly good deeds, you have done nothing for My sake, you have not done Me the least service, because you are entirely destitute of faith. Whatever is not of faith is sin, and you cannot show forth a single deed by which you served Me, not a single deed proceeding from true faith.*

And here we are confronted with another remarkable incident. While those on Christ's right hand give all the glory and honour to God and profess total ignorance of good deeds on their part, what do those on the left hand say?

'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Is not this surprising? Before the tribunal of God they cling to their deeds and insist that, while in the world, they did that which is right in the sight of God.

Can we conceive that they would resort to a falsehood before the judgement seat of Christ, and that they had not performed charitable deeds in life? No; there will be no more lying before the judgement seat of the Discerner of the hearts of men.

Certainly those on the left hand are honest about what they say. Certainly they did good in the world, as people say, and, perhaps, were even religious to a certain extent. Yet they are cast away, because they lack faith, without which it is impossible to please God.⁵

Jesus says to them, *'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'* Their so-called good deeds did not proceed from love to Christ and were not the fruit of a true living faith in Christ, and according to Mark 16:16, *he who does not believe will be condemned.*"

The final result is, ⁴⁶ *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*"

O let us not be deceived by those who denounce faith, or speak despicably of faith, and say that all depends on love, sympathy, good deeds, and that our good deeds will earn for us eternal life.

The world is full of false prophets who wear the sheep's clothing of Christianity and endeavour to foist upon the Christians this old thread-worn heathenish doctrine, that good deeds will lead to heaven, and that faith is not taken into account at all, that it does not matter what religion you profess, whether you be Christian, Turk, or Jew, if only you perform good deeds.

Jesus says, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned?"*⁶ Faith, therefore, is the first thing and the main thing. Above all things see that you have faith. Pray to God that He would endow you with a true living faith in His dear Son, who died on the cross for

your sins and gained for you eternal life, and that He would keep you in the faith unto the end.

And if your faith is true, you will continually be performing deeds of love and do all those things which Christ praises in the righteous on His right hand, until believing will be changed into seeing, when the Lord shall say, “*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*” Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Acts 16:31

² Habakkuk 2:4

³ Acts 4:12

⁴ Romans 7:18

⁵ Hebrews 11:6

⁶ Mark 16:16