

# Manifestation

by H. A. Ironside

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I am going to ask your attention to the fifth chapter of the second Epistle of the Corinthians, verses 9 and 10:

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For 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.

The second clause might be translated, "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ," and that is what I ask you to consider: the word "manifestation."

It will be a wonderful day when those who know the Lord and love Him shall appear in His presence, and when He will go back with us over all the path we have come since His grace has saved us. He will point out everything in our lives and service that has been in accordance with His own holy Word, everything that has been the result of the working of the Holy Spirit within us, and for all of that there will be a special reward in that day. He will also manifest all the selfishness, all the carelessness, all the worldliness, the lack of spirituality that has characterized many of us. He will show how we have missed our opportunities; how we could have been more faithful; how we could have been more devoted. But we were indifferent to the call of the Spirit of God, and because of all this we will suffer loss in that day.

I want you to notice several scriptures that bring this thought before us, looking first at verse 9 which we have already read:

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

"Wherefore we labour, "we make it our aim, we are ambitious, we have a laudable ambition, as we are going on in this scene for Christ. And what is that laudable ambition? That whether we remain in the body, or whether we go home to be with the Lord—for that is what is involved in the expression, "whether present or absent"—we will be well-pleasing unto Him.

Do not confound this statement with a very similar expression in Ephesians 1:6, which has an altogether different meaning. There we read, "He," that is, God "hath made us," we who believe, "accepted in the beloved." Now that is true of every Christian. It is true of you who

not very long ago were still walking in the world, with the worldlings, had not yet received Christ; but now you have trusted Him. The moment you put your trust in the Lord Jesus, God made you accepted in the Beloved. That is, God received you at that moment according to all the value that He put upon the person and work of His Son. What a wonderful thing that is! Accepted in Him!

What does it mean? It just means this: that the believer is as dear to the heart of the Father as the Lord Jesus is; that God thinks as much of you who have trusted Christ as He does of His own blessed Son. That may seem hard to believe; in fact, I could not believe it if I did not find it in my Bible, but I do find it there. In John 17, I hear the Lord Jesus praying to the Father and He uses this language: "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (v. 23). Those are the Saviour's own words. He says of every believer, of every child of God through faith in His name, of everyone of them, no matter what their experience may have been: "Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

There is another verse in the First Epistle of John that is very striking. It says there, "As he is," that is, as Christ is, "so are we in this world" (4:17). I remember years ago when I just could not take that in. I would read those words, "As he is, so are we in this world," and I would say to myself, "Oh no, not I! I am not as holy, I am not as righteous as He is. I am not as loving, I am not as compassionate, I am not as much concerned about lost sinners as He is." I could not say that I am as He is right down here in this world. I felt as though I could have understood it better if it had said, "As he is, so *shall* we be when we leave this world," for I confidently hoped to become some day exactly like Him; but to say, "As he is, so *are* we in this world," that was altogether too much for me in those days. I felt that I could have understood if He had said, "As he is, so *ought* we to be in this world," because I felt it was my duty to be as much like Him as possible in this world. But the definite statement that, "As he is, so *are* we in this world" was more than I could take in, until light from heaven shone upon this passage and I saw that what He was speaking about was not exactly our personal experience, or our personal growth in grace, or our likeness to Christ in that way; but it was our justification before God, our acceptance in the Beloved. In that sense, God sees every believer in Christ. As He is, so are we before God down here in this world.

That is what is involved in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 8: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." I am in Him before the Father. He sees me in His Son and I have a perfect, a complete standing in Christ. Every believer is made

meet to be a partaker "of the inheritance of the saints in light."

But now in verse 9 of Second Corinthians, chapter 5, the apostle says, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." Notice "accepted of him," not accepted *in* him. "Accepted of him" means well pleasing to Him. Now he is referring to our behaviour, to our practical experience, to our service; and he says, "We are labouring, we are working now, we are ambitious to be well-pleasing to Him. We want his approbation day by day." I want the approval of the Lord; don't you? I can hardly conceive of a Christian who does not desire that his life be pleasing to God.

And then he goes on to say, "For we must all appear," we must all be manifested, "before the judgment seat of Christ." The day is coming when we are going to leave this scene. The Lord is coming back for His own, and the dead shall be raised and the living changed. Then we shall appear at His judgment seat. Somebody may say, "How do you know that this judgment seat of Christ is just subsequent to the rapture of the Church?" Well, in the Book of the Revelation, the last chapter, we get this: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (22:12). You see, when He comes again, when He returns for His own, His reward will be with Him. The judgment seat of Christ is the place where we shall be manifested in order that we may receive our reward. And so the apostle says, "We must all," we believers—he is speaking of the two classes, the resurrected dead and the living who shall be changed—"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

Somebody has suggested that the original word here has really the thought of a complete opening up, a complete unveiling, and it might be translated, "We shall all be turned inside out at the judgment seat of Christ." How would you like to be turned inside out now? How would you like to have all your thoughts made manifest? all your hidden motives? I think that would be rather humbling for some of us.

There is more hypocrisy about many of us than we would like to let people know. Of course, if people knew, then it would no longer be hypocrisy. We may do some covering up now, but the day is coming when it will all be made manifest. One may pretend to be humble and lowly and to seek the will of the Lord, and all the time in the heart there is envy and strife and jealousy of others, and one does not like to see other people recognized in place of oneself.

Oh, if we were turned inside out now, I think there would be some tremendous showings up! Friends would see a lot of things that many of them never dreamed were hidden away in the heart. Well, we ought to be real, we ought to seek to be genuine, because it is all coming out

some day. The Lord Jesus has told us that everything is going to be made manifest in that coming day. Every idle word and the thoughts of the heart are going to be made known. We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ.

And let me say this. The judgment seat of Christ, as we have it here, should not be confounded with the judgment of the great white throne at the end of the world. Now, of course, the great white throne will be Christ's judgment seat also. He said, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). So when the wicked dead are raised at the end of time and they stand before the great white throne, do you know who will be seated on that throne? The same blessed One who suffered once to save them, and from whom they have turned away. They will behold seated on the throne of judgment the Man who hung on Calvary's cross, the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is God as well as Man. God is going to judge the world, but He is going to judge the world in the person of His Son.

The judgment of the great white throne, of which we read in Revelation 20, is the judgment of the wicked. The judgment seat of Christ is a different type of judgment altogether. It is the judgment of God's beloved people when they come before Him to give an account of their lives since He saved them. They are not going there to be judged for their sins, because these have all been put away by the precious blood of Christ; but they are going there to give an account of their service, and the Lord will take cognizance of all that His people have done, whether it has been good or bad, whether it has been the work of the flesh or the work of the Spirit; "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).

It will be a very wonderful time when we stand there in our glorified bodies. You see, we will not go there to find out whether we are going to heaven, but we will be there glorified in our resurrection bodies. It will be a very wonderful time when we stand there before our blessed Lord and He says, "Now I am going to show you how all of your works appeared to me." To many of us it will be a tremendous revelation. We have worked hard and laboured long, and sometimes we have been so discouraged and felt as though we had not accomplished anything; and then the Lord is going to open things up and say, "You remember the time when you were so disheartened? You just felt that you were working away and your ministry wasn't counting for anything, but at that very time this precious soul was brought to know Christ." That night when you were so discouraged and you felt that you were such a failure as a preacher, and you told the Lord that perhaps you didn't belong in the ministry at all, you will

find at the judgment seat of Christ that the Lord used that message to lead some soul to Himself.

We have those experiences here on earth sometimes. I remember one time I had prayed so earnestly for a meeting, and I spent so much time before God and my expectation was great. I just poured my heart out in the message that night, but there was no response at all. Nobody seemed to be interested, and I did not even try to get down to the door to meet anybody, I felt so discouraged. So I slipped out the back way and went home and threw myself down on my knees and cried out to the Lord, telling Him what a complete failure I was and that nobody got any blessing. I was so utterly disheartened! Then about three months later I was leaving that place after having worked on for nine months in all, and I got a letter from a young woman who had been singing in the choir.

She wrote me and said, "I have never told you of my salvation, and I feel that before you go I ought to tell you." She gave me the exact date. She said it was so vivid in her mind that she would never forget it. "I was singing in the choir that night. In fact," she said, "I sang a solo. You know, I always thought I was a Christian, but that night God revealed my own heart to me. I saw that I had never been converted, and when you asked for anybody who wanted to receive Christ to come to Him then, I had such an urge to walk down to the platform and publicly confess Christ, but I was ashamed. I went home so miserable, so wretched; but thank God, before I retired I broke down before Him. I got down on my knees and confessed my sins and took Christ as my Saviour, and everything has been different since. I have never had the courage to tell you before, but I felt that I must tell you before you left."

I checked up and found that it was that night when I was so utterly discouraged. That night God had wrought a miracle in that young woman's life.

I think there will be many things like that in the day of manifestation. I think the Lord will show many of us how He used the Word, when we did not know He was using it at all. Or just the manner of life lived will have borne fruit in someone's life, and at the judgment seat of Christ one will say, "I watched that man, that woman, at their work; I watched them when things went wrong, and they manifested such a kind, gracious spirit. I watched to see if they would get angry or upset when their wishes were crossed, but they were so meek and so gracious and so Christian-like, I said to myself, 'There is something there I would give a great deal to have.' That message led me to Christ. I have never told them, but I am telling them now."

Many things are going to come out like that, and for everything that has been done for Christ, there will be rewards. But there will be the other side of it. I am afraid many of us will be disappointed in that day. So much of our service has been done in the energy of the flesh, and we shall be disappointed when the Lord has to say to us, "Your life hasn't counted very much for Me. You were so much concerned with magnifying yourself, with building up your own reputation, with what people would think of you, and you just fattened on applause and praise. Well, you have had your reward. I do not have any for you now. You had it all down there. You will have to suffer loss. You did not work for my glory; you were concerned about your own reputation. You wanted people to speak well of you. Well, you have had your success, but there is no reward for you here."

He is coming! Oh, how solemn!  
When the Judge's voice is heard,  
And in His own light He shows us  
Every thought and act and word!  
Deeds of merit, as we thought them,  
He will show us were but sin;  
Little acts we had forgotten,  
He will tell us were for Him.

It will be a wonderful thing to get His mind about it all, but a very solemn thing, too.

Now turn back to that passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 3. These Corinthians were making a great deal of Christian leaders, so much so that they were actually dividing themselves, sectarianly. One of them would say, "I am of Paul," another would say, "I am of Apollos," and still another would say, "I am of Cephas." I don't know that they used the actual names. I really don't think they did, because the sixth verse of the fourth chapter, it seems to me, negatives that:

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (I Corinthians 4:6, 7)

You see, "I have transferred these things in a figure to myself and to Apollos." What probably was taking place was this:

Some were saying, "I enjoy a man like Paul who really teaches the

Word. I do not care to go and hear these lightweights. I like a man who digs down under the letter and gives us something weighty." Another says, "I haven't much use for that dry as dust Bible teacher. He is too deep for me. I like a man who can soar up into the clouds. I enjoy one who can preach with unction and liberty, an eloquent man, and a man mighty in the Scriptures. Give me Apollos! I like to hear a great preacher. I am not interested in going to church when somebody is just expounding the Bible. I want something that thrills me." Another says, "I like the exhorter. I like the man who gets down to something practical and stirs you up, and makes you feel your own need and the importance of Christian living. I am not interested in Bible teaching or in eloquent preaching. I like good, faithful exhortation. I am of Cephas."

But the apostle says, "They have all received their gifts of the Lord, and the gifts are for the whole Church. Do not under-value one and put the other on a pedestal. Thank God for them all. There are some times when you need the Bible teacher; there are times when you need the eloquent preacher; and there are times when you need the exhorter. Thank God for every one of them." See what he says:

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase (I Corinthians 3:5-7).

In other words, don't make too much of the instrument. It is God who gives the increase, and whether He works through the teacher or the preacher or the exhorter, you just give Him the glory; give Him the praise.

Then as to the laborer, "He that planteth and he that watereth are one," and he has already said that they are both nothing; so they are just men, both of them. They do not amount to anything in themselves, but "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (verse 8). There you have it! That is the reward that Christians are to receive at the judgment seat of Christ. You do your work faithfully in the place that God has put you and do not be worried because you cannot do what someone else is doing. You will get your reward. There is no need to be jealous; there is no need to be envious because someone else gets more recognition than you do. Do that which God has commanded you, and do it as unto the Lord. Each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder,... (I

Corinthians 3:9-10).

Paul had gone into Corinth and laid out the plans for the work, and was used of God to establish the church there.

I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereupon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (vv. 10, 11).

The Church rests upon Christ, and Christ alone.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation"—he is on the Foundation; he is in Christ. Now he is building: "Gold, silver, precious stones..." These will glorify God. They speak of that which is precious in His sight.

But then there are "wood, hay, stubble." These speak of that which is worthless; they will never abide the test of judgment fire.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest." This tells us that everything will come out in that day:

For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire.

The fire of God's holiness will test every man's work. Will it come up to God's standard? Will it come up to what He has a right to expect? He is going to test it! "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

It is a great comfort to me to know that it does not say, "How much it is." All my life there has been so much I have wanted to do; there have been so many, many places I should like to go and preach; there are so many things I wish I could accomplish for Christ, but time and strength make it impossible. As I look back over the years, I have been able to do so little compared with what I might have done; but I get a lot of comfort out of this Scripture: "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." And my heart says, "O Lord, help me to do the right sort of work, even if I can't do a great deal. God give me to do the right sort—the work that is the result of the control of the Holy Spirit in my life, in accordance with the Word of God."

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward (v. 14).

This is not salvation; this is reward! You say, "Well, do you work for a reward?" We work for the glory of God, but He delights to give rewards.



I attended a men's banquet at one of our city churches one night, where I was to speak, and they had just been doing a good deal of building and in a very nice way they were recognizing the different men who had accomplished quite a little in their program. One dear aged brother was called to the front, and they said something like this: "He has probably done more for the work of the church on this occasion than almost anyone else," and they wanted to give him a gift. He came forward quite diffidently and said, "What I did, I did for the Lord. I was not looking for any thing and I was not looking for any gift, but since you have been so kind and have done this for me, I accept your gift and thank you for it."

I think that is the way we will speak to the Lord when He says, "Now, you did this for me, and you did that and you did the other, and now I want to reward you. I am going to give you a crown of righteousness, or a crown of glory." I think we shall feel like saying, "Blessed Lord, I did not do that for a reward; I did it for Thee because I love Thee. But since in Thy rich grace Thou delightest to give rewards, I receive it as from Thyself and thank Thee for it."

In the day of manifestation! And I think we shall feel ashamed, if we have nothing for which we may be rewarded.

If any man's work shall be burned [if all his work seems to go for nothing], he shall suffer loss" (v. 15).

This will have nothing to do with the question of his eternal salvation, for we read:

But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

God grant that each one of us may serve faithfully in view of the day of manifestation, and that we may have a rich reward because of heart devotion to Christ down here!

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