

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **WILL THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST INVOLVE ANY ELEMENT OF PUNISHMENT?**

*Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.  
2 Timothy 4:14 (ESV)*

*<sup>29</sup> How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know him who said “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

*Hebrews 10:29-31 (ESV)*

#### **Will any Christians be punished at the Judgment Seat?**

This is a highly controversial question which very few people even ask, let alone attempt to answer. People get very sensitive and insecure about it. It can cause them to lash out defensively, rather than face the question calmly and analyse what the Bible actually says.

Accordingly, in attempting to deal with this question of the negative aspect of what might occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ we must be meticulously precise in our language and ensure that we define every word exactly. If not, then words like *condemnation, punishment, rebuke, loss, disqualification* and so on are likely to be mistaken for each other, or merged together, creating confusion.

So, let's begin by restating the question more carefully and defining exactly what we mean by it. The wider question could actually be broken down into the following series of shorter questions:

- a) Can a *real* Christian who goes to be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ end up being *condemned* at it, such that he is classified as being ‘unrighteous’ and sent from it to the Lake of Fire?
- b) Can such a person, even if not condemned in that drastic way, nonetheless, be *punished* in some lesser way?
- c) What exactly do we mean by the word ‘*punishment*’ and what kind of things might be included within it?
- d) Can punishment include the loss, withdrawal, reduction or cancellation of rewards, positions, roles, status, titles, crowns, treasures etc which we might otherwise have been given, or which might already have been provisionally allocated to us?
- e) Even if condemnation cannot be the outcome for anyone who actually goes to the Judgment Seat of Christ, is it possible that before they ever go to it the *venue* for their judgment could be changed, such that they are instead judged at the Great White Throne? Can that change of destination ever happen to a *real* Christian, who has been genuinely saved, but later becomes false or apostate?

#### **Why is the question about the possibility of punishment for real Christians so sensitive and controversial?**

If the question is asked about the possibility of real Christians being punished at the Judgment Seat, some people tend to become very agitated. Some people are so determined to uphold the valid doctrine

that salvation (i.e. justification) is by grace alone and through faith alone, that they get alarmed if they think that anyone is even suggesting that we might be saved (i.e. justified) on the basis of our *works*.

The concept of us being *punished* for our works, or lack of works, appears to them like another way of saying that we are *saved* or justified by works. They therefore recoil from that instinctively and cannot cope with discussing something that even sounds like it.

Others are very committed to the (valid) doctrine which says: “*He who believes in Him is not condemned....*” and that “*there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (See John 3:18 (a) and Romans 8:1).

Therefore they become agitated by anything which sounds, even remotely, like saying that there might still be some form of punishment that might come upon real Christians. They confuse *condemnation* and *punishment* for each other, as if they were the same thing. Such people therefore become agitated needlessly. They then try to defend the Gospel from a charge which isn't even being made, but which they imagine is being made.

Others wrongly think that to say that real Christians may face punishment, of whatever kind, comes dangerously close to sounding like the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory. Roman Catholics (wrongly) believe that most people go to this place called purgatory after their death. The idea is that they will be *purged* of their sins, so as to be got into a fit state to go to Heaven.

However, the very concept of purgatory is a false and entirely man-made one. Only the sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ can actually pay for our sins. Nothing else can pay for them, or remove them, least of all a period to be spent in so-called purgatory, a place which does not even exist, and of which the Bible never speaks.

Others have simply never heard of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Many have never been taught anything about it and some may even have been taught not to believe in it. Therefore they “edit out” and ignore any reference to the Judgment Seat when they read the Bible.

However, when they hear somebody else mention the subject, they then feel insecure, and even threatened. So they panic and close down the conversation. In that way they believe they are upholding right doctrine, but they are really just closing their own minds, and silencing other people, in order to make themselves feel more comfortable.

Bearing all of that in mind, let us consider this short passage from the letter to the Hebrews, in which the writer clearly indicates that *during this life* God disciplines, chastises and punishes us:

***<sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons?—***

***“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor lose courage when you are punished by him.***

***<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.”***

***<sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.***

***Hebrews 12:4-10 (RSV)***

Why is it that we can easily accept that in *this life* God should find it necessary to chastise, and even punish us, but find it unthinkable to suggest that He will also do so at the Judgment Seat? Surely, if it is right for Him to deal with us in those ways now, it is equally right for Him to do so when we are finally judged, if not more so. At any rate, one clearly cannot continue to argue that the concept of God chastising, or even punishing, a genuine Christian is in any way unbiblical.

### **An example from the workplace to show the kind of punishments that may be given to some of us by Jesus**

If you are struggling, to accept the idea of Jesus going beyond rebuking us and actually punishing some of us, then the following analogy may help you. Imagine a situation which arises from time to time in the police. I should add that I used to be an officer myself. Consider how it would be for a policeman who has done something wrong, or neglected his duties, and is therefore summoned to appear before the Chief Constable or Commissioner to be *disciplined*.

Let's consider the wide range of responses that are available for the Chief Constable to use. Then let's ask whether we could properly classify any of them as punishments, or whether they must be seen as something less than that, such that it would be inappropriate even to use the word 'punishment'.

Imagine you were that policeman who had done something wrong and that your supervisors had gone through all the necessary investigative and disciplinary stages and procedures. What if at the end of it all the Chief Constable finds that you have acted wrongly and are in breach of the internal Police disciplinary rules, or even that you have broken the criminal law?

Let's briefly set out the range of potential options which are open to the Chief Constable, starting with the least serious and ending with the most serious. Then let's consider whether we would classify any of these as punishments:

- a) a mere *rebuke*, i.e. to tell you, just in words, about his disapproval, disappointment and concern and to say that he feels you have let him down.
- b) for him to go further and to impose some *sanction*, albeit a minor one, such as to deduct some of your wages for a month or more.
- c) to go further and to transfer you into a *less desirable role* such as to move you from CID into traffic, or to put you back onto an ordinary shift in uniform.
- d) to *demote you in rank*, for example from sergeant to constable, which means reduced status and also reduced pay.
- e) to knock you down by *several ranks* eg from Chief Superintendent down to Inspector, or even all the way down to Constable.
- f) to *dismiss you* from the Police Force entirely, i.e. to sack you, but to allow you to keep your pension.
- g) to sack you and *strip you of your pension* as well.
- h) to go beyond the internal disciplinary procedure and to *charge you with a criminal offence* and prosecute you through the courts. That could lead to a fine, or prison sentence or even, (in the past) to a death sentence.

Now, which of those responses do you feel it would be right to classify as *punishments*? Most of us would say that they are *all punishments*, with the possible exception of (a) i.e. a rebuke alone with no

other sanction. However some of us would say that even a rebuke by itself could be seen as a punishment.

Who would relish the prospect of driving over to Force Headquarters to see the Chief Constable even if they knew it would *only* result in a rebuke and nothing more? Most of us would flinch even at the prospect of such a rebuke, let alone actually experiencing it.

Moreover, even a rebuke by itself could still have long term or even permanent consequences, it could blight your promotion prospects and cause you to be held back in future years. So, if someone was to say that only option (h), criminal prosecution, can properly be called a punishment, most of us would probably disagree.

I suspect that you too would probably regard most or all of those responses as punishments, especially if it was you who was facing them. Why then do so many people see it so differently when it comes to the Judgment Seat of Christ? Why do so many of us insist on saying that it will not involve any negative dimension at all, or at least nothing that could properly be classed as a punishment?

Many of the responses that Jesus is likely to make in His assessment of our lives sound very similar to what our imaginary Chief Constable might do at a disciplinary hearing. If so, then they must surely be classed as punishments, even though they fall very far short of us being condemned and sent to the Lake of Fire.

#### **A simplified list of some of the negative sanctions, or punishments, which Jesus may dispense to some of us at the Judgment Seat**

Let's make a similar (simplified) list of the range of potential options which appear to be available to Jesus in relation to a Christian with whom He is not pleased, or who has not achieved what he ought to have achieved with the talents and time he was given. His responses might involve some of the following things, in rising order of seriousness/importance:

- a) for Him to *'merely'* rebuke us, i.e. to speak of His disapproval or disappointment but with no other sanctions. I personally would be appalled by that. Even so, let us concede for the moment, and for sake of argument, that a rebuke by itself is not a punishment in the proper or full sense, because no further sanction is involved.
- b) for Him to *withhold rewards* from us, e.g. crowns, or treasures, that we might otherwise have been given during the 1000 year reign of Jesus (the Millennium) or even beyond that in the eternal state, the New Jerusalem.
- c) to *revoke or take away* from us rewards, crowns, treasures, that we might *already have qualified for* in relation to our past services to Him. This would be like a person being stripped of their knighthood. That happened with the dictator, Robert Mugabe, the disgraced Chairman of Royal Bank of Scotland, Fred Goodwin, and the spy and traitor, Anthony Blunt. The Queen revoked all their knighthoods and it must have been a major humiliation for them and a source of regret and grief. I would certainly class such a loss as a punishment. Yet to be stripped of rewards/crowns etc by Jesus must be infinitely worse. Why then should we deny that such a sanction is a punishment? We would all be devastated if it happened to us. Yet the Bible suggests that it will happen to at least some of us, i.e. that we will be stripped of rewards which we would, otherwise, have been given.
- d) to *demote us* and to withhold from us, or strip us of, roles, positions, ranks, titles etc that we might already have earned, or which we might have been about to earn or be awarded. This would mean going through the Millennium, and probably also the eternal Kingdom thereafter, in a reduced role or rank, rather like being demoted from Superintendent to Inspector.

Surely one must accept that all of the above responses from Jesus, if they were to happen, would properly be described as:

- i) *negative* – they could hardly be called positive
- ii) *punishments* – they all involve a loss or sanction, with the possible exception of where He only rebukes us and does nothing else

Once you start to look at it in that way then it is hard to deny that the Judgment Seat of Christ will contain at least a negative *dimension* to it. For some people it may even be a negative, unpleasant experience *overall*. Accordingly, those who insist on seeing it solely in positive terms are either missing the point or are not being quite honest in their use of words.

**If there was no negative element at all within the Judgment Seat, and no sanctions, then why would Jesus be asked to show mercy at it?**

If there was no negative element to the Judgment Seat at all, then why would any of us need Jesus to show *mercy* to us when judging us? Yet it is plain that we do need His mercy. Indeed, Apostle Paul wrote about his friend Onesiphorus, who had helped him in the past when he was in great need. He then prays that Jesus will grant mercy to him (Onesiphorus) on that Day (the Day of Judgment):

*<sup>15</sup> You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup> May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, <sup>17</sup> but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—<sup>18</sup> may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.*

*2 Timothy 1:15-18 (ESV)*

If we had no need of mercy, then why would Paul pray for Onesiphorus to be given it? It is clear that Onesiphorus is already a genuine believer. Thus we know that Paul is not merely asking for him to be given mercy in terms of having his *sins forgiven*. That cannot be Paul's meaning.

He does not expect Onesiphorus to go the Great White Throne Judgment. Paul clearly means that He wants Jesus to take into account, at the Judgment Seat, the great help and mercy that Onesiphorus showed to Paul and for Jesus to grant equivalent mercy to him when He judges him.

One can only conclude therefore that Paul is asking for Jesus not to rebuke or chastise Onesiphorus for other sins or failings, or else to rebuke/chastise him less severely for those things. But, again, why bother to ask for any of that unless the Judgment Seat will contain elements of rebuke, chastisement, loss of rewards, demotion etc?

What is more, there is an intriguing passage in 2 Timothy chapter 4 where apostle Paul is speaking of a time when he was facing criminal charges because of his evangelistic work. He names certain Christians who had let him down and failed to stand by him or speak up for him in his time of trouble.

He says that they 'deserted' him. Thus we can be sure they were real Christians, otherwise why would Paul have expected them to stand by him in the first place? However, note what Paul then says at the end of that passage:

*<sup>9</sup> Do your best to come to me soon. <sup>10</sup> For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. <sup>12</sup> Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup> When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. <sup>14</sup> Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him*

*according to his deeds.* <sup>15</sup> *Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.* <sup>16</sup> *At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!*

*2 Timothy 4:9-16 (ESV)*

Paul ends by saying "...*May it not be charged against them*". Again, we have to ask why Paul would feel it necessary to ask Jesus not to charge these men with having deserted him, abandoned him, or let him down if there is no possibility of any real Christian being charged with, or punished for, anything anyway.

Whatever it might mean for Jesus to 'charge' us in relation to some sin, omission or act of disobedience or neglect, it is plainly not something we would want to be said or done to us. Paul therefore wanted those believers who had failed him to be let off.

He wanted their wrongdoing to be overlooked by Jesus. Accordingly, the passage, and the prayer, can only make sense if there is a real chance for some or all of us to be charged with such things. Otherwise, Paul's request would be meaningless and unnecessary.

**There is no condemnation for those who go to the Judgment Seat of Christ. However is it possible for a real Christian to fall away and to be sent instead to the Great White Throne Judgment, where they would be condemned?**

The question of whether a *real* Christian can fall away, so as to cease to be a Christian and be sent to the Great White Throne Judgment when they die, is a very complicated one. It cannot be answered in a short sound-bite. Please refer therefore to chapters 21 and 22 within Book One, in which I have attempted to give some balanced answers to the above questions.

However, if you doubt that there is even a question to be answered here, because you are convinced that no real Christian could ever fall away to that extent, then please consider passages such as these, from the letter to the Hebrews:

<sup>26</sup> *For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,* <sup>27</sup> *but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.* <sup>28</sup> *Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.* <sup>29</sup> *How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?* <sup>30</sup> *For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."* <sup>31</sup> *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*

*Hebrews 10:26-31 (ESV)*

<sup>36</sup> *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.* <sup>37</sup> *For,*

*"Yet a little while,  
and the coming one will come and will not delay;*

<sup>38</sup> *but my righteous one shall live by faith,  
and if he shrinks back,  
my soul has no pleasure in him."*

<sup>39</sup> *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed,  
but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

*Hebrews 10: 36-39 (ESV)*

Consider also what apostle Paul says in Romans about Israel being the vine from which branches (some of the Jewish people) were broken off because of their unbelief. That would not concern us so much,

were it not for the fact that Paul then warns his readers, in the church in Rome, that *they too* could be cut off.

*<sup>13</sup> Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry <sup>14</sup> in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup> If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. <sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,*

*<sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. <sup>19</sup> Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. <sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.*

*Romans 11:13-22 (ESV)*

My argument is that these warning verses need to concern all of us, not just somebody else. We have no basis for complacency. However, it is essential that we also seek to be balanced about this, as with every other question. Therefore, if you have not already done so, please do refer to the fuller, more balanced discussion on this point within chapters 21 and 22 of Book 1.

### **Are we meant to feel some fear about the prospect of facing Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ?**

In the light of all that we have now seen, is it valid to feel some measure of apprehension, or even fear, at the prospect of being judged? I think it is, and it would appear that the Psalmist did too:

*My flesh trembles for fear of you,  
and I am afraid of your judgments.*

*Psalm 119:120 (ESV)*

Moreover, so did apostle Peter. When referring to the subject of God's judgment, Peter urges us to "conduct (ourselves) with fear":

*And if you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.*

*1 Peter 1:17 (RSV)*

Therefore, we should not be coy or squeamish about using the word "fear" to describe how we should feel about the Judgment that awaits every one of us. Indeed, if we don't fear the Judgment Seat of Christ, then it is likely that we have not properly understood what it is.

### **We are meant to be taking active steps now to prepare for the Judgment Seat of Christ**

Hopefully this book has convinced you, if you didn't already know it, that we all face Judgment, either at the Judgment Seat of Christ or at the Great White Throne. If we really believe that, then we would be fools not to take it seriously and not to prepare ourselves. Of course, the first priority is to avoid even being present at the Great White Throne Judgment.

We achieve that by becoming a genuine Christian, i.e. by repenting, believing the gospel and putting our trust in Jesus Christ to save us from our sin. Doing that prevents us from being judged for our sins at the Great White Throne. If you have not yet taken that step, then take it now.

If you are not yet sure how to do so, then I would recommend that you look at my Book 1 and follow the advice given in that. However, if you already know that you are a real Christian, and are aware that you are going to be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ, then how can you best *prepare* for that?

What steps can you take now in the years, months or days that you have left, to get yourself into a better position to do well at that judgment? Let us firstly face the fact that you do not know how long you have got left to prepare yourself. You cannot just assume that you will live until you are about 80 or more.

Therefore you cannot be sure that you have plenty of time to get ready and that you can safely leave it for now and think about it later. I can remember being deeply affected when I was a new convert, aged 19. A student I knew who was very active in the Christian Union, died very suddenly aged 20 due to an accident in his home.

It shook me to think that I had seen him only a short time before, alive and well. Then he was suddenly gone, literally overnight. Then a couple of years later another Christian student from the same CU was killed while mountaineering. His life literally came to an end, in seconds, with no warning.

Again, his death made me think deeply about the fact that I could not know when I would die. It could be at any moment. Perhaps you consider that to be a morbid and unhelpful thought? In fact, as I see it, dwelling upon such questions has been one of the most useful things that I have ever done. It has helped me to become judgment-focused, which I have found to be very helpful, and even life-changing.

Let us return to the key question, i.e. what should we be doing now to prepare for our own judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Indeed, is it even possible to prepare ourselves? I believe that it is, and that God wants us to do so.

Indeed, that is the very reason why He has gone to such lengths to inform us of, and warn us about, that judgment and to make us aware of the many criteria by which we shall be judged. So, to attempt to answer the question, let us begin by reminding ourselves of the main purposes and objectives of the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will enable Jesus to:

- a) evaluate and assess our lives and in particular our faithfulness, obedience and fruitfulness
- b) decide what rewards and/or rebukes are due to us and to allocate us a place, position, role and rank within His Kingdom, i.e. during His 1000 year millennial reign and even beyond that, in the eternal Kingdom

### **Some practical advice on how to prepare yourself for the Judgment Seat**

Accordingly, it would seem that we can best prepare for the Judgment Seat of Christ in the following ways:

#### **a) Seek to be made aware of your own faults**

Actively seek for correction, criticism and even rebuke now, rather than wait to be given those things at the Judgment itself. Would it not be foolish, and sad, to leave it until that Day of Judgment to learn things about yourself and your habits, attitudes, sins, faults and failings that you could have discovered now, and sought to reduce or eliminate?

Such knowledge can be obtained, first and foremost, by careful study of God's Word and by sincerely praying for God to open your eyes to your own faults. It can also be got by being willing to listen to the criticism and correction that can be given to us by other people, i.e. our bosses, colleagues, friends, family and especially our husband or wife.



By all of these means we should test and examine ourselves. Then we should change whatever needs to be changed so that we can get back to God and live His way:

***Let us test and examine our ways,  
and return to the Lord!  
Lamentations 3:40 (RSV)***

Apostle Paul specifically tells us to judge ourselves now, so that there is then no need for God to judge us or chasten us. We can judge ourselves, by simply comparing the way we *actually* live with what the Bible says about how we *should* live:

***<sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world.  
1 Corinthians 11:31-32 (RSV)***

We therefore need to go out of our way to look for, and welcome, such discoveries about our faults and failings, wherever they may come from, and however painful they may be to hear. Above all we need to look for them in the Bible. Willingness to be corrected and to see one's own shortcomings as they really are, rather than in the self-justifying way in which we tend to portray them to ourselves, is rare.

However, it is extremely valuable. It is obviously better to seek for and accept rebuke, correction and criticism now, from the Bible, or from a boss/colleague/friend or spouse. Then you can do something about your faults and seek to change, rather than wait to receive these rebukes for the first time from Jesus Himself. By then it will be too late then for you to change so as to alter His assessment of you.

So, ask God to judge you now and to make you aware of your faults during this life. Ask Him to do it *in whatever way seems best to him*, whether it be through your spouse or other people or bosses or through His Word. We all go wrong and we all do wrong, but it is much better to be made aware of what you're like now, rather than later.

Therefore ask God to make you aware of your shortcomings now. It is perfectly legitimate to ask Him to do this gently, so that it does not overwhelm you. Look how Jeremiah went about it. He asked God to correct him, but not to do so in anger:

***<sup>23</sup>I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. <sup>24</sup>Correct me, O LORD, but in just measure; not in thy anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.  
Jeremiah 10:23-24 (RSV)***

#### **b) Actively seek to change now, while you still have the chance**

What is the point of learning more about how God wants us to be, or of learning about our faults, if we do not set out to do something about it and to change? Whatever period of time you have left to you in this life is your opportunity to change. Don't waste any of it. However little time there is left, even if it is only minutes, that time can, at the very least, be used to sincerely acknowledge and repent of whatever sins or failings you are aware of.

Even if that was all you did, you would at least change the nature of your meeting with Jesus on that Day because He would no longer need to rebuke you for those sins. They would have been removed from you as far as the east is from the west. They would even be deleted from God's memory, at least for purposes of judgment. Therefore such repentance is profoundly worthwhile, even if the only thing it achieved was to reduce the extent to which we will be rebuked at the judgment.

However, repentance has so much more potential than that, if we allow it to lead to real change in our character and in the way we live. If so, then those changes will also have a very material effect on the outcome of our judgment in terms of rewards and also the role or rank allocated to us.

**c) Seek to invest in God's Kingdom right now and to build a stockpile of 'treasure'.**

I have met very few people who take this point seriously. If people think of it at all, or if they respond to things I have said on the subject, it is usually only to brush this aside. They speak as if it was inappropriate, or even improper, to seek for rewards. But God very clearly wants us to think this way and to see every day as an opportunity to invest in His Kingdom and to add to our stockpile of rewards or treasures.

The Bible refers to these things frequently and Jesus Himself emphasized them. Therefore make it your aim to start to focus more and more on taking God seriously when He refers to rewards, treasures, roles, inheritance, positions etc. Make it possible for Him to allocate more of these good things to you.

It is hard enough to focus on these issues when one is trying to do so. It is virtually impossible if one isn't even seeking to do so, because the question of rewards is not even on one's agenda. We therefore need to deliberately put it on our agenda. And we must keep putting it back on the agenda again, every time it falls off or gets forgotten.

Jesus did not repeatedly emphasise rewards so that we could just ignore and forget them. He wants those rewards to be very much on our minds. The difference is that it is with the treasure of the *next world*, not *this world*, that He wants us to be concerned.