

CHAPTER 7

SOME OF THE CRITERIA BY WHICH ALL REAL CHRISTIANS WILL BE JUDGED – PART THREE

¹⁴ *And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful.*

Titus 3:14 (RSV)

¹⁷ *Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.*

Proverbs 19:17 (ESV)

¹⁸ *The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.*

Proverbs 11:18 (ESV)

⁴¹ *For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.*

Mark 9:41 (ESV)

⁴¹ *The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."*

Matthew 10:41-42 (ESV)

⁸ *"And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,*

Luke 12:8 (ESV)

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

² *"Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

Matthew 6:1-4 (RSV)

Criterion Number 17 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of how truthful we were and whether we had "the love of the truth"

God wants us to be truthful in every way, all the way through to our inward being:

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,

Psalms 51:6(a) (ESV)

However, Jesus doesn't just want us to be truthful. He wants us to have a very rare quality in our character which the Bible calls "the love of the truth". That means to love the truth in itself, for its own sake. People who have this characteristic are committed to living and speaking the truth in every way, all the time. Unless we have that level of intensity about the truth we will inevitably go astray.

In this next passage Paul tells us of a future generation which will fall for the deceptions of the antichrist (the very man himself) because they do not have the love of the truth. Therefore they are vulnerable to his deceptive speech and will choose to follow him:

⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. ¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-13 (ESV)

For an example of what it means not to have the love of the truth, look at the Chief priests and scribes in Luke chapter 20

If you want an example of what it means not to have the love of the truth and how the lack of this manifests itself in practice, consider this passage from Luke about the Chief Priests and Scribes. They refused to give a straight answer to a question from Jesus and deliberately dodged it because they had no love for the truth. All they were interested in was protecting their own image and prestige:

One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up ² and said to him, “Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.” ³ He answered them, “I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, ⁴ was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?” ⁵ And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven’, he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ ⁶ But if we say, ‘From man’, all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.” ⁷ So they answered that they did not know where it came from. ⁸ And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Luke 20:1-8 (ESV)

Jesus refers to these men again and to the way they parade themselves around seeking honour and prestige and making long prayers which were not sincere:

⁴⁵ And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, ⁴⁶ “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the market-places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at feasts, ⁴⁷ who devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

Luke 20:45-47 (ESV)

However, if we are complacently assuming that Jesus was only referring to these men and that He does not mean us, we need to think again. He means *anybody who is* not genuinely sincere in their beliefs, questions, prayers, actions and so on. In short, He means anyone who does not have the love of the truth.

As far as I can see, that is the case with the vast majority of the population, even within the Church. Truth is our defence against a host of different problems. That is why it is spoken of as part of the armour of God in Ephesians 6. Each of the pieces of armour to which Paul refers represent particular character qualities which will protect us, such as righteousness, hope, faith, etc.

However all of these are themselves held in place by the character quality of truth. That is why Paul refers to truth as the *belt*. It keeps all the other character qualities in place and functioning. Without

truth, none of the rest of our armour will work. At least they will not continue to stay in place for long:

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Ephesians 6:10-17 (ESV)

For an example of what it means to have the love of the truth, look at Nathanael, the man in whom Jesus said there was no guile

The importance which Jesus placed on truthfulness, and also its rarity, even within the churches, are shown in this next passage from John's gospel. Jesus meets a man called Nathanael who is extremely honest, sincere, transparent and *guileless*. Jesus is so impressed, and even surprised, to meet such an unusually truthful person that it comes across in the way He responds to Nathanael. It is evident also in the ease and speed with which Nathanael believes in Jesus:

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Beth-sa'ida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathan'a-el, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶Nathan'a-el said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathan'a-el coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" ⁴⁸Nathan'a-el said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹Nathan'a-el answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these."

John 1:43-50 (RSV)

So, we will certainly be judged on the extent of our own personal truthfulness in itself. However, in addition to that, the extent of our honesty and whether we have the love of the truth will largely determine how well we do in every other part of life too. That is because truth is the belt which holds all the other character qualities in place. Thus, the level of our truthfulness will indirectly affect the extent to which we qualify for all the other rewards, right across the board.

Criterion Number 18 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of whether we exercised self-control and self-discipline

The only form of control which is acceptable for us to have is self-control. God does not want us to control or manipulate any other people, or even to desire to do so. However, He does very much want us to control *ourselves*.

Self-control will bring all sorts of benefits as we learn to deny ourselves, to crucify our flesh nature, to stamp out bad habits and to create better ones. That's because self-control is essential in order to do

all of these other things. Therefore it is actually listed as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in Paul's letter to the Galatians:

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:22-24 (RSV)

Let's consider some more verses which speak of the need for self-control, and the rewards and benefits that come from it:

*A man without self-control is like a city
broken into and left without walls.*

Proverbs 25:28 (RSV)

*He who is slow to anger has great understanding,
but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.*

Proverbs 14:29 (RSV)

*Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

Proverbs 16:32 (ESV)

*Whoever restrains his words has knowledge,
and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.*

Proverbs 17:27 (ESV)

*Good sense makes a man slow to anger,
and it is his glory to overlook an offense.*

Proverbs 19:11 (RSV)

*A fool gives full vent to his anger,
but a wise man quietly holds it back.*

Proverbs 29:11 (RSV)

Criterion Number 19 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of what good deeds we did for the poor, the needy and the weak

Our treatment of the poor is a hugely important topic in the Bible and is clearly going to be a major criterion by which we will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We shall look at some verses in both the Old and New Testaments which speak of the need for us to care for the poor and give to them.

However, before that, we firstly need to deal with an area of confusion that has built up in the minds of many people about this subject. The problem with speaking about doing good works or helping the poor is that it tends to confuse two different groups of people in opposite ways. Two alternative misunderstandings arise:

a) The error made by those who think we are saved by good works

There are many people who wrongly think that we can be saved, (i.e. justified/forgiven) on the basis of doing good works. This first group is confused by the purpose of good works and giving to the poor etc. They wrongly imagine that what we do for the poor and others is the *basis*, or at least part of the basis, for deciding whether we can be saved and go to Heaven when we die.

So, this group basically thinks in terms of *salvation by works*, which is plainly wrong. We can never be justified or forgiven on the basis of our good works, no matter how good they are or how many we do. To speak in those terms is to create a *social gospel* in place of the real Gospel. So, that's *not* what I mean here.

In speaking of our being judged on the basis (amongst other things) of what we did for the poor, I mean the things we do and give *after* we have already been saved (i.e. justified). We achieve that justification, and have all Jesus' righteousness imputed or transferred to us, solely by repenting, being baptised and putting our faith in Jesus Christ alone.

It is repenting and believing in Jesus that saves us and brings forgiveness and eternal life, not the good works that we do from then on. Nevertheless, the Judgment Seat of Christ will still be concerned with what we did for the poor. But that is only in order for Jesus to reward us (or *not* reward us) for what we did *after we were saved*, (justified).

It has nothing to do with qualifying us *to be saved* in the first place. A good passage which explains this distinction very well is in Paul's letter to Titus. Paul makes it clear that we are saved by God's mercy, not by our own good deeds. However, he goes on to say that, having been saved, God then wants each believer to do good deeds *from then on*:

⁵ he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, ⁶ which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. ⁸ The saying is sure.

I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men.

Titus 3:5-8 (RSV)

And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful.

Titus 3:14 (RSV)

b) The opposite error made by those who are uneasy if good works are even mentioned

The second group who get confused are those who are so determined to defend the truth about salvation being by faith alone that they are suspicious of, and alarmed by, any talk of good works being *judged* at all. They fear that it could be taken to mean that we are hoping to be saved (justified) on the basis of our good works, whether in caring for the poor, or any other kind of good works.

Thus people who have that concern sometimes play down, or ignore, what the Bible teaches about how we will be judged for what we did *after* we were saved (justified). Therefore let me be clear. It is only the good works that we do *after* we are saved that we are discussing here. So, having hopefully made that sufficiently clear, let's examine a number of passages which speak of what God wants us to do for the poor and needy.

We shall also consider why it matters, and what results such good works will have, both in this life and at the Judgment Seat. We shall begin with some Old Testament verses, and I shall include quite a large number in order to demonstrate how important this theme is:

²⁵ "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. ²⁶ If ever you take your neighbour's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; ²⁷ for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

Exodus 22:25-27 (RSV)

⁹“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰ And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:9-10 (RSV)

⁷ “If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; ⁸ but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 (NASB)

*¹⁴ The Lord will enter into judgment
with the elders and princes of his people:
“It is you who have devoured the vineyard,
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
¹⁵ What do you mean by crushing my people,
by grinding the face of the poor?”
declares the Lord God of hosts.
*Isaiah 3:14-15 (ESV)**

*⁸ Open your mouth for the dumb,
for the rights of all who are left desolate.
⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously,
maintain the rights of the poor and needy.
*Proverbs 31:8-9 (RSV)**

*Whoever gives to the poor will not want,
but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.
*Proverbs 28:27 (ESV)**

*Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord,
and he will repay him for his deed.
*Proverbs 19:17 (ESV)**

*If a king faithfully judges the poor,
his throne will be established forever.
*Proverbs 29:14 (ESV)**

*Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor
will himself call out and not be answered.
*Proverbs 21:13 (ESV)**

*Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit
gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.
*Proverbs 28:8 (ESV)**

*¹ Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him;
² the LORD protects him and keeps him alive;*

*he is called blessed in the land;
you do not give him up to the will of his enemies.
³ The LORD sustains him on his sickbed;
in his illness you restore him to full health.*

Psalm 41:1-3 (ESV)

*He who is generous will be blessed,
For he gives some of his food to the poor.*

Proverbs 22:9 (NASB)

*He has distributed freely;
he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn is exalted in honour.*

Psalm 112:9 (ESV)

Some passages from the New Testament which speak of our duties towards the poor

Now let's consider some New Testament passages which speak in the same way of our duties to the poor. Here is a very clear statement, made by Jesus Himself, as to what He wants us to do for the poor. Moreover, He specifically states that if we do these things we will be “repaid” for it when we are resurrected, i.e. at the Judgment Seat. In the light of what Jesus says, nobody can validly argue that caring for the poor is just an Old Testament concept, or that it is not part of the duty of a Christian:

¹²He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. ¹³But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Luke 14:12-14 (RSV)

Apostle Paul also spoke approvingly of the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia who had given generously to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem during a famine:

²⁵but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. ²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

Romans 15:25-27 (NASB)

Paul goes further when writing to the Corinthians and specifically urges them to give generously. He also confirms that if they do then God will, in response, make all grace abound to them and give them an *abundance*. That clearly includes material/financial abundance in this life, but it must surely also mean receiving an abundance of some kind at the Judgment Seat, as per what Jesus said in Luke 14 above:

¹For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared; ⁴otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised

bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness. ⁶Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹as it is written, “He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

2 Corinthians 9:1-11 (NASB)

Also, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul speaks of the time when he went to Jerusalem to check whether the apostles agreed with what he was teaching. Giving to the poor was even referred to then:

⁹and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

Galatians 2:9-10 (NASB)

Lastly, look at what James says about what importance God places on caring for the needy:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

James 1:27 (RSV)

¹⁴What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren?

²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, ²³and the scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”; and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

James 2:14-26 (RSV)

So, our conclusion must surely be that giving to, and caring for, the poor, the needy, the homeless, the old the sick, etc is a major part of what a Christian's life should consist of. It is part of what it means to be ‘salt’. However, let's remember again that we are to do those good works not in order to *become* saved, but because we *already have been*.

Criterion Number 20 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of the extent to which we did acts of righteousness, kindness and goodness

Similar considerations arise here as with the question of caring for the poor. Remember, we are not advocating a *social gospel* or *salvation by works*. We are just speaking of another of the factors upon which those of us who have already been saved (justified) will be judged on what we did from

conversion onwards. So, let us look at some verses which make clear how important it is to do righteous acts and what rewards flow from doing so, both now and at the Judgment:

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.

Hosea 10:12 (ESV)

Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honour.

Proverbs 21:21 (ESV)

The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.

Proverbs 11:18 (ESV)

“...the work of a man’s hand comes back to him:

Proverbs 11:14(b) (RSV)

He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8 (RSV)

Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way will fall into his own pit, but the blameless will have a goodly inheritance.

Proverbs 28:10 (ESV)

Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished, but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered.

Proverbs 11:21 (ESV)

Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

Proverbs 11:28 (ESV)

Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.

Proverbs 20:28 (ESV)

Consider also this powerful passage in which the prophet Jeremiah directly criticises Shallum and Jehoiakim, the Kings of Judah, who reigned in place of their godly father, King Josiah. Jeremiah contrasts the righteousness of Josiah with the self-serving, self-promoting, self-indulgent reigns of his sons, King Shallum and King Jehoiakim.

Jeremiah therefore pronounces God's judgments on them and others. Note in particular the emphasis that God clearly places on how we live our lives and whether or not the things that we do and build are done with righteousness:

¹¹*For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went away from this place: “He shall return here no more, ¹²but in the place where they have carried him captive, there shall he die, and he shall never see this land again.”*

¹³*“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,*

*and his upper rooms by injustice,
who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing
and does not give him his wages,
¹⁴who says, 'I will build myself a great house
with spacious upper rooms,'
who cuts out windows for it,
paneling it with cedar
and painting it with vermilion.*

*¹⁵Do you think you are a king
because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.*

*¹⁶He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
then it was well.*

*Is not this to know me?
declares the LORD.*

*¹⁷But you have eyes and heart
only for your dishonest gain,
for shedding innocent blood,
and for practicing oppression and violence."*

¹⁸Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:

*"They shall not lament for him, saying,
'Ah, my brother!' or 'Ah, sister!'*

*They shall not lament for him, saying,
'Ah, lord!' or 'Ah, his majesty!'*

*¹⁹With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried,
dragged and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem."*

Jeremiah 22:11-19 (ESV)

In conclusion, one of the clearest statements of how God wants us to serve Him and how we are to relate to one another is in Micah chapter 6:

"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6-8 (ESV)

Criterion Number 21 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of the extent to which we loved one another and what we did to help and care for our fellow Christians

Jesus specifically commanded us to love one another. He also said that it would be one of the key things which prove to others that we are His disciples:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34-35 (RSV)

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13 (RSV)

Apostle Paul also instructs us to do good to others, but especially to our fellow Christians:

*⁹ And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.
¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Galatians 6:9-10 (RSV)

Apostle John also confirms that we are to provide for the material needs of fellow believers if we have the means to do so:

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him

1 John 3:16-19 (RSV)

The writer to the Hebrews also tells us to remember those fellow Christians who are ill-treated or even imprisoned for their faith. The clear implication is that we are meant to help them and care for them:

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body.

Hebrews 13:3 (RSV)

He also tells us to do good and to share what we have:

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Hebrews 13:16 (RSV)

The reward for doing all of this isn't defined, or even described. What we can say is that it goes to those who give to, or care for, those who belong to Christ, i.e. those who are part of the real Church:

For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

Mark 9:41 (ESV)

This reward, whatever it is, can evidently be gained even by those who do the smallest acts of kindness or generosity towards their fellow Christians. Presumably this reward must come in different grades or quantities, so as to match precisely the level of our service. If you take it seriously the prospect of this reward will motivate you to help others. That is one of the very reasons why the reward is given, and spoken about, by Jesus.

Therefore we ought to be on the lookout for people to whom we can show such kindness and help. Why not? This reward is deliberately intended to be an incentive, as with all the other things that God says He will reward. As long as what we do is done sincerely and provides genuine help to others, then we would, on the face of it, become eligible for this reward.

Criterion Number 22 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of whether we did the work of the ministry and also what we did to help other workers

We know from apostle Paul that every believer is called "*to do the work of the ministry*", as opposed to us having such work done on our behalf by paid church workers. The primary role of church leaders, or elders, is to train the people and to equip *them* so that *they* can do the work of the ministry. God does not want leaders to do all the ministry work themselves:

¹¹And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.

Ephesians 4:11-14 (RSV)

In this next passage Jesus tells us of a specific reward that goes to those who:

- a) receive a prophet, i.e. help and accommodate them
- b) receive a righteous person
- c) provide help or provision, however small, to a fellow Christian.

If we do things such as these, which any of us can easily do every day, then we add further to our stockpile of rewards. This is the kind of investing we all ought to be doing, i.e. investing in the ministries of other people, as well as doing our own work for the sake of the Gospel:

⁴⁰"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

Matthew 10:40-42 (ESV)

Apostle Paul also makes a very interesting comment in his letter to the Philippians. He is thanking and acknowledging them for the fact that when he was in financial need they were the only church which entered into partnership with him and gave him financial and material support. He then implies that when their gift bears fruit it will do so "to your credit":

¹⁴Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:14-19 (ESV)

The point is that the financial and logistical support they gave to Paul's ministry bore fruit in the sense of people being saved and becoming disciples. However Paul suggests that the *credit* for that fruit will, in some way, also accrue to those people who supported Paul's ministry. He doesn't say *what* that credit will be, or *how* it will manifest itself later. But whatever it may be, Paul obviously believes that it is real and will be good for them.

Criterion Number 23 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of whether we had the fear of the LORD

To have the *fear of God*, or the *fear of the LORD*, means that a person has a reverent awe for God and for His power and majesty. It involves deep respect, but it goes beyond that and includes literally fearing God. We are meant to fear Him for what He can and will do about our sin, and for the fact

that He is going to judge us. If we do fear Him, then that fact alone will bring about many changes in our lives.

Our fear of the LORD will cause us to live very different, and much better, lives than we would otherwise have lived. Therefore having the fear of the LORD is a good characteristic which will be directly rewarded in itself. However it will also lead indirectly to other rewards because of the changes it produces in you. Again, we are entitled to assume that those rewards will also be received after death, as well as in this life:

*The reward for humility and fear of the Lord
is riches and honour and life.*

Proverbs 22:4 (ESV)

*Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
which you have stored up for those who fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in you.....*

Psalm 31:19(a) (ESV)

*The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,
and delivers them.*

Psalm 34:7 (ESV)

*Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!*

Psalm 34:9 (ESV)

Criterion Number 24 – Jesus will also judge us on the basis of what we did to care for and provide for our own families, in particular our own parents and children

We have already seen that we have a general duty to care for and give to others, and especially to our fellow Christians. However, that duty to care for others is even greater when it comes to our own blood relatives in general, and our immediate families in particular. We have a very clear and strong duty to provide for our own elderly parents and also for our children.

Please refer to chapter seven of Book 1 which contains quite a detailed section on our duties towards the elderly in general and our own parents in particular. God takes all those duties very seriously. Consider also this next verse. We can see that it is undeniably addressed to Christians, not unbelievers, because how can a man “*disown the faith*” if he has no faith? Likewise, how can he be “*worse than an unbeliever*” if he is an unbeliever?

If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8 (RSV)

Sadly, in the modern Western world there has been an alarming decline in respect for the elderly. Increasing numbers of people are now expecting the State to care for their elderly parents instead of them doing it themselves. That is partly why we see this growing crisis of neglect, and even abuse, of the elderly in hospitals and care homes. Many elderly people have too few relatives, or even none at all, who can “police” the care that they receive and speak up for them.

In part it is also caused by the hardness of heart of an increasing number of medical staff and care home workers, for whom neglect has come to be seen as normal. For many of them, including managers, indifference, and even abuse, are no longer viewed as wrong. Such attitudes and standards

are just a part of the job and many employers wouldn't even attempt to stamp out such conduct, or to remove such staff. They know that any replacement staff would probably be as bad, or worse.

Obviously, not everybody is in a position to care for their elderly parents. Some of us may be too sick or poor to be able to help. However, for those of us who *are* capable, the duty to care for our own parents when they grow old, and to honour them throughout their whole lives, even when they are not old, is very clear. Indeed, the commandment to honour our father and mother is the only one which carries a promise with it:

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Exodus 20:12 (RSV)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.”

Ephesians 6:1-3 (RSV)

Jesus Himself referred to this commandment and condemned the way that some people allow other activities or preoccupations, and even religious duties, to take the place of their duty to care for their parents:

⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die’; ¹¹ but you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is Corban’ (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on. And many such things you do.”

Mark 7:9-13 (RSV)

Criterion Number 25 - Jesus will also acknowledge and reward us on the basis of the extent to which we acknowledged Him before men in this life

Here is an interesting passage from Jesus' own mouth:

“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,

Luke 12:8 (ESV)

Jesus will not merely acknowledge us in the sense of saying that He knows us. One gets the impression that it means much more. Those who have paid the price of acknowledging their allegiance to Jesus in the midst of a hostile and unbelieving world will, one day, be openly honoured by Jesus in front of the angels in Heaven. Imagine how that would feel!

Nevertheless, many of us do not always openly acknowledge Jesus in front of the people we know or work with. We might fear their reactions, in case they disapprove of us or even persecute us. However, we need to make a clear choice as to whether to seek the praise of men or the praise of God, because we cannot expect to receive both:

⁴² Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: ⁴³ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

John 12:42-43 (RSV)

We need to take care to ensure that we openly identify ourselves with Jesus in this life and that we are not ashamed of Him. Consider these sobering words which Jesus Himself said. They are generally assumed to refer only to unbelievers who are not saved. However, I am not so sure. I feel this statement may well also refer to believers, i.e. those who were simply afraid or embarrassed about being publicly identified with Jesus:

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Mark 8:38 (RSV)

Clearly, the above verse applies primarily to those who reject Jesus entirely, because they do not want to be associated with Him, or His Name, at all. However, I can see no reason to assume that the same principle does not apply to Christians as well. It may be that even a saved person could find that Jesus expresses Himself to be ashamed of them at the Judgment Seat.

Even the possibility of His rebuke, and of the look in His face as he raises this with us, should be enough to persuade us never to be ashamed of Him, and if we are, then to acknowledge it and repent of it.

Criterion Number 26 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of the extent to which we were ready and waiting for His return

This is a rather controversial area, especially when you try to define the details of how this will operate and who exactly is being referred to. What we can confidently say is that Jesus wants all of us to be actively engaged in waiting for His return to the Earth. We are not to be passive about it but are meant to *prepare and wait actively*.

Jesus explains this by way of a parable about a group of servants waiting for their Master to return home. He equates Himself with that Master and urges all of us to make sure that while He is away, pending His return, we are:

- a) dressed for immediate action
- b) with lamps burning, so that no time need be lost in finding or lighting these
- c) awake and waiting for His return.
- d) ready to take whatever action is needed on His return:

³⁵ “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Luke 12:35-40 (ESV)

The theme of the parable is that the servants, who represent all believers, are commanded to be ready and actively waiting for Jesus' return. However, the reality is that, at least in Great Britain, most of us are not doing any of this. Indeed, many of us are not even aware that He is going to return to the Earth at all, let alone actively anticipating that momentous event.

His return scarcely features nowadays in the teaching and preaching of most British churches. But it needs to because a lot depends upon our state of readiness and whether He comes back to find us alert and waiting for Him, distracted with other things, or even asleep. The Master in the parable reacts angrily and punishes those staff who were not ready. The clear implication is that Jesus will do likewise:

⁴¹ Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" ⁴² And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming', and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Luke 12:41-48 (ESV)

Why does it matter to God that we should be alert and waiting for the Rapture?

One question we need to ask is why it should make any difference whether we are ready and waiting or fast asleep when Jesus returns. Why does it matter so much to Him? We need to point out firstly that this parable is referring to Jesus' return for His Church, i.e. "*the rapture*". That is the moment when Jesus will return:

- a) suddenly and without any warning, such that the timing of it cannot be calculated or predicted
- b) in such a way that only His followers will see Him, plus the believing dead who will all be resurrected to meet Him
- c) to meet all His followers in the air and to take all believers, from all ages of Church history, back to Heaven with Him

The rapture must not be confused with the "*Second Coming*" of Jesus, which is also known as His "*glorious appearing*". Unlike the rapture, it will be visible to everyone, including unbelievers. After His Second Coming Jesus will *not* go back to Heaven. He will stay on the Earth and will rule it for 1000 years.

Moreover, the approximate timing of the Second Coming can be fairly easily calculated in advance, i.e. by the people who are on the Earth at that time. However, the timing of the rapture, which comes earlier, cannot be known in advance. Once we realise that it is the rapture of the Church that is being referred to by Jesus, not the Second Coming, it makes sense why it matters so much for us to be ready and waiting at all times.

A person who is actively waiting for the rapture is also, in effect, waiting for the Judgment Seat of Christ, which will follow very shortly after the rapture. Such a person is much more likely to be focused upon, and attending to, all those things which Jesus has commanded us to do.

Conversely, a person who has no expectation of imminent rapture or Judgment may well be distracted with worldly matters, or just absent-mindedly drifting along. Our state of preparedness for meeting Jesus at the Judgment Seat is therefore strongly correlated with the degree to which we believe that Jesus is about to return at any moment, i.e. at the rapture.

One sees therefore why it matters so much to be ready and waiting for the rapture. Those who are alert and expecting Jesus to return at any moment are much more likely to be doing God's will than those who are not expecting anything, or at least who are not expecting Him to return *imminently*.

Accordingly, we would all do well to study very closely what the Bible has to say about Jesus' sudden return to the Earth and to think carefully about its implications for us. The degree to which we take His return seriously will be a major determining factor in how well we do at the Judgment Seat, which follows after it.

What does Jesus mean when He refers to the Master in the parable in Luke 12 becoming angry with those servants who were not ready and waiting for His return? Will Jesus also be angry?

That brings us to a second vital question. That is to ask what Jesus means by His references within the above parable to the Master becoming *angry* with the servants who were not ready and were not awaiting his return. We are told that the Master will:

- a) *cut in pieces* the servant who was found drunk and who was beating his fellow servants when the Master returned
- b) give a *severe beating* to the servant who know his Master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will
- c) give a *light beating* to those servants who did not know the Master's will but, nonetheless, did things which deserve a beating

These are perplexing and worrying statements and they have caused much controversy. Therefore they are rarely ever preached on. Even when they are, the more disturbing parts of the parable are usually glossed over. Let us attempt therefore to face each of these points head on and to come to a view as to what they mean.

The reason the latter part of the parable is so controversial is that it appears to be suggesting that the Master, who represents Jesus, will *punish* his servants with varying degrees of severity, depending on how prepared they were for His return and what He found them doing when He returned.

Many people do not believe that Jesus could ever be angry with a Christian, or that He would ever punish or '*beat*' us, under any circumstances. The most common response, therefore, is to argue that the parable must be referring to unbelievers, i.e. unsaved people, who do not even believe in Jesus in the first place, let alone repent, and who are not His disciples at all.

It might be good if that really was what these passages are referring to. It would mean that we who are Jesus' disciples would be in the clear and need have no concern about being punished. However, that approach immediately runs into some very serious difficulties, so much so that the passage cannot make sense if unbelievers are being referred to. I will set out some reasons why I say that:

- a) Unbelievers/non-disciples would not be waiting for or preparing for the return of Jesus at all. Why would they be? They would have no reason to. Therefore Jesus would have no expectation of them being *ready* or *alert*, or of having obeyed His instructions during His absence.
- b) Jesus would have far bigger issues to raise with unbelievers than their state of preparedness for His return. He would be far more concerned with their sinfulness in general and, above all, with the fact that they did not repent of their sins, or even believe in Him.
- c) The event being described here is the rapture of the Church, i.e. when Jesus returns for His Church. When that occurs He will only be seen by His own followers who are alive on the Earth and by those who have previously died, who are all resurrected at the rapture. Thus unbelievers,

whether alive or dead, will play no part in the rapture. It does not concern them. Indeed, they will not even be aware of it when it is happening.

- d) The point at which Jesus will concern Himself with unbelievers is not until after His Second Coming, which is when He will return to the Earth visibly, to destroy the wicked and to set up His Millennial Kingdom. At the end of that 1000 year Kingdom there will be the Great White Throne Judgment. That is when unbelievers will be judged and when all of them, without exception, will be punished. None of them will be called “blessed” because none of them will be doing Jesus’ will in any way when He returns at His Second Coming.
- e) The timing of the Second Coming, unlike the rapture, will be relatively easy to calculate in advance, at least approximately. The Bible tells us the length of the Great Tribulation. Therefore those who live through it will know that in so many days Jesus will return to depose the antichrist. So there will not be any element of surprise and nobody need be caught out by His return. Beyond doubt, it will be spoken of and written about by the believers at that time and even unbelievers will hear of it. They may ignore it, or refuse to believe that it is coming, but they are likely to hear of it.

Thus it is inappropriate to speak of the Second Coming in terms of surprise and being caught unprepared etc. It would be like someone being caught out and surprised by the surrender of Nazi Germany on 7 May 1945. It was spoken of and anticipated for months beforehand. The progress of the Allied armies could be tracked on the map as they steadily approached Berlin from both East and West.

- f) It would also be a misnomer to refer to Jesus as being the “*Master*” of the unbelieving world. Neither could any unbeliever be described as His “*servant*”. They are not His servants. Most do not even believe in Him at all, let alone serve Him. Therefore neither they nor Jesus would refer to Jesus as being their Master or call themselves His servants. It would be more accurate to describe the Devil as their Master, i.e. the god of this world.

He is the one who blinds their eyes and whom they all follow. Thus the people in the parable, who have a Master who has gone away, cannot be taken as representing unbelievers. Their Master is Satan and he has not gone anywhere. He is prowling around, actively getting on with his wicked work in the time he has left. That is because he too is awaiting Jesus’ return, albeit with dread, rather than hope.

Criterion Number 27 - It would seem likely that Jesus will give some credit for partial achievements, or for specific things which we did well, even if in other areas we were disobedient or unfaithful

Every Christian is a mixture of good and bad, strengths and weaknesses and obedience and disobedience. We might listen to God, and obey Him in certain areas of our life, but be deaf, blind and disobedient in other areas. It is unrealistic to think of any Christian as being 100% faithful, obedient and diligent all the time.

Nobody is that consistent. The flesh, or sinful nature, is still very active, even in the most mature of believers, and even in apostle Paul. Conversely, even in a worldly, fleshly, Christian who has let God down in many ways, there will probably be specific things, perhaps things they did in the past, which may still gain them some praise, and perhaps even rewards, at the Judgment Seat.

It is hard to see how it could be otherwise, such that there could be a Christian somewhere about whom Jesus would have nothing at all to praise and nothing at all to rebuke. The only exception to that might be in the case of a deathbed conversion, where the person's time on this Earth as a born again believer might only have lasted minutes or even seconds.

However, for most of us, if we have walked as disciples of Jesus for many years, we are likely to have done many things which will cause us to receive both praise and rebuke. That is we are likely to get both. Therefore the real question is in what *proportions* will these be, and what *specific* things will be raised with us?

An example of this kind of mixed judgment, i.e. some rebuke, but also some praise, might be the assessment that God made of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. This was expressed through a prophet, after Jehoshaphat had displeased God by forming an alliance with the wicked King Ahab of Israel. What he did was contrary to God's will:

¹ Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. ² But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. ³ Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asheroth out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God."

2 Chronicles 19:1-3 (ESV)

Jehoshaphat had survived the battle in which King Ahab had been killed, but his involvement in that battle still displeased God. So he was rebuked for it. Yet the prophet was still careful to point out that Jehoshaphat had done some good things too. God had clearly not forgotten about those things, despite this particular act of disobedience and folly.

Criterion Number 28 - Jesus will also take note of the extent to which we have already been recognised, praised and rewarded in this life. In particular, He will withhold rewards from those who were seeking prestige and honour in this life

It is clearly right and proper for us to seek for praise, recognition and rewards. However, we are only meant to seek them in the *next* life, not in *this* life. Regrettably, many of us do the exact opposite. We seek for recognition and honoured positions *now* and give little or no thought to receiving those things after we die.

The problem is that Jesus has made it plain that rewards will *not* be given to those who do their good works with the motive that they want to be seen and admired by other people in *this life*. Such recognition, fame and admiration will be the only reward that those people ever get.

Their actions will receive no *further* reward at the Judgment Seat. Therefore they are making a very poor bargain and are actually minimising their own reward, as well as shortening its duration:

¹ "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ² "Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-6 (RSV)

¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when

you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:16-18 (RSV)

This is a very clear warning to us. We must not seek for honour or glory in this life. Those things must never be our goals for this present life. The only glory we should seek is the glory that comes from being recognised, praised and honoured *at the Judgment Seat*. To seek to receive such things *then* is good. Indeed, we are commanded to seek them.

However, to seek for those things *here and now*, from other people in this life, is bad and we are warned not to do so. If we do seek for glory in this life we will disqualify ourselves from obtaining the rewards that we would otherwise have been given in the next life, i.e. if our ambitions and motives had been righteous ones.

Criterion Number 29 - Jesus will also judge us on the basis of the extent to which we told other people about the Gospel so that they could turn from their sins, be saved, and avoid His wrath

The task of spreading the Gospel and making disciples has been entrusted to us in the Church. It is the duty of every one of us to tell others. Then, collectively, the Church as a whole can take the message of salvation to every nation on Earth:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (RSV)

In part, the task of sharing the good news of the Gospel involves warning people about sin and its consequences and about God’s judgment which is coming on the whole world. We are each *accountable* for whether we tell others and thereby make it possible for them to believe and repent.

God addressed this issue with the prophet Ezekiel, making clear that if Ezekiel did not warn people of the danger of their position, then He would hold him accountable for their blood:

¹⁷ “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ¹⁸ When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. ¹⁹ But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their sin; but you will have saved yourself.

²⁰ “Again, when a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before them, they will die. Since you did not warn them, they will die for their sin. The righteous things that person did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. ²¹ But if you do warn the righteous person not to sin and they do not sin, they will surely live because they took warning, and you will have saved yourself.”

Ezekiel 3:17-21 (NIV)

We need to reflect carefully on this heavy and serious responsibility which has been placed on us. We must not shrink from warning others or from telling them the good news, either because we can’t be bothered, or because we are afraid. If we do, then we will have to explain that disobedience to Jesus at the Judgment Seat.