

## The Review of a Lifetime

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”  
2 Corinthians 5:10*

This season marks an unwelcome event for me at work: the annual performance review. I'm well familiar with the routine; the boss calls me into his office and, behind closed doors, I see the paperwork grading my performance for the preceding year. There are 5 categories graded: Output, Quality, Knowledge, Dependability and Cooperation. Several pages later comes the bottom line, my overall rating and applicable salary adjustment. This year I'll experience my 20<sup>th</sup> review with this company, but I'm not comfortable with the process. I nurse a nagging doubt that I could walk away disappointed, regretful or ashamed because my performance fell short in some area.

I'll admit that annual reviews are probably important for a business to monitor employee performances and standardize pay raises within the organization. And some of my coworkers do look forward to their review, expecting a higher salary. But personally, having my performance evaluated is not something innately easy for me, regardless of how prepared I am. However, this discomfort in a sense foreshadows my anticipation of an upcoming review in eternity, the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). This is where God's people are held accountable for their earthly productivity while standing before a Perfect Judge without excuse.

Though it won't be the same for everyone (Luke 12:42-48), all need to answer hard questions. How faithful a servant was I? What did I do with the resources God entrusted to me? Was I diligent and productive or lazy and unprofitable? What gold, silver and precious stones will remain for me after the wood, hay and stubble burn up (1 Corinthians 3:12)? All my motives and actions will be exposed (1 Corinthians 4:5). Talk about possible humiliation! At least my current job reviews allow for a semblance of dignity in the presence of a boss who isn't omniscient and can't address every detail. Not so then.

The Judgment Seat of Christ awaits all saved by grace; their names remain forever written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 3:5). They are spared from the dreaded Great White Throne Judgment where lost souls receive eternal judgment without hope (Revelation 20:11-15). While on earth, they denied the Blood of Christ and relied on something else for their eternal destiny. God is patient, longsuffering and wishes none to perish (2 Peter 3:9) but the opportunity for repentance and rebirth ends at death. Consequently, many receive the condemnation deserved by all, but from which only those eternally redeemed are delivered.

Though spared from eternal condemnation, we'll nonetheless undergo eternal evaluation. Once saved, we're not meant to glide on into eternity resting on spiritual laurels. Rather than glide, we can soar as those born from above and endowed with everything needed for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) including His Word and the indwelling Spirit. But our opportunities are limited, ceasing in the day when we're absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Personally I can't fathom standing before my Creator with my life fully exposed without some discomfort, and probably a lot.

Indeed, if my job performance review causes me to inwardly recoil, how much more will I be humbled while evaluated before God? But higher than Heaven above earth will be Christ's Judgment Seat above any earthly assessment. There, nothing will be overlooked except my guilt for which Christ died. Moreover, my eternal evaluation will be perfect; unlike many work situations now, there will be no way to effectively lobby for a higher score or promotion. Then I'll stand by grace alone, unlike here where an employer hired me on the basis of experience and merit. And unlike temporal jobs, our eternal redemption can never be revoked or terminated; it is as unending as all eternity.

Still, some similarities are noteworthy. My company hired me to do work I'm equipped for, and the expectations differ for me than for other employees. So I'm not paid to do the job of CEO or janitor, nor am I evaluated accordingly. Similarly, God won't hold me accountable for the abilities and opportunities He gave someone else, but for those He gave me. Furthermore, to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). In the working realm, more is demanded of the CEO than the janitor; likewise more is expected of spiritual servants given ten talents than those given two (Matthew 25:14-23). Yet each is accountable to the same master; as employees today within an organization serve the same company, all those in Christ serve the same God. And though not all are judged equally, in eternity all are judged equally right.

So yet again, I brace myself for another yearly job review. Though imperfect and repeated, they do allow opportunities for future progress. But my eternal evaluation happens once and for all, after every occasion for improvement has been left behind.

Therefore, since Christ may come anytime, we're wise to be ready. Those truly prepared will receive from God a glowing evaluation, like servants who hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master (Matthew 25:21)."