

3. Stay Off the Judgment Seat

By John Thiel, *Seeking to Please God Series*, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

In this series we are following the counsel that is given to us in the following quote:

We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. {GC 489.3}

This is what we are doing. And as we do this, all the way through as we search our hearts, we are firmly to remain focused on Christ. And as we saw, the very first thing that we are to examine is whether Jesus is really in our hearts or not. As we focus our full attention on Jesus through this examination of self, in this serious time that we are living in, the hour of God's judgement, we examine ourselves with Jesus by our side.

The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone and shall make the apostle's confession our own: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." {AA 561.2}

This is what it means to be in the presence of Jesus. My contrition, my confession, will deepen. *A continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him* is the consequence when we see Jesus as He really is. And it

will therefore be the careful examination of God's word in Jesus Christ that will show us.

Being Kind One to Another

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

For Christ's sake we have had our sins of the past forgiven; and as we read this statement above and ponder upon it, this reminds us where we have come from. Where have we come from? A life of sin, mistakes, and serious errors. We know, as we reflect back upon our life, that we have indeed been forgiven by the amazing mercy and love that God has for us. Much has already been forgiven, and as we believe and trust in God, we will have yet more forgiven. And this concept of being *kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven* us, is in connection with the judgment scene of the parable Christ has given in reference to this forgiveness. We have been forgiven; we are in the judgment scene right now; our names are being examined closely; and Jesus gave a parable that describes this in reference to whether I am forgiving others around me as I have been forgiven.

Even As You Have Been Forgiven

Matthew 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

This is the hour of God's judgment; it is a parable directly referring to this. An account is being taken of God's servants.

Matthew 18:24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

He humbled himself before his lord.

Matthew 18:27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

Ten thousands talents.

Matthew 18:28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took [him] by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Here is a full-blown parable describing the challenge that lies before us in our present state in the time of judgment we are living in. The Lord is taking account. And as He has forgiven me in the past, I am to remember so that I can forgive anyone that has sinned against me, because so much has been forgiven me. This message is for all who stand on the platform of truth of original Adventism, the three angels' messages. We are to consider those who are standing on this platform together with us; we are to consider one another to have this compassion and love one toward another, because we are all in the judgment together, all of us.

Our Attitude Towards the Brethren

If you think about this for a moment, as the hymn says, *O solemn thought*, the hour of judgment is taking place. As my sins are coming up before God, as we have just observed in regards to one who owes so much and comes in contrition before God, is there not a serious impact upon our own conscience? My own sins are coming up before God; can I look left and right to anybody else? We are all being judged; *my* sins are being examined; my history is being examined. Have all my sins been forgiven? And if I have been forgiven, there is something that I need to know in this judgment hour as to what I do with my fellow brothers and sisters. People are standing under the three angels' messages together, the hour of God's judgment is taking place, and we are personally affected by the errors of others on this platform together, are we not? And as we see the errors of others around us on this platform of truth, what is our temptation? As we saw it in the parable, if we do not really forgive those around us, then what I have been forgiven comes back onto my own shoulder again.

As I personally see the sins and errors of others around me, like the man who came to the one who owed him a hundred pence, what is my attitude? Something had affected this person because the other owed him something. He comes to him and says, You've got to come right; you've got to pay me back; then the other falls down and ask the man to forgive him; but what does this man do? He does not. This is echoed in the following words. We who are standing upon that platform of truth, how long have we been standing there for? Many years for many of us.

Into the hearts of many who have been long in the truth there has entered a hard, judicial spirit. They are sharp, critical, faultfinding. They have climbed upon the judgment seat to pronounce sentence upon those who do not conform to their ideas. God calls upon them to come down and bow before Him in repentance, confessing their sins. {CCh 327.1}

Can you feel the word of God causing us to examine our hearts? Is it true that this could mean me, that I have been long in the message and something has entered into my heart—a hard, judicial spirit? I have been illuminated with all the rights and wrongs; the word of God has been laid out before me for many years in regards to what is right and what is wrong, and what is it that creeps in, what are we tempted to do? A sharp, critical, faultfinding, judicial spirit starts to operate, and we attempt to climb upon the judgment seat to pronounce sentence upon those who do not conform to our ideas. Isn't this what this servant did to his fellowservant? He took him to the judgment; he cast him into prison because the man owed him something. He had to go to judgment. And this is what our danger and temptation is when we see what others have done in the church to us—I climb upon to the judgment seat to pronounce sentence upon them. But notice what the counsel of God is:

God calls upon them to come down and bow before Him in repentance, confessing their sins. {Ibid.}

This is relevant material of examination of our hearts in this time of judgment. We are also counselled further here:

Your position binds you under the most sacred obligations to be very careful what kind of spirit you entertain towards your brethren. They are acting a part in God's cause as well as yourself. {12MR 375.2}

We have to remember that; we are all working together on this platform of truth. They are doing the same as the other person on it.

Will not God teach them and guide them as well as yourself? You are not even to allow yourself to think unkindly of them, much less to climb upon

the judgment seat and censure or condemn your brethren, when you may be yourself, in many respects, more deserving of censure than they. Your work is bearing the inspection of God. {Ibid.}

This is exactly the picture—the one who has been forgiven much, *ten thousand talents*, is much worse than the one whom he is judging, who owed a mere *hundred pence*. And that causes us to feel deeply where my sin actually is in all its enormity. Therefore I am, in my position, not even to think unkind thoughts towards another brother or sister, let alone climb upon the judgment seat and censure. This counsel of God's word in the Spirit of Prophecy is enlarged vastly in many other quotes. In this judgment hour,

Jesus Is My Judge

And Christ has been made our Judge. The Father is not the Judge. The angels are not. He who took humanity upon Himself, and in this world lived a perfect life, is to judge us. He only can be our Judge. Will you remember this, brethren? Will you remember it, ministers? Will you remember it, fathers and mothers? Christ took humanity that He might be our Judge. No one of you has been appointed to be a judge of others. It is all that you can do to discipline yourselves. In the name of Christ I entreat you to heed the injunction that He gives you never to place yourselves on the judgment seat. From day to day this message has been sounded in my ears: "Come down from the judgment seat. Come down in humility." {CCh 259.4}

Is this relevant material for us at this time? So in the judgment hour in which we are living, Jesus Christ is our Judge. And as we are together on this platform with our personal faults that need forgiving, and with the others around me with their faults that need forgiving, what is the attitude that we should have one to another as we stand on this platform together before the judgment seat? What is the attitude that God's word describes should be exercised among us toward one another? We live in this serious time, and we see our brothers and sisters around us with their faults, what are we to do? How are we to react?

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, [be ye] all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, [be] pitiful, [be] courteous: 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Isn't the blessing forgiveness? Isn't the blessing the wonderful pardoning grace and compassion of God to us? That is what we should inherit. And the counsel says we are to be of one mind, having compassion one for another. It is a beautiful experience when, although I know I have failed you, you turn to me in

compassion. And do you like someone else turning to you with compassion when you know how bad is the sin you have committed and how much they could censure you and be upon the judgment seat over you? So we have this beautiful response to God's word: I have been forgiven much, therefore as I see the failures of my brothers and sisters I will forgive them and will come close to them in perfect unity, being of one mind, having compassion, loving as brethren, pitiful and courteous. What an opposite transaction to what is happening in the circles of Christians and reformers today—the censuring, judicial spirit that has taken control in so many ranks of reforming Seventh-day Adventists. What is the attitude we are counselled to have in Ephesians?

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,

There it is; this is the attitude. If Jesus is the judge, and no one else is to be judge, what is the attitude? *Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* And I enjoy reading the Spirit of Prophecy in these matters, because this is the counsel that makes all the difference in our fellowship as we stand on the platform together.

Climbing upon the Judgment Seat

Never let your tongue and voice be employed in discovering and dilating upon the defects of your brethren, for the record of heaven identifies Christ's interests with those He has purchased with His own blood. {HP 178.4}

What a meditation. Christ's interests are with those whom He has purchased with His own blood. And as I am now sitting on the judgment seat and dilating upon the defects of others, Jesus is saying:

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren," He says, "ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). We are to learn to be loyal to one another, to be true as steel in the defense of our brethren. {Ibid.}

What does love do amongst us? It covers a multitude of sins. We are together on this platform of truth, and we are coming to God with contrition for our sins; and as we are doing our part, others can see, Yes, I've sinned, and I can see where you have sinned too; but because we know that we are on this platform together and we want to have our sins pardoned and each one is doing his work to plead with God for forgiveness and ask Him to help us out of this terrible clam that Satan is trying to put on us, will we not have compassion for each other, rather than sitting on the judgment seat and criticising those things that the other person is already pleading for God for mercy with?

The 11th chapter of 2 Corinthians contains much instruction. It reveals to us that men who are liable to view matters after human eyesight may make very grave mistakes if they engage in a work that God has not appointed, but condemned. That work is to criticize, to climb upon the judgment seat, and pronounce sentence. How much better would it be for the spiritual advancement of such to look well to their own shortcomings and defects of character through watchful examination of their own hearts, {6BC 1105.10}

Here it is again, this is what we should be occupied with; not to discover and dilate upon the errors of others, but to examine our own hearts,

...to try to remove from them the beam of faultfinding, of evil surmising, of evil speaking, of bearing false witness, of hatred, and accusing of the brethren (MS 142, 1897). {Ibid.}

These are the sins that must be eradicated in the time of the judgment. This is what this message is about—to get off the judgment seat so that our sins will be erased by our being kind and compassionate to others, getting rid of this sin that must be laid off. Remove the beam of faultfinding and evil surmising, because you are judging from human eyesight. God judges not with the seeing of the eyes or the hearing of the ears; He makes just judgments. But we judge by what we see and hear. We must remove *the beam of faultfinding, of evil surmising, of evil speaking, of bearing false witness, of hatred, and accusing of the brethren*.

This is something that must be totally erased from the books of record. This is exactly the parable that keeps on playing before our mind's eye.

So as we examine our own hearts in this time, to confess and have pardon written beside our names we need to be very honest in self-examination on this subject. Have I sins of faultfinding, of evil surmising, of evil speaking, of bearing false witness, of hatred, and accusation of the brethren? Is there any of that there? Do I need to confess it before the Lord? Examine to see if in any way we have engaged in this. Ask God to illuminate our minds. And we must examine our disposition as well; not only whether we have done it or not, but what is my disposition even now. What does *disposition* mean? I am disposed still to put a criticising note upon my brothers' expressions and communications. That disposition must be laid down. Remember, if it is a disposition still, God has a perfect photograph of every man's character in heaven, and He judges the things that would have been done if we had opportunity. So next time a person comes across my path, if I have a disposition to stand upon the judgment seat with regards to him, that has to be put aside; that has to be conquered, put away. This is what the words of Ephesians 4 tell us. We are to put away what?

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Put it away.

"Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8). True moral worth does not seek to have a place for itself by evil thinking and evil speaking, by demeriting others. {HP 178.5}

We try to lift our personal moral worth by evil thinking and evil speaking of others. Sister White also says in another place that many people lift themselves up because they think themselves better than the others, and they run them down, forgetting what they are themselves like.

All envy, all jealousy, all evil speaking, with all unbelief, must be put away from God's children. {Ibid.}

This is the time that it must be repented of and confessed, and the disposition removed, so that we may have a precious, compassionate fellowship one with another in this time of the judgment. So I ask the question to the word of God, How do I put it away? What must I do to put it away?

How Do I Put it Away?

We are in the great day of atonement, when our sins are, by confession and repentance, to go beforehand to judgment. {ISM 124.3}

How am I going to give it up? How am I going to put it away? Confess it; repent of it. Don't try to put it away by thinking: I won't do it anymore. No; confess it, repent of it. And as I confess and repent, I am putting it away. This is how you do it.

I beseech the churches in every place to make thorough work for eternity by confession and putting away of sins. {TDG 290.6}

Here it is again. By confession and repentance you put away the sin. Here is now the beautiful assistance of Jesus Christ in this hour of judgment.

"His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). By what means? "Through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." {Ibid.}

Through the knowledge of Jesus that we explore, the beautiful atonement, the beautiful knowledge of Jesus being one with us, suffering with us, experiencing with us all these things.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). {Ibid.}

As we focus on Jesus together, the knowledge that we are gaining from Him is going to cause us to confess and put away sin.

God and Christ alone know what the souls of men have cost. For our sakes the Son of God became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich with eternal riches. His love is without a parallel. {TDG 290.7}

He has forgiven the worst of sins to the worst of sinners. Where have you come from? Do you know your own sins? Believe, as you confess it to Him, that it is forgiven. And now, as we are searching through this heart-searching experience, the nearer we come to Jesus the more there will be a continual, heart-breaking confession of sin; and let this be removed entirely, so that the prayer of Jesus might be answered.

Look to Your Own Defects

Never let your tongue and voice be employed in discovering and dilating upon the defects of your brethren, for the record of heaven identifies Christ's interests with those He has purchased with His own blood. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren," He says, "ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). We are to learn to be loyal to one another, to be true as steel in the defense of our brethren. Look to your own defects. You had better discover one of your own faults than ten of your brother's. Remember that Christ has prayed for these, His brethren, that they all might be one as He is one with the Father. Seek to the uttermost of your capabilities to be in harmony with your brethren to the extent of Christ's measurement, as He is one with the Father. {HP 178.4}

Let us answer the prayer of Jesus that we would be one. He is yearning for this; and I am yearning for it too, brethren and sisters, that we would come to the point where we have learned from our experience, that we have seen what a horrible thing it is, what a terrible scene it is when people fall apart. We don't want to fall apart; we want to press together. *Press together, press together*, says the Spirit of Prophecy. And how are we to do that but by following this counsel that we have meditated upon in this message. We have our own faults; we are to concentrate on our own and never jump on the judgment seat and criticise, and have evil thinking and evil speaking. Remember what judgment this is talking about. This is not judging someone about the fact that they are condemned for eternal life; we are not talking about that; we are simply criticising each oth-

er. This is what is meant by the judgment here. Many times when we are picked up for judging someone, we say, "But I'm not judging him! I'm just recognising he's doing something wrong." But according to this, if I am thinking about the wrong he is doing, and I am dilating on his mistakes and errors, that is sitting on the judgment seat. This is what is meant here, and we need to understand what God's word is trying to tell us; not what John Thiel is trying to tell us, not anything to do with any human being; this is God speaking to us, and I have been reading these things as God has communicated them to us. And if we will listen to God, we will be compassionate one toward another, with all our sins, with all our frailties and character defects. And as we hear the sermons being preached from here onwards further, in more detail of this or that subject, we will not think, "Ha ha, that's the other person; it meets him well; that fits for him." No, no; nothing like that. As we are confronted with the different aspects of God's word, searching God's word to examine our own souls, yes, we will be aware of the others, but we will see them in compassion; we will see them as drawing close to each other, so that we will show each other kindness in the discovery of the things that we are further enlarging in God's word together.

May God raise a beautiful spirit in our hearts, and may we dismiss the judgment seat, come down off the judgment seat, and blend together as God's true children.

Amen.