

# The thoughts of the heart - exposed

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. Lk 12:2-3

We have spoken before of the need for Christians to appreciate that their works will be judged<sup>1</sup> but here we wish to develop certain aspects of this matter and underline the importance of the doctrine.

There is no doubt that the majority of modern Christians are complacent. The problems with modern apostate churches begin with modern apostate individuals. Years of blatant false teaching and wrong emphases of Biblical doctrine have done lasting damage to the consciences of young disciples.

For instance we have, elsewhere, demonstrated that the common dictum 'not guilty', when applied to believers who sin, is antinomianism and not Biblical doctrine. Those who say that believers are never under condemnation cannot have read their Bible's properly, to say nothing of listening to their own conscience.<sup>2</sup> When Christians are continually told that they are not guilty when they habitually sin, the result will be complacency at the very best.

Thus much of modern Christianity is antinomian; there is little care about practical righteousness and no understanding of God's law. Justification ensures that genuine believers who sin will be forgiven<sup>3</sup> but those who chose to live for themselves instead of serving God sin in failing to glorify God in their lives and failing to do the works he created them to do.<sup>4</sup> Complacency is, in itself, sin.

Now this ought to worry believers greatly since there is a future reckoning, whether they believe it or not. It is true that believers are not placed with the reprobate at the Day of Judgment and do not suffer for sins because their Saviour has already suffered for them. However, God does judge them for their faithfulness in service, as plainly taught by clear Biblical doctrine and the parables of the talents and pounds. No true believer will lose his place in heaven for poor service, but many believers will lose their rewards. We are warned about this in texts like these:

**Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward. 2 Jn 1:8**

**Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Rev 3:11**

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<sup>1</sup> For instance see, *Ashamed at His Coming and Rewards in Biblical Theology*.

<sup>2</sup> See my papers, *The Problem of Sin, Are Christians Ever Guilty Before God? Are Christians Ever Condemned?*. Note Rev 3:19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent'.

<sup>3</sup> However, disciples ought to fear if they sin without compunction since merely professing Christians will suffer in hell for their sin. One of the signs of being a true Christian is that you cease from sin and live a life of repentance. Thus Paul tells believers to examine themselves to see if they are in the faith.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, these works are commands from God, 'Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."' (Lk 17:9-10).





For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 1 Cor 3:11-15

Now whether his view is the corporate church here or the individual believer, it makes no difference (in any case he applies the temple allusion to the individual in 2 Cor 6:16). The point is that believers have Christ as the foundation of their lives (the new man) and sanctification is the process of building upon this foundation in character. Disciples can either build with spiritual value (symbolised by gold, silver and precious stones that withstand the fire of judgment) or with works of the flesh, which are consumed.

Paul's point is simple and easily understood; believers have a choice how to work – for spiritual value in glorifying God or for selfishness in pleasing the flesh. Paul clearly states that living in the flesh results in loss and the burning of works. In other words, all you have done in your life is a waste of time with no lasting value. Only that which is from Christ passes through the fire and continues into heaven.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three. 1 Cor 13:13

The fruits of Christ remain; that is they pass into heaven and are not burned up with the earth. All that is done by faith in love and for hope, being rooted in Christ and empowered by his Spirit, will have a value in heaven. Such works will be recognised at the tribunal of Christ and will be rewarded by offices in the new world.

### **The nature of the rewards**

Scripture does not give a full commentary on what these rewards actually consist of. However, the teaching of Jesus strongly implies that it involves functions in the new world, where heaven is on earth. These functions have a delegated authority, as is clear from Jesus' words in the parable of the pounds,

And he said to him, 'Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' Lk 19:17-19

The same reward is spoken of in the parable of the talents,

His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Matt 25:21-23

The word 'ruler' here means, 'to set one in place over others to administer an office'. Having authority over cities, or being over cities, clearly involves an administrative office of authority also. The reward of faithful service is having a delegated authority under God to administer his affairs in the new world.

Now my feeling about this is that the offices Christ gives to his faithful servants will reflect the character of the Trinity in the administration of the world. This is logical. It is the plan of God that the church always reflects and represents God; Christians are to glorify God both now and forevermore.

Now the Trinity has a functional order, which has nothing to do with the being of God. Each Person of the Trinity has a function despite all being equal to each other. Thus the Father initiates and decrees; the Son fulfils the will of the Father and the Spirit applies

what the Son achieves. This is the economy of the community in the Godhead. The Father is always a father to the Son; the Son is always a son to the Father and the Spirit always proceeds from both the Son and the Father. There is no tension in this community of love.

It is my contention that the church on earth, in heaven, will represent this community perfectly (as it is supposed to do now, but with the imperfection caused by the old nature). This means that there must be a representation of the Father (ruling) of the Son (achieving and being glorified) and the Spirit (applying). Functions in the new world will reflect, in some way, each member of the Godhead. Thus there will be rulers and workers. The rulers are those who are rewarded for their faithful service. All the elect are equal but some have functions that imply authority (just as in the church today). All will be glorious and there will be no jealousy, just as the angels have no jealousy despite some being archangels.

This is what rewards are about and the rewards follow faithful service.

## The divine scrutiny

Now we need to discuss what I really want to talk about here, something that is never preached about (to my knowledge at least) and that is the extent of the divine scrutiny of our lives and the implications of this.

### The measure of divine scrutiny

Let us first look at some statements of Jesus:

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. Lk 12:2-3

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. Matt 10:26-27

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.<sup>7</sup> Matt 12:35-37

Jesus was merely bringing to deeper light what God had already declared through the prophets:

For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. Eccles 12:14

And through the apostles,

In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. Rm 2:16

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. 1 Cor 4:5

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 Cor 5:10

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<sup>7</sup> 'Condemned' here can merely mean 'to give a judgment against'.

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. Rev 20:12

Notice in this last text that the Book of Life is also included (i.e. the record of those who are saved in Christ) and the works of all those in all books are judged. This alone refutes the arguments of those who say that Christians are not judged for their works and have no rewards. First the books of memory for the wicked are opened, then the Book of Life is opened, which contains all the elect, and then all the dead are judged.

The books of God's remembrance, alike of the evil and the good (Psa 56:8; Psa 139:4; Mal 3:16): conscience (Rom 2:15-16), the word of Christ (Joh 12:48), the law (Gal 3:10), God's eternal counsel (Psa 139:16).<sup>8</sup>

This is entirely in agreement with the teaching of the previous texts; the righteous are judged for their faithful works, the wicked are judged for their sins.

The only way to avoid this conclusion is to say that the 'dead' only refers to the wicked dead. But the very descriptions here strongly imply the whole human race, small and great.

There is no intimation here that it is the wicked dead that are referred to in this description of the final judgment. It is the judgment of all the dead. ... **According to their works** - See the notes on 2 Co 5:10. The fact that the name of anyone was found in the book of life would seem, as above remarked, to determine the "certainty" of salvation; but the amount of reward would be in proportion to the service rendered to the Redeemer, and the attainments made in piety.<sup>9</sup>

The books mentioned here were the books of the living and the dead, or the book of life and the book of death: that is, the account of the good and evil actions of men; the former leading to life, the latter to death. St. John evidently alludes here to Dan 7:10, on which the rabbinical account of the books appears to be founded. The expressions are figurative in both.<sup>10</sup>

What is the level of divine scrutiny? It is everything that we ever did; it includes every thought, word and deed throughout our entire life. Everything we do is recorded by God and will be read out in eternity on the Last Day and will be either approved or disapproved. The balance between these two will result in rewards or suffering loss of reward.

Even the world has a vague notion of such powerful eternal justice. A child's song (later recorded by the Beatles on *Abbey Road* - 'The End') says,

And in the end, the love you take, is equal to the love you make.

It is hard-wired in the conscience of men that divine rewards are for the good you do and divine retribution follows wickedness.<sup>11</sup>

Now I must re-affirm, just in case there is anyone who has not grasped the point, that salvation has nothing to do with human merit and justification is by faith alone, a faith that is given to the elect alone. Neither do we grow in sanctification by human effort but by putting on the new man and bearing spiritual fruit (i.e. living by faith; abiding in Christ). However, in God's mercy, he has planned that we are rewarded for faithful service in thought, word and deed, and this is what is judged in believers at the Last Day.

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<sup>8</sup> Jamison Fausset & Brown, *Bible Commentary*, in. loc.

<sup>9</sup> *Barnes Notes*, in. loc.

<sup>10</sup> *Adam Clarke's Comm.* in. loc.

<sup>11</sup> But human beings by nature cannot do any good at all since they are totally depraved. Thus this natural aspiration for justice should drive them to the Gospel.

Now how many of us are reedy for this divine scrutiny? I suspect none of us. But it will happen nevertheless and this ought to be a strong impetus to live right. Now all this means that we need to have a good understanding of what constitutes good works. If we get this wrong then all our actions are pointless.

### **The scope of examination**

#### *Hidden away, secret sins*

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Lk 12:2 & Matt 10:26

For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor *anything* hidden that will not be known and come to light. Lk 8:17

For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. Eccles 12:14

In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. Rm 2:16

#### *The intents of the heart*

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. 1 Cor 4:5

Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Eccles 11:9

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life. Prov 4:23

#### *Words spoken that no one heard*

Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. Lk 12:3

#### *Idle words: that is, unprofitable speech, wasteful speech*

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. Matt 12:36

By your words you will be condemned. Matt 12:37

#### *External, visible, works recorded by God*

The dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. Rev 20:12

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 Cor 5:10

The purpose of these texts is to show that the whole person will be scrutinised at the Day of Judgment. Nothing will be left out and every secret will not only be exposed to God's eyes but also to everyone else. It will be will be, 'proclaimed on the housetops' (Lk 12:2-3).

### **The question of the severe treatment of faithless servants**

'Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.' Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable *only* to us, or to all *people*?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two

and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.' Lk 12:40-48 [Compare Matt 24:43-41]

#### *Who is this addressed to?*

Clearly it is to the church. It sits in the context of the Lord warning his people to be vigilant about his coming and ready. It is to those who expect the Lord's coming, not to those who deny it.

When Peter asked specifically if the parable was addressed to the disciples the Lord then expanded his message into this warning, a warning that can only be for servants of the Lord.

#### *What is in view?*

There is the comparison between faithful and wise stewards of the ruler, who give the master's household their food at the proper time; [notice that this is a good definition of leadership – feeding the Lord's people properly and regularly] and those who mistreat the master's servants.

#### *The types of bad stewardship*

Mistreating the Lord's servants and appropriating the Lord's goods for himself.

That servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers.

The servant who knew his master's will but did not prepare himself.

And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

The servant who did not know his master's will.

But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.' Lk 12:40-48

#### *The form of punishment – the worst offender*

Firstly, the word 'unbelievers' really means, 'unfaithful' and implies unreliable. There is great difficulty in interpreting this. One view is that it means that this steward is sent to hell with the lost. If this is the case then it must mean that such stewards were never saved in the first place and gained church office by deceit. In my view there are many such impostors in the modern Charismatic churches.

However, it may be that these stewards are saved and that there is a certain punishment for such unfaithful service, which is symbolically stated as being sawn in two. What Jesus means by this figure is impossible to say – but it isn't good. The final reward is thus with the other faithless – implying a complete losing of all rewards.

In either case, the lot of those who mistreat the Lord's people through their church office is severe and terrifying. Modern leaders ought to pause and consider this.

*The form of punishment – the unprepared worker*

Those leaders who know the Lord's will but fail to do it will be beaten with many stripes. Now it is impossible to say what this means, but it indicates a severe discipline. The phrase 'beaten with many stripes' can even mean flaying or skinning, it is so severe.

*The form of punishment – the ignorant worker*

Those stewards who ought to have known the master's will but did not will still be beaten but with few stripes.

*Interim conclusion*

The point is that there is a severe discipline for all leaders who fail to do the Lord's will. As James says,

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. Jm 3:1

This subject is rarely taught and widely misunderstood. It is for this reason that the church is riddled with false teachers and charlatans making money out of the saints. If prospective leaders understood that there was to be a fearsome investigation of their life and ministry there would be fewer false teachers around.

But apart from blatant false teachers and charlatans, there are also a good many sincere teachers and leaders who are hopelessly misled and teach various forms of deception. These too will face a fearsome judgment; yet none of these men appear to have any sense of what is coming upon them since they have not been taught well.

**Good works**

The doctrine of total depravity means that man, by nature, can do no good work. Absolutely nothing he does has any divine acceptance.<sup>12</sup> This means that the good works of sinners, no matter what sacrifice is involved, are not acceptable as a good works by God.<sup>13</sup>

The doctrine of common grace is a lie, and has no Biblical basis whatsoever. It is a modern fabrication that no one in history accepted until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. References in historical theology to a common grace usually meant something quite different to the modern idea which treats the works of sinners as acceptable by God.<sup>14</sup> Such historic references usually pointed to the universalism of God's grace to the elect from all nations or was a reference to God's providence to the earth. Neither of these has anything in common with the modern version of common grace.

So, no man can do any good. But what does this imply for Christians?

Firstly, it means that no Christian can do any good work in his old nature. The old man is in Adam and fleshly Adam can do no good work since he is totally depraved. Christians, because they are Christians, do not do good works. They only do good works if they are acting in Christ having put on the new man.

Thus a first principle of sanctification, of doing good works, is that you need to understand when you are in the old nature and when you are in the new one. This is why Paul

<sup>12</sup> Note: Ps 14:1; Prov 4:19, 15:8-9, 21:4; Eccles 7:20; Isa 64:6; Matt 7:18.

<sup>13</sup> This is why grace is needed to believe the Gospel and repent. Man cannot do these good works unaided.

<sup>14</sup> Modern Common Grace was developed by Abraham Kuyper, principally to state that God, by it, favours sinners and thus enables them to work with the church to a common purpose to do good. This was developed for political purposes in the Netherlands to allow the Reformed party work with Roman Catholics to gain a majority in parliament. It was then further developed to substantiate the free offer to all men in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. See my paper, *Common Grace*.

frequently lists the works of the old man to show what is flesh. Thus lying is flesh. No Christian who ever uses a lie is doing a good work. A Christian claiming a do a good work based upon a lie is doing a bad work. Lies are the basis of false teaching and thus any Christian leader preaching heresy is going a bad work. Any church set up on the basis of false ideas is filled with bad works and will struggle to do any good at all since its whole basis is flawed.

Bad works will be scrutinised and shouted from the housetops. No reward will come from them.

So, if people do not understand the basics of progressive sanctification they cannot do any good works at all. If you do not understand the necessity of putting off the old man every day, then nothing you do will be worthy of a reward.<sup>15</sup>

This is because the basis of good works is God. Only what is of God is good. There is no good other than God (Matt 19:17; Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19). There is no good done in this world unless it originated in God. This is why Jesus was the only good man who ever lived – and he was utterly dependent upon doing God’s will, despite being God in the flesh.

Thus good works must emanate from God. The motivation for the work must be pure and arise from God. That is, the Holy Spirit must have motivated the work in the first place. Thus even prayers can be bad works unless they are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Do not think that all prayers reach God, only what originates in God and returns to God in prayer is a good work. There have been a great many bad prayers in church, just as there have been many bad sermons.

So, the origin point for the work must be God; the inspiration for the work must be divine.

Then the activity in the work must also be God. That is, the way in which the work is done must be by divine grace and not human strength. There are potential good works done in human strength and good works done in divine grace. The former has no value, but the intention was sincere; the later have divine acceptance. As well as inspiring the motivation for the work, the Holy Spirit must provide the energy for the work to be performed.<sup>16</sup> Frequently the Greek word for God’s grace given to believers to minister is the Greek work for energy (*energeia*); for example in Ephesians 3:7, ‘I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working (*energeia*) of His power.’ This is living by faith.

So, only God’s work, done God’s way is a good work.

But then the objective for the work must also be God. The goal of the work must be to glorify God and not man. Far too many works in the church today glorify men or some particular man. None of these will merit any reward. When churches are built according to human principles of management in brick cathedrals gathering large numbers and using worldly methods, all of the glory of that goes to men and not God. The works we do must be to the end that God is glorified. This means that the end goal must be according to God’s

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<sup>15</sup> Note the evil of antinomianism here. Those who teach that Christians are never guilty for anything, such as Terry Virgo, imply that believers can do good works without dealing with the flesh. If the Christian is never guilty and always righteous, then all he does is righteous, even when in his old nature. This is a pernicious lie.

<sup>16</sup> Gal 3:5, ‘Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?’ Eph 1:19, ‘what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power’. Eph 3:7, ‘I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power’. Col 1:29, ‘To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily’. Heb 13:21, ‘[May God] make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever’.

word or it is of no value at all. The very basis of our attempt to glorify God must be Biblical or the whole affair is a waste of time.

So, good works are only those that are inspired by God, are done in the power of God and were attempted to glorify God. Only such works have value in God's eyes. Thus the beginning and the end of our works must be God.

Now this does not mean that simple works are pointless; indeed, Jesus goes out of his way to emphasise that the simplest of works are registered by God as having value. Thus he tells us that even a cup of water given to someone (especially a believer) in the name of Christ (that is as if Christ were giving it) will be rewarded (Matt 10:42; Mk 9:41).

This also establishes a principle; if we do works as if we were doing them for Christ, they will be accepted by God as having value. Thus we can even do everyday ordinary jobs, as unto Christ, and be rewarded. For example, a wife who does the best job possible to establish the running of the home, if she does this as unto Christ, will be rewarded. Equally a man who does his job as unto Christ will be rewarded even if his employer does not bother.

So to do good works we have to overcome the problem of total depravity and this means that we must do works from the new man, by walking in the Spirit and abiding in Christ. All else is vanity.

Such works will attract a divine reward; anything else will be subtracted from our rewards. Thus rewards can be lost and we can enter heaven as if by fire. 1 Cor 3:15, 'If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire'.<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

Although few teach about the severe level of divine scrutiny of our whole lives, it will happen nevertheless and all believers ought to be wise in this matter. It is the greatest folly to live a complacent life, which will end in losing rewards. All believers ought to be set upon a course of doing good works that please God by abiding in Christ and walking in his Spirit. Only then will we be able to do the works that God commands. Even more amazing is the fact that God, in his grace, will reward such works and give us treasure in heaven.

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<sup>17</sup> I.e. as when a man jumps from a burning building naked to save his life. He gains his life but loses all he had.