



Baptist hour messages



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THE FINAL JUDGMENT

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Fundamental in the Christian faith is a belief in divine judgment. That judgment, which represents the final act in life's long, hard drama, will be the time when all mankind will stand before God Almighty to account for their way of living.

Then, there is a constant judging in time which does not wait until eternity. This judgment is the daily weighing of life's decisions on the scales of conscience, the balancing of wrong against right, the hammering out of life's rough edges on the anvil of the Golden Rule. Some of us judge ourselves; still others are judged by one another. Then the laws of God's universe are judging us whether it is the pace by which we move or the quality by which we think.

TWO JUDGMENTS

The first mentioned of these two judgments—the final judgment is not to determine whether or not one's soul is saved but the degree of his reward or punishment. The fact of one's salvation is established in time—not eternity—when an individual rejects or accepts his Saviour. But the import of this sermon is not to detail the agenda of eternity's judgment but to describe that process of judgment which our way of life is serving on us now and the probable course the human race will take in the ensuing decades. It is too late when we stand before God's shining presence to wishfully wonder

about what the world would have been like had our lives been more of an example to others.

What about that example right now? What deposit are you making with your life toward the judgments of a better world? In a word, do you expect our world to get better or worse? It is easy to excuse our detachment by either believing that the world will be changed for the better by impersonal wheels of history or by some miraculous intervention of God. Chances are that neither

Baptist Hour Sermon Topics for July

- July 6—The Nature of Heaven
- July 13—This Younger Generation
- July 20—Looking at Yourself
- July 27—"I Have Fought . . ."

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will happen. Are we pouring foundations on which the superstructure of a more understanding world will be built or are these efforts like a scrubwoman's mop trying to dry up the sea? Is this world getting better? If so, let's admit it. If it is not, let's take stock of what we are not doing.

NEITHER WORSE NOR BETTER

There are many who say that the world is getting neither worse nor better. Progress to them is but a mirage of the imagination. History rather turns in cycles to this school of thought and human nature remains basically the same. Individual exceptions stand out like tall trees in a forest of small trees, but most people, like most of those small trees do not ever reach enough altitude to matter. They readily agree that some are real sinners and a few are real saints but the rank and file neither add to nor take from the tenor of significant living.

Their reasoning is based on the belief that this is the way man is supposed to be.

Man is an animal, admittedly the highest of the species, but an animal nonetheless, and to expect the dreamer's plateau for him is too much. The world can't be changed since it does not need changing . . . its present condition, with modifications of course, is what it was intended to be. Religion to these reasoners is but the intoxication of delusion . . . helping in anesthetizing a bit of the pain of having to live in such a world, but wholly devoid of objective significance. Needless to add that this is the school which is populating the world with cynics, skeptics, agnostics and atheists.

Seeing no real meaning in life other than feeding one's stomach, clothing the children, competing with the neighbor next door, fighting off taxes and deflation, they grope through their dreariness journey "like quarry slaves scourged to their dungeons." While a Christian knows that much of life is drugery, that certain lines are fixed, nonetheless, he looks at this pagan philosophy with the eyes of a surgeon's scalpel, ripping it into shreds of sheer worthlessness . . . and that forthrightly without apology. It stagnates Christian faith while not being worthy of one hour's practice.

GETTING PROGRESSIVELY WORSE

Equally wrong and damaging is the next answer to our question as to whether or not the world is getting better. This second group states with adamant finality that the world is definitely getting worse. A progressive graph shows a downward declension. They contend that life was at its peak from the beginning of life and ever since has slid down the iceway of civilization. Now, unfortunately, many religious people fit into this category. They admit the necessity of the church in the world, they encourage missions and preaching the Gospel to the ends of the earth. With an evangelist's zeal they proclaim a faith that can remove mountains but deep inside they don't really believe that the mountains will move nor were intended to move.

Much like Jonah who went to Ninevah to preach repentance then when the Ninevites repented it made Jonah so peeved that he acted like a disappointed provincial. Strange dualism indeed! Yet many today act the same way. If the human race suddenly really embraced the faith with two firm hands and rubbed its salty preservatives on society's spoiling meat, many of the religious exponents of this belief would suddenly be stricken by chagrin and disdain. To many of them every bit of bad news, though received with regret, is silently weighed in the scale of their expectation that "wars and rumors of wars" represent some sort of strangely good news in that they are a part of a neatly arranged little schedule of events before the big final holocaust that destroys them all.

Well, if I understand the Bible aright this is a distorted view of the future indeed! If all the good people in this world today and those who have lived for twenty centuries before today's good ones is an argument in favor of the world getting progressively worse, if all the churches, hospitals, charitable organizations, if all the millions of recently pagan people but who now are praising the name of the One who was recently damned, if all the sacrificial giving of self and substance, the denying of the ego, the turning of the other cheek, the foregoing of shady profits, the concerted efforts of multimillions who see as life's most mag-

nificent obsession the relieving of human misery . . . if all these represent a sinking ship, then maybe we had better conclude that the human race isn't worth saving nor could it be if it were worth it.

GETTING PROGRESSIVELY BETTER

The other school of thought contends that the world is getting progressively better. Well, are we? In some areas, of course we are. Streptomycin is a better medicine than the witch doctor's strange concoction. Diamond pointed drills go through steel armor in but a few seconds. It would have taken a former generation many, many times longer. Once a ruptured appendix would have been interpreted as the possession of a devil. Today it is removed as routine surgery. That is progress.

Mental illness once considered as the strange visitation of the evil spirits, and unfortunately much the same consideration by too many moderns, still by most, is regarded as a type of illness which carries no more of a stigma than pneumonia. In commerce, industry, transportation, medicine, scientific research, techniques, space travel . . . yea, in many, many more there is astounding progress.

But are we getting better in the one realm that matters most . . . in the soul

and mind of man? Actually, this is all that matters for without progress here we shall lose the ground gained in the others. My answer is a qualified yes. Many millions are devoutly surrendered to God and His purpose for life. To them life is one wonderful experience because they have met the Author of life and the Saviour of life. Each day is a bursting sunrise of challenging adventure. But to conclude that any sizeable minority of the world's two and a half billion fit into this group is obviously false.

The great wave of religious curiosity that is sweeping our nation like a novel fad is not best interpreted as revival . . . because revival means giving life back to something that once had life. Many, many never had the life that others erroneously are interpreting as revived life. Yet, the smallest ratio of ingredient in good bread is the yeast. That yeast lifts the other parts of the wet, heavy dough until it rises to soft, palatable, light bread. Here is the hope of Christ's wonderful plan.

You and I are to be like yeast, worked into the bread of human society. If the yeast is not dissipated, it will lift the bread until our world will know a glory through Christ Jesus that will eclipse the wildest dream. Then shall be fulfilled that prophetic ideal, "righteousness shall cover the earth like the waters cover the sea."

SINLESS PERFECTION: DIRECTION OF DECEPTION?

June 8, 1958

Is it possible for a Christian to live without sinning? What means that Biblical warning, "The soul that sins shall surely die?" If we are intended to achieve a level of living known as sinless perfection, then either the great majority of us are failures or God has set up an impossible goal.

Friends, it behooves us today to answer this timely question about sinless perfection in a way that is in keeping with what the Bible really says. The passages are many and on the surface seem to be

conflictive in nature. One says, "He that saith he hath no sin deceives himself and the truth is not in him." Another, "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creation . . . the old man is passed away . . . behold, all things are made new." There are those who feel that the Christian ideals are too lofty and outside of the realm of their achievement; hence, many of them have abandoned any effort in that direction.

Others, feeling equally inadequate but still feeling an enslavement to the idea in