

“The Preparation of the Judgment”

1 John 4:17-21

Introduction

When runners are behind in a race, they must dig deep, find whatever strength and endurance they can and speed up to try to win. Paul compares the Christian life to a course we run by keeping the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). God has given us a way of speeding up so we can have confidence when our race is finished on the day of judgment, and it has everything to do with love. Growing in the exercise of biblical love is the key to successfully preparing for judgment.

Love is the decision to compassionately, righteously, responsibly and sacrificially seek the wellbeing of another. Loving God means seeking to please Him and pursuing His glory. We do that when we love others sacrificially. When we love, we reflect God's character because it is essential to His being. Love is intricate to who God is. If we love little, we know God very little. Our love reveals our fellowship or lack of fellowship with God. If we want to grow in our intimacy with God, then we need to grow in love. Our motivation to love comes from gratitude for the free gift of salvation. Also, love will give us boldness and confidence at the judgment seat of Christ. On that day, God will measure our loss or gain of rewards by looking at the amount of love we gave.

Love must be demonstrated. It cannot simply be discussed. We demonstrate love through good works. The term “good works” is often misunderstood as being merely good things, but even sinners do good things. Good works are good things with God attached to them. God is visible, not hidden, in good works. When we share the gospel or show mercy to strangers, we are doing good works. There can be no mistake that God takes part in those things. When we show mercy to others, God will show mercy to us. When we share the good news of Jesus Christ, God will always respond to anything that glorifies His son. When we share love, we will experience God's love more and more. Now is the time to speed up your ministry of love in preparation for the judgment. Despite past failures, you can get back in the race and look forward to eternal rewards.

Getting Started

1. How does the world define love and how does the Bible define love?
2. What differentiates good things from good works? What are some examples?

Let's Get Personal

1. What does your love of others reveal about your fellowship with God?
2. How has Christ strengthened you in loving others amidst difficulties?
3. How has your understanding of love been influenced by culture? How can you realign it with the Word of God?

Take the Next Step

1. How can you demonstrate love and mercy to your family, friends, and coworkers?
2. How can you make God known through your good works, so they are not merely good things?
3. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Peter 1:17; Matthew 12:36-37; Matthew 10:42; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Mark 10:28-31; Romans 2:12; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Colossians 3:23-24; 2 Timothy 2:12; Matthew 16:27; Ephesians 2:8-10; Revelation 21:4; Ephesians 6:8; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Luke 19:17; 1 John 2:28; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 19:29; John 12:26; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 22:16; Hebrews 1:14; Hebrews 10:35-36; Hebrews 9:15; Romans 8:17; 2 John 1:8; Matthew 25:14-30; Hebrews 10:29-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 13:38; Matthew 22:11-14; 2 Peter 3:1-14; Isaiah 30:15; Acts 3:19; Matthew 3:2; Matthew 3:8; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11; James 4:1-10; Matthew 12:41; Matthew 22:1-14; Colossians 3:1-11; Matthew 6:19-24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8; 2 Corinthians 4:18; 1 John 4:17-21; 1 John 3:16-21; 1 John 4:1-6; Hebrews 10:35-39; 1 John 5:3-5; Galatians 6:10; 1 John 4:7-16; 1 John 3:13-18; James 1:26-27; Matthew 10:32; Luke 10:23-37; Matthew 25:31-46; James 2:8; James 2:13.

Renew Your Mind

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”

1 John 4:17
