

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister  
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The Sermon: DEEDS DONE IN THE BODY

Scripture: Revelation 20:11-15.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to his works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

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For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive a reward of the deeds done in the body.

There is no principle more clearly taught in both old and new testaments than the principle of judgment according to deeds done in the body. This principle or doctrine exists side by side with the doctrine of salvation by grace. They are the two sides of the same shield -- the two faces of the same coin.

One who honestly tries to save himself by good works will soon become aware that it is impossible. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot keep the whole law. No matter how closely he guards himself or disciplines himself, he sins. When he sins, he needs forgiveness, and good works can never bring forgiveness. Only God's grace can bring forgiveness. Yet it is also true that we must make some response to God's grace. Life under God's grace must begin by taking God's demands seriously and trying to fulfill them.

It is right and reasonable and just that man should be judged on his response to this grace of God. Grace is a morally creative force. By releasing men from old habits and base desires, it opens up new and enlarged possibilities of living a new life that abounds in good works. If good works do not ensue as the results or fruits of grace, then grace has not been allowed to do its work.

God grants to every human being his free moral will or agency-- the right to choose for himself. Choice involves ac-

tion. If there is no action, there is no choice, except the choice of refusing to choose at all. I cannot make a choice between a good deed and a bad one unless I actually do one or the other -- unless I act on the basis of my choice. If I don't act when I am offered my choice of apple or cherry pie, I don't get any pie at all -- and that is my choice.

Agency and choice have no meaning and no moral value, unless they are followed by certain consequences or judgments. Some choices are of little consequence. It probably makes no difference whether I choose apple or cherry pie. But it makes a great deal of difference whether I choose to love my neighbor or to hate him. It matters a great deal whether I choose to serve God or Satan. And it is the law of the universe that every choice, and every act proceeding from every choice, have certain judgments and consequences. Some judgments are immediate. Some develop gradually, and continue indefinitely. Others are reserved for a great final judgment before the throne of God.

Unless there is some kind of judgment to follow every act, some accountability to some higher law or some omnipotent power and personality which we call God then there is no significance to what we call agency. Why bother to choose if there is no consequence to my choice? If it makes no difference whether I hate or love, why choose to do either? Grace

stimulates the right responses of men who are free moral agents. Moral agents must choose. Choice involves action. Every act has its consequences, or its judgments. Therefore, there can be no doubt about it; men are and will be judged according to the deeds done in the flesh. Good works are a necessary part of the Christian life.

Jesus never condemned good works -- not even the good works of the Pharisees. Remember that the Pharisees were the good solid respectable church-going citizens of their day. They paid tithes; they supported the temple and the priesthood. They observed all the feasts, the fasts, the sabbaths and holy days. They studied the scriptures. They kept the law, Jesus did not condemn them for any of these things. "These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the others undone." The thing that Jesus condemned was their pride in their works -- the idea that because of their good works they were superior to other men and needed no repentance. The publican who prayed, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner," was accepted of God because in his humility he repented and accepted God's grace. The Pharisee was rejected because in his pride of good works he denied that he needed any grace. We don't achieve salvation by forsaking all the good things the Pharisees do and turning to the sins of the publicans, but by repenting of such sins as we have, whatever they may be.

It might be said that there are two kinds of good works -- one good, and one not so good or perhaps even bad. There are good works done in one's own name, in one's own strength and wisdom, in pride, in self-righteousness, in cold calculation, with the eye on the expected reward. And then there are good works done in Christ's name and for his sake, in love, in humility, out of the fullness of the heart, without stint, without measure or calculation of reward. As examples, contrast the kind of work done on the family estate by the prodigal son after his return, restoration, and forgiveness, with the work done by his self-righteous brother who was carefully watching every nickel of his inheritance to see that no less worthy person should get it. Contrast the "works" of the lawyer who wanted Jesus to lay down some hard and fast law in answer to his question, "Who is my neighbor," with the works of the Good Samaritan who didn't check his law book or his scriptures, but simply was a neighbor to one he found in need.

If you don't think works are important, or if you believe that Jesus didn't think they were important, I suggest that you read carefully the 25th chapter of Matthew. First comes the parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins, who were judged according to what they did or did not do. Then comes the parable of the pounds or talents. All of the men in this parable had faith in the Master who gave them their stewardship. Those whose faith stimulated works that made possible an increase received a reward and added opportunity and responsibility. The one talent man who did nothing with his stewardship, relying only on his own faith and his Lord's mercy and grace, lost even the one talent he had.

Next read the parable of the sheep and the goats, and note that the blessed received a reward for the things they had done, not for their knowledge of the law or their faith; and that the goats were banished because they had had the same opportunity to perform works of kindness and mercy, but had done nothing. Do you remember the parable of the two sons? One said he would go and work in his father's vineyard. He confessed with his mouth; but he went not. The second son at first rebelled and refused to go; but later repented and went. Jesus leaves the story there, simply asking, "Which of these two did the will of his Father?"

One purpose of joining the Spirit and body in the Resurrection is that spirit and body might receive together the reward or punishment for the deeds they have done together during the probation of this life in the body. It is God's grace that makes possible this restoration, and this immortality. It is his grace, his mercy, his forgiveness, that bring us before him for judgment -- that release us from the hopeless burden of guilt -- that give us entrance to his kingdom. But it is our works that determine the degree of our reward. If we have not been willing or able to take care of even one talent, can we expect God to make us ruler over five cities?

We prepare for greater responsibility, greater service, greater joy and happiness, greater reward, greater glory, by using what we have in this life, wisely, worthily, humbly, diligently. According to the capacities we develop, we shall receive, for every man shall be finally judged according to the things which are written in the books -- the deeds done in the body.