

An Unbreakable Appointment

Preacher: Joe R.

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References: **2 Timothy 4**, Romans 1:9; Genesis 2:17; Galatians 6:14; John 5:22; Hebrews 9:27; Psalm 51:5; John 3:16; Revelation 20:11-15; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 5:9; Romans 10:13

The Seriousness of an Oath

Okay, if you were going to court for some reason—this would be in Canada—if you were called to go to court, you were either accused of something, or you have to go as a witness, or there's some reason that you have to participate in a courtroom setting. One of the things that they will ask you, even in Canada, is, "Do you promise to tell the truth?" Okay.

Now, I looked this up just before the meeting today, and you have some options in Canada. Of course, we want to please everybody, right? You have some options. You can place your hand on a Bible. That's option one, let's say. And you can raise your right hand and say, "I swear or I promise to tell the whole truth." Okay, and they receive that as a statement from you that you promise to tell the truth.

Now, in fairness, you can use any religious book you would like in Canada. It doesn't matter what the book is. If you are of another religion, you can put your hand on that book, and you can raise your other hand and say, "I promise to tell the whole truth." Okay, and then there's another option. And this option is if you happen to be—I'm assuming it's maybe First Nation—you could put your hand on a feather. I'm not sure about this, but that's what it said in the explanation. And you could promise to tell the whole truth.

What is the point of all this? This is a formal court. It is a legal court. It is a **serious** time. We're not there just telling stories. You've been called on to testify, or to witness, or to make a statement or something. And the judge is just reminding you this is very serious. If you lie, you will commit perjury. And that is a very serious offense, and a very serious consequences. Okay.

Now, the Bible has something similar in it to call attention to things that are very serious. Now, we're not going to look these verses up; I'm just going to share them with you. But in Romans chapter 1 and verse 9, the apostle Paul says, "God is my witness." Oh. He's about to

make some statements. He's about to tell some truth. And he said, "This is so serious that I want you to know that I call the ultimate—" Are you with me? The ultimate authority. **God is my witness.** In other words, "I can't go any higher. I can't swear by anyone greater. I can't make a more serious declaration. I'm calling God as my witness."

[Romans 1:9 NKJV] - For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,

Likewise, in the book of Galatians chapter 6 and verse 14, the same author, Paul, in a different context will say this—are you with me?—"God forbid." Oh, that's very serious. If God forbids, if God says, "Don't eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; in the day that you eat, you will surely die." God said that. That's very serious. You've got to take that serious. Thank you.

[Genesis 2:17 NKJV] - but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

In the New Testament, Paul is going to make a declaration, and he says, "God forbid." In other words, it's unthinkable not to do this. It's wrong. This is the most serious statement that I can tell you: "Don't do that. God forbid." He goes on to say that "I should boast in anything other than the cross." But the statement is—excuse me—"God forbid." That's the statement. Okay.

[Galatians 6:14 NKJV] - But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Paul's Final Charge

So we're going to look at a text this morning in which the writer says this is serious business. This is like going to a legal court and putting your hand on some object and with your mouth saying, "I swear, I promise I'm going to tell the whole truth."

Now, if you have a Bible, let's go to 2 Timothy and chapter 4, please. New Testament, 2 Timothy and chapter 4. For you Bible students, you will know that the Apostle Paul—who used to be called Saul of Tarsus, who got saved on the road to Damascus, who got commissioned to go into the world and preach the gospel—is the author who's writing.

Not only is this important, this is the last time that we will hear from the pen of the Apostle Paul. He is winding down. He says he's fought a good fight. He's finished the race. He's kept the faith. He's ready to go. But before he does go, he has some information to pass on to Timothy. And I want to read at this point just verse 1 for you. 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 1, reading from the New King James Version: "I charge you."

He's writing to Timothy. Okay. Timothy is a younger man. He's called of God. Paul—if I could use a way that maybe you can understand this—in a race, some of your children, maybe when you were younger in school or in some kind of competition, there was a race where there were four runners, and each runner would run part of the way through the race, and they would carry a baton in their hand and they would run so many yards around the race. And when they had finished their part, they would hand the baton off. The next runner would grab that and he would run, and then the next runner would grab that, and they would make a complete circuit or circle around the course, handing off the baton to the next runner.

That's what Paul is doing with Timothy. He's handing him the commission, the gospel: "Go into all the world, don't neglect your gift," et cetera, et cetera. So he says in this last chapter of his last book that he's writing: "I charge you. I'm calling God for my witness. This is a very serious thing. I implore you. I beg you. You can't get any more serious than this. Watch your Bible. I charge you, therefore, before God, or in the presence of God, or God is my witness. This is how serious it is. And His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ." So he's calling for God, he's calling for the Lord Jesus to be witnesses here.

[2 Timothy 4:1 NKJV] - I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

And he makes a statement now, "who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." You know earlier when I said if you go into a formal legal courtroom, things have to be done legally. And so that's why you have to make a statement, "I'm telling the truth. I promise to tell the truth." Paul is saying to Timothy, "I'm telling you something so serious that I'm calling God and the Lord Jesus as my witnesses." This is how serious it is.

But then he goes on to authenticate that you can't go any higher than God and the Lord Jesus. None higher. You can't say, "Well, I'm calling Joe for my witness." Well, who's Joe? Nobody knows Joe. "Well, I'm calling Joe's father." Well, who's Joe's father? "I'm calling God and the Lord Jesus." And then he says this. Watch this: "Who will judge the living and the dead?"

Now, dear friend, this is a meeting you cannot avoid. You can't cancel this meeting. You're going to be judged. I don't care who you are. I don't care who I am. You say, "Well, I'm a judge." It doesn't matter who you are. You're on earth. You're born into sin. We're all sinners. And the Bible says the Lord Jesus is going to be the judge of the living and the dead. We'll get to that in a minute.

So, yeah. Hold your hand here. We'll be back. Okay. I want you to go to John's Gospel, chapter 5. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, chapter 5. And the Lord Jesus is speaking. Just one verse, verse 22. John chapter 5, and verse 22. Jesus says, "For the Father judges no one"—that's God the Father—"but has committed all judgment to the Son." Okay.

[John 5:22 NKJV] - For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,

Now, the Bible is very, very clear that everybody is going to be judged. In the book of Hebrews—we won't turn there, chapter 9 and verse 27—it says, "It is appointed unto man once to die." Now, that's a generic term. It is appointed unto mankind. It is appointed unto man and woman. It is appointed unto every human being once to die. Huh? Huh? If 100 people are born, guess how many die? 100. It's appointed unto mankind once to die. But that's not the end of the verse. It's appointed unto man once to die, and after this—are you listening?—the judgment.

[Hebrews 9:27 NKJV] - And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

You see, you have an **unbreakable** appointment with Jesus Christ. Now, you have some choice in this. That is, when you meet Him, you have a choice. Because you can meet Him by faith. You can confess that you're a sinner, that you've offended a holy God, that you believe that God has a salvation plan, that He sent His Son to take your place, to die in your stead on the cross, gave His life so you could be forgiven. Your sin separates you from God. But Jesus

came to take your place. He was separated from God on the cross. He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Okay, He's taking our place. Sin separated Him from God. He paid the penalty of our sin. He died. He was buried. He rose again the third day.

And by faith, you can say, "Lord Jesus, I accept Your payment. I accept Your love. I accept Your salvation. I know I can't save myself. I can't forgive my own sin. And so I accept what You have done for me." The Bible calls that being born again. The Bible calls that salvation. Over 100 times in the New Testament, it calls that act of faith, "you are saved." So you get to choose if you want to accept the Lord Jesus while you're living on earth. But you will meet Him. You'll meet Him by faith as your Savior, or you'll meet Him as your judge after you die. It's appointed unto man once to die, after that the judgment. Okay.

So we're talking now—watch it again back in our verse—the Lord Jesus will judge the living and the dead. Who are they? Who's the living and the dead? Well, the scriptures say that all who are born into the world are dead. That's kind of weird, really, but it's the truth because it's talking about a spiritual life and death. How can you be born dead? We're not talking about a stillborn baby who is physically dead; we're talking about stillborn spiritually. The Bible makes it very clear: we're born dead. We're born in sin, born dead, separated from God spiritually. That's why we have to be born again. We need a new relationship with God. We need a new start in life to have God as our Father and not as our Judge.

And so, the living are those who have trusted the Lord Jesus as their Savior. Those are the ones who've passed—are you listening?—from death to life. They were dead in trespasses and sins; now they're alive to God because they accepted God's plan of salvation—forgiveness of sins, new life on earth, guaranteed life in heaven. Those are the living. Well, who are the dead? Well, the dead are those who've never trusted the Lord Jesus.

The Condition of the Lost

They are born into the world separated from God, and they continue on. One time I saw a little gospel tract. Now, a gospel tract is generally a little piece of paper about this big, and it has some kind of a statement on the front that maybe is intriguing or asks a question or something like this. And this particular tract had on the front of it: "What must I do to go to hell?" That was on the front. So if you picked it up, that's what it said: "What must I do to go to hell?" So you open it up. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing on the inside. You don't have to do anything to go to hell. Okay.

You're born in sin. David said, "In sin did my mother conceive me." You're born in sin. You go forth from the womb speaking lies. We're separated from God. We're dead, the Bible says.

We're dead in trespasses and sins. What we need is a new birth. Because we're born already with our back to God.

[Psalm 51:5 NKJV]

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

Sin has permeated the human race. It's passed on. Okay, I got it. We're all sinners. I got it. That's the problem. The good news, the answer, is salvation is in God's plan. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him," the Lord Jesus, the Son, "has everlasting life." That's God's good news.

[John 3:16 NKJV] - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

As many as receive Jesus, as you would receive a gift, trust the Lord as your Savior, receive Him. You have the right now to be in the family of God, sons and daughters of God. So you move from death to life.

So in this statement that we read in 2 Timothy chapter 4, it says that the Lord Jesus, who is the judge, judges the living and the dead. You say, "Wait a minute. I thought that if you were born in sin and you got saved as a Christian, you trusted Christ, there wouldn't be any judgment." Well, there won't be any judgment for your sin. But there will be a judgment.

Now, let's see if we can look into this. I'm going to give you a flyover, and then we're going to look at some verses. The flyover is this: every one of us will meet Jesus Christ as a judge. Every one of us. Whether you're a Christian or you're not a Christian. And I use the word Christian very carefully here—one who's accepted Christ, one who's born again. Okay. You will meet the Lord Jesus as your judge. And those who have never trusted the Lord Jesus, what do you got to do to go to hell? Nothing. Just keep going. Don't ever get born again. Don't ever accept Christ as your Savior. Don't do anything like this; just continue on. And the Bible says there is the eternal lake of fire waiting for you.

Two Distinct Judgments

But there are two judgments. Let's go first to the judgment of those who never accept Christ as their Savior: Book of the Revelation, chapter 20. Revelation chapter 20. Remember, the Lord Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead. Revelation chapter 20, last book in your Bible. I'm going to begin reading verse 11. Revelation chapter 20, verse 11.

[Revelation 20:11 NKJV] - ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Verse 12, and I saw the dead. Oh, oh, the dead. Well, who are the dead? Well, the dead are those who have never trusted the Lord Jesus. These are the ones who never got born again, who never saw their need, who never reached out in faith and accepted God's plan of salvation. They never admitted they had a need; they just kept rejecting the Lord Jesus.

"I saw the dead," and I noticed there were two categories of the dead: the small and the great. What I want you to know about this is, within those who have rejected Christ, there are some that are very powerful people. Shakers and movers, I guess we would call them. Okay. People in important positions and important places. And there are others that you never hear their name. They're born on the backside of nowhere, but they've never trusted Christ as their Savior. The Bible says they're dead—the small and the great. Notice where they are: standing before God. And the books are open. And another book is open, which is the book of life. And the dead, the small and the great, were judged according to their works by the things which were written in the books.

[Revelation 20:12 NKJV] - ¹² 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.

See, it would appear that God keeps impeccable records. Yes. This is your life. It's all recorded: your genealogy, your birth, your life, your death, it's all coming in front of the judge. And the books are open, and you're judged according to the things that you have done, which is in the books.

Verse 13, "the sea gave up the dead which were in it." I'm not sure if that's the sea of humanity or if that's the ocean. Doesn't matter. "The sea gave up the dead. Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." Oh. You can't hide in the grave. You can't just die and say, "It's all over, you know." No, it's not. Remember we read the verse? "It's appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment." So death and hell gives up the dead that were in them. And they were judged, each one according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

[Revelation 20:13-14 NKJV] - ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

This is at the—listen—this is the last event in time. Oh, the next thing is going to be eternity. This is like God's whole plan, all the way through, all the way through, all the way. Now, the last event in time is what's called the **Great White Throne Judgment**, and all the Christ-rejecters are judged. The dead—they're all dead. They're all separated from God. Look at verse 15.

[Revelation 20:15 NKJV] - ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

None of these people got their names in the Book of Life. You know how you get your name in the Book of Life? You **choose** to accept Christ as your Savior. That's the only way you can get your name in the Book of Life. You admit that you're the sinner. You admit that Christ is the only Savior, that God sent Him because He loved you and doesn't want you to go to the lake of fire. That's your escape. But all these people didn't do that, and their name was not in the Book of Life, and they were cast into the lake of fire. Okay.

The Testing of the Believer

Let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. 1 Corinthians chapter 3. There is another judgment. The judgment that we read about in Revelation chapter 20 is for all who don't want Christ. They've never trusted the Lord Jesus. They are dead in their trespasses and sins. But now

we're going to read about those who have trusted the Lord Jesus as their Savior. Look at verse 10—1 Corinthians chapter 3—verse 10, sorry, verse 10.

[1 Corinthians 3:10-11 NKJV] - ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

He's using the terms here, architectural terms, about a building. We know that if you want to build a structure of any kind, you have to have a foundation. And so he's saying in our spiritual life, the foundation is Jesus Christ. How we live our life is like building a building, building on top of that foundation. These are for those who have trusted the Lord Jesus.

Verse 12: "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 Corinthians 3:12-15 NKJV] - ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Now, let me try to put this in perspective. For the believer, we're not going to the Great White Throne. That's for the dead. That's for the unbeliever. But for those who've trusted in Christ, we're going to a testing station where God is going to review our lives as Christians. We're not going to be judged according to our sin; our sin has been paid for. There's going to be a review seat where God reviews our life of how we lived our life for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's go to 2 Corinthians now, chapter 5. You're in 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and let me read verse number 10. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 10. This will help, I think.

[2 Corinthians 5:10 NKJV] - 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.

Not Great White Throne judgment—that's for unbelievers. **Judgment seat of Christ** is for believers. 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—or "worthless" is the idea.

So for the believer, we're going to have a time when we come before the Lord Jesus. Yes. And He's going to review our life. And this review is not to determine whether we're going to heaven or hell. We've already accepted Christ as our Savior. Our sins have been forgiven. We are going to heaven, guaranteed by the word of God. Okay, wonderful, great.

However, we must give an account to God of the things which we have done in the body, in our life while we were on earth, whether it was good or whether it was worthless. And it's going to be reviewed. As we read in 1 Corinthians 3, it's going to be tested by fire.

What does that mean? If you put gold in a fire, it just turns out better. All of that—all the imperfection, the dross is burned off, and you've got pure gold. You put wood or hay or straw in a fire, what do you get? Ashes. Ashes. You put gold or silver or precious stone and you test that by fire, it proves to be real; it proves to be valuable. So the testing station is going to be what we call the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Now, this is a term that they all knew, and even in the Olympic Games back in those days—or back in the days today—as people's lives are reviewed, as their talents are tested, then rewards are given because they've done well. If they don't win a prize, they still were in the Olympic Games, they just didn't win a prize.

God has a prize for everybody who knows Him as Savior. And you can't get a better prize than it. You know what it is? It's His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. For those who have lived for Christ, who have served Christ, who have been a good representative of the Lord Jesus, who lived their life in obedience to the word of God and serving the Lord Jesus as a housewife, as a business person—whatever your job on earth, whatever your gift is, you've been faithful to that. Guess what? You get another reward. The Bible talks about even crowns: crowns of faithfulness, crowns of life, crowns for soul winners. There's all kinds of... And God will say, "Here's one for you, faithful witness. And here's one for you." Nothing to do with your salvation; everything to do with your service for the Lord Jesus.

The Ultimate Authority

Now, let's go back to 2 Timothy chapter 4. 2 Timothy and chapter 4. You know, when the apostle John writes his epistle, 1 John—you can look this up sometime, it's in chapter 5 and verse 9, we're not going to turn there—but it says this:

[1 John 5:9 NKJV] - If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

Getting back to the courtroom, right? So some guy comes to the courtroom, and he says, "I swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth." And everybody goes, "Okay. Tell the truth." And he makes a statement. We go, "Okay. We receive it. He promised to tell the truth." And that's what John says: if we receive the witness of man—which we do in a courtroom, okay?—the witness of God is greater. Of course, man can lie; God can't. So whatever God says is great.

So Paul says in 2 Timothy—notice it: "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead." You got it now? We know where we're going with this? In other words, "I got something so serious, I'm calling God and the Lord Jesus my witness. And I want to tell you how high of an authority that is." You cannot go any higher than the Judge of all the earth. This is the final Judge. Doesn't matter what man says; doesn't matter what religion says. God the Father and the Lord Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead.

So if you're here today and you know the Lord, hey, guess what? There's going to come a time when you're going to stand in the Lord's office. He's going to say, "Next, Joe." "Joe Reese, yes." "Come in, Joe. Nice to have you in heaven with all the believers. Now, what I want you to do is just watch. I'm going to review your life now. You're going to..." "Just tell me if this is an accurate record or not." And so, "This is your life." As a Christian, my sins are forgiven. This is what I've done, and it's going to be tested by fire. My question to you and to myself—are you with me?—what will you have left on the fire? The holiness of God tests your life and mine.

Let's suppose an angel dips into the fire, and he brings over a little shovel like you use to take the ashes out of the fire in your fireplace at home or your stove, you know. And that's all he gives you: "Here's your reward. There it is—a few ashes." A few ashes. Well, that'd be rather disappointing, I think. You're in heaven. It's okay. You're going to be saved forever. Wouldn't it be nice if you had a crown or two? Because you know what you're going to do with those? You're not going to wear them in heaven and say, "Oh, I got the soul winner's

crown. Look at me." Not a chance. If you have a reward of any kind, you know what it's going to be your privilege to do? Take it and present it to the Lord Jesus and say, "I am what I am by the grace of God." Wouldn't that be wonderful? The day is coming, folks. We will give an account as Christians.

Choose Your Meeting

But then I end with Revelation 20: the Great White Throne. That's the end. By the time you get to the Great White Throne, there's no turning back. You can't reverse it. You can't say, "Oh, wait a minute, I want to trust Christ." It's too late. You've had many chances. You've got a chance here this morning. You can do it this morning. You can say, "Boy, that makes perfect sense to me. I don't want to go to the Great White Throne Judgment. I don't want to be cast into the lake of fire. I want my sins forgiven. I want to be in the family of God."

You can do that right now, right where you're sitting. Just call on the name of the Lord. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," the Bible says. Admit you're a sinner. Admit you can't save yourself. And call on the name of the Lord: "Save me. I don't want to go to the lake of fire." You have an **unbreakable** appointment with Jesus Christ.

[Romans 10:13 NKJV] - For

"whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

What you get to choose is when you're going to meet Him. You can meet Him right now as the Lamb of God, or you will meet Him at the Great White Throne as your judge. You get to choose.

Father, thank you for giving us a choice. And thank you for the Savior coming. And thank you for the working of the Spirit of God in all of our lives right at this moment. We're praying your will be done for Christ's sake.