

Part 40: Integrity at the Judgment

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There's a children's story where there's a king over a kingdom. And in this kingdom there's a group of little girls that are mean to this other little girl. They bully her and treat her like an outsider – like she doesn't belong. And the king is totally fine with this – it doesn't bother him at all. In fact, he would approve of it. But then there comes a day when the king is exposed as a fraud. He's the one who doesn't belong – he has no right to the throne – and so he is removed so that the throne can be restored to its rightful ruler. And to everyone's surprise, it turns out that that mistreated little girl is actually Princess Venellope von Schweetz – the rightful ruler of the land. The mean little girls are shocked and dismayed. They come groveling before her, and she graciously says, "Tut, tut, as your merciful princess, I hereby decree that everyone who was ever mean to me shall be... executed." Thankfully, Venellope was just kidding and the story ends with everyone getting along. But the point is that the mean little girls had lived their life thinking that they answered to the wrong judge. They thought it was King Candy. In reality, it was the princess they had bullied. They hadn't known how they were going to be judged and so they weren't prepared for judgment. If they had known the truth about who the true ruler was and how that ruler was going to judge them, then their lives would have reflected that.

It's possible that some of us here today are confidently going through life completely unprepared for judgment because we have a false sense of security around how we are going to be judged. For others of us, we might be consumed with worry about how other people might be judging us – being afraid of being looked down on or being rejected in their courtroom. But maybe the courtroom we worry about isn't actually the one that matters. And maybe the decisions we're making to avoid judgments are actually shortsighted.

Well we've been working our way through the book of Acts, and at this point the gospel of Jesus is spreading through the Roman Empire. And in our passage today, Paul, who's a faithful messenger of Jesus – he stands in two different courtrooms being examined by Jews and Romans because of his message about Jesus. He's in dangerous situations where people want to end his life. But Paul is prepared to maintain his integrity through his trials because he knows how he and everyone else is ultimately going to be judged. In that knowledge, Paul has integrity in what he believes and how he lives.

And that's the title of this message today: "Integrity at the Judgment."

And as we just heard, this is a very lengthy passage today. We're not going to be able to look at all of it in depth. But as we move through sections of the text I want to highlight this main point: Knowing how you're judged prepares you for judgment.

And we're going to look at this in two points:

1. Judgment by the True Court
2. Judgment by the Final Decision

And as you listen today, I want you to formulate an answer to a question that I'm about to ask, and after the service, I want you to share your answer with someone else who is here today. So kids, this goes for you too – On your way home or over lunch, I want you to share your answer with your parents and then ask them to share their answer with you. Okay, so here's the question: How can you know you're okay in God's courtroom?

And so let's look at our first point today: Judgment by the True Court

So as we saw last week, this Roman officer, or tribune, named Cladius wants to know the real reason why the Jews want to kill Paul. So now he commands the Jewish leaders to meet together and sits Paul down before the council. Now Paul will make his defense in 23:1-2.

So Paul is on trial before this Jewish council, but he says that he's lived his life "before God in all good conscience." He's saying that there's nothing to any accusations against him. And this causes Paul's opponents to feel indignant. They believe that to follow Jesus is to depart from true Judaism. So Paul says that he has a clear conscience before God – that his Christianity is the true faith and that his life is consistent with that true faith. And that's scandalous to them. So the high priest has someone strike him on the mouth. Paul is in a volatile situation. So what compels him to take such a bold stance?

Well it matters which courtroom you think you're in.

When I was a young driver, I got a careless driving ticket. I had to go to the courthouse and stand in front of a judge. And a friend of mine who had extensive experience with tickets put me at ease. He told me which judge I was likely to have and he coached me on the appropriate thing to say and assured me that I would get off easy. But when I got to the courtroom it was a different judge than I had been expecting, and the rules for careless driving tickets were different from other tickets. The judge said I had to take a class on all the horrible things that can happen when you drive carelessly. I didn't know who I would be standing before, and so I was prepared for the wrong courtroom.

Maybe you've experienced this before as a kid or as a parent with kids. There have been times that my 5-year-old walks by looking like he's on a mission. And when I ask him what's up and offer to help he nervously insists that he has a question for mommy. He knows that it matters who you stand before.

Paul knew who he ultimately stood before. He said "I have lived my life before God." He may have been standing before the Jewish council, but he lived his life knowing who his judge really was. And so he had a clear conscience in obeying Jesus no matter what these men thought of him or could do to him.

When I'm counseling people at church, a common issue that comes up is the feeling of shame over what other people think of them. Often when I've asked someone whose acceptance matters to them, they'll say "everyone." We can have such a craving for approval from people that we try desperately to anticipate what their standards are that we would have to meet for them to like us or affirm us. We're

always performing for people trying to unlock the appreciation we desperately want from them. And yet other people's standards are a moving target. We could never satisfy everyone.

When I worked in retail, it was amazing how you could have 99% of customers who you had great interactions with but if just one customer made you feel incompetent, it could completely ruin your day. Even just being in a crowd of people – maybe even today at church - you might sometimes panic inside at the thought that perhaps in other people's eyes you aren't put together enough or attractive enough or normal enough. We can feel a sense of guilt and condemnation.

But are we in the right courtroom?

Who will you live your life before? The only way to have a truly good conscience is when that conscience has been aligned to God's opinion instead of man's.

For young adults in the room, peer pressure is all about whose courtroom you're in. The world might say that the solution is to just not care about what anyone thinks. But deep down we know that if we say there's no courtroom, we're just pretending. The real question is: what does God think? Do you live in light of that in how you talk about yourself and present yourself?

Parents, everyone has an opinion on how you should parent. You might wear yourself out trying to give your kids enough opportunities, enough excellence, enough experiences, enough friends, enough instruments, enough sports. But in whose eyes are you living? How can the priorities in your schedule reflect that you live before the eyes of God rather than men.

The judge you think you stand before will shape your choices. Knowing how you're judged prepares you for judgment.

We know the terms of approval are always changing. And Luke's narrative will show that. By the time Paul ends up in Rome he will have stood on trial five times, some are informal and with his peers, others are official and Jewish, others are Roman and imperial. And while his judges seem to change...his confidence doesn't.

Paul lives his life before God, and so he doesn't cave to the courtroom of men. First and foremost, he has a clear conscience that he believes the true faith. But from that, he also has a clear conscience in how he then lives in light of that faith. Which we'll see in v.3-5.

So when the high priest ordered Paul to be struck in the mouth, he was actually violating the very law of God that they were supposed to be upholding. Paul is angry at this and charges the council with injustice. He says "God is going to strike you." Recognizing the true courtroom means that he recognizes everyone including the people judging him are accountable to God.

Now he was right that being struck like he was wasn't just, but he didn't realize it was the high priest who ordered it. So when he's accused of reviling the high priest, Paul quickly backs down and essentially says: I made a mistake.

One pastor said that the right truth at the wrong time is still the wrong truth. You might have something to say that is biblically true, but you need to check if it is a biblically appropriate time to say it. And so even though Paul is right in what he said, he's so sensitive to God's word that he doesn't want to disobey this command to not speak evil of a ruler. He doesn't use their mistreatment as an excuse to ignore that command. Sin doesn't make other sin okay.

In our home, our children helpfully provide lots of illustrations of the exact opposite of this. Recently we had one of our daughters practice babysitting her younger siblings. We had given those children one rule that we thought was really clear - and that was to obey their babysitter (unless she tells you to sin). However, we received several phone calls from our daughter throughout our short time away as she filed extensive police reports with us of various infractions of our one rule. When we got home we found that these misdemeanors were in fact a response to the greatest injustice a younger sibling can experience. In short, their older sister was bossy. Now had she been bossy? Yes. And we took the opportunity to help her understand what Christlike, servant leadership looks like. However, we had to explain to her younger siblings that though her bossiness wasn't just, they weren't really concerned about justice. If they had been concerned about justice, then they would have been concerned about the injustice of not following our one very clear rule: obey your babysitter (unless she tells you to sin). Answering the question "how many pieces of pizza have you had" is not sinning. Doing a chore you've been assigned even though it's not your "normal chore" is not sinning. But disobeying mommy and daddy is.

If you care about obedience to God, then you won't just be concerned with the other person's sin but your own as well. We're really good at excusing our own sin while featuring other people's in the courtroom. But Paul seeks to obey God's word to maintain a clear conscience before God even in the face of mistreatment. Our hearts might yearn to respond in kind when we feel that something isn't fair. We might see other people's sin against us clearly - we may be right. But God doesn't just call us to be "right" but to be "obedient." Paul is serious about living in light of judgment by the true court. He has integrity at the judgment.

If Paul is so concerned to obey God's word, even when being so mistreated, how much more should we be concerned about obeying God's word. Our relationships are constantly giving us material for venting our frustrations. But are we only thinking horizontally in the courtroom? God's commands are meant to be obeyed. So if you remember that you live your life before God, where do you need to prioritize concern with your own obedience over how other people are treating you?

And so we see in this passage what it looks like to maintain a clear conscience before God. Paul didn't know and act perfectly. He hadn't realized who he was rebuking. And so even though he was right, if saying it meant he was violating some other command of God, then instead of blame-shifting he would acknowledge his mistake.

And we can do this because we trust the true judge. The thing that frees us up from trying to be the judge when we're mistreated is the fact that there is a judge who everyone stands before. Not taking matters into your own hands doesn't mean that justice is sacrificed. Instead, it's precisely because all

of us stand before the judge who knows everything that we can entrust ourselves to the one who judges justly. Christ calls *us* to obedience, *and* he speaks on our behalf.

Now for some Christians, being aware of the right courtroom just leaves them hopelessly trapped in guilt and shame. We may take obedience seriously but without remembering the gospel we're headed to despair. Sometimes awareness of sin leads to self-loathing or even self-harm. It can be a form of self-atonement trying to relieve the conscience by preemptively punishing yourself in the courtroom. The problem is that there is just too much "self" in all of this.

Just as we must know we are in the true courtroom, we also need to know the true judge. Other people are not the judge, but neither are we. Even as believers, how we functionally relate to God can often be summarized as "performance unto acceptance." It is true that we are accepted by God based off of performance. But it is Christ's performance in our place, not our own. If you have renounced trust in yourself to be your own savior and have instead put your trust in the finished work of Christ, then your hope is not in your obedience but in Christ. If you really take your sins seriously then you will recognize that whatever self-punishment you can come up with won't cut it – only Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice in your place could atone for your sins. In our standing before God in Christ, we can't add to his payment for our sins or his merit that he has gifted us. So when the Christian sins, we can get back up again because we never stopped being in Christ.

So we see evidence here that Paul's clear conscience in his life isn't the result of perfection but of repentance. For the Christian, a good conscience doesn't mean we never sin. But it does mean that we know where to take our sin, and find peace through the work of Jesus. Repentance, not perfection, gives us a clean conscience in God's courtroom.

Where might you need to live out this kind of repentance in your life? If there's an area of your life where you haven't been living with a clear conscience, what would it look like to repent like this? Maybe the first step would just be inviting in a fellow church member who can help you head in the other direction.

So we've seen that this council is not interested in upholding God's law. And then in v.6-10, Paul notices that the council is split between two parties: the Sadducees and the Pharisees. In the absence of any formal accusations, Paul states the true reason he's on trial but in such a way that it exposes the insincerity of the council. He shrewdly cries out, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial." This was a controversial thing to say. The Pharisees and Sadducees have a theological disagreement over the resurrection so the two parties take sides and some on the Pharisees' side even start defending Paul. And then the council turns violent and the Romans have to rescue Paul again.

So Paul needs encouragement in v.11.

What a comfort for Paul to have the Lord himself come and stand by him. There are other instances of apostles being in prison and angels coming and rescuing them. This time it is the Lord himself who comes. And yet he doesn't rescue him. Instead he tells him to take courage because he must be a

witness of the facts about Jesus in Rome too. There's no earthquake. There's no doors being flung open.

Oftentimes our lives are not what we expected. Disappointment often reigns. Feeling stuck in a marriage – a mid-life crisis – dealing with chronic illness. Often we just want to escape reality. Sometimes people numb themselves with marijuana, or distract themselves with entertainment, or try to feel better in gluttony, or try to feel successful or in control with pornography. When we live for “my kingdom come, my will be done,” our disappointed expectations can leave us frustrated that this isn't fair.

And this is especially true if we feel like we did all the right things and then we got ripped-off. If the way things are supposed to work in the courtroom is that I work hard and make sacrifices and then God blesses me, then I'm going to be angry when all my obedience is repaid with suffering. This isn't how it's supposed to be. It isn't fair.

Paul keeps doing the right thing, and he keeps suffering for it. But Jesus encourages him that he is going to get him to Rome to share the gospel. It's not the Jews or the Romans who are ultimately going to get him to Rome. It's Jesus. So what would Paul have to value in order for that to be an encouraging message while sitting in custody?

You know Paul, when he gets to the end of his life and is awaiting execution in Rome, he writes his final letter to his beloved ministry partner, Timothy. And in that letter he charges Timothy to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus to keep the word going forward and to share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. And then he uses the soldier metaphor and says, “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” Paul lives his life before God in the true courtroom. He knows who has enlisted him and he wants to do what's pleasing to him. He stacks other metaphors to make the same point - that there is something that is worth all the suffering and self-discipline involved in gospel ministry. And what is that? He says, “I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Jesus is going to get Paul to Rome to share the gospel. Paul is called to do it. He must obey. But it's exactly what his heart desires to do and Jesus will give him the strength to do it. Paul stands before God, but Jesus stands with Paul. What could be more worth suffering for than trusting and obeying Jesus knowing that we're participating in the salvation of the lost to the glory of God?

Directly after service today, we're going to have a member meeting where the members will vote on affirming Paul Cheng as a Sovereign Hope missionary. Paul and his wife Ellyn would be the first missionaries we have committed to send out in over 40 years. They know they are facing a lot of suffering in this. This is not easy for them. If their hearts didn't agree with the apostle Paul on this then they wouldn't go. But they look at the cost and say “I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” There are going to be a lot of times where Paul and Ellyn are going to need the same encouragement the apostle needed that night – that Jesus will stand with them and give them everything they need to testify to Jesus where he has called them to go.

How might Christ use you to support and encourage the Chengs in what Jesus has for them to do? If you are a member please stay after service and vote. And consider praying for them regularly and if you might be able to financially support them.

And if you aspire to be involved in missions, do you share the apostle's desire? If Paul did missions because he wanted to show his greatness and be admired in man's courtroom then he would have quit in the face of his sufferings. But suffering for the sake of others is how gospel ministry goes forward because that's how our savior came for us. Paul has integrity in how he lives before God in what he has ordained because his heart is aligned with his savior's.

So now we're going to summarize v.12-35. While Paul maintains his clear conscience before God, the Jews hatch a plot to deceive the Roman officer so they can ambush and kill Paul. The deception stands in sharp contrast to Paul's integrity. More than forty men strictly bound themselves by an oath to neither eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

And so Paul's nephew just so happens to overhear the plot and Paul's able to get word to Claudius and he safely gets Paul to Governor Felix. Claudius's letter to Felix is also comical. He chooses to leave out the part about how he ignorantly bound a Roman citizen and instead makes himself the hero. He's trying to boost his image in governor Felix's court. There's just a lack of integrity all around. And yet, despite everything the gospel is advancing.

The company of Roman soldiers that escort Paul out of Jerusalem is impressive. Maybe up to half of the garrison at Jerusalem is escorting the gospel one more step towards Rome. The Romans don't acknowledge the true courtroom and have no idea that they are obeying God's plan to spread the gospel. But as we'll see in our next section, though everyone will ultimately play right into God's plan, it is those who decide to follow Christ who willingly obey him and are vindicated at the judgment. Everyone's decision regarding Christ will be the basis for the final decision before Christ.

And this leads us to our second point: Judgment by the Final Decision

So in 24:1-9, Paul stands before the Roman Governor named Felix. Some of the Jewish religious leaders from Jerusalem are there to make their accusations. And they have a spokesman named Tertullus who presents their case. And Tertullus' little speech is kind of a joke. He's just posturing in the courtroom. He painfully flatters the governor telling him how much the Jews love him even though this was verifiably false. Then he accuses Paul of stirring up riots, being a ringleader of the Christians, and profaning their temple. And so it's time for Paul to respond in v.10-21.

And so Paul works through their accusations showing how they are false. The only thing he confesses to is being a follower of "the Way" which is what Christianity was first called. His accusers call Christianity a "sect" but Paul argues that Christians are actually the true followers of the God of Judaism. He says that Christians worship "the God of our fathers" and believe "everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets." All these promises point to our hope in God that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So Paul is arguing that Christians have the true faith

that is not in contradiction with Judaism but rather fulfills it in Christ. And he features the resurrection of the dead again saying that it is his hope in God.

When we think about what gives us hope, I don't know that we often think about the resurrection of the dead. In our lives, we often have such fragile hope that God would even just help us through the day. But consider for a moment that without Christ, death is constantly a near enemy who always has the final say. We are powerless against it. As much as we might try to ignore it or avoid it, death is an ever-present reality.

I remember when a member of the church passed away several years ago. I heard that he was declining and was headed over but I got there too late. I sat with his son and daughter-in-law in the room where his body lay. It was so strange to see him there not breathing – you half-hoped he might take a breath at any moment. But he was gone and we were all powerless to do anything.

But because Christ was raised from the dead, we have hope.

I want to read this quote from Paul Tripp about the miracle of Christ's resurrection. He says:

“Consider with me the magnificence of the resurrection of Jesus. He was in the tomb long enough to be certifiably dead. Dead. Rising again after death meant that the synapses in his brain suddenly began to fire; electric charges fired through his nervous system; the muscles in his heart started to pump; fresh blood coursed through his veins; his muscles suddenly became soft and flexible; his organs turned on and functioned in symmetry with one another; his eyes became moist and able to focus; he suddenly could breathe, smell, taste, and feel. His balance and orientation returned. His ability to relate and communicate instantly turned on. Thoughts and desires, plans and purposes suddenly rushed in. This is but a limited summary of everything that had to happen all at once for Jesus to be able to get up, fold his grave cloths, and walk alive out of that tomb.” (Paul Tripp, *Do You Believe?*, p. 169)

All who are in Christ will likewise share in a resurrection like his. It feels so surreal at a graveside when the casket or the urn of a saint goes into the ground and the dirt is being shoveled back into place. In all of the confusion though, we have this hope – that we will see that brother or sister again in the flesh when they come out of that grave at the resurrection. Because of the one who was raised, we have resurrection hope in Christ.

But it doesn't just say that Christians will be resurrected. Paul says there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. What does that mean? Well just as believers will enjoy eternal life with a physical body, so the sufferings of eternal judgment will be experienced in a physical body. At the final judgment, there couldn't be more at stake.

And so did you notice that it is after Paul confesses this truth of the resurrection of both the just and the unjust that he says, “So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.” He lived his life knowing that other people would stand in God's courtroom too. Paul doesn't back down from boldly proclaiming the gospel because receiving God's grace through faith is the only way

anyone can be justified in God's courtroom. Paul has integrity because his witness about Jesus is consistent with the biblical hope that he claims to believe.

Is your life consistent with the belief that other people will stand in God's courtroom? God is the one who decides between the just and the unjust. He gives the final verdict. To have a clear conscience toward God and man is to live in a way that makes sense in light of that reality.

Parents, how far down the road are you preparing your kids for? We want our kids to be prepared for college, being a good citizen, getting married, being a parent – we might even encourage our kids to start saving for early retirement. But is our primary concern to prepare them to stand in God's courtroom?

One of the first things that my five-year-old asks me about people that he meets is, "are they a Christian?" I'm grateful that he's picked up on that priority in relationships.

I've seen families seek to build a culture like this in their homes in different ways. You might pray for your kids' salvation in family devotions. You might do a discipleship time with them where you help them understand the gospel and how someone is saved. You might pray for the salvation of extended family members. You might watch missionary documentaries or Torchlighter animated movies with them. You can pray for persecuted Christians or unreached people groups. Your kids can watch you evangelize neighbors, family, or friends. However you do it, the point of every relationship – the point of parenting – is to prepare others for the day of judgment.

There's a book in the bookstore titled "Seasons of Sorrow" where Tim Challies shares how he processed the sorrow of his 19-year-old son Nick's sudden death. Challies reflected in the book on the comfort he experienced in knowing that despite how sudden and unexpected Nick's death was, they had done what they could to prepare their son for death. If you have adult children, it's not too late to have a winsome witness in their life.

The day is coming, and God decides between the just and the unjust. So where might your priorities in your relationships need to change if this is your primary concern for others?

Paul doesn't shrink back from loving people with the truth despite how unpopular it is. And in so doing, Paul has a clear conscience - he has assurance that he has nothing to fear in God's courtroom – not because evangelism saves him, but because he demonstrates integrity before God in that his gospel witness is consistent with the biblical teaching he claims to believe. He has integrity at the judgment.

Knowing how you're judged prepares you for judgment. God is the judge and his decision is decisive. And what we'll see next is that in light of that decision on the last day, your decision matters today.

Let's read the rest of the passage in 24:22-27:

So Felix is acquainted with Christianity, and he knew that the Jews didn't have a legitimate case against Paul. So he puts the Jews off and says he'll decide Paul's case later. He's nice to Paul and he

even sends for Paul so he and his wife can hear his teaching. And Paul speaks about faith in Jesus and reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment. In Christianity, the way to a right standing with God is by faith in Jesus, and faith in Jesus produces growing fruit of self-control in one's life, and all of this takes place in the knowledge of coming judgment. Well Felix hears this and he is alarmed. This message is disturbing, but he lacks the urgency to respond to it. He often listens to Paul, but he's also hoping to get some money from Paul. For two years, he doesn't decide his case like he said he would. And then when he is succeeded by someone else, he does the Jews a favor and leaves Paul in prison. So Felix was alarmed, but then he ends up being apathetic.

There's an obvious danger in being directly opposed to Jesus. But there's another danger of thinking you're neutral towards Jesus. If at this moment, you have not received Christ, then your indecision is currently the decision you would be judged according to before God today. In this state, Scripture says that you are actually spiritually dead, a slave to the world the flesh and the devil, and deserving of God's wrath. Felix put off making a decision, but knowledge of God's decision at the final judgment should have given him urgency to decide what he would do with Jesus. He knew right things about Christianity. He heard the gospel message and warnings from Paul. But knowing right things is intended to produce a right response. In being passive and unwilling to respond, Felix sealed his fate.

Years ago I saw an episode of a show where contestants were in a race, and one of the contestants had won a ticket that they could use to bypass any one challenge in the show. Well he got stuck on a challenge and was having the hardest time completing it, but he wouldn't use the ticket. One by one everyone else completed the challenge and moved on until finally he was the only one left still trying to finish the challenge in the dark. By the time he was done, it was painfully obvious that he was eliminated. The host was exasperated that this was the first time in the history of the show that someone had been eliminated while holding that ticket.

Felix had an accurate knowledge of the gospel – he held the ticket – the way of salvation from judgment. But he was too strategic to use it. There was something else more attractive – money from Paul - his legacy of benevolence with the Jews. He was holding out for something better and thought the timing was up to him – but his time to decide ran out.

What will you do with the message of the coming judgment? You will be judged based off of whether you received Christ's righteousness by faith – and that will be evidenced in a life that makes sense in light of the coming judgment. It's not a life characterized by perfection but by repentance – by real concern for obedience and for the lost.

Felix was alarmed, but he didn't have urgency. Don't get caught before the judgment with accurate knowledge of something you never believed in.

No one wants to be judged by a corrupt judge. The true courtroom is where true justice will be had. No one's sin - not yours or the sin of those who sin against you - will be swept under the rug. But when your sin is dealt with, you will either stand on your own or in Christ. In Christ, God can both be just and justly pardon you if you have received the righteousness of Christ through faith in him.

I want to close with this story from the biography of a man named Adoniram Judson:

In the early 1800's Adoniram Judson was a promising young university student. He had grown up in a Christian home but didn't really want to be a Christian because he felt it stood in the way of him becoming great. He became fast friends with a bright, confident college student named Jacob Eames who was a deist, and Adoniram soon became a deist as well. While traveling one night he came to an inn, but he was warned that there was a man who was very ill in the room next to his – maybe even dying. That night, Adoniram considered that he himself might not be prepared for death. He considered the uncertainty of death and the awful thought of lying in the grave. But then he scolded himself for such thoughts and felt embarrassed at what Jacob Eames would think. The next morning on his way out, he asked if the man in the room next to him had recovered. ““He is dead,” was the answer. “Dead?” Adoniram was taken aback. There was a heavy finality to the word. For an instant, some of his fear of the night made itself felt once more. “Do you know who he was?” “Oh yes. Young man from the college in Providence. Name was Eames, Jacob Eames.”” (Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, p.43-44)

This was no coincidence. The death of his friend rattled Adoniram. He knew that he was not prepared for judgment in the true court. In light of God's decision at the coming judgment, Adoniram made the decision to put his faith in Jesus. He later became one of the first missionaries sent from America and gave his life to spreading the gospel to the lost in Burma. He was not a perfect man. But at the end of his life as his health was painfully deteriorating, he said that he had no doubt resting on his future. The man who had tried to ignore death or feared death was not afraid. With his hope in nothing but his blessed Savior's merits, he was prepared to die. He said, “[Christ] has not led me so tenderly thus far, to forsake me at the very gate of heaven.” (Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, p.496, 499)

Do you remember our question from earlier? “How do you know you're going to be okay at the judgment?” Remember to share your answer with someone. “How do you know you're going to be okay at the judgment?”

Paul, in prison at the end of his life awaiting execution, will say, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

All who have loved his appearing will persevere and will receive that crown of righteousness because they've already been declared righteous in God's courtroom through faith in Christ. Brothers and sisters, take heart. This is what it looks like to have integrity at the judgment.