

The Adopted Life

Third Sunday of Easter ~ 05.08.2011

Judgment According to Works

When you're learning to read the Bible in the light of Grace, it can be jarring when you come to passages about judgment and fear—this week's epistle text, for example: "You invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds" (1 Peter 1.17). The Scriptures clearly affirm that we are saved according to grace, but with equal clarity they testify that we are judged according to our works. Really, look it up; it's quite unsettling.

To judge is to tell the truth, to discern, to divide truth from non-truth. To judge an alcoholic by grace would be to say that he does not have a drinking problem. So really, "judging by grace" just means "Lying." But if the alcoholic has people who love him unconditionally (grace), they will want to see him whole/unbroken (saved). So they will tell him the truth about himself (judgment). The hope is that the alcoholic will see the truth (belief) and admit the truth (confession), and rethink his future (repentance). Until he does that, he is condemned to a painful life—not because anyone is condemning him, but because he is living against the grain of reality.

It is good that the Triune God judges us according to our deeds, because only the truth will set us free. We become free to "love one another deeply" only as our souls are "purified" by "obedience to the truth" (1 Peter 1.22).

~ John Stonecypher