

True Success

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"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." ~ I Corinthians 4:5

Success can be a relative thing. It really all depends upon who is measuring it. Even the world about us has different standards for determining success. But ultimately, all true success will be determined at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

There are many activities and ventures, which by social and religious standards appear to be successful. These are honored, respected, and celebrated. But all that glitters is not gold.

THE BEMA

What is successful, and of true value, will be determined at the Judgement Seat of Christ – what old-timers called the *Bema*. They did so because 'bema' is the Greek word used to translate "judgment seat."

*"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the **judgment seat** of Christ" (Romans 14:10).*

*"For we must all appear before the **judgment seat** of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).*

THE MEANING OF BEMA

"The *bema* in New Testament times was a raised platform at the Olympic Games, where the chief of the games stood and placed awards (*stephanos*) around the neck of all the winners!"

For the believer, the *Bema* is a recognition of what is *real*, and of *true value* in life. It is about "bringing home the gold." It is the genuine measure of the success of this life. This success is represented by the lasting quality of *gold*, *silver*, and *precious stones* (as opposed to wood, hay, and stubble).

“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble” (I Corinthians 3:12).

Gold, silver, and precious stones, represent a way of measuring what has real and lasting value. Often, in difficult economic times men will use these as the standards of true wealth. At the *Bema* God will reveal what was of real value in this life. The outcome may be surprising to many.

LOVE IS PARAMOUNT

God has made it very clear what is valuable in life. And *love* is at the apex of this value. Paul, the apostle, makes the divine case for love as:

“a more excellent way” (I Corinthians 12:31).

“the greatest of these” (I Corinthians 13:13).

“above all these things” (Colossians 3:14).

“the bond of perfectness ” (Colossians 3:14).

Since love is the preeminent value with God, it should be the object of our lives. And we will not be disappointed with love – it is truly a sure thing – *it never fails*.

“Charity never faileth” (I Corinthians 13:8).

LOVE IS ...

The means whereby faith works.

“... faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).

How we are rooted and grounded.

“... rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:17).

How members of the Body of Christ edify each other.

“... edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16).

THE EXHORTATION TO LOVE

We are therefore exhorted, by Paul ...

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Romans 12:10).

“Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth” (I Corinthians 8:1).

“Though I ... have not charity, I am nothing” (I Corinthians 13:2).

“Though I ... have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (I Corinthians 13:3).

“Follow after charity” (I Corinthians 14:1).

“... By love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

“... The fruit of the Spirit is love ...” (Galatians 5:22).

“... Forbearing one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

“But speaking the truth in love ...” (Ephesians 4:15).

“... Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us ...” (Ephesians 5:2).

“... Abound in love ...” (I Thessalonians 3:12).

Love is what is real! God says that it is lasting, edifying, perfecting, and profitable. Without this *single* ingredient of the divine life, we are reduced to nothing. This is why Paul so aptly penned:

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness”
(Colossians 3:14).

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