



March 2010—*Standing Before God*

When the distinguished American statesman, Daniel Webster, was asked to share the greatest thought that had ever passed through his mind, he said, “my accountability to Almighty God.” Though Webster was a Unitarian, his awareness of ultimate accountability to God is a profoundly biblical idea and resonates with all orthodox believers.

This theme has been given powerful expression by C.S. Lewis:

In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or with the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised. I read in a periodical the other day that the fundamental thing is how we think of God. By God Himself, it is not! How God thinks of us is not only more important, but infinitely more important. Indeed, how we think of Him is of no importance except insofar as it is related to how He thinks of us. It is written that we shall “stand before” Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the Divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.<sup>1</sup>

The thought that “we shall ‘stand before’ Him, shall appear, shall be inspected,” can be deeply disturbing when we reflect on our sins. But Lewis reminds us that through Christ (and his atoning, reconciling work for us on the cross) we can gain God’s approval and actually bring him pleasure. It is truly mind-boggling that this could be true, but the Bible assures us that it is. However, it will not happen to everyone alike, but only those who really choose it. The choice Lewis refers to is the choice of saying “yes” to God and not “no.” It is saying yes to God’s pardoning love by obeying Jesus’ call to “repent and believe the gospel.” And it is continuing to say “yes” to his commands out of a heart of grateful love—relinquishing ourselves to him who loved us and gave himself up for us. As we do so, God will be glorified and pleased, and we shall stand before him without shame.

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*In February’s Reflections, we looked at C.S. Lewis’s advice to read more “old books.” Here is a short list of great classics: Confessions, Augustine; The Divine Comedy, Dante (Dorothy Sayers translation); Imitation of Christ, Thomas a Kempis; The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence; The Pilgrim’s Progress, John Bunyan; Pensees, Blaise Pascal; Institutes of the Christian Religion, John Calvin.*

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (USA: The Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 10.