

that when the work is considered of good quality, the check will be paid to the person. This is not salvation, but rather the reward of faithfulness to responsibility as a child of God (cf. crowns in the Bible).

- 2) Losses, v. 15. This is another first class condition. The verb used here has the idea of inflicting a forfeit or to fine. It points to the fact that one might have gained something, but didn't. With what pain one will contemplate the merely external fruits of a wasted life! No check is paid!

Conclusion The seriousness of this passage is patent. God does provide one saving feature in the phrase "he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." As if one is obliged to save his life by passing through the flames. It is too terrible to contemplate, yet it does magnify God's grace. No reference to purgatory because 1) No real fire. 2) Trial is of valuation and not purification 3) Fire comes at judgment of believers and not before and 4) Salvation comes in spite of the fire and not by it. Oh, serve the Lord Christ with vigor (Col. 3:24). Amen.

## THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Saved by Fire"

1 Cor. 3:10-15

### Introduction

1. The enterprise of the Cross is utterly unsuccessful without the Lord's activity (vv. 5-9). But He does use men!
2. The men involved in the program of evangelism know that it is a work of God in which rewards are forthcoming. To set this forth in a fashion consistent with Himself, the Spirit of God employs the figure of a building. Two factors in that building are essential. They mark the truth of the solemnness of the Gospel ministry! Study them with care:-

### 1. THE FOUNDATION vv. 10, 11.

#### a. Provided

- 1) By God, v. 11. This is a great truth. The Lord actually lays a foundation of His own Son, Jesus Christ. The reason men must watch how they build (v. 10) is explained in this verse. The participle "which is laid" points to the work of God. No worker has anything to do with the foundation but to build on it! The fact that it is already laid notes its fixity. It cannot be shifted in anywise. It all speaks of His completed death, burial, resurrection, etc. Too often certain passages are argued over and their real meaning is missed (cf. Matt. 16:16-18 where the emphasis is on Christ and not Peter!).
- 2) By Paul, v. 10. Anything Paul did in his service was due to "grace." Paul does not shirk his own involvement in the work at Corinth. He absolves Apollos and denies that he is to blame himself, but he defends himself against attack and this must often be done by preachers. He is certain that he is a wise "master builder." This word is only found here in the N.T. It has a wide use and did

refer to chief engineers in the papyri. It points to the primacy of Paul as pastor of the church at Corinth. Includes the idea of placing and directing the work. Indeed, he says, "I placed a placing" (for AV rendering "I have laid the foundation"). The use of the cognate accusative points to the original movement of God at Corinth (Acts 18:1-18). The aorist of the verb points to the single event when it all took place.

b. Utilized.

- 1) By addition. v. 11. According to the arrangement, the one foundation which God laid is sufficient. Some would try to add another. The other is actually another of the same kind, but even this is impossible! The literal translation is "alongside of the one laid." Hence, there is no room for another Saviour on the same platform with Christ! It is a gratuitous impudence for another to assume the role Foundation. You can only have ONE! He is not a landmark, but the very ground of all we possess.
- 2) By position. v. 10. Rather than attempt laying other foundations, it is expected that the One laid is to be used! The preposition used here is found four times in the context (vv. 10, 11, 12, 14). The word "other" does not only refer to Apollos, but to all who build on the Foundation. What a blessed privilege!

2. THE CONSTRUCTION vv. 12-15.

a. Materials. v. 12.

- 1) Pretested
  - a) Gold--pure truth
  - b) Silver--redemption
  - c) Stones--people
- 2) Non-durable
  - a) Wood--human opinion

- b) Hay--padding of life
- c) Stubble--no testimony

NOTE: It is difficult to identify the strict significance of these materials. In summary, three major suggestions have been made: 1) persons. 2) moral fruits 3) doctrines. Perhaps it is simply the persons and doctrine in which case one moulds the other. But the big point is that Paul warns how one builds upon the Foundation (v. 10). With such a valuable Foundation, one cannot begin to use materials of inferior grade of the superstructure! If this ever got to the quick of the believing heart, it would revolutionize current efforts in evangelism and upbuilding of the saints!

b. Certainties. v. 13.

- 1) Concerning persons. How clear the Bible is to point out that every man (used three times in vv. 10-13) will be involved in the testing program of God. There is a solemn individualizing emphasis in the Word! There is no escape from it. "the day" is the subject of the verb "revealed." The Judgment Seat of Christ will make clear and pull back the veil on all the work of believers! There is a certainty to all that is marked here (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). Fire shows that nothing will be hidden in that day!
- 2) Concerning proofs. The statement is made without any question that the fire will make it evident what sort (qualitative relative pronoun) every man's work is. The verb used here bears the sense of bringing to light the good by means of testing. It was used of metals. It is not implied that good will be found in every instance (cf. v. 12), but this is the intent of the evaluation.

c. Possibilities.

- 1) Rewards. v. 14. This is a first class condition, therefore it is assumed to be true. The construction "shall receive the reward" suggests