

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 The Judgment Seat of Christ

Paul has used the illustration of a field to point out that we are all fellow servants and laborers but that God is the One who causes the growth. In verse 8 he introduced the fact that each believer will be rewarded individually for his own labor. Now Paul uses the illustration of a building to teach us that we must be careful how we labor or build in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Even though Paul does not use the words “judgment seat” (*bema*) in this passage it clear that this is what he means. He knows the Corinthians remember his being called before Gallio at the judgment seat while he ministered in Corinth (Acts 18:12). He does specifically mention the judgment seat in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10.

Verse 10

Grace of God – Paul wanted it to be clear that anything he accomplished was because of God’s grace.

Master builder – The Greek word is *architekton*. Paul was the architect of the church in Corinth in the sense that he planted the church and laid a foundation. Others had built upon it.

Let each man be careful – The problem in context was that the foundation of Christ was being built upon with the wrong materials. The power of the gospel was being traded for worldly wisdom.

Verse 11

Jesus Christ is the only foundation upon which the building, the church can stand. Note the parallel in Ephesians 2:19-22.

Psalm 118:22 reminds us that Jesus is the chief cornerstone.

Verse 12

There are two categories of materials: gold, silver, and precious stones represent imperishable materials, while wood, hay, and straw represent perishable materials.

Verse 13

Each man’s work will become evident – Sometimes it is difficult to evaluate a person’s works. A day is coming in which the motivation for our works will be revealed.

The day will show it – This is a reference to *the day of Christ*.

When He comes for His church every believer will stand before Him and give an account of the stewardship of his or her life. Paul had already mentioned this day in 1:8. There are many references to this day in the New Testament (Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6, 10, 2:16; 2 Timothy 1:12, 18, 4:8). Revelation 22:12 makes it clear that when Jesus comes He will reward everyone according to what he has done.

Revealed with fire – Fire in the Scriptures is a metaphor for testing.

Hebrews 12:29 states, “*for our God is a consuming fire.*”

Quality of each man’s work – If we couple this verse with 4:5 we see that the motives of our hearts have much to do with the quality of our works.

Verse 14

Remains – The fire will burn up the wood, hay, and stubble. If we build with gold, silver, or precious stones we will receive a reward.

Verse 15

He shall suffer loss – Loss of reward (2 John 8). “The primary purpose of the *bema* is not loss, but gain... the consequences of missed opportunities and lost reward will go with us into eternity, any regret or shame we might experience will not.... Regardless of what happens at the *bema*, Jesus will not love you any less or any more for all eternity than He loved you when He purchased your life with His own blood...” (Bruce Wilkinson, *A Life God Rewards*)

He himself shall be saved – Eternal life is never tested by any human achievement. However, every believer must pass through the fire of Christ’s Judgment Seat.

The Judgment Seat

- Our eternal destiny is based on belief! How we spend eternity is based on our behavior!
- “God chooses to reward because it is an expression of His own generous nature. His plan to reward, like His provision to save, is a display of His amazing grace.” (Bruce Wilkinson, *A Life God Rewards*) Hebrews 11:6, “...he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a *rewarder* of those who seek Him.”
- The quality of each man’s work – (1) Relationship – John 15:5 (2) Motive – Matthew 6:1, 1 Corinthians 4:5 (3) Love – Luke 6:35, 1 Corinthians 13:3
- Faithfulness, not ability, is rewarded – 1 Corinthians 4:2, Matt. 25:21