

Sunday, March 2, 2014—The Judgment Seat of Christ—The JSC: I Corinthians 3, Reward and Loss

### **Introduction/Review**

- Last week we continued our series on the JSC by looking at I Corinthians 3:12-13. In doing so we observed the following general points.
- I Corinthians 3:12—the expression “if any man build upon” is in the present tense. Consequently, the “if” at the beginning is not designed to cast doubt upon the supposition. In other words, this verse assumes that every man is building upon Paul’s foundation as an actual fact.
  - Just as it is true that unbelievers CANNOT build upon the foundation of Christ until they have trusted Christ it is equally true that believers ACTIVELY ARE building upon the foundation thus the warning to TAKE HEED how it is done at the end of verse 10.
- Last week I said that Paul identifies six types of “building materials:” gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. Further thought on the passage has promoted me to view these as “sorts” of workmanship rather than as the materials with which one builds. More on this later.
- I Corinthians 3:13—at the JSC every man’s work will be made manifest, declared, and revealed because the fire shall try every man’s work of what “sort” it is. The three words manifest, declare, and revealed indicate that it is not just the outward appearance of one’s work that gets disclosed, for that is readily apparent to the eye. The unseen or hidden aspects of the work are manifest as well. The examination at the JSC is not based on an external judgment or outward observation, but rather on a test that determines the inner character and motivation of one’s work.
- The purpose of the trial by fire is to determine the “sort” of everyman’s work. The English word “sort” carries many meanings one of which is derivative, signifying that which is thrown out, separated or selected. At the JSC a man’s work is going to be sorted (suitable, befitting 1828). The implication is clear, the fire will manifest, declare, reveal, and sort by consuming and destroying those aspects of a believer’s work that are inferior and unacceptable while those that are not inferior will “abide” i.e., survive the trial by fire. The entire purpose of the trial by fire is to determine that which is destructible from that which is indestructible.
- Taken with verse 12 the implication is clear. The gold, silver, and precious stones are indestructible materials whereas the wood, hay, and stubble are destructible. The indestructible “sort” indicates those things done in the believer’s life under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, the destructible “sort” indicates work that men produced of their own wisdom and effort i.e., the works of the flesh. It cannot be determined by outward observation into which sort a man’s work falls, so that work must be subjected to the trial by fire in order that its true character may be proved.

## **I Corinthians 3:14**

- *If any man's work abide*—once again the “if” at the beginning of the verse serves the logical function not the conditional. Paul just said at the end of verse 13 that the fire “will try every man’s work of what sort it is.” Verse 14 is now going to begin dealing with the results of the trial by fire in the previous verse.
- Notice again that this is referring to “any man” this is the sixth time Paul has used a form of this all inclusive expression since verse 10. Again the JSC pertains to every member of the body of Christ.
  - Verse 8—“every man shall receive”
  - Verse 10—“let every man take heed”
  - Verse 12—“if any man build upon this foundation”
  - Verse 13—“every man’s work” (2x)
  - Verse 14—“any man’s work”
  - Verse 15—“any man’s work”
- The Greek work translated “abide” means to remain or endure. This verse is talking about the work that “abides” or survives the trial by fire in verse 13.
- *Which he hath built thereupon*—the work that is abiding is in reference to how the individual built upon Paul’s foundation. Verse 10 warns every man to “take heed” how he is building and verse 12 describes six different “sorts” or manners of workmanship with which one can build upon the foundation laid by Paul.
- Of the six “sorts” or qualities of workmanship mention in verse 12 only three will “abide” a trial by fire: gold, silver, and precious stones. Consider the outcome if the following were subjected to fire:
  - Gold—would melt but not be consumed.
  - Silver—would melt but not be consumed.
  - Precious Stones—would remain unscathed.
- Revelation 21:18-21—the Heavenly Jerusalem is described as being made of pure gold upon a foundation of precious stones. Silver is not mentioned in relation to the Heavenly City.
  - Exodus 28:15-21—these same stones were in the breastplate of the high priest which was made of gold.
  - Ezekiel 28:12-13—Lucifer the sum total of God’s creative expression in terms of beauty and wisdom was decorated with precious stones and gold..

- Based upon these verses, it seems reasonable to rank the sorts of workmanship Paul has identified in I Corinthians 3 as follows: 1) Precious Stones, 2) Gold, and 3) Silver. So any man's work that abides the trial by fire falls into one of these three "sorts."
- *He shall receive a reward*—so the man whose work abides shall receive a reward. The Greek word translated "reward" here means "dues paid for work," or it is "used of the fruit naturally resulting from toils or endeavors."
  - Matthew 20:8—"hire"
  - Luke 10:7—"hire"
  - John 4:36—"wages"
  - I Timothy 5:18—"reward"
- I Corinthians 3:8—remember that "every man" will receive "his own reward according to his own labour."
- According to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* the English word "reward" carries the following meaning: recompense, or equivalent return for good done, for kindness, for services and the like. Rewards may consist of money, goods or any return of kindness or happiness.
- What is tried by fire at the judgment seat? Every man's work. It is a general principal that a man is rewarded for a proper days work. Those who build properly upon the foundation laid by Paul will be rewarded for their work.

### **I Corinthians 3:15**

- *If any man's work shall be burned*—the English word "burned" means "consumed with fire," according to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*. This is obviously the "sort" or work that is characterized by the wood, hay, and stubble in verse 12. These sorts of work will be consumed by the fire. Fire is used in other parts of the Bible to describe judgment or the consumption what is left behind following the harvest.
  - Matthew 3:13
  - Matthew 13:40
- *He shall suffer loss*—the one whose work is consumed in the fire will suffer loss. In the context what kind of loss is being suffered here? It is the loss of reward. The one whose work abides is rewarded and the one whose work is burned is not. There are two possible outcomes of the JSC:
  - Loss of Reward
  - Reward Bestowed
- Regarding the rewards at the JSC, Dwight Pentecost wrote in part, "On the basis of this test there will be two decisions. There will loss of reward for that which is proved by fire to be

destructible. Things done in the strength and for the glory of the flesh, regardless of what the act might be, will be disapproved. . . There will be a reward bestowed for that work that is proved to be indestructible by the fire test.” (*Things to Come*, 224-225)

- *But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*—the believer is not on trial at the JSC but rather the believer’s work. Remember that only believers will appear before the JSC. Only believers are capable of building upon Paul’s foundation. As I said last Sunday, if a fire burns entire house down the foundation remains. Our foundation and salvation is safe, secure, and sound because it is NOT BASED upon our works but upon Christ work on our behalf.
- The JSC is similar to judged athletic completion. The athletes participating are judgment and rewards and handout in the form of medals but there is no condemnation placed upon those failing to medal they simply fail to receive a reward.

### Preparation for the JSC

- We studied in verse 13 that “the fire will try every man’s work of what sort it is.” We further identified those sorts of work for which rewards will be given in verse 12 are: gold, silver, and precious stones.
- Romans 12:1—Paul beseeches the Romans to present their bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God.
  - II Corinthians 5:9—Paul instructs the Corinthians to labour in such a way so as to be “accepted of him.”
- Romans 12:2—the Romans are told to be transformed by the renewing of their minds that they might prove “what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The Greek word translated “prove” in verse 2 is the same Greek work translated “try” in I Corinthians 3:13.
  - Try (I Cor. 3:13)—2) to **prove by a test**; as, to try weights and measures by a standard; to try one's opinions by the divine oracles. (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*)
  - Prove (Rom. 12:2)—1) **to try**; to ascertain some unknown quality or truth by an experiment, or by a test or standard. Thus we prove the strength of gunpowder by experiment; we prove the strength or solidity of cannon by experiment. (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*)
- The fire at the JSC tries the “sort” of a man’s work: gold, silver, precious stones. A renewed mind is capable of discerning between the good, acceptable, and perfect. Could it be that there is correlation between these two passages? Could it be that believes are able to determine the “sort” of work that will revealed by the fire at the JSC by choosing to function with a renewed mind now?

- Gold—the good
- Silver—the acceptable
- Precious Stones—the perfect