

House on Fire!

Hardly anything would jolt us into 911-emergency mode quicker than discovering that our house was on fire! Getting loved ones to safety and extinguishing the blaze quickly so as to salvage everything we could, would be the urgency of the moment. In today's Templates of Truth, the Apostle Paul talks about a different kind of house on fire.

In his first letter to the Church in Corinth, Paul wrote: *each man's work will become evident, for the day will show it, because it will be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work* (I Corinthians 3:13). What is the *work* to which Paul refers, what is the *fire*, and what *day* is Paul talking about?

Paul opens this passage by talking about a construction project underway: *let each man be careful how he builds* (I Corinthians 3:10). Paul refers to the builders of this project in verse 9 as *fellow workers*, and indicates that the *foundation* for the building has already been laid – *which is Jesus Christ* (3:11). A temple is a building, and Paul reminds us that we *are a temple of God* (3:16). Paul also identifies certain materials that go into the building process: *gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay (and) straw* (3:12). So it is clear from these verses that the work to which Paul refers, is the life of each believer in Christ. Through salvation, we have made Christ and His Word the foundation of our life, and the life we build can be as strong & valuable as gold, silver and precious stones, or as flimsy & worthless as wood, hay and straw. The choice is ours as the builder.

In Scripture, *fire* refers primarily to God's judgment as it is applied to the guilt of sinful disobedience and rebellion. The writer of Hebrews declared: *Our God is a consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:29). Paul applies this principle of God's judgment to the choices we have made as Christians in the building of our lives. The purpose for this judgment is to consume all the worthless & unacceptable substance of our lives, leaving only that which is worthy & appropriate for heaven. Paul said it this way: *If any man's work which he has built...remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire* (I Corinthians 3:14-15). The building of our lives can be with acts & deeds of holiness, righteousness and truth; or with ungodly tolerance, compromise, and corrupt accommodation. Only that which is acceptable to God will endure the inferno of His fiery judgment.

When will this judgment take place? Paul says, *the day will show it* (3:13). This reference in Scripture always indicates the day of the Lord, meaning certain events during the end times. The judgment for believers will take place immediately following the Rapture of the Church. Paul later called this judgment the "Judgment Seat of Christ" – *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad* (II Corinthians 5:10). Believers are not to be judged concerning the guilt and condemnation of sin. Jesus already settled that issue with His death on

the cross, and we were delivered from that condemnation when we placed our faith & trust in Christ as our personal Savior & Lord. We will, however, account to God for how we have built our lives on the foundation of that salvation. We will answer to God for both the good and the bad choices we have made in life that have gone unrepented for. That should be a sobering reality to us, and serve to motivate us in living our lives holy, blameless and pure before God.

We take for granted that our house will always be safe & sound when we come home to it each day. How would we regard our house, however, if we knew for certain that one day it would catch on fire, we just never knew exactly when? Those things that are most valuable to us would be secured in some way so as not to be destroyed when the fire breaks out. We would probably welcome all the other junk and clutter to go up in smoke! In the same way, we must secure all in our life that is precious and valuable to God and work to clean out all the junk and clutter. Is your house in order? Is it properly insured with the heavenly homeowner's policy? There's not much time left to secure your home against fire.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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