

1 Corinthians 3:6-20

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

Making life count

In updating his computer system a friend of mine lost four years of work by mistakenly saving the wrong file. When I asked him if he had “backed-up” his work, there was a long, painful pause which gave me his answer! Imagine losing four years of work with a single push of a button! Imagine the agony of mind that such a mistake would bring! Imagine how often since that mistake my friend has asked himself “Why didn’t I follow instructions and back-up my work?”

As heart-wrenching as this must have been, a worse fate awaits the negligent Christian. Paul warns of a time when every believer will stand before Christ and either have something to show for a life or lose it all: “If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” (1 Corinthians 3:12-15 NIV).

This is clearly not a judgement of sin. God’s promise to the person who has accepted Christ as personal Saviour is removal of all condemnation (Romans 8:1), without any separation (Romans 8:31-38). However, because God has called each believer to serve Him as the salt and light of the world (the agents to bring the message of salvation through Christ to the world and the models of that new life in Christ before the world – Matthew 5), God will measure the faithfulness of His children when He calls them to His presence. Here there will be either joyful celebration at God’s approval or shameful regret for a wasted life. As stewards, God will hold each believer accountable!

Should this judgement bring fear and anxiety to the believer? No – not if that life is daily surrendered to Christ. In daily surrender, the Christian makes himself/herself available to be used of God, and is empowered by God for each days tasks. The beauty of this arrangement is the wonderful fellowship the believer has with God through the process of surrendered service. This is the reality of the abundant life Christ promised.

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was interviewed near the close of his life. This is what he said: "God had all there was of me. There have been others who had greater plans, greater opportunities than I; but from the day I got a vision of what God could do, I made up my mind God would have all there was of William Booth." Christian friend, has God got all of you every day? If not, you risk standing before the one who died for you empty and ashamed. There is still time to “back-up” and save your life for Christ.

What is my response:
