

“ANYONE WHO GOES TOO FAR” – A Study of 2 John 8-9 (part 3 of 4)

In this segment we will examine 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and its relationship to John 15:1-8, in order to clarify the warning found in 2 John 8-9. 1 Corinthians 3 begins with a rebuke from the apostle Paul to those believers in Corinth who were identifying with various teachers rather than with Christ (vv1-4). This was causing a spirit of divisiveness to develop within that fellowship (cf. 1:10-13). Paul encourages them to turn their attention away from the servants of Christ and back onto the Savior whom they serve (vv5-7). Then, beginning in v8, the apostle transitions to the reward each individual servant will receive for their labor, bringing us to the critical passage for our consideration: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Notice the warning which Paul issues in vv10-11 –

“According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

In v11, the apostle refers to the redemptive work of our Savior, upon which God’s entire plan of salvation rests. In Ephesians 2:20, Paul declares Jesus to be the cornerstone in the building that is Christ’s Church, with the apostolic era being foundational for any future growth. Therefore, the apostles themselves needed to be careful as to how they did their work, in perfect harmony with Christ’s redemptive accomplishment, which is also relevant for each of us. Any service for Christ must maintain a strong connection to His person, His teaching, as well as His death, burial and resurrection on our behalf.

How? By abiding in Christ, just as a branch maintains its connection to the vine, so that we can bear fruit for advancing the cause of Christ in our world. Any other kind of service will fall short and go unrewarded. Why? *Because apart from abiding in His person, His teaching and His redemptive work; we will accomplish nothing of eternal value.* This is why 2 John 8-9 warns of going too far, by functioning outside the realm of the teaching of Christ, and falling short of receiving a full reward.

Paul issues an additional warning in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, by reminding us that the quality (not quantity) of our service for Christ will be tested by fire, with work that remains receiving a reward (vv13-14). Work which is burned up will suffer loss, NOT the loss of salvation, but the loss of reward (v15). 1 Corinthians 3:15, along with texts such as John 6:39-40 and Romans 8:30, provide us with strong proof which supports the doctrine of eternal security; in that once we are truly saved, our concern should not be about some non-existent possibility of losing our salvation, but in faithfully living for and serving our Savior every day, as we abide in Him.