



73rd Year

August 10, 2025

Pamphlet #32 (3767)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (1 Corinthians 3:9-17)

Christ, the foundation stone

Brethren, we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

THE THREE FRIENDS

The Apostle Paul addresses the Church of the Corinthians and teaches the value of our lives and deeds in light of eternity. Each person's works will be revealed, for the Day of Judgment is made manifest through fire, which tests and reveals them. If our deeds are of pure gold, they will remain untouched and unaltered. But if they are counterfeit and corrupted, they will be consumed, and their ugliness will be laid bare.

Human deeds

The sacred Chrysostom uses a marvelous analogy to illustrate the true worth of human deeds on earth: “We resemble actors on a stage – one plays a glorious king, another a wealthy ruler, another a great sage. All this during the course of the play. But when the curtain falls, the actor retreats backstage, sheds his false persona, and becomes once again what he truly is: a simple laborer who dons a disguise to earn his daily bread.”

So, it is with us: we step onto the stage of this life, and one plays the strong man, another the saint, another the wise one. But when death brings down the curtain of life, then the true face of each person is revealed. Then each is judged by his deeds, by how he stood before God, his fellow man, and himself.

The mindset of our age disorients us from the perspective of the end. For ultimately, what we are living has an end, which at the same time marks the beginning of eternity. The spirit of the age sways us into a life that is earthly and false. It makes the temporary seem permanent, the imperfect appear perfect, the counterfeit shine like gold. It prevents us from understanding that we are walking a path with a beginning and an end, which, at some point, intersects with another path: one that has a beginning, but no end. And so, whatever we do, good or bad, lacks true perspective. Or if it does have perspective, it is shaped by a transactional mindset toward God. But good deeds alone are not enough. Other works are needed to open the gates of Paradise.

Papoulakos on good works

Papoulakos, when speaking to the people about the kind of deeds that withstand the trial of fire, used a vivid parable: “A man had three friends, for whom he had sacrificed much. One day, however, he himself was accused, dragged to court, and faced the danger of condemnation. Of the three friends, the first remained cold and indifferent, unmoved by his friend’s crisis. The second felt pity, came as far as the courthouse door, but was not allowed to enter, and left. The third, however, fought for his friend’s salvation. He

appeared as a witness in his defense and succeeded in securing his acquittal.”

“Each of us,” said Papoulakos, “has three friends in this life, and we sacrifice ourselves for them. The first is our wealth, the second is our family, and the third is the works of our love. But when the curtain of this life falls and we appear before the tribunal of the Righteous Judge, our first friend – our wealth – remains cold and indifferent to our fate. The second – our relatives and friends – come as far as our grave, but unable to go any further, they depart and forget us. And the third remains, if, of course, we have such a friend. It is the works of our love, not merely our good deeds, those done out of kindness or sympathy because our conscience prompts us, but those that spring from a loving heart. Deeds done for our suffering fellow human being, for the orphan, the unfortunate, the wronged, the weary, the disheartened, for the one in whose face we saw God Himself.”

This is the true meaning of good works. They are the ones that, because they are pure as gold, will endure the fire of trial and will testify on our behalf at the hour of Judgment. Whoever possesses such provisions can await the fall of life’s curtain undisturbed. Whoever does not possess them, let him do whatever he can to acquire them, while there is still time. Amen!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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August 10, 2025: 9th Sunday of Matthew

Lawrence, Archdeacon and Martyr;
Bishop Sixtus of Rome, originally from Athens († 258)

Pl. 4th Tone – Eothinon: 9 – Epistle: 1 Corinthians 3:9-17
– Gospel: Matthew 14:22-34

NEXT SUNDAY: August 17, 10th Sunday of Matthew
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 – Gospel: Matthew 17:14-23

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