



PURGATORY

Where is that in the Bible?

Purgatory is the final purification for those who have died in God's friendship but still need to be cleansed of their attachment to sin. It makes us pure and ready for the full glory of heaven.

1 Corinthians 3:15 ...

If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, **but only as through fire.**

Catholic Perspective

Paul is discussing the judgment after death that every human being will one day face, framed in the context of loss and reward. "Each man's work will become manifest," writes Paul, "for the Day [of judgment] will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done" (1 Cor. 3:13-14).

Paul then describes a state of being. He cannot be describing hell, because people are being saved there. He is not describing heaven, because there is imperfection being "burned up" there (cf. Heb. 1:13, Rev. 21:27).

Paul is describing a third place, Purgatory: a place (or state of being) where the faithful dead who are in a state of grace but not yet purified of all imperfection go for final purification to prepare them to enter the glory of heaven.

Common Objections

ST. PAUL IS ONLY TALKING ABOUT APOSTOLIC LABORS.

REASONING

St. Paul is not talking about people being judged of all their works. In verses 5-10, he speaks only of apostolic labors. So this cannot be Purgatory.

RESPONSE

Paul uses his and Apollos's labor to segue into a discussion of the Day of Judgment, when all works will be judged. Paul is clearly speaking universally, here.

ST. PAUL NEVER USES THE GREEK WORD FOR "CLEANSE."

REASONING

Paul never uses the Greek word *katharizo* (to cleanse/purify). He's speaking solely of the rewards of the saved, not Purgatory.

RESPONSE

Paul is speaking of those who are saved "as through fire." Being "saved" implies being purified from imperfections.

Even notable Protestant scripture scholars like Dr. W. Harold Mare (in his *Expositor's Bible Commentary*) and Gerhard Friedrich (in his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*) acknowledge that "fire" refers to purification in this passage. Friedrich, in particular, finds a parallel between Paul's eschaton and the purifying fire referenced in Malachi 3:2.

