

1 Corinthians 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Analysis

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it (ἡμέρα δηλώσει, hē hēmera dēlōsei)—'the Day' (capitalized, with definite article) refers to the day of Christ's return and judgment (1 Corinthians 1:8, 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:4). Dēlōsei (shall reveal/make clear) promises exposure of all hidden things. **Because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is** (ποῖόν ἔστιν, poion estin—'of what quality').

The fire is not purgatorial but probative—it tests and reveals quality, not purges sin. This is not about salvation (believers are secure, verse 15) but reward for faithful service. The phrase poion estin ('what sort it is') emphasizes qualitative evaluation, not quantitative measurement. God judges motives, methods, and fruit, not just activity level. The Refiner's fire (Malachi 3:2-3) purifies gold but consumes dross. This eschatological judgment should produce present carefulness: knowing our work will be tested should motivate excellence, humility, and dependence on God's strength rather than human ingenuity.

Historical Context

Fire was both feared and revered in antiquity—destructive to human habitations but purifying for precious metals. Refining gold and silver required intense heat to separate pure metal from dross. The eschatological 'day of the Lord' in OT

prophecy often involved fire imagery (Malachi 4:1, Isaiah 66:15), representing God's holy presence consuming all impurity.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the certainty that 'every man's work shall be made manifest' affect your present priorities in ministry, career, and relationships?
2. What work are you doing that you hope will survive 'the Day'—and what might prove to be wood, hay, or stubble?
3. How can you build now with eternity in view, ensuring quality ('what sort it is') rather than just quantity?

Interlinear Text

ἐκάστου	τὸ	ἔργον	φανερὸν	γενήσεται	ἡ	γὰρ	ἡμέρα
Every man's	G3588	work	manifest	shall be made	G3588	for	the day
G1538		G2041	G5318	G1096		G1063	G2250
δηλώσει	ὅτι	ἐν	πῦρ	ἀποκαλύπτεται·	καὶ	ἐκάστου	
shall declare it	because	by	fire	it shall be revealed	and	Every man's	
G1213	G3754	G1722	G4442	G601	G2532	G1538	
τὸ	ἔργον	όποιόν	ἐστιν	τὸ	πῦρ	δοκιμάσει	
G3588	work	of what sort	it is	G3588	fire	shall try	
	G2041	G3697	G2076		G4442	G1381	

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 4:5 (Parallel theme): Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Revelation 20:12 (Parallel theme): And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

1 Peter 1:7 (Parallel theme): That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 3:10 (Parallel theme): But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Zechariah 13:9 (Parallel theme): And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

1 Peter 4:12 (Parallel theme): Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Romans 2:16 (Parallel theme): In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

1 Corinthians 1:8 (Parallel theme): Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Malachi 3:17 (Parallel theme): And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

2 Timothy 1:18 (Parallel theme): The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

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