

1 Corinthians 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

Analysis

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward (μισθὸν λήμψεται, misthon lēmpsetai)—lēmpsetai (future middle: 'shall receive for himself') promises personal, certain recompense. The condition 'if... abide' (εἰ... μενεῖ, ei... menei) means 'if it remains after fire-testing,' implying some work will survive. Misthos (reward/wages) suggests proportional justice—faithful labor receives corresponding recompense.

Scripture nowhere specifies what these rewards entail, maintaining holy reticence about eternal details. Jesus spoke of 'treasures in heaven' (Matthew 6:20), varying capacities for ruling (Luke 19:17-19), and degrees of greatness in the kingdom (Matthew 5:19). The prospect of reward should motivate diligence without breeding mercenary motives—we serve from love, but God graciously adds blessing beyond our deserving. This parallels justification (free grace) and judgment (according to works): salvation is unearned gift; rewards recognize faithful stewardship of grace already received. The reward ultimately is Christ himself, known and enjoyed in proportion to our faithfulness.

Historical Context

The concept of eschatological rewards permeated Jewish thought (Daniel 12:3, 'they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament') and Jesus's teaching (Beatitudes, parables of talents/minas). Paul builds on this theology, applying it specifically to Christian ministry. Rewards were well-understood in

Greco-Roman culture—crowns for athletes, laurels for poets, triumphs for generals.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the promise of future reward affect your present perseverance in apparently fruitless or underappreciated service?
2. What balance should you strike between serving for love of Christ versus anticipation of reward—are these motivations compatible or contradictory?
3. What 'work' are you building that you believe will 'abide' through fire—and how can you ensure its permanence?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	τινος	τὸ	ἔργον	μενεῖ	ο	ἐπωκοδόμησεν	μισθὸν
G1487	G5100	G3588	work	abide	which	he hath built thereupon	a reward
			G2041	G3306	G3739	G2026	G3408

λήψεται

he shall receive

G2983

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 3:8 (Parallel theme): Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

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.

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