

23 EACH ONE'S WORK

1 Corinthians 3:13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

In reading *1 and 2 Kings*, one cannot fail to notice how each king and his reign were evaluated by a repetitive summary statement – *“he did that which was evil /good in the eyes of the LORD”*. The kings were a diverse lot. Some ascended the throne at a young age, others much older; some by inheriting the throne, others by rebelling and overthrowing; some ruled for short spells, others for long periods. Some were great as men of might and valour, or as builders or conquerors. But the ultimate significance of each is stamped in that summary statement that bears God's verdict for all time. The final measure of worth in God's estimate is a moral one. So it is with our lives – the measure that matters is moral. Self-worth is an absurdity; the only real worth in our lives comes from living in conformity with His will.

A related question is whether success is necessarily an indicator of being in God's will. Is it possible to follow God's will and still not 'succeed' in terms of accomplishing the desired outcomes? Both church history and Christian biography show that this happens all the time. There are many great and godly saints who have expended their lives in the service of God according to what they know to be His will for them, with little to show by way of tangible and visible results within their own lifetimes. While some may be acknowledged by subsequent generations for their spiritual stature, many others remain buried and forgotten in memory. In that great day when all believers will be gathered to meet the Lord, there will not only be the renowned spiritual greats and giants in history, but a countless company of 'unknown soldiers' who have laid down their lives without leaving any footprints in the sands of time. As recorded in the great 'hall of faith' of *Hebrews 11*, the vast majority in the history of the church will be those heroes of faith referred to simply as 'others' (*Hebrews 11:35- 36*). They may be unnamed and unknown to men, but not to God.

At the judgment seat of Christ, we will be evaluated and rewarded according to what we have done and how we have done it. Will the quality of our work be of the *“gold, silver, precious stones”* standard, or will it be accounted as *“wood, hay, straw”* (*1 Corinthians 3:12*)? The quality of our work is dependent on the quality of our lives before God. We will be judged and rewarded according to what we have been gifted and entrusted with, not according to what we have not. And it is not what we have that matters so much as what we do with what we have.

Whether we succeed in the eyes of men is of little account. We are accountable for what God has called us to do. Paul's testimony was that *“he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision”* (*Acts 26:19*). Real failure is missing God's mark. Tragically it is possible to miss it by a wide margin through being very active and accomplished in doing our own things rather than the things of God. Make it your aim to be faithful, not successful.