

1 Corinthians 3

1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

In verse 1, Paul tells them that he can't speak to them as true children of God. If they were children of God they would be focusing on things that are spiritual in nature. They are behaving like they did before they knew about Jesus. Paul equates being a new Christian is like being new in the world, a baby. What do babies eat? Milk. What adults eat? Solid food. He knows that they are still immature Christians because they are behaving worldly. In verse 3, Paul says "Take a serious look at yourself. How does the world act and how are you acting? You are still doing the following things: " (JRG paraphrase)

1. Jealousy
2. Quarreling among yourselves
3. Behaving worldly or fleshly
4. Acting like mere humans

"These people are part of the family of God (he calls them brethren), and that is the problem. Though they have the Holy Spirit (unlike the *natural man* of 1 Corinthians 2:14), they are not behaving like spiritual people, but like carnal – that is, fleshly -people, like immature Christians (babes in Christ)." (Guzik)

4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? 5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

Paul says that if you are focusing on the human that gave you Jesus' words, then you are being human. If you want to behave spiritually, focus on the spiritual one that taught them, Jesus. It seems that the Corinthians are raising Paul, Peter and Apollos to celebrity status. This seems similar to what is done in Catholicism. When Paul started this letter and many of his other letters, he addresses it to those called to be saints of Corinth. We are all saints or children of God and Paul is saying that they or we should not raise mere humans as anything to be worshiped. It should be all about Jesus.

In verse 5, Paul says “Who are these men really?” They are servants of Jesus. As servants God gave them certain tasks to do. Each job is no more important than the other. Even in Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, Paul will still be teaching this idea of unity. Read 1 Corinthians 12:15-20. Paul uses the human body to get the message of all believers serve one master.

According to verse 7, what are our jobs regarding leading someone to the saving knowledge of Jesus and how does that translate into the real world?

Plant the seed. Tell someone about Jesus.

Water. Teach them more about Jesus, by example or word.

Whose job is it to make their faith grow? God’s

If they reject what you say, who are they rejecting? God

Is planting any more important than watering? No. How does the amount reward get determined? According to the amount of work and not according to souls saved.

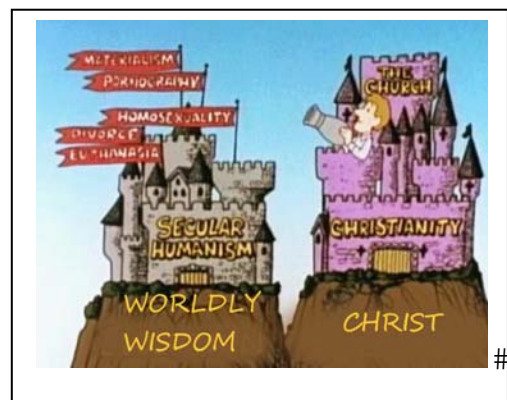
In verse 9, Paul is saying as he will again regarding spiritual gifts, you have a job or a gift and you are to use that gift to do God’s will. It is not important what job you have been given to do but it is important that you do it to glorify God and to lead others to Jesus.

What example did Jesus use in Matthew 7:15-20? We are doing God’s will, if we bear good fruit. We are all working to accomplish one goal, God’s will. Read 2 Peter 3:9. What is God’s goal? That none should perish.

“God gives us the amazing opportunity to work with Him. We cannot work without Him, and He will not work without us (generally speaking). God wants *you* as His working partner.” (Guzik)

10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Paul tried that biological illustration. In verse 10, he tries another approach, maybe they will get a “building” analogy. Paul told them and us in verses 10-11 that when he was with them for the year and he built the foundation



for their Christianity. And that foundation was Jesus Christ. Reminds me of a hymn, “On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.” If your foundation is made of anything else and it is tested by fire, the fire will destroy you and your foundation.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10. We will all be accountable for what we have done. The purpose of the fire that Paul is talking about is to test the quality of what we have done for Christ and not purify us. It does not affect your salvation but it does impact your “rewards” in Heaven. When we studied “Heaven”, we studied about the crowns that we will receive in Heaven.

“This passage has first application to Christian leaders, because this is Paul’s topic in context, but the application extends to all servants of God.” (Guzik)

Matthew 6:19-21 tells us to lay up our treasures in Heaven. This is the same idea. If we are serving God for praise or personal gain here on Earth then they will be burned up by the fire. We are to serve God as kingdom builders. Kingdom builders want to make sure as many souls as possible end up in Heaven. Not for nickels and noggins.

16 Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

Paul is speaking about the Church as a whole and not the individuals. What makes a church building into a church or temple? (Matthew 18:20)[#] “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” A temple is different from any other building because the spirit of God dwells in His temple. Our church began in 1827 where they met in a barn. What separated that barn from any other barn in the area? Because they were worshipping in it, the spirit of God was present in the barn.

These verses are a harsh warning to church leaders not to do anything to cause the church to fail or lead it away from God. How can church leaders “destroy God’s temple”? Water down the Word of God. Make it a social gathering. Become all inclusive. . .

“The Corinthian leaders needed to preserve the unity of the temple, not destroy it with divisions. If they divided the fellowship, they attacked God’s holy temple, his body (Col. 1:18,24) and his bride (Eph. 5:23–27), thereby provoking God’s wrath.” (Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians)

18 Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is

foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; 20 and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

The Corinthians had inflated their egos based on wisdom. The Greeks of that day were all about wisdom and these believers from Corinth were getting caught up in the ways of their world. Sound familiar? Paul points out that wisdom of the world is of no value to God. He quotes Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11. Paul is says that it is better to be thought to be a fool for God than wise by human standards. Where have we seen someone acting a fool for God? Read 2 Samuel 6:13-23. Verses 21-22, King David says, "I will celebrate before the LORD, and I will humiliate and humble myself even more than this."

21 So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Simon Peter) or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, 23 and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

In these verses, Paul sounds like a father or parent scolding his child. You can almost hear him say, "That's enough! No more bickering about who is the best!"

"How prone we are to glory in men! We are more excited about being with the influential and famous of this world than about being with God. We value the gifts and honors of men more than the gifts and honors God gives. How we need to hear, let no one glory in men!" (Guzik)

This chapter ends with Paul saying that since we are in Christ then we have the same inheritance or as he says in other letters, we are joint heirs with Jesus. See Romans 8:17. *"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."*

How much better can it get? We are in Christ and Christ is in God. God controls all, Jesus was given all power, then we will have all power.

Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians sums up the first 3 chapter this way:

Divisions in the church are contrary to the gospel.
Believers are of great value, and they deserve to be treated well by other believers.
God loves his church and dwells in its midst—it is his holy temple.
Believers possess everything in Christ.