

1st Corinthians Chapter 3.

The first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

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The carnal state of the church.

The Corinthian church showed its carnality by the sad contentious quarrels they had in preferring one minister above another. Paul says I could not speak to you as spiritual but as unto carnal. Paul had been away for about 2 years, and in that very short time these Christians came under the influence of their fleshly appetites and were not strong enough in their faith to withstand the temptations of the enemy and the wayward persuasion of the other weak members of the church. They had life in Christ, abounded in spiritual gifts (see Chapters 12 to 14) but their everyday Christian walk was so weak that Paul tells them they are still babes in Christ and unable to decide what is good for their souls and what is not.

Verse 1

And I Brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as babes in Christ. 2. I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able.

It is God's purpose for men and women to become Christians, babes in Christ as Paul rightly calls them to begin with, but to grow in the faith by prayer, the reading of the Word of God, listening to the word of God preached and applying it to everyday life. The last line of verse 16 of our previous chapter says 'But we have the mind of Christ'. To have the mind of Christ we must resolve to work hard at building up our spirit man. It is the prompting of the Holy Spirit on the inside of us that will change our motives and keep us away from the carnal and fleshly things that we once desired and which are against the mind of Christ. After all the church are new creatures in Christ Jesus: and we must be different from the world. The Bible says 'come you out from among them and be separate says the Lord'. That separation is necessary so we are not contaminated by our association with the world in our daily walk.

Verse 3/4

For you are yet carnal for whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men. For one said I am of Paul; and another I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?

As Christians we ourselves are utterly to blame if we do not endeavour to grow in the grace and the knowledge of God: we are responsible for the consequences.

Paul becomes more severe now; his words are stronger as he proceeds, after all he left the church in a good place, with good men to teach them to become mature in Jesus but they ended up in strife, envying and divisions. How can a church, born of the shed blood of Christ invite strangers in to hear the Gospel and point men to Jesus only for them to become part of a divided Body of believers? The same party spirit and carnal mind-sets have wrecked many churches in our day.

Verse 5/6/7

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered but God gave the increase. So then neither is he who plants anything, neither he who waters; but God who gives the increase.

The Corinthian church was birthed with the help and ministry of other preachers chosen by Paul to teach the principles of God and make the church strong to resist temptation. So the church was out of order in choosing favourites. There is a danger of this happening today, some choose their favourite Pastor based on their personality, some because he makes them laugh and some of the more discerning because he teaches the meat of the Word of God and feeds their souls. Unless the pure Word of God is preached in these last days Jesus will come back for a weak, uneducated church which may not be ready to meet Him! And I don't think He said in His Word that He is coming back for a weak compromised Bride! Paul said he fed his church with the milk of the Word - that is an elementary simple message that lays a good foundation for beginners for the deeper message to build on. This is essential because today's church is so near the return of Christ, Ministers have a responsibility to make His church ready.

Verse 10

According to the Grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another builds thereon; but let every man take heed how he builds there-upon.

Paul is concerned that those who follow him and take over his ministry which he had laid down to establish the church at Corinth should in every sense accord with the doctrine of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. God says we must take heed, or take great care and be watchful that we do not build our own fantasies and false reasoning's on the foundation of Holy and Divine revelation.

Verse 11/12

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood hay stubble.

Paul makes it very clear that there is only one foundation, a foundation is what a building rests upon so it must be strong and steadfast. The foundation Paul speaks of is Jesus Christ and Him crucified who is strong and steadfast. Many religions start off with Jesus Christ but soon diverse from the fundamentals of Jesus Christ and introduce other things that replace Him. One church we all know of starts off with Jesus but very soon says we can go to the priest and ask forgiveness of our sins. They have taken out Jesus and replace Him with man.

I will repeat the story I gave in a previous study, I asked a man who was working on our church if he would like to come to one of our meetings? Laughing his reply was 'No thanks, if I mess up in the week, I can go to my Priest and get forgiveness on Sunday and I am free to mess up the week after'. It was obvious he knew nothing of Jesus, His shed blood, salvation or commitment to God all he was interested in was being able to get forgiveness of his sin of one week so he is free to sin the next.

This is wood, hay and stubble and having the mind of Christ is nowhere to be found. The problems that the Corinthian church found themselves in was because they neglected to seek the mind of Christ which would keep them from Satan's temptations. If they sought the mind of Christ together as a church under good strong Bible based leadership, they would have built foundations of Gold, Silver and precious stones and would have become strong enough to become a Testament to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Verse 13

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.

This verse tells us we are accountable and responsible for all that we do, and this will be tested by fire. Fire is the great leveller, if our life is wood, hay or stubble it will not last long in the fire of God. This fire is the fire of the end times when all our work for Jesus will be tested. Sometimes we go about our work for Christ in our own strength and not with the mind of Christ and when that fire comes our work will disintegrate and will be blown away on a puff of wind. If we are in Christ we will be saved regardless of what happens to our works. On the day of reckoning Jesus will ask us what we did with the abilities He gave us. Did we do the works He asked us to do, or did we do our own thing? It is only the works we do under the authority of Jesus that will endure His fire. The other works will burn in His fire. We will not burn unless we have completely rejected Him. But we will not receive our full reward in heaven if all we did was based on our own preferences.

Verse 14

If any man's work abides which he has built thereupon he shall receive a reward. If a man's work be burned, he shall suffer loss but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Verse 16

Know you not that you are the Temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you.

To be the Temple of God is an awesome thing, when we became a Christian we accepted Jesus into our hearts and the Holy Spirit abides there to. We don't dwell *in* a Temple we *are* the Temple of God. The Temple, from a Greek root meaning 'to dwell', it is the place where God dwells on earth and where He has put His name. God did not say you are 'the synagogue' which is for the assembling of men; He

called us His Temple which is His dwelling place, not made of wood or stone but the whole congregation of believers are His 'living stones', and as believers in Jesus Christ we are spiritual priests unto Him. So God no longer dwells in the tent of meeting as in Old Testament times. He now dwells in you and me and in everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord. The tabernacle was a portable building. God being inside each one (in our spirit) means that wherever we go a measure of His presence goes with us.

Verse 17

If any man defile the Temple of God him shall God destroy for the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple you are.

As a believer we have the God-head dwelling in us. Should we defile the body that contains the Temple by way of our ungodly behaviour, sex sins, fornication, alcohol, tobacco and drugs that destroy the body, God says He will destroy that body. The Temple is Holy because God dwells within that Temple; but if our minds and our bodies become defiled by our ungodly behaviour we are opened up to Satan which will ultimately result in destruction - and God says we will be destroyed. We will be susceptible to illness and negative emotions: hopelessness, despair, depression and the like. It is a fact that eternal death is the penalty for marring the spiritual Temple-the Church.

In Exodus 19: 6 God said; *and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a Holy nation.* God had the highest aspirations for His born again Children, He said in 1 Peter.2:9. *But you are a chosen generation, a Royal Priesthood a Holy nation, a Peculiar People; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.*

When you think of all that Christ has done for us in bringing us from our sinful wicked state into being Chosen, Royal, Holy, and a Special People unto Him, we must expect Him to show His disapproval when we defile our body which contains the very Temple in which He dwells.

Verse 18

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world let him become a fool that he may be wise.

How easy it is to be fooled into thinking our ways are right. We can see how easily our builder on our church was fooled by Satan into thinking we can play with God from week to week pretending to be a Christian. The man who thinks he is wise must become a fool that he may become wise. He must divest himself of all earthly wisdom and be called a fool by this worlds standards that he may become wise unto salvation, by renouncing his own wisdom and seeking that which comes from God.

Verse 21

Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours. Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death or things present, or things to come, all are yours. 23 And you are Christ's and Christ is God's.

Paul was telling the Corinthian church not to have favourites in the ministry; they must not glory in men. There is no doubt that some ministers have a gift of putting a message across that is pleasing and educational. They are able to feed the congregation with the Word of God to build up help and encourage the body of Christ to be overcomers and victorious in spiritual warfare. Paul, Apollos and Cephas would all have imparted wonderful truths about the teaching of Jesus. They were each contributing to the spiritual growth of the church. But the people were idolising one of the preachers above the others. They were not open to receiving the full council of God and thus they remained babes in Christ.

Paul reminds them that all things are yours but in the verses earlier Paul encourages them to have the wisdom of God, so what he is saying is yes all things are for us but we must have the wisdom of God to choose that which is spiritually good for us and discard that which is bad for us. The choice was theirs and the choice today and every day is ours.

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Be blessed

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