

1 Corinthians (Chp. 3)

Corinth, an ancient city in Greece was a highly traveled shipping center of international commerce (due to location). Having ports along the Aegean & Adriatic Seas (separated by a 4 mile wedge of land), cargo was loaded to wagons & then hauled to ships waiting at the opposite sea. Ships sailing east / west stopped at Corinth to slash up to 200 miles from their trip. Immense quantities of traffic flowed through this city (shortcut between Italy & Asia)

Corinth (sin city) was also a center for lascivious living or unbridled, insatiable (sexual) immorality. Corinth promoted sinful living & had a lewd reputation. Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love/beauty was idolized/worshipped. Nonetheless, Apostle Paul was led by God to travel to Corinth (52 AD) & evangelize (Acts 18). He spent 18 months there and established the Corinthian church. The church was mainly comprised of Greeks (Gentiles) who were former pagans, and converted Jews.

Approximately three years later, on his 3rd missionary journey in Ephesus, Paul is informed that the Corinthian church is in serious trouble (1:11) & plagued by:

- (1) Divisions (Schisms, Factions, Cliques) -- No Unity (Contentions about who is the leader)**
- (2) A member having a sexual relationship with his stepmother**
- (3) Bashing one another in court with lawsuits**
- (4) Marriage, The Lord's Supper, Spiritual Gifts (Abuse), The Resurrection**

Point: One reason this evil was able to permeate the Corinthian church because the body of believers were arrogant, carnal-minded, segregated & loveless (Chp. 13), in addition to wrestling with the temptations of immorality. Today, a church diseased with these elements is in danger of destruction.

(Loveless -- Contention, disharmony, dissention, conflict, controversy, bickering, discord, hostility, strife, feuding, infighting, opposition)

Proverbs 6:16-19 "7 Things The Lord Hates":

- (1) A proud look (arrogance)**
- (2) A lying tongue (liar - does not speak the truth)**
- (3) Hands shedding innocent blood (killing the innocent)**
- (4) Heart devising wicked imaginations (minds plotting evil)**
- (5) Feet that swiftly run to mischief (zealous to do evil)**
- (6) False witness that speaketh lies**
- (7) He that soweth discord among brethren (one who seeds strife & contention)**

Matthew 12:25, "...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."

*** When these evils are allowed to exist & are promoted, we compromise the structure, purpose, & growth of the Church of God in Christ. An organization will not survive if it is infected by "viral" division & strife!**

LOVE is a necessary weapon (foundation) to fight against those elements & forces that would cause division in & desolation of the church. Where only LOVE is allowed to operate, there is no room for the Adversary to operate.

Review of Chapter 1: (Christ - The foundation of unity)

- (a) Verse 10 -- This is the purpose Paul wrote this letter...A powerful exhortation to be unified & not divided. Live in harmony & peace with each other. (Charity / love should motivate us to be unified...love for Christ & love for one another)**

- (b) Verse 12 -- There was intense division over who was the leader (hero) of the church: Paul, Apollos, Cephas (Peter), or Christ. This competition of who was "best" was created by the congregation itself. They honored & revered men rather than God.**

- (c) Verse 13 -- Christ is not divided, there is neither division / confusion in the Godhead. Satan is the author of confusion & division! Schisms should not be for those "sanctified in Christ and called to be saints" (v.2). Christ is preeminent (Supreme) & Central in the church -- unite around Christ.**

- (d) Verses 18-28 -- Earthly (Carnal) wisdom can never compare to Heavenly (Spiritual) Wisdom. The Greeks were arrogant, conceited glorifiers (idolizers) of worldly wisdom. Paul (v. 25) declares God's "foolishness" is wiser than men; and God's weakness is stronger than men. The preaching of the Crucified Christ that these skeptic stoics view as "foolishness" is for the saints the power of God & our Salvation! There is no salvation in worldly wisdom (philosophy) or anything other than Jesus Christ!**

- (e) Verses 29-31 -- No man (human) has the right to glory in or brag about anything! The saved have no right, for we received Salvation through Jesus Christ. Our glorying must be done in the Lord! Through Christ comes our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, & redemption. There is no room for arrogance & conceit in the heart or life of a Christian -- God makes no Fellowship with the haughty or prideful.**

Review of Chapter 2: (The Holy Spirit reveals True wisdom)

- (a) Verses 1-5 -- Paul declares he did not evangelize from a foundation of fancy words nor deep philosophy of men, but centered around Jesus Christ (His Crucifixion), and was empowered by the Holy Spirit (God's Wisdom). So their faith would not be in men's eloquent language nor worldly wisdom, but the "power of God."**

- (b) Verses 6-16 -- Paul states the wisdom he speaks with is Spiritual (God's) Wisdom, ordained before the Creation, and cannot be comprehended by worldly thinking. God's Wisdom (imperishable) is received through the Holy Spirit's revelation & illumination, not human (perishable) wisdom. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal & illuminate God's Truths, therefore we can only understand the things of God by receiving the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of the world. To the unregenerate, Spiritual things are foolishness for they are unable to discern or comprehend them. Believers controlled by God's Spirit or have the "mind of Christ" are able to understand God's Truths (Word) or Spiritual things, and can be spiritually instructed.**

1 Corinthians -- Chapter 3 (The Spiritual Christian)

- (a) **Verse 1:** When Paul arrived in Corinth, he taught or fed them basic principles of the Gospel. The new believers were like babies for they were weak and young in the Christian faith. They were not able to understand or “digest” deep spiritual instruction (meat), but could only digest simple Christian principles (milk) like “infants.”
- (b) **Verse 2:** Paul re-emphasizes he taught them basic principles of Christianity (Gospel) or “fed them milk” because they were too immature initially to understand or digest deep spiritual instruction (meat). However, to Paul’s great disappointment, after having established the church years prior, they were still immature in Christ, and had not attained any spiritual growth! They were still only able to “digest” milk of the Word and not meat.
- (c) **Verse 3:** Paul identifies their obstruction to attaining “spiritual growth” in Christ and His Word...**CARNALITY!!!** You all are carnal or worldly Christians -- you are unable to digest, understand, and apply greater spiritual Christian doctrine in your lives because you continue to “eat” from a fleshly (carnal) “menu.” You continue to practice worldly beliefs and allow yourselves to be influenced by worldly doctrine instead of the Holy Spirit. You are not behaving as those who are “sanctified in Christ & saints”, but those who relish the world (carnal lifestyle). Here is the evidence: there is envying (jealousy), strife (fighting), and divisions among you! ****We must work to promote Christian (spiritual) growth in our lives by intentionally disengaging from carnal principles and engaging / applying spiritual principles.**
- (d) **Verse 4:** Paul re-emphasizes their behavior is carnal because they are exalting or glorifying men by fighting in regard to who to follow or in other words “who is the best”, instead of uniting with each other with Christ as the Center and the One to exalt! This is what those who are motivated by the flesh do, not those sanctified in Christ, with the mind of Christ, and influenced by the Holy Spirit. Those who are unsanctified are led by men and demonic forces, but the sanctified are led by the Spirit of God. It is hazardous to exalt men above Jesus Christ and the Gospel, and to create competition within the church. This carnal, immature behavior is an enemy to the “spirit of unity.”
- (e) **Verses 5-8a:** Paul illuminates that neither he nor Apollos is anyone to exalt above Jesus Christ, nor to give glory to period!! They are simply servants or agents used by God to perform the work of God (evangelize the Living Word). We have various assignments, yet we work together, cohesively on “God’s Team” to accomplish God’s Purpose(s). The servants who “plant” and “water” are of no significance in comparison to the Almighty God who gives the increase. The planter nor the waterer have the power to make the seed grow, it is God who gives life! Therefore, exalt & glory God, not men! Christians can work (plant, water, etc.) however, without the power of God our work will not produce fruit. We work together as one (one Lord, one Mind, one goal) for we are **CO-LABORERS** in the Gospel and not in competition with one another. We are **CO-LABORERS** in the service of God – this produces the fruit of unity and prohibits jealousies, strivings, and divisions. God expects us to appreciate the gifts / abilities He places in each of us! ****We do not have the right to de-value another’s service or gift(s)!**

- (f) **Verses 8b-9:** Paul reemphasizes that we Christians are all God's servants, working together as CO-LABORERS (not combatants or competitors), to perform God's Work. We work with God and for God because we belong to God...we are His field and His building. (Another interpretation: Using an agricultural comparison, we Christians are CO-LABORERS working together, in the field or on a building, for a "spiritual harvest." **Individuals nor should churches be in competition, nor combating with each other. We are responsible to God and He alone will judge our works (Christian service), our faithfulness to Him, and determine our reward...not men!
- (g) **Verses 10-11:** Paul states by God's Grace has he been able to accomplish the laying of the foundation for the Corinthian church, and that Foundation was Jesus Christ. For Paul preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Apparently others were coming to the Corinthian church teaching also, and Paul was cautioning against doctrines / teachings contrary or in opposition to "Christ and Him crucified." The Foundation was already laid by Paul...Jesus Christ! A building has one foundation, so Paul's exhortation was for the Corinthian church to reject any doctrine opposing Christ and His Crucifixion.
- (h) **Verses 12-13:** Paul metaphorically speaks about a Christian's service as gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. A spiritual Christian's service to God can be compared with having the value of gold, silver, and precious stones. This brings glory to God and blessings to man. A carnal Christian's service to God can be compared to wood, hay, and stubble. These are works which failed to glorify God and edify man. God will Review / Judge (FIRE) whether the Christian's work was valuable or invaluable. The work of the spiritual Christian will withstand the fire (Judgment) and not perish. But the carnal Christian's work will perish under God's Judgment.
- (i) **Verses 14-15:** Paul highlights the service of the Christian which has brought God glory. It is of value (profitable) and will be Divinely rewarded (2:9). In contrast, the carnal servant whose works did not glorify God shall forfeit Divine Reward for "valuable service" and becomes as a man who BARELY escapes from a firewall with his life.
- (j) **Verses 16-17:** Paul reaffirms to the Corinthians that they, as a unified body of believers in Jesus Christ, were the "temple of God" and since the "Spirit of God" resides in them, they should behave as those "sanctified in Christ" (saints). The church has a "holy responsibility" to represent the "Character of Jesus Christ" and to provide service or live in a manner that edifies the church (constructive work). Anyone who decides to participate in "destructive work" against God's holy temple (church)...those intentionally working to destroy the temple, God shall destroy them (those creating divisions, promoting immorality, false teachers trying to destroy the Foundation laid by Paul). Paul exhorts them to BE HOLY, be spiritual -- not carnal!
(Note: Scripture referring to the Believer's body as "the temple" is 1 Cor. 6:19-20)

(k) Verses 18-20: Paul warns them: Don't be a fool! Those that who believe they have "worldly wisdom" and think they are so intellectual and wise in the eyes of the world, are fools in the Eyes of God. "Worldly wisdom" is garbage in comparison to Spiritual (Divine) Wisdom. (Prov. 3:7 -- "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil" ; Prov. 1:7 -- "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...")

To be wise in God's Eyes, one must seek God and spiritual wisdom. Human wisdom could never understand God, nor devise a plan of Salvation. The quote from Job 5:13 shows that God always triumphs over the wisdom of men for His own Purpose. Man with all his wisdom can never thwart the plans of God. How foolish for a man to think that he is wiser than God or can outsmart God!!! Men are poor and helpless before God! Paul uses Psalm 94:11 to magnify his point regarding the futility of worldly wisdom -- God knows everyone's thoughts including the wise and their thoughts are vanity or useless garbage. Therefore, do not be snared in trusting and exalting "wise" men, but trust and exalt God!

(l) Verses 21-23: Paul exhorts them to not glory in men and avoid at all costs the carnal temptation to form parties, divisions, schisms, etc. in the church. Everything God has done benefits the church, therefore there is no place for man-worship nor prideful boasting. Glory in Jesus Christ, in whom we have everything, for we all belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.