

Misguided Believers

1 Corinthians 3:1

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul" and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (3:1-9)

Intro: As we start chapter three we can almost sense the frustration Paul is experiencing with the Corinthian church. He had labored there for a year and a half, pouring out his heart, mind and soul to them. When he left I'm sure he did a lot of praying for them to go on to maturity in the faith. He had laid the groundwork and now it was up to the individual believers to continue to seek God's leading and direction for their lives. It was not possible for Paul to nurse them the rest of their lives. There comes a point when a person must accept responsibility for his own life. For many people life after their salvation is a surprise. They embrace the faith thinking it is going to be smooth sailing from that point on, only to find that life becomes very different then it was prior to their salvation. In fact the more one grows in the faith the more challenging it becomes to continue to be the person God is pleased with. ***Faithful Christian living becomes increasingly more difficult and more demanding as we grow spiritually.*** I like to think of it in terms of training. When I went into the military my training began immediately and day by day the instructors demanded more and more. So being in an environment where I could not leave I actually grew stronger. When we accept Jesus a lot of good things happen but not all of the struggles are taken away. God allows the struggles to teach and strengthen his children in order to withstand the demands of life. Even Jesus made it clear, in the world we are going to have trouble, **He called it tribulation.** I think all of us would testify to the fact that life is a challenge and maybe even harder since your salvation than it was before.

In this section Paul is simply trying to rally the believers and encourage them to take the next step in their journey with God. To take a deep breath and face the reality that we are in a battle and we better be equipped to fight the battles that will surely come.

Vs 1-2 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly.

1. Paul has to limit what he says to them; their spiritual growth has been small in fact they have not move beyond where Paul had left them.
2. They had the basics but nothing more; like little children they were fighting among themselves.
3. I cannot talk to a 3 year old the way I talk to an adult; spiritually this is what Paul is doing.
4. He is addressing them in very simple terms because that is all they can understand.
5. Remember discernment comes by the Holy Spirit revealing God's truth and it only comes to those **who love God and are obedient to Him.**
6. What are little children known for? Being self-centered and disobedience.

Vs 3 For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul" and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? What then is Apollos?

1. The evidence of their immaturity is the conflicts they were involved in.
2. Paul doesn't have to prove their immaturity it is self-evident by their actions.

For whenever anyone says, "I am with Paul," and another, "I am with Apollos," are you not merely human? ⁵ Therefore, what is Apollos and what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, and to each as the Lord gave.

1. Their actions shouted to their immaturity.
2. Paul did not have to prove to them that they were immature, the evidence was their division.
3. The Corinthians had elevated Apollos and Paul above what they were; simply servants that God was using.

vs 6 And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

1. They were giving more credit to their leaders than they should.
2. They were doing what God called them to do, but the results came from God.
3. God needed to be their focal point, not the leaders God provided.

Vs 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

1. The only one who should get the praise is the Lord.
2. The important thing is not who the preacher is; the important thing is whether God is using him.

3. If God is using him, then God should have the credit for the results. Give God the praise and the glory.

Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour [1 Cor. 3:8].

1. We need to recognize that God uses many workmen. They may each be doing things a little bit differently.

2. We need to be careful that we are not fighting God by fighting His workmen.

3. The question usually boils down to this; is God getting the glory and is it working to reach the lost and build up the saints?

4. There are many men who use different methods. Many men do things in a different way from the way I would do them. Yet God uses these men. We are all workmen together with God.

5. We see the promise of rewards here; everyone will receive from God based upon his own work according to his faithfulness in the work God called him to do.

6. God does not fail to recognize the faithful work of His servants. Each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

7. God will "give their reward to [His] bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear [His] name, the small and the great" (Rev 11:18). That is the uniqueness of future glory.

God rewards on the basis of labor, not success or results.

8. A missionary may work faithfully for 40 years and see only a handful of converts. Another may work far fewer years and see far more converts. Jeremiah was one of God's most faithful and dedicated prophets, yet he saw little result of his ministry. He was ridiculed, persecuted, and generally rejected along with the message he preached.

9. Jonah, on the other hand, was selfish and resisting what God called him to do, yet through him God won the entire city of Nineveh very quickly. Our usefulness and effectiveness are totally based upon God's grace (cf. 1 Cor 15:10).

10. We are told to give honor to whom honor is due; it is appropriate that God's faithful servants be appreciated and encouraged while they are on earth. But they are not to be glorified, set apart, or made the center of special groups or movements.

For we are labourers together with God: you are God's project, you are God's building.

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon [1 Cor. 3:9–10].

1. Paul had the privilege of laying the foundation of the church.
2. The foundation was put down over nineteen hundred years ago. Ever since people have been building upon the foundation, and that is Christ Jesus.
3. It is not my role or yours to deal with the foundation, it is set and permanent.
4. We can build on that foundation. The way we build upon the foundation is to lead men to a saving knowledge of Jesus and to show the world how to live as a Christian.
5. When a person accepts the Lord they become part of the building. The building grows as people are saved and joined to Christ.
6. Paul identifies himself as a “**Wise Master builder.**”

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 3:11].

1. We should all be building on the foundation laid by Paul.
2. We were saved to be a witness for Christ and part of that is doing good. In the process of doing good deeds we will impact others and actually be used by Christ to lead others to Him.
3. We are warned here to be careful how we build or put another way be careful what you do and how you do it.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

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 [1 Cor. 3:12–13].

1. Paul says that you can build on the foundation that has already been laid with six different kinds of material: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.
2. Fire won't hurt the first three on the list. Actually, the fire purifies gold and silver and precious stones.
3. But fire certainly gets rid of the last three on the list. Wood, hay, and stubble will all disappear into smoke.
4. The believer is at liberty to build on the foundation with any of these materials: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.
5. This clearly indicates that God will acknowledge what we do in His name and reward good actions. If any man's work abides, work that he has built on the foundation that has already been laid, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward [1 Cor. 3:14].

1. If there is anything left after the fire passes over it there will be a reward waiting.
2. This is not hard to understand; everything is based upon the material we are building with. Gold, silver and precious stones are the things done with God's blessing; wood, hay and stubble are those things we like to do, but God is not pleased with them.
3. I think a lot of the wood, hay and stubble are the things we do that point back to us, give us recognition and generally fail to acknowledge God in the process.
4. There are many things done in the name of God that has nothing to do with God at all.
5. The crusades, the Spanish inquisition, are two that come to mind immediately.
6. Often buildings are erected in the name of God in order to honor men.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire [1 Cor. 3:15].

1. You see the contrast: "If any man's work abide" which he built on the foundation, he shall receive a reward; if any man's work goes up in smoke, he will suffer a terrible loss, but he himself will be saved.
2. Losing one's reward is not losing one's salvation.
3. You can be saved and yet fail to gain rewards.
4. The question is this, "Why are you doing what you are doing?" What kind of material are you using?
5. I think the gold mentioned here may well be the things done in secret with no one knowing what you have done.
6. Gold tends to come in small quantities while wood, hay and stubble are everywhere. The gold is hard to find and you have to search for it.
7. Wood, hay and stubble are laying around everywhere.

Conclusion: Now if you are a carnal Christian, you cannot expect a reward because you have not been using Gold, Silver and precious stones. The carnal Christian is the one who does not obey the Word of God because he refuses to study and apply the Word of God in his life. **Actually** each of us that know Christ as Lord and Savior have to make a choice; am I going to search the Scriptures to find the gold and silver and precious stones so that I can utilize them in my life and impact the people I come in connect with, or am I simply going to continue to do what I was doing before I was saved and that is do my own thing, my own way, for my own satisfaction. As Joshua said many years ago, ***"Chose you this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."***