

Prince of Peace Baptist Church
Bible Academy
February 26 and 28, 2014

1 Corinthians 3

Pastor Shipman's Highlights

There are two main divisions of chapter 3. Verses 1-15 make up the first section; and verses 16-23 the second. The first section deals with arguments against the flesh (the natural sensual desires of the human being) for determining behavior and for understanding the Holy Scripture.

The second section (15-23) is an additional polemic against using the body for anything that God considers a defilement of the body, as it is the unique temple of God.

Verses 1-3 Knowing the character traits of your audience. Knowing how to discern the spirits of those who serve with us. Synonyms are babes, carnal. It is important to know that there are undeveloped people "in Christ," so that we participate less in condemning a life rather than learning how to minister to them.

Evidence of a materialistic, flesh satisfying person (3-4). This is a person who is only concerned about his/her own needs being met; their will being enforced; their will being done. Even the dissension over who baptized whom is a result of fleshy pride, which pits the value of ones servant of God against another. It is an attempt to establish prestige or prominence within the Church.

For Paul, the argument is resolved in verse 5-9. Verses 10 and 11 establish that Christians must be careful what they add to the substructure/the foundation of the faith. Jesus Christ—his work of atonement and redemption—are the foundation upon which the Church/the faith is built. Creeds, polities, traditions, doctrine, sacraments and the like shall all be tried by fire (12-15).

At verse 16 there is seemingly a turn in the discussion , but it is not unrelated to the prior section inasmuch as behavior is determined by belief. It includes:

The respectful use of the the body as the temple of God

The use of wisdom

The ultimate truth that every believer and every thing belongs to Christ. It is for his glory, not for our arbitrary use. (15)

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Arno Gaebeline's Commentary

CHAPTER 3

1. The Carnal state of the Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 3:1-9).
2. The Workmen and their Work. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).
3. The Church the Temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).
4. Warning against Deception and Glorifying in Men. (1 Corinthians 3:18-23).

Their condition is next uncovered. They did not depend on the Spirit of God and did not enjoy the hidden wisdom and walk in it. They were carnal, mere babes in Christ, in the sense that their growth, their spiritual development had been arrested. Carnal (fleshly) is not equivalent to "natural." The believer is no longer a natural man, for he is born again. Carnal describes a condition in which the believer walks when he is not subject to the Spirit of God, but is led and governed by natural instincts and motions. Such was their condition. What was merely of man; wisdom, learning, intellect, eloquence and other things, were highly esteemed by them. They were wise in their own conceits and gloried in men. They delighted in and longed for that which is of man, and admired it, therefore the real spiritual truths communicated by the Spirit were unknown to them.

The evidence that they walked not according to the Spirit and the wisdom of God, was the strife and factions which existed among them. They were carnal and walked according to man. This party spirit among them had its source not in the Spirit Of God, but in the flesh. In it, not the Lord was glorified, but man was exalted. They were more occupied with Paul and Apollos, their persons and talents, than with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way sectarianism began, as the fruit of the flesh. And the remedy for it is "seeing no man but Jesus only." If the Lord Jesus Christ is owned in His glory, and union with Him is enjoyed, then the carnal condition ends and the believer walks in the Spirit and glories no longer in man. Paul and Apollos were but servants by whom they had believed. It is true Paul planted; Apollos coming after him, watered, but God gave the increase. God is all. And any man, whether he planteth or watereth, shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. They were God's fellow-workmen and the Saints are God's husbandry (tillage), God's building. And so all true servants of the Lord, though differing in gifts, are one in this that they are instruments in God's hand.

Next ((1 Corinthians 3:10-15), God's fellow-workmen and their work is considered in view of the time "when each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Paul here calls himself a wise master-builder (an architect). It was not of himself. He did not plan the great building, the church, but it was according to the grace bestowed upon him. The Lord had chosen him for that. The mystery concerning the church which was hidden in former ages, had been made known to him by revelation. Laboring in Corinth, by preaching the Gospel, he was

used by the will and the grace of God to establish the church there. The foundation was laid by him in sound doctrine, according to the revelation given to him. But neither Paul nor Peter nor any other man is the foundation upon which the building rests ; there is but one foundation, Jesus Christ, the Son Of God. The church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:20-21). The foundation is laid, but the question is what fellow-workmen are going to build upon this one foundation.

Those who are not at all building upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ the Son of God, are of course, not considered. (The different anti-Christian cults, like Christian Science, Spiritism, New Thought, theosophy, etc., all lay claim to the name of Christ, but they reject Him and belong therefore to that class who destroy the Temple of God.) Those who own the one foundation may build upon it either gold, silver, precious stones; or wood, hay, stubble. The first three things mentioned are precious and durable; the other three things are worthless and perishable. Gold, silver and precious stones are the fit adornment of the church as the temple of God, but wood, hay and stubble are worthless material fit not for a temple, but for a mud hovel. Gold, silver and precious stones typify the service of the workman which is of faith, done in obedience to the Word and manifesting the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, while wood, hay and stubble represent what is not of faith, the work and service done in self-will, exalting man instead of the Lord, and therefore disfiguring the temple of God.

The workman whose aim is to please God and not man, whose one ambition is to exalt Christ in all his service, who labors for the perfecting of the Saints, the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12), builds that which is durable and which can never perish. The workman who pleases men, seeks the applause of man, uses the means and schemes of the world to carry on what is called “Christian work” and in it all is not obedient to the Word of God, builds that which is worthless and his work will perish.

A day is coming in which each man’s work shall be made manifest. The day is the day of Christ when all believers shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. He is a consuming fire; and before Him whatever is of man and not of Himself will be burned up. That fire shall try every man’s (who is a believer saved by grace) work of what sort it is. Then those who toiled in an unostentatious way, who built upon the one foundation that which glorifies Him, whose work was done in faith, shall find that their work abides and they will receive their own reward. The others will see all their work go up in smoke. They shall suffer loss. There is no reward for them. They shall be saved, yet so as by fire. Like Lot who escaped out of Sodom; but all that he had wrought in Sodom, his righteous soul being vexed, was burned up. But the salvation the believer has is independent of his service and work. Every believer will be saved and live, though what he wrought may be found in that day only fit for the fire.

And the building of which the Apostle speaks is the church, the temple of God, the habitation of God through the Spirit. God’s Holy Spirit is dwelling in every member of the body. The temple of God is holy and such are ye. Then the solemn warning “if any man destroy (not defile) the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” God’s temple in which He dwells, the church, is founded on His truth. The destruction of that temple means therefore the denial of the truth of God or the introduction of false doctrines; critics of the Word, who deny the fundamentals of the faith have well been called “destructive.” They are the enemies of the cross, whose end is perdition. They are not saved as by fire, but God is going to deal with them in an awful judgment.

In the professing church today are uncountable numbers, who have crept in unawares: they were never born again and therefore they work corruption and will perish. Therefore "let no man deceive himself." The Corinthians were setting aside the wisdom of the Spirit and were being seduced by the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God. They marred the temple of God by their carnal spirit, trusting in men and glorying in men. In God's gracious purpose as revealed by the Spirit of God all things were theirs. Paul, Apollos and Cephas were the chosen instruments of God for blessing them. As believers they had all things and belong to none but Christ and through Christ to God Himself.

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Bibliography Information

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