

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 3

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon explores Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian church for their divisions and immaturity, emphasizing the importance of spiritual growth and unity in Christ.

Duration: 54:11

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:10

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of division and contention among the believers in the church. He emphasizes the importance of unity and encourages the congregation to speak the same things and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment. The speaker also warns against seeking acceptance and approval from the world, as this is based on pride and goes against the purpose of glorifying God. He urges the believers to move beyond the foundational teachings of the gospel and to apply the teachings of Jesus and the apostles in their lives in order to grow and be conformed into the image of Christ.

Transcript

As we come to chapter three, we're actually picking up right in the middle of this lengthy rebuke that's being given by the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth, a rebuke that is due to the fact that they have veered from the pure gospel and they have embraced philosophy, human wisdom. They have interpreted the apostles in an entirely different light than they actually were. They had begun to see the apostles as representatives of various philosophical schools within the church, and they had begun to line themselves up under the one that they felt the most attracted to.

And all of this was so much like what was going on in the city of Corinth, a city that was steeped in philosophy and human wisdom, a city that was divided up into various sects depending on the preference of the individual for a certain school of philosophy. And so what they were doing was mimicking the world and they were doing this based upon pride, wanting to be accepted by the world, wanting to be thought of by the world as being sophisticated and intellectual and so forth. And so as we come to the third chapter, we pick up, as I said, in the midst of this lengthy rebuke.

But let me read you a few verses from chapters one and two to kind of get the continuity of thought. Back in chapter one, verse 10, Paul begins and says, Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same things and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be

perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

Now I say this, that each of you says, I am a Paul or I am of a Paulus or I am of Cephas or I am of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. Now, verse 17, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Now, over in chapter one or excuse me, chapter two, verses one through five, he says, And I, brethren, when I came to you did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God, for I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

And now chapter three, and I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual. So as we look at the flow of thought here, we see it all began with the apostle rebuking them for the divisions, and then he goes on to really get at the root of the division. The root of the division was pride, intellectual pride, sophistication and a desire to be seen as important by the world.

That was the root of it. And so he reminds them of his own presentation when he came among them, that he did not come among them as a philosopher, that he did not come to them using rhetoric or having an emphasis on his mode of expression. The emphasis was rather on the content of his message.

He was preaching the simple and the clear gospel. And now he again says to them, and I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual. Now, apparently what they had decided was that Paul was inferior to some of these others that they had elevated because, in their opinion, he spoke to them too simply.

He spoke to them in in a simplicity and and he wasn't necessarily eloquent in the sense that the philosophers were. And so because he spoke to them in simplicity, they were criticizing him for that. And it appears from the text, as we'll look at it, that Apollos, although none of this was actually the case, there was no rivalry between Paul and Apollos.

Yet some of the people in the church had set themselves up under these different men and they had in their own midst developed this sort of a rivalry. Now, we know Apollos was a very eloquent man. The scriptures testify to that in the Acts of the Apostles were told about Apollos.

He was an Alexandrian Jew who was a very eloquent individual and a very capable man with words. So it appears that what they were doing is they were preferring Apollos over Paul because Apollos was a more polished speaker and he was more eloquent. So they were saying about the Apostle Paul that, oh, his message is it's.

It's for the immature, he's he's really dealing with elementary things, his message is is very simplistic, and so they were implying that. That there was some fault in the Apostle Paul himself because of the way he addressed them. Now, he's going to show them that the reason he addressed them the way he did was not because of anything lacking in him, but it was actually because of their condition.

That they were spiritually immature and they needed to be given the elementary principles of Christ because of their immaturity. So he says, I could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as

to babes in Christ. They were saying, oh, Paul, you know, he's he's not that he's not that special.

You know, his his message is so elementary, it's so simplistic. Paul says the reason I adapted that approach was because of your immaturity. I couldn't speak to a spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ, I fed you with milk and not with solid food for until now you were not able to receive it.

And even now you are still not able. So you see, he's showing them the problem isn't with him. The problem is with them.

And this is the crux of the problem is this. They have mistaken human wisdom and eloquence for true spirituality. And in that they've made a mistake.

They're forsaking the wisdom of God and the simplicity of the message of Christ. And they're going after this complicated, philosophical type of an approach. And they're thinking that that is actually more spiritual.

But Paul says, no, that that's not a sign of spirituality at all. And the fact that they were enamored with this, the fact that they were impressed with human intellect was an indicator of their immaturity in the faith. And so he says, I fed you with milk and not with solid food.

Milk would be a reference to the elementary principles of the gospel, the initial things, the fact of Jesus coming and dying for the sin of the world and rising again, just the basic essentials of the gospel. The solid food would be more of a reference to the application of those things and a growing into maturity in the faith. Now, milk is valid for nourishment.

At a certain point in every one of our lives as Christians, as a new Christian, I need the milk. Peter, in writing his epistle, he said, as newborn babies desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow by it. So there's nothing the matter with milk at all.

The only problem with milk is when a person ought to be feeding on solid food and they're still requiring milk. In the epistle to the Hebrews, we find that that was the case there. And the author writing to them, he says, for the time has come.

That you yourselves ought to be teachers, but instead you need to be taught again the elementary principles of the doctrines of Christ and you have become those who need milk and not solid food. You see, milk is valid when a person is a new believer, but a person needs to grow beyond the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ and begin to go into that life of obedience, that life of deeper understanding, that life of taking it beyond just, you know, the four spiritual laws, if you will. You know that I'm separated from God by nature, that I cannot bridge the gap that Christ came to do that.

He died. He rose again and he can reconcile me to God. Those things are wonderful realities.

They are the elementary principles of the gospel. And that's what I need to know initially, and I need to be founded in those things. But then there comes a time when I need to have solid food to take me beyond just simply believing that Jesus is who he said he was and did what he claimed to do.

I need to now begin to apply to my life his teaching and through the application of his teaching to my life, I begin to grow into his image. So solid food is really, you know, growing deeper in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles in order that my life would be more and more conformed into the image of Christ where milk is just that the initial foundational things. But they're vital.

We can't go on to solid food unless we first have all been established in the milk. So the problem here with the Corinthians, as well as with the Hebrews, was that they had been arrested in their growth instead of going on from infancy into maturity. They were still stuck in an immature state.

And that's the thing with the Corinthians. But the irony is they think they're spiritual. But Paul says, no, you're not spiritual at all.

You're actually carnal, and this is the evidence of it. You are still carnal for where there are envy, strife and divisions among you. Are you not carnal and behaving as mere men? You see, the word of God is to have an impact on our lives.

The word of God is meant to change our lives and to give us. A new pattern of behavior and a new ability through the grace of God to behave in a way that is consistent with the nature of Christ. So Paul says to them, you think you're spiritual, but the evidence says the opposite.

Why? Because there's envy, strife and division among you. Wherever there's envy, strife and division, that indicates that there's immaturity rather than maturity on the part of an individual. Now, division is a manifestation of immaturity.

And it's interesting that a person, on the one hand, can appear to be mature. If we're not fully aware of what maturity is, because maybe they have somewhat of a better grip on the scriptures than, say, the average Christian. Maybe they know their Bible better.

Maybe they're able to quote rapidly a string of scriptures. Maybe they're able to go out and address a person and, you know, speak to them boldly in the name of Jesus and refute their arguments or things like that. A lot of times we look at those things, we say, oh, wow, that person is really spiritual because, you know, look at that.

I have a friend who is a brilliant guy, he has a great mind. And through just his brilliance, he's been able to memorize a lot of scripture, been able to really take lengthy passages and be able to quote them verbatim. And, you know, he got to a point where he was sort of wanting to impress everybody with his biblical knowledge.

And, you know, you'd walk up and say something to him and, oh, that reminds me of. And then he'd go off and, you know, rattle five or six scriptures and everybody, oh, he's so spiritual. Oh, my, you know.

And he did indeed appear to be. But then he gets into a difficult situation. He gets into sort of a crunch where he has to depend on God for something and everything comes unraveled in his life.

He can't even trust God. To provide for him in this area or something like that, and suddenly you realize, wait, there's there's not a maturity here as there appears to be. There's actually an immaturity because in the more vital things of trusting God and obeying God and having Christlike character, there's a there's an obvious weakness.

So we have to have an understanding of what true spirituality is. True spirituality is primarily evidenced by a character that is conforming to the character of Christ. By a character that demonstrates itself in love, demonstrates itself in patience, demonstrates itself in faith and trust in God.

That's when we can see that a person is maturing. Now, these Corinthian believers, they were far from maturing because they were divided up. They were striving with one another.

They were envying one another and they were dividing up within the church. For one says, I am of Paul and another, I am of Apollos, are you not carnal? This reminds me of some of the things that have gone on in later church history. And the irony is that people have not seen it as carnality, but rather, you know, again, as spirituality.

I don't know how familiar you are with these terms, Calvinism and Arminianism, but these are two different schools of theology. And it's been amazing over the centuries to see the division that is developed in the body of Christ over these theological differences. And in essence, it's the same kind of thing.

It's a person saying just the equivalent of I am of Paul or I am of Apollos. And I've known people who would not feel that they could fellowship with you as a Christian. If you did not hold to their exact theological point of view.

They were very quick to criticize you and to even question the validity of your salvation. Now, a name that many of us are probably familiar with would be the name of John Wesley. John Wesley was, theologically, he would be known as an Arminian.

And the Arminian view of theology tends to put an emphasis on man's responsibility, where the Calvinistic view of theology puts an emphasis on God's sovereignty. So John Wesley leaned more toward an Arminian type of view, and he put an emphasis on human responsibility. He told people, you need to make a decision for Jesus Christ.

Now, I have read some publications recently from people coming from a Calvinistic point of view, and they're actually questioning the salvation of John Wesley. I mean, they're not taking into consideration the great impact he had for Christ in his time. The fact that he preached to hundreds of thousands of people and many people came to faith in Christ through his ministry.

And he developed churches all over this country, which spread out into various parts of the world. You know, they're discounting all of that. And they're saying because he put an emphasis on human responsibility, he might not have been a Christian himself.

You know, and there's this division, this dividing up. And here's the point that I'm getting at. People fail to see that this is far from being a sign of maturity.

This is a sign of absolute immaturity. This is the very same thing that was happening in the city of Corinth. A few years ago, I had a person come to me who I had led to the Lord and basically disciplined them for a number of years.

And one day the person came into my office and said, I have to leave the church. And I said, well, why? He said, well, because you're not teaching sound doctrine. And I said, really, well, can you show me the area where I'm failing? Maybe you can help me.

He said, well, I've been reading these books and I've come to believe that God is sovereign and man doesn't have any choice in the matter. That certain people are predestined to heaven and other people are predestined to hell. And you don't teach that you teach that people have a responsibility and therefore you're teaching false doctrine.

And I have to leave the church. And I thought, you know, what a what a sad and tragic thing. But here again is the irony.

He felt that he had come to a place of superior spirituality and therefore he could no longer associate with us who in his mind were carnal. But the fact of the matter was just the opposite. He was the immature and carnal one.

Because. Of this divisive attitude over these kinds of issues, so the things that were happening in Corinth definitely have application among us today. Now, I want to say this as well about the whole issue of division.

Division. Always results. From a deviation from the word of God.

But here's the thing I find interesting today, those who want to hold to the word of God are usually the ones being accused of being divisive. But you see, it's it's exactly the opposite of that is the deviation from the word of God that actually causes the division. So we should never feel intimidated or condemned that we are being divisive if we're holding fast to the scriptures and not willing to compromise the scriptures for, you know, some new thing that's come along.

The division is actually caused by those who deviate from the word, not from those who hold fast to the word. So. Division itself, though.

Is always a result of carnality. It's always the result of putting a person above the Lord or a theology above the Bible or a philosophy above the clear teaching of scripture. It's always a result of that, and it's always also a manifestation of carnality.

So. Like the Corinthians, you find, though, that most people who have erred from the scriptures to some degree and embraced some sort of aberrant teaching. Tend to think that they are really the spiritual ones and those who disagree with them are the immature or the carnal ones.

Again, I'm reminded of an incident a few years ago where, you know, a person was seeking to explain to another person why Calvary Chapel was problematic. And the problem, in their opinion, was that we were immature spiritually, we were babes in Christ. And the reason for it was because we had not embraced the teaching of men like Kenneth Copeland or Benny Hinn or that type of teaching, which was obviously true spirituality.

And we were too immature to move into those deeper things of God. That was the explanation that they gave to this person as to why Calvary Chapel was missing out on the real blessing of God. You see, the fact of the matter is this is just the opposite of what they described.

The carnality was on their part, the division was caused by them from the deviation from the scriptures. So, there's so many different areas, it's hard to know what to cover and what not to cover. But moving on into verse 5, the particular problem in Corinth again was that they had elevated one man over another.

And what Paul is going to remind them of is that that was something that was foolish. Who then is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers, the word minister is servant, but servants through whom you believed as the Lord gave to each one. You see, they're wanting to exalt men.

Paul says, who are we? Who am I? Who is Apollos? We're just servants. We're slaves. He's trying to bring them back to the proper focus.

And and this is true about ministers of God and ministers of God need to remember this themselves. The word minister means slave. There was a time when the term minister or reverend or something like that, you know, really, really was quite impressive in the culture.

Nowadays, it's not too impressive. But, you know, there was there was a time when the clergy were exalted given the red carpet treatment and and many people in the clergy began to feel that that was the kind of treatment that they deserved. So, you know, they should get a free round of golf because after all, I'm a man of the cloth or I should get a reduction on my getting my clergyman's outfit cleaned or, you know, something like that.

And there was, you know, sort of an attitude that I should be privileged because I'm a minister. But it's a failure to even understand the word itself, the Greek word behind the word we say minister is a word that means servant. And Paul's trying to bring them back to a proper understanding of Christian ministry.

You see, they were taking the ministry in the church and again, they were wanting to make it just like the world. It's just a little version of the world. We've got our important people.

We've got our different schools of philosophy. We've got our divisions and we've got our ministers, people that we look up to. Paul says, no, we're ministers through whom you believe we're servants.

We're hired slaves. We're nothing more than that. And then he says, as the Lord gave to each one.

They were doing what they were doing because God had called them to do it. And they, in other words, were not into the ministry for their own glory, for their own self gratification. And now he says, I planted Paul was the founder of the church.

You can understand if I can really identify with this, you know, having planted some churches. And, you know, here's Paul, who is really, as he will say to them later, he says, I'm your father in the faith because we have 10000 instructors in Christ. You only have one father.

Oh, there are many people who want to come along and teach you and give you their point of view and get you to give allegiance to them. But he says, I birthed you. I brought you in to the world and I took care of you.

I changed your nappies. You know, I went through all the difficulty of bringing you up in the Lord. And and now they're turning against him and they're embracing human wisdom.

You can you can see how he would be grieved by this. But he reminds them, I planted. The work there is a result of my endeavor, my activity, I planted a polis watered.

So here here's where we see that the that the conflict was really over Paul and a polis. Paul had been there. He had planted the church.

He had spent some time there. He left and a polis came and ministered. And when he came, they had already been moving toward this philosophical.

Way of thinking and embracing. Worldly wisdom and a polis comes on the scene and he is so articulate. Oh, he's so smooth with his words, not to fault a polis, this is just the way he was.

It was fine. It was just part of his gift. But they were saying, oh, a polis is our man.

But he says, no, I planted a polis watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. So you see, he just brings it all back to God.

This isn't a competitive thing. We're not in this competing with each other. But yet, how often in the church do we find that that's the case, especially today, isn't it? Oh, you hear of some ministry that's gaining more disciples and right away.

Oh, you know, we've got to get into competition with them or we've got to give some reason why, you know, God really couldn't be blessing them. It's just part of human nature, isn't it? This happened even in the ministry of Jesus. And it happened with the disciples of John.

You remember the disciples of John? They loved John so much. They came to John, they said, John, not one that you pointed to, that Jesus, everybody's going after him now and they're baptizing more people than you are. And they're trying to get John to compete with Jesus.

John says a man can receive nothing except it's given to him from heaven. I told you that I'm not the Messiah, but I came to prepare the way for him. John pointed them back to Jesus.

How wise Paul is doing the same thing. He's pointing them back to Jesus, pointing them back to God. Ministers should never be.

Competitors with one another, we're co-workers with one another. We have the same goal, the same purpose, the same cause is to get the gospel out, some plant, some water, but God is the one who gives the increase. So all glory really inevitably goes back to God.

I think, God, that I've been allowed to plant and I think, God, I've been allowed to water and I think, God, that on occasion I've been allowed to reap. But I certainly am not envious at all if I simply plant and someone else comes along and waters. Oh, thank God that they got the opportunity to water.

And then thank God that someone else got the opportunity to reap. You know, you maybe hear about someone that you planted a seed with that eventually came to the Lord through another person. Are you jealous that they got to lead the person to the Lord? I hope not.

No, you would rejoice when you say, oh, wonderful to realize that we're workers together. One person does their part. Another person does their part.

God is the one ultimately who gets the glory because neither he who plants is anything or he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now, he who plants and he who waters are one. Now, again, back in the context of Corinth, Paul is saying to them, there is no variance between Apollos and I. Whatever you've developed in your own thinking process, well, that's your problem.

But know this, Apollos and I are one. We're not setting up competing schools of theology, we are one. And each one will receive his own reward according to his labor, for we are God's.

Fellow workers, Apollos and I, we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God, which was given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another builds upon it. Paul is always pointing things back to God.

He's always redirecting the focus of people because people tend to just naturally exalt other people. There's something in us where we tend to exalt the instrument and give more devotion to the human instrument than we ought to. And it's it's something that I think is almost incurable.

It's just part of human nature. We just tend to exalt people. And therefore, Paul was always pointing people back to the Lord.

When God uses a person and when God uses a person in your life, well, of course, you have great admiration for that person, love and respect and so forth. And and that's fine. There's a there's a legitimate place for that.

It's a place to give honor to whom honor is due, Paul said in writing to Timothy, he said, hold those who labor in the word and doctrine, give them double honor. There's a place for that, but we always have to remember that the human being is simply an instrument in God's hand. And it's not the person.

But it's God working through the person, and so we can thank God for the person, but we glory in the Lord. Not in the person, we have to keep that perspective. And here, Paul, according to the grace of God that was given to me, he again, he's pointing back to God.

It's the grace of God given to me. It's not that I myself am some super apostle. And great church planter, and he wasn't pulling out any of his own natural credentials, he's reminding them of God's grace as a wise master builder.

Now, the use of the word wise here is important because remember the context. That's the whole debate, the debates over wisdom. And what they're doing, in essence, is accusing Paul of not being wise because they're comparing him again on a philosophical level.

But he says, as a wise master builder, I laid the foundation. And he goes on in verse 11, and he says, for other foundation can no one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. So his wisdom was manifested in the fact that he laid the foundation on Jesus Christ.

He knew that if a church was going to be built and succeed, it had to have a solid foundation and the foundation had to be Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church, and if anything else is substituted, the church will inevitably collapse. You think of so many churches that have collapsed historically.

And you would have to go back and see that it was probably because a faulty foundation was laid. Some churches were built on the foundation of of the reformers. I think of Holland, the Dutch reformed church built on the foundation of the reformers.

But if you if you go into Holland today and if you consider the laws in Holland, you'll find that it is so utterly pagan and contrary to biblical Christianity. But yet the state church was there, the Dutch reformed church. But I think the problem is the church was built on a faulty foundation, was built on reform instead of on Jesus Christ to some degree.

Built on the doctrines of the Reformation, the doctrines of the Reformation, many of them are good and accurate doctrines. But you can't separate the doctrine from the person. The person of Jesus has to be the foundation.

Today, many people are trying to build the church on the foundation of the Holy Spirit. You know what? The Holy Spirit is not the foundation for the church. Jesus Christ is the foundation for the church.

The Holy Spirit is the servant of Jesus and the one who manifest Jesus. But when a ministry says, oh, we're built on the foundation of the Holy Spirit and all the emphasis is on the Holy Spirit, you know, a faulty foundation has been laid. And in a process of time, the structure will collapse.

It's inevitable. Now. Verse 12.

Says now, if anyone builds on this foundation and as we've been doing on a regular basis, you know, we've been taking the entire chapter, expositing it and then leaving the the next study to to do more of a, you know, in-depth topical study. This these are the verses we're going to be looking at next time, so I don't want to get too involved in it. But something I want you to understand, and I'll make it more clear in our next study.

I want you to understand who Paul is addressing at this point, because it's absolutely vital to an understanding of his whole argument. And it's because there's been a failure to understand who he's addressing that. I think so much of the church has ended up being built on a faulty foundation in verse 12 when he says, now, if anyone builds on this foundation, he is making a reference specifically to the leadership of the church.

He's not addressing an individual Christian and making any reference whatsoever to our walks as individuals. None of what he's going to say now has anything really to do with us as individual Christians. It's addressed specifically to leaders.

He says that I have laid the foundation and another builds on it. See, Paul was a foundation layer. He planted the church, but he knew that his calling was to plant churches.

So he spent a year and a half or so in Corinth. He laid the foundation, but then he moved on and others were now going to build on the foundation that he laid. But listen to what he says, but let each one take heed how he builds on it.

So he's now moving from addressing the Corinthians in general. To addressing specifically the leadership of the congregation, those who are taking the church in the direction that it's going, that's who he's addressing right here. And I think it's been a failure to understand this that has really contributed to many problems in the church, because what it does is if we don't understand the context, we don't understand the severe warning that's given here.

There is probably the most severe warning in all the New Testament to leadership contained in these verses right here. And because people have taken these verses out of their context and misapplied them, the warning that's given has been missed. Now, if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw, so the builders are.

The leaders. The gold, silver and precious stones. Are.

Jesus Christ, the sure foundation, the wood, hay and the straw is a reference to human wisdom and its various facets. See, that's the whole issue right here. Paul laid the foundation on Jesus Christ, and these guys are trying to build on that structure with human wisdom, wood, hay and straw.

Listen to what he says, Each one's work will become clear for the day will declare it because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is. You see, Paul is speaking to the leaders in the church and he says, Know this as you're building on the foundation that I laid one day, your work is going to be tested by God. And that's something that every person who stands in a pulpit, every person who claims to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, has to remember one day I'm going to answer to God, not only for my own life as a Christian, but I'm going to answer to God for how I've instructed his people.

And I think it's the fact that people have forgotten that that has led to the utter chaos in the modern church. There are men in Christian leadership who have no accountability. That's the problem.

They don't see themselves accountable to anyone, especially to God. They're not thinking in terms of an appointment with God to answer to God for what they've done with his church. And it's it's evident by the way they behave.

By the way, they fleece the flock of God, by the way they take advantage of God's people financially and otherwise, you can see that there is no thinking. In their mind that one day I'm going to have to give an account, but that's what Paul is talking about here, he's talking about a day when the work that you've done, the the building that you've erected on the foundation is going to be tested. And if anyone's work which we which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burned. He will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. So you see, it's a it's a strong warning to those who are building the church.

There's there's coming a day of reckoning, that's why James, in his epistle, he reminded those who wanted to be leaders, they saw that there was a bit of prestige in Christian leadership. He said, do not be anxious to be teachers. Why, for we shall receive the greater condemnation.

So whenever a person is is motivated to get into Christian leadership or ministry for their own selfish. Gratification. That warning is especially applicable to them.

Don't be anxious because you're going to receive the greater condemnation. You're not only accountable for yourself at that point, but you're also accountable for those who you are going to be leading. And he says, if anyone's work is burned.

So, in other words, for those who build the church through human wisdom and reject the wisdom of God is revealed in the scripture. They are going to suffer loss on that day, but he does say they themselves will be saved. But though, as through fire.

I can't help but think about many in the modern church who are building the church. On human wisdom of a variety of sorts. There's all kinds of different manifestations of human wisdom that's being applied to the church today.

Those men are going to suffer loss on that day of judgment. They themselves will be saved if they're genuinely believers. Some are not believers at all.

They're strictly false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing. But some are genuinely believers. But they've moved away from the biblical model for ministry and that solid foundation of Jesus.

And they have adopted human wisdom and they put an emphasis on human wisdom. And there's a day of reckoning that's coming. They're going to be saved themselves, but they're going to suffer loss.

Now, verse 16, here's where the very stern warning comes in. He says, do you not know that you are the temple of God? Now, again, the problem with a lot of interpretation is the failure to see the context. When Paul says you are the temple of God here, he's not talking to them individually.

He will bring up the same issue later to them and apply it to them individually. When he says you are the temple of God, he's talking about the church corporately. You are the temple of God.

And don't you know that and that the spirit of God dwells in you, if anyone defiles the temple. So he says the church is the temple of God, you leaders are the builders of this temple. But if any one of you leaders defiles the temple, listen to what it says.

God will destroy him. God will destroy him for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. You see, God does not take lightly people who try to build the church with their own wisdom.

The church is not ours to do that with. The church is not mine. The church does not belong to any man.

The church belongs to Jesus Christ and it's God's church. And God has told those who would be his servants how his church is to be built. He's very specific when you go back into the Old Testament and you read through the law.

It gets quite laborious reading through the law as you find all the meticulous guidelines, rules and regulations that God had for building the tabernacle and then finally building the temple. What do you make of all of that? Well, one thing that's quite clear is that God is very specific and things are to be done in a specific way. And if we do our own wisdom, our own will decide that we're not going to do it God's way, we're going to do it our way.

Well, we put ourselves at odds with God. And in doing so, see, what happens is this. We defile the temple of God.

And actually we have in the translation I'm using defile and destroy. It's the exact same word in the Greek. So it could be translated destroy in both cases or defile in both cases.

The word means more to destroy. Now, we need to understand this, the church of Jesus Christ. In every city, as it was in Corinth at that time, is to be the alternative in the community to pagan religion and pagan morality.

The church is to be the alternative to it. It's to be the alternative. Therefore, it must be distinct or it's not an alternative at all, is it? If the church is no different than the world, then it is no alternative.

And this was the danger in Corinth. The danger was that the church there would no longer be an alternative in the city because they were adopting human wisdom and they were seeking to do things just the way the world was doing them. And inevitably, the church would lose its distinction and become irrelevant in society.

Is that a model of what's happened with the modern church? It's so clear. The church has compromised its position and therefore has lost its distinction, is no longer an alternative in society and therefore is relatively insignificant to people. See, it's seen as nothing, stands for absolutely nothing.

But the vast majority of the blame goes on the leadership. The vast majority of the blame goes on the leadership. I have found just in my own limited experience that there are multitudes of Christians that are crying out for someone to lead them, someone to guide them, someone to tell them the truth.

And it's the leaders who are failing miserably and they're doing exactly what was happening in Corinth. They're building on a foundation. In some cases, the foundation is entirely faulty, but where the foundation has even been a good foundation.

They're building with human wisdom and they're ruining what God had done, and it's a sad, sad thing. As I said, I don't want to spend too much time because we'll get into it in more detail next time. But again, the strong warning is given.

And now he goes on and he says, let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. You see, it was human wisdom that was threatening the church.

And Paul says, if you think you're wise in this age, here's my counsel to you. You become a fool that you may really be wise. Forget this human wisdom.

Forget borrowing from the world to try to build the church. Become a fool in this age that you may become wise for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, he catches the wise in their own craftiness.

And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are futile. With all that the Bible tells us about human wisdom, how is it that we as Christians can still be enamored with it? I mean, right here, listen to what God says. He says that the thoughts of the wise are futile, they're empty thoughts, they're vain, they're worthless.

Why? Because they reject the ultimate reality, which is God. All human wisdom one day is just simply going to crumble. Why? Because it's built on a faulty foundation, they've left God out of the picture.

And God is the ultimate reality. When you leave the ultimate reality out of the equation. You end up with nothing in the end.

And that's what human wisdom, that's what the kingdoms of this world, that's what man's. Program is finally coming to, it's coming to nothing. We as God's people should not be chasing after human wisdom.

We should recognize it for what it is. And realize that it has no application to what God is doing in this church. We have a wisdom that is far superior, it's the wisdom of God.

And it's so simple. And that quite often is the stumbling block because of man's pride. Oh, that's that's too simple.

I want something more complicated, because if I can get a hold of something complicated, that makes me feel really smart and I feel really good about myself. You see, it all goes back to pride. It's an appeal to human pride.

Therefore, let no one boast in men for all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, that all things are yours. God has given these things to you as your servants. We boasting in men for Paul, Apollos, Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come.

All are yours and you are Christ and Christ is God's. You see, his point is simply this again, God is the ultimate reality and you belong to God and we all belong to God as well. And we're all in this for one purpose, and that's for the glory of God.

So let's stop being divided and let's stop contending with one another and being envious of one another. And let's realize that all of this is really for the glory of God. And we belong to God through Christ and everything is ultimately ours.

He's wanting to bring it all back into perspective to them. Don't be impressed with the world. Don't think that you've got to please the world.

Don't look for the world to pat you on the back and say, oh, aren't you sophisticated and important and. Wise, don't look for that from the world, because the world and the less thereof is passing away. And everything will finally come down to God.

And his Christ sitting upon his throne and reigning forever. And to the astonishment of many. The insignificant ones in this world will be the ones who are.

Ruling under him in the world to come. So we don't have anyone to impress with the Lord. And that should be our ambition and our goal to impress him by keeping the focus on him and on Christ.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11462.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/brian-brodersen/1-corinthians-overview-to-chapter-3/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net