

I CORINTHIANS 3:1-23

REVIEW...

- **THE CITY OF CORINTH...**
 - Corinth was a beautiful, very prosperous, and influential city in the Roman Empire...
 - But Corinth was also infamous for its idolatry and sexual promiscuity...
 - This is the place where Paul began a church - but it became a church with lots of problems!
 - Paul devoted his entire letter to the church to address these problems...
- **I CORINTHIANS 1:1-9 - THE GREETING TO THE CHURCH...**
- **I CORINTHIANS 1:10-17 - THE 1ST PROBLEM - DIVISION IN THE CHURCH - FOLLOWING MEN...**
 - Paul spends the next 4 chapters dealing with this problem - **I Corinthians 1:10-4:21**
 - When there is division in the church - it keeps us from being effective for Jesus...
 - The solution to division - focus on Jesus Christ - the one thing we all have in common!
 - The first cause of the division - following men - I am of Paul / Apollos / Peter / Jesus...
- **I CORINTHIANS 1:18-31 - THE 2ND PROBLEM - DIVISION IN THE CHURCH - THE WISDOM OF MEN...**
 - 1st - the Wisdom of God's message - the cross - is foolishness to the world!
 - 2nd - the Wisdom of God's messengers - the foolish people of the world!
- **I CORINTHIANS 2:1-16 - THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S MESSAGE...**
 - Paul determined to just preach Christ crucified to the church - the simple Gospel...
 - So that the faith of the believers would be based in God's Word - not men's words...
 - Those who received the message of the Gospel - were made perfect and understood...
 - The 'mystery' of God's love - Jesus crucified from the foundations of the world
 - The riches God has planned for those who love Him (*eyes has not seen...*)
 - Revealed by the Spirit of God within us - who knows the mind of God..
 - Unlike those who do not believe - cannot know the truths of God - no Holy Spirit!

THE 3RD PROBLEM - DIVISION IN THE CHURCH - SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY... VS. 1-8

- **SPIRITUAL VS. CARNAL... VS. 1-4**
 - The 3rd reason for division in the church - the immaturity of the believers...
 - Paul rebuked the church - I could not speak to you as 'Spiritual' instead as 'Carnal'...
 - Spiritual - mature in the faith - able to handle the 'meat' - deeper truths of God's Word...
 - Understanding life is about far more than momentary needs and pleasure...
 - Recognizing the consequences - both temporary and eternal - for actions...
 - Desiring to please and serve the Lord in both actions and thought...
 - Carnal - immature in the faith - only able to swallow the 'milk' - simple teachings...
 - Those who know Jesus - but live for their flesh - their basic desires...
 - Live to eat / sleep / enjoy the pleasures of this passing life...
 - Still bound to their sin - they live only to please themselves...
 - I fed you with milk - not with meat...

- At first - Paul could only feed the believers with 'milk' - which is to be expected...
 - The believers in Corinth had not grown in their walk with the Lord...
 - But right up to the writing of Paul's letter - they still could only receive 'milk'!
 - They had never grown in their faith - they had never matured in the Lord...
 - When we first come to know the Lord - we are not going to understand much...
 - There is a LOT about Jesus and God's Word we do not comprehend...
 - We are going to make a lot of mistakes - and struggle to overcome our sin...
 - But we should not stay that way - as we get into God's Word - we should grow...
 - It is cute to bottle feed a young infant - no surprise when they mess their diapers
 - But when a 20-year-old adult is still on the 'bottle' - still wearing diapers...
 - It is a tragedy - something has gone terribly wrong...
 - When a believer whose been saved for 20 years - is carnal - still living for this world
 - It is a tragedy - they never grew in the Lord - they never matured in their faith...
- When those who should be teaching others - still need to be taught simple truth...
 - * **Hebrews 5:12** - "You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures. You are like babies who drink only milk and cannot eat solid food."
 - As believers in Jesus we should - by spending time in God's Word...
 - Be growing out of 'milk' - the simple truths - salvation by faith / eternal judgment...
 - Growing in the Lord to a place where we can begin to teach others about Jesus!
- The proof of their childishness...
 - The believers in Corinth should have been zealous - for Jesus...
 - Instead they zealously debated with each other over their 'divisions'...
 - Their 'denominational' attitude - I am of Paul / I am of Apollos...
 - Showed their immaturity - showed they were still babes in Christ...
 - Paul does not hold back here - those who divide over denominations - are immature
 - People who argue over being Catholic / Baptist / Adventist...
 - Reveal they are either not saved - or have never grown in the Lord...
 - Because they are acting no differently than before they knew Jesus!
 - People in the world love to divide - they have their groups / barkada...
 - In the world it is all about who is your family / town / county...
 - Men have fight and kill each other just because they are rival sports teams...
 - But it should not be the same in the church - we are to be united by love!
 - **John 13:35** - "All will know you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - When we divide the church over denomination - we show we are like the world!
- **PLANTING AND WATERING... VS. 5-7**
 - It's not about the messenger...
 - Who is Paul - who is Apollos - just servants of God - who told you about Jesus...

- If you got a letter in the mail with 1000 pesos from a good friend...
- You don't thank the messenger - you go and thank the friend who gave the money...
- In the same way it does not matter who told you about Jesus - the Gospel...
- It does not matter what church you got saved in - the point is you received Jesus!
- One plants - another waters - God gives the increase!
 - One man might sow a seed - another adds the water - but only God can make it grow!
 - So it is not about the one who plants or waters - the credit goes to God!
 - The one who plants and the one who waters work together so the plant will grow
 - Paul planted the seed of the Gospel - and Apollos watered those seeds...
 - But it was God who ultimately caused the people to grow in the Lord!
 - Churches - pastors - do not get the credit for people growing in Jesus...
 - You might have gotten saved (*planted*) listening to a pastor - in one church...
 - Then you grew in God's Word (*watered*) in a different church...
 - That does not make one church better than the other - both were used!
 - And ultimately it was God who used both to plant and water you in the Lord!
 - So don't look to the church - don't give credit to men - give credit to Jesus!

A WARNING TO PASTORS... VS. 8-15

- THE REWARD FOR THE LABOR... VS. 8-10
 - So if all the credit goes to God - what do the Pastor's get...
 - In farming - both the planter and one who waters receive a reward for their labor...
 - If either one failed to do their part - then the crop would fail...
 - The reward they receive is the fruit that comes from their combined labor...
 - Their reward for serving God...
 - 1st - The church in Corinth was God's field - Paul was sent to 'farm' in...
 - The reward Paul received was seeing the fruit in the lives of those who believed...
 - He planted / Apollos watered - both rejoiced in seeing the people grow - fruit!
 - It is a sad thing to me that many pastors today think they are the 'only farmer'...

- As though there is only one church - their church - that is the 'right' church...
- The joy of the pastor should be to watch the people grow and mature...
- No matter where they attend church - we are all one in Christ!
- 2nd - The church (*people*) was God's building - Paul was sent to build...
 - The reward Paul received was seeing the church of God built in Corinth...
 - The reward of the pastor - is seeing people grow and the church of God built...
 - My greatest joy is seeing people grow in the Lord - bear fruit for the Lord...
 - I am constantly amazed as I get to be a part of God building His church!
 - **III John 1:4** - "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."
- **THE WORKS TESTED BY FIRE... VS. 10-15**
 - Paul was the wise master-builder (*architect*) of the church in Corinth...
 - Paul set the foundation of the church - cause he was the first to share the Gospel there...
 - Other men came - and added to the work - building on that foundation...
 - But he warns - they needed to be careful on how they added to the church...
 - Because the only foundation - is Jesus Christ...
 - **Matthew 16:18** - "On this rock I will build My church..."
 - The 'Rock' that is the foundation of the church - is Jesus Christ!
 - The foundation that Paul set - the only foundation that the church can stand upon!
 - There were those who sought to 'replace' the foundation...
 - They wanted to build the church upon a denomination - name - rather than Jesus!
 - When a church uses a man's name / churches name - more than Jesus names...
 - When a denomination become more important than Jesus - wrong foundation...
 - If any one builds upon the foundation (*Jesus*) - their work will be tested...
 - It will be tested to see if it is Gold/Silver/or precious stones or Wood/Hay/ Straw...
 - It will be tested - by putting the 'work' through the fire - on THE Day (*Judgment Day*)...
 - The idea is the works of pastors/leaders who serve and teach in the church - are tested
 - Was their work based on Jesus - or on their own name / their own efforts...
 - If anyone's 'work' endures - he will receive a reward...
 - If the foundation of their work was Jesus - then the work will endure...
 - It will be obvious because of the fruit that comes from the work - mature believers!
 - You can always spot a church that is founded on Jesus - the people grow in the Lord...
 - Faith comes by hearing God's Word - **Romans 10:17** - getting to know Jesus...
 - The fruit of the church is gold/silver/precious - because it lasts - **John 15:16**
 - In the same way you always spot a church that is full of wood/hay/ and straw...
 - There is no maturity in the believers - 20 years down the road - still babes...
 - Still arguing over denominations - still living like they did before they knew Jesus!
 - If anyone's 'work' is burned - he will suffer loss - but himself will be saved...
 - The pastors work is burned up (*sermons, lectures, books, teaching, all dry as dust*)
 - He will still be saved - but all of his efforts are lost in the fire...
 - It is the tragedy of a fruitless life - a minister who built so poorly on the true foundation
 - His work goes up in smoke - His sermons were empty words without building power...
 - They left no mark in the lives of the hearers - it is the picture of a wasted life!

THEREFORE DO NOT CAUSE DIVISION... VS. 16-23

- **YOU ARE THE CHURCH OF GOD... VS. 16-17**

- Paul turns back to the saints of Corinth - you are the temple of God...
 - The Holy Spirit (*who is God*) dwells within you - within the Church of God...
 - The church of God is not a building - it is not a particular denomination...
 - There is only one church of God - we are all part of the Body of Christ...
 - No matter what name - no matter what traditions - we are all part of God's church!
- If you destroy the building of God (*the church*) - God will destroy you...
 - Going back to the idea of causing divisions within the church - tearing down the church
 - The punishment is equally effective - God will wreck the church-wrecker!
 - If we cause division within God's church - if we focus on denominations - watch out...
 - If someone beat up your wife - what would you do to them...
 - We are the Bride of Christ - what do you suppose God will do to someone who hurts us

- **DO NOT FOLLOW THE WISDOM OF MEN... VS. 18-23**

- If any of you are wise in this world - become a fool for Jesus...
 - Cause the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God - the thoughts of the wise - futile!
 - Just because others divide - do not follow in their example - don't follow men's wisdom!
 - Keep in simple - stay firmly planted on the foundation of Jesus!
 - Don't settle for less - don't rob yourself of the blessings of the riches of the church...
 - Not just one church - but the blessing of knowing all of God's kids...
- Everything is already yours - Paul / Apollos / the whole world!
 - Things present - things to come - life and death - are all yours!
 - And you are Christ's - and Christ is God's!