

ONE FOUNDATION
1 Corinthians 3

INTRO: We are continuing our study 1st Corinthians today and will pick it up again in two weeks on Labor Day Sunday. Next week, when we have our outdoor worship, Pastor Butch White will bring the message.

Paul is dictating 1st Corinthians and he's got a good secretary. I mean, the guy is obviously writing every single word Paul says. You can tell that because of the little asides here and there throughout the letter, and in fact, in all of his letters. Paul will be addressing one issue and then head down a little bunny trail, equally as powerful and helpful, but a bit off subject. He also refers back to things he said earlier, especially here in these first several chapters of 1st Corinthians.

So that is what is happening here in chapter 3. He is back to discussing the “favorite preacher” issue he discussed in chapter 1. He is also, again discussing the issue of unity and strife, and as he does that, he points out a key issue, it can all be solved by realizing who the one and true foundation is.

We'll read the text and then point out some things that will help us to be the church in these challenging times.

(Read 1 Corinthians 3)

Right out of the blocks Paul's words raise the question . . .

Can the world tell that you are a Christ Follower?

- He doesn't use those words, but the concept is there. You see, Paul obviously has no patience for a profession of faith in Christ that doesn't exhibit itself in proper behavior. Worldliness is not an option, but the infighting and factions, one of them being over who's preacher was the best, was revealing the Corinthian church to be a bunch of babies.

- He didn't actually call them babies but he did indicate that they were still choking on solid food when they should have been way past the nursing stage. They were Christians, but they had a long way to go to spiritual maturity. This is one of the ways this letter is so helpful for living these days, since we have a lot of disagreement over what our faith is supposed to look like. The problem with this is, in Paul's thinking, Christians can't be spiritual and divided at the same time, and it's time to grow up and live to our full potential.
- One key way we can do that is by going back to that question I asked a bit ago – can the world tell you are a Christ Follower, or do you look like everyone else? In Paul's words, are you still worldly? If you are, you need to repent. Christ Followers are supposed to be different. In the King James Version, Peter calls us **a peculiar people**. Let me read that to you, *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light* **1 Peter 2:9 (KJV)**. In the NIV that word, “peculiar”, is translated as **God's special possession**, which makes it even more poignant. It indicates that we are set apart which is another word for holy. God's special possessions are different because they are holy. The old way is gone and new way, a godly way, sets us apart. We should then, look different than the world.
- That is the essence of **repentance**. The way we relate to others will be different from the world – we will not be caustic and nasty, which seems, more and more the norm, but the love of Jesus will shine through. The world will know we are Christians by our love – to quote an old song. Our view of marriage and proper sexual relationships and how we handle our finances and obligations with integrity, and all kinds of other things, will be different from the way of the

world. We will deal with others in truth and forthrightness, even when lying would appear to be easier. This is very different from the world because it is meaty Christian maturity.

- And that helps us, as it did with Paul and Apollos, to be . . .

God's instruments

- Rather than being touted as the man of the hour or preacher extraordinaire, Paul says that he and Apollos are *“Only servants, through whom you can believe.”* (v. 5). After all, he planted the seed, Apollos came along and watered the garden Paul had planted, but God was the one who brought the growth. In fact, focusing on the preacher, takes one's eyes off of the one who is to be the focus. The preachers had been merely co-workers, while the ones hearing the message were God's field and God's building (v. 9).
- Think about how much more effective the Church would be if God's people realized they were instruments in God's hands rather than infants crying for mother's milk. Grady is a bruiser because he wants his mother's milk early and often and if he doesn't get it, he's ticked! That's the way it is with babies. Grady can't just go to the fridge and make lunch – he's limited in what he can do at this point – he's a baby. God's instruments are ready for work. They are **co-workers rather than competitors**.
- I think that's one of the most powerful things about today's Sacred Assembly at Freer Field. It isn't being put on by one preacher or one church. It's being convened as a ministry of **THE Church** – God's called out ones here in our region. It's not a competition, it's a ministry calling us to repent and plead with God for mercy. We know where our help comes from – our help comes from God. We will unite to pray for mercy and for healing.

- This is because there is only . . .

One true Foundation

- Paul switches from a farming metaphor to a building metaphor, because, well, because that's what Paul does. His mind is going a mile a minute and his secretary is writing his every thought, and suddenly the thought goes from field to building – and it really works.
- Let me put it this way by using our pavilion as a word picture. In the summer and fall of 2009 when our guys (many of us worked on it, but mainly Dale Dohner, Dick Ohler, Dick Keets, and Dave French) built the pavilion, I was amazed at the solid construction. The Nowakowski boys and Jordon Dohner had laboriously dug out the footer and Dale and his crew lined it with Styrofoam and poured concrete into the ditch. **They took special care to make a deeper and larger pad where each upright post of the pavilion would be placed.** These were 6x6 treated posts that were so heavy we needed to set them with a front end loader on Dale's tractor. From there, once the concrete had cured, they had the proper foundation and they could **continue to build the structure that we have enjoyed for the past 10 years.** The building is so solid I've often told people that if a tornado struck, the earth would be gone, but our pavilion would still be there. The building was built from the ground up on a rock solid foundation.
- Paul points out that he ***“laid a foundation as a wise builder and someone else is building on it.”*** (v.10). That someone else is obviously Apollos. Both of them had done legitimate work for the Lord and both had made key and lasting contributions. But all that work would not have been worth a hill of beans if the solid foundation of Jesus Christ had not been there first. No matter what the construction material, ***“gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw”*** (v. 12)

nothing will hold up if it is not placed on the proper foundation. Our pavilion is built with solid materials, but they are dependent on the solid foundation placed by our builders.

- Former Catholic priest, Menno Simons, one of our BIC forebears, made 1st Corinthians 3:11 the foundation of his new movement which we know as the Mennonites. One person wrote, “The man who had never read the Bible until two years into the priesthood did come to have a favorite Bible passage. On the front page of each of his writings he would include this verse from **1 Corinthians 3:11**. *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.”* It’s not just a Mennonite thing, it’s really true – it’s all about Jesus. He is the one foundation for any and all Christ Followers.
- In actuality, and this is my final point and conclusion, Jesus is the foundation for . . .

God’s Temple

- Later in our study, in a discussion about sexual purity we will see that Paul tells his readers, *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.* That is different from what Paul means in our text when he says, *Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.* He is telling us here, we, the Church, are his temple.
- In Matthew 16, Jesus asks the disciples *“Who do you say I am?”* (Matthew 16:15) and it says Peter answers for everyone with, *“You are the Messiah, the*

Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16) to which Jesus replies, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:17-18). That Rock is not Peter as the Catholics mistakenly believe, that Rock is the Rock-solid confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Our confession of Jesus is our one foundation. He’s not some nice guy with nice hair and baby blue eyes – he is the only hope of the human race and he is the Lord of the Church.

- And we, the Church are the temple of God Paul refers to here in our text. We are God’s temple! God dwells in his temple. God dwells in us, corporately.
- Hear this ABC, Jesus, God, the Son, is **our one foundation** of the holy temple, which is us, his church. Let’s live that profession in maturity and unity. Amen.