

Bible Study October 4, 2023

I Corinthians Chapter 3

Divisions in the Church Paul addresses the Corinthian church using God's choice to work through weakness (the folly of the cross and the ministry of his people) for His own glory to bring light to the divisions that are tearing the church apart.

3: 1-4 Paul illustrates the church's lack of maturity by identifying them as "people of the flesh." Their behavior is not as one would expect of Christians filled by God's Spirit. They are actually behaving as unbelievers. He explains to them they are not ready for the "meat" of the Gospel. They are not ready for advanced teaching as they are still morally and spiritually immature as well as filled with pride, which is tearing apart the church.

3: 5-15 The Gospel is not bound to the one who delivers the message, salvation is from God, and as the seed of faith is planted, it is God who brings the growth. The foundation of faith is Jesus Christ, and all that comes afterwards by grace is built on Him. The work that is done in the lives of individuals and in the church will be tested by time. Only that which is of God will survive. The rest will be as chaff, blown away by the winds that threaten the church, as well as the individual.

Paul uses the analogy of the building of Solomon's temple and the materials used – gold, silver, and precious stones. These items will survive the test of fire while wood, straw, and hay will be consumed. God uses His people, the church, to do His work. It is not just certain people; He uses all His children to build up His church.

3: 16-23 The people of God are now His temple, the dwelling place of God. Christ is in our hearts as well as in the presence of two or more believers. God will not let those who attack His people (the indwelling place of the Holy Spirit) go unpunished. He calls His church to love and build each other up, not hate and tear each other down. Arrogance is the root of the problem in Corinth. It is causing divisions in the church and destruction from within. Each person in the church belongs to God, not to the person who baptized them, not to the church to which

they have joined, not to the denomination or to the country where the church is located. If we are to boast, boast only in God, giving Him the glory.

And the same goes for spiritual gifts, the glory is to be given to God and not to the one who exhibits the gifts. Spiritual gifts belong to the people of God and His church, to be shared and used for the building up of the church – the body of Christ. All things given by the Spirit belong to the body of Christ – the church, and we belong to Christ, and Christ is of the Father.

Read Catechism Questions 85-90