

1 Cor 3 pt. 2 - v.8-17

We left off last week with Paul adding definition to the struggle within the church at Corinth by addressing the issue of division once more.

He soundly corrects the church for their immaturity and carnality (living in the flesh and after the flesh) - which gave rise to the sickness of division within the body.

In an effort to break down these silos Paul points out that the minister is nothing.

[1Co 3:7 NKJV] 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

Minister = servant

The church, should collectively and individually remain fixed, focused, and determined to follow Christ and not any man based on any set of qualifications or credentials apart from the grace of Christ. In fact, we who serve the church find that in truth we are woefully under qualified to even wash the feet of the saints much less proclaim the mysteries of God.

REF: [1Co 1:26 NKJV] 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called].

[1Co 15:9 NKJV] 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

It is not about the servant, especially if they are a servant in name only while living as some kind of uppity, self righteous, self appointed Lord.

God gives the increase.

v.8 While we agree that neither he who plants is anything nor he who waters we now find that he who plants and he who waters are of one accord, share a unity in service even while laboring individually.

Competition in the corporate world, in education, in athletics, etc may be healthy and have all kinds of positive benefits for business but competition, self-promotion, in ministry is gross. God's economy is diametrically opposed to ours! It is completely opposite of the worlds.

In the world competition for position and advantage bring envy, strife, division - things that Paul pointed out as part of the sickness in Corinth (3:3).

[Phi 2:2-4 NKJV] 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. 3 [Let] nothing [be done] through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

While the world belts out the everlasting command: look out for yourself because nobody else is going to, we are commanded to die to self to place others before our selves to take the place of a servant.

One of the cool things about meeting with God's ministers, a bunch of servants, is the joy and unity - it's not all perfect - but there is tremendous joy in supporting one another and rejoicing together in the work that the Lord is doing.

There is a unity in the shared experience and call to serve the Body. Where Christ is, there is unity.

[Jhn 17:20-21 NKJV] 20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, [are] in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

v.8b - each one will receive his own reward according to his labor - while there is unity and shared joy and excitement, we find that this is also a very intimate, individual walk that we are called to. We are all called to work out our faith on an individual and practical level - no matter the circumstances we find ourselves in. Our proximity to somebody else ministry will not grant our reward. Clinging to the coat tails of another man's walk of faith will not guarantee our reward.

[Gal 6:2-5 NKJV] 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing,

he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.

v.9 - remember the flashlight - what's cool is, God calls us His fellow workers, with full knowledge that He alone is responsible for the increase.

We - the ministers; you - the body, the flock. God calls, equips, and moves upon the hearts of certain people to be His fellow workers. It is a glorious work. To watch God's miracles blossom as He creates new life in people like us. That alone is such a great reward who could ask for more?

God's field/building - you are, a creation in the hands of almighty God in need of maintenance and cleaning and care. But you belong to God alone, and no man. We, the servants are blessed with working in the field - or cleaning the windows - hey window man!

v.10 - Paul's personal ministry in Corinth

wise - it is prudent for one to exercise wisdom when working on God's property, pray for wisdom, shun foolishness, laziness, and cutting corners.

master builder - architektōn - a master builder, an architect, the superintendent in the erection of buildings - is this a boast?

No - he says, "it is according to grace of God" - unmerited favor of God

another builds on it - pray that others use the same care and wisdom when ministering to God's people. Is this us? Are we careful when we are caring for God's real estate.

v.11 - no other foundation - that is the only foundation, there is no other suitable foundation by which we can hope to weather time and the elements.

[Luk 6:47-49 NKJV] 47 "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. 49 "But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

[Gal 1:8-9 NKJV] 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

There is no other foundation. We can stand on nothing else - not feelings, not strategy, not our own merit or hard work. We stand by the gospel of Christ alone.

v.12-13 For the worker who puts their hand to constructing any work on God's building - be wise with what you are building with! Are we building with sticks and leaves, big handful of mud? Things that are easy, plentiful, and cheap? Things that won't endure? Are we building McMansions that sure look good from the outside but are empty on the inside, that are out of code and subject to disaster at any moment? That may in fact collapse on the family within?

Fire will test each one's work.

Our prayer is that what God is building here, the things we put our hands to, having staying power. That when you are tested you endure.

[1Pe 4:12-13 NKJV] 12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

My prayer is that as I have not shunned to declare to you the entire counsel of God - you will know the certainty of God's great love towards you when all the chips are down, as they say. In your darkest hour you will know beyond the shadow of a doubt the He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. That when all else have forsaken you, Christ is with you by His spirit - He is ever faithful.

May that work endure to the end.

v.14-15 the two outcomes of being tested.

Work remains or it doesn't and in that testing we learn for certain the worth of our work and the quality of our materials.

For one who builds, and strives, and stands back and sees it all perish even with the best of intentions that is a "come to Jesus moment." That is a "what have I done" moment. That is when the worker, who may have been deceived or half-hearted is saved - through fire. Lord, help us build in a manner worthy of our calling.

v.16-17 the gravity of the call - Paul tells the church that they have a lofty position in God's economy. You are the temple of God!

Often this is taken out of context to justify any manner of legalistic behavior and lifestyle. But taken in context it is in regards to ministers building on the foundation of Christ in a worthy manner.

If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. This is big!
[Jas 3:1 NKJV] 1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

[1Pe 4:17 NKJV] 17 For the time [has come] for judgment to begin at the house of God;...

Worker - take this work seriously!

The temple of God is holy, which temple you are — that applies to you too!
The church today!

*historical note, the temple in Jerusalem was still standing, and wouldn't be destroyed for another 15 years or so and is in ruins to this day. For Paul, with such a deep Jewish heritage, to speak of the church in this way demonstrates his complete surrender to Christ - he is a new creation! The jews revered the temple!

It's not about the building, it's about God's people, serving His people rightly, building as a wise master builder those things of the Spirit, not as a novice, or some sloppy temp, but a wise master builder - taking great care. Measuring twice! Sticking to the building code - God's word!