LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

1 Corinthians 3

Let no one boast in men

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT

We're back with another study in 1 Corinthians, we're in chapter 3, and this is where the apostle Paul brings it all home about the things he's been talking to them about, which is really the worldliness that they have been displaying by creating little popularity groups around Paul and Peter and Apollos and so forth. And so this chapter is really just Paul convincing them of their need to move on from such things. Let's go ahead and read. Beginning in verse 1, chapter 3, it says, But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. Now, this is an important place to stop and pause just for a moment, because there's some pretty good insights here.

Here's my question to you. Is it possible for someone to be a born-again believer, love Jesus, and to be truly, you know, filled with the Holy Spirit, go into heaven, you know, come into church regularly, and still be a person of the flesh? Well, the answer to that question is yes. It is very possible, because that's what Paul calls these believers. He says, I couldn't talk to you like spiritually mature people.

In fact, you're infants, you're babes in Christ. You're people of the flesh. You are governed more by the flesh than you are by the Holy Spirit. You know, this is something we recognize and even expect to see in brand-new believers. We recognize that, you know, it's going to take time for them to kind of grow up.

A lot of people spend several years as unbelievers in the world, learning from the world, before they even come to faith in Jesus. And there's a lot of things they have to unlearn, you know. I remember a lot of that happening in my life, after I came to know Christ as my Savior. A lot of things to unlearn. So we have an expectation that people are going to continue to reflect the influence of worldliness, carnality, and the flesh, until such time as they grow and mature in their faith.

You can tell, however, that the Apostle Paul, even though he's telling them here, I have to still talk to you like your children, he doesn't expect them to be children any longer. You can tell that they've had the time, they've had the opportunity to grow in their faith, and they're not growing as they should have been

growing. And you'll see that as Paul goes on. Look at verse 2 and following. He says, I fed you with milk, meaning when I was with you, not solid food, for you were not ready for it.

And even now, you are not yet ready. Again, you can hear it, if you kind of read between the lines, that Paul's frustrated. They should be ready for meat. They should have teeth where they're able to chew up the more difficult meals served to them in their spiritual diet. But they're not ready yet.

He says here in verse 3, and he explains why, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? You might say, well, we're human beings. What other way should we behave other than a human way? Well, we should be behaving in a Christlike way, which is not a human worldly carnal way.

Paul goes on, verse 4, for when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Apollos, are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants, through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. We're getting some kind of interesting insights about how people receive the Word of God and how that Word takes off and grows in their life.

There are people who come along and they plant, and that's the first thing, you know. Of course, God has to be there to break up the soil first so that the soil is even ready to be planted. I think there's a lot of Christians who try to plant seed in soil that has not been prepared. You know, Jesus told us a parable about different types of soil and some that was not at all ready to receive the seed of the Word, and it didn't fare very well for the Word of God in the lives of those people. But this is a thing that only God can do.

You know, I get so many emails from people who are frustrated because they're doing their level best to share the Word of God with a friend, relative, co-worker, or whatever, and they'll tell me, you know, it's like it's not going anywhere, it's not happening. And I always come back and say, you've got to spend time praying for that person, for the Lord to do the work of breaking up the soil in their lives so that the Word of God that you're planting has a fighting chance to germinate and begin to take root. Otherwise, you're scattering the seed on concrete, potentially, or among such weeds in the soil that the seed doesn't have a chance. So I tell people, you've got to pray, and then you have to wait for God to show you an open door. In other words, that the soil has been readied, and you can usually pick up on that by the things a person says, and the way they're acting toward you, and their desire to know more about Jesus and the cross.

Do you see those kind of open doors? Or do you see a resistance by that person? That's probably someone who is communicating to you, the soil of my heart is not ready for the Word of God. You can plant it if you want, but it's not going to get in, right? So witnessing starts with prayer, because only God can break up the soil.

You and I can't do that. So he's talking here about these different roles that people can play. You got somebody who comes along and plants, and then you got somebody like an Apollos, who was a really good teacher, and he came along and he gave instruction, and Paul likened that to watering the seed so that it would grow, and that's what he said. He said, I planted, Apollos watered, but God's the one who gives the increase, ultimately. No man can lay claim to that.

He says, so what are we? Who am I? What is Apollos? We're just servants. Don't go exalting the servants.

Help the Lord, not the people he chooses to use in your life. He goes on in verse nine to say, for we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building, and according to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. So now he's kind of likening the whole process of growing as a Christian to building a house, and it begins with the foundation.

And of course, a real true Christian building can't have any other foundation other than Christ and still be Christian. It's just not possible. So that's what he says. So he says, now what are you building upon that foundation? You know, Paul had a lot of false teachers follow him.

He would get done in a place like Corinth or Ephesus or Philippi, and then he would move on to other areas where he would be sharing the gospel. And legally... He called them Judaizers, would follow behind Paul, and they would begin to build on the foundation that Paul had laid, but they would build using very poor materials, mostly legalism. And this is what Paul is going to talk about now. He's going to talk about the things that are built on the foundation of Christ.

And you know, we ourselves can build upon the foundation of Christ. We can submit to a teacher who helps us to build on the foundation, or we ourselves can take on things that are good, and we can build on the foundation of Christ in our lives with bad things. And Paul is going to talk to us here in these verses about how we ultimately find out whether what we've built is good or bad. Okay, so let's keep reading verse 12 and following. It says, In other words, it will be proven.

For the day, meaning the day of the Lord, will ultimately disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, and that's of course going to be those good building materials like gold, silver, precious stones, right? He says again in verse 14, Whew! This is an insightful passage. What are you building on the foundation of Christ?

By the way, it's the foundation of Christ that is ours in our salvation. When we come to know Christ as our Savior, we are saved, and we now have a foundation, and we can now build on that foundation. Nothing's going to change that foundation, okay? That's why he says, even if you build with bad materials, yeah, those bad materials are going to be proven to be bad when the day of the Lord comes and the fire of God's holy presence rushes through the buildings that we have built upon the foundation of Christ. How much of your building is going to survive?

How much of my building is going to survive? Well, I'll tell you, anything that is built with those good building materials, silver, gold, precious gems, those things will remain, and those are the things that we build through the Spirit. Those are the things we build with the wisdom that God gives. Not worldly wisdom, not carnal wisdom, but spiritual wisdom, spiritual guidance, spiritual building materials. Those things are going to survive.

But the things that we have built on the foundation of Christ, that are built with what he mentions also earlier, wood, hay, and straw or stubble, those things are going to burn up. They're combustible. The very presence of God, which is a burning fire, will prove those to be things not of the Spirit, and they will burn up. Now, notice that Paul says, if anyone's work is burned up, this is in verse 15, he himself will suffer loss, the loss of those things, those building materials. But notice he goes on to make it very clear, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

So why is the man still saved? Well, because the foundation is still Jesus, and that can't be lost, because anyone who is founded on the cross of Christ cannot lose that, right? Simply because they've lived a carnal life and built with wrong materials. As long as their faith is in Jesus, that remains, and there's nothing that's going to change that part, okay? Verse 18—I'm sorry, verse 16.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him, for God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. We are individually temples of the Holy Spirit, and collectively as the body of Christ, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Let no one deceive himself, he says in verse 18. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

In other words, that he may become truly wise. If someone thinks they're smart by worldly standards, let them cast off that worldly wisdom that they might become truly wise in the Lord. Verse 19—for the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness. I'm pretty sure that's a quote from Job.

And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, and they are futile. That's a quote from the Psalms. So let no one boast in men, and that's again what the Corinthians were doing. They were boasting and following Paul or Apollos or Peter. He says, let no one boast in men.

And then he makes this statement, and this is so important at the end of verse 21. I love this statement, and I think the implications of this statement are very far-reaching. He says, for all things are yours. All things are yours. Now listen to what he goes on to say.

Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, which is Peter, or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Wow. I've got to tell you something. We could spend a lot of time, and I mean each of us, a lot of time, meditating on what Paul says there at the end of verse 21 through the end of the chapter. All things are yours.

All things belong to you already. Why are you huddling around this thing or that thing? I'm of Paul. I'm of Apollos. I'm of Peter.

No, they're all yours. They're all yours. They were given to you by God to be a blessing to you. Don't get fixated on any one thing. It's all yours.

Christ has given it all to you. Be blessed and put your faith fully in Jesus alone. He says, and this is amazing, all things are yours, including life. Have you ever thought about that? Life is yours.

Death, you know, we think about death as, well, we think about death in a lot of interesting ways, don't we? But have you ever thought about death as yours, belonging to you because you are now in Christ? You see, death has been conquered by Jesus. The Bible says, and Jesus said this, I hold the keys to death and the grave. He said it in the book of Revelation.

I hold the keys. He has the keys. And now you are in Christ. So Paul can say here in 1 Corinthians 3, death is yours. Life is yours.

The present is yours. The future is yours. All are yours. Can I just encourage you this week to spend some time meditating on what Paul has been saying here in this chapter? It's a good chapter from the

standpoint that the Apostle is really kind of finally bringing the correction that he's been talking about in the two previous chapters about their popularity groups.

Don't gather around men. Don't focus on men. But in the midst of that, he uses this. as a beautiful teaching experience, an opportunity to convey powerful insights that we wouldn't know otherwise. All things are yours through Christ.

Pretty powerful, huh? Yeah. Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you so much. Thank you for your word.

Thank you for the reminders that we get from it. Thank you, Lord, that you have a desire that we would grow up in our faith and be mature believers. And Lord, we're moving that direction by digging deeply into your word. And I pray that you'd help us to keep doing that. Lord, show us, please, about all of these things that you've given to us, all of these blessings that you've bestowed upon us.

Show us, show us how they've become ours through Jesus and how that should affect our lives today, how we live. Thank you for your word. Thank you for your Holy Spirit who brings the word to life. Thank you, Lord, for loving us and for caring. We commit all of these things to you in the authority of your son, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.