



Sunday School Lesson
1 Cor. 3:1-23
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Spirituality and Wisdom



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With this lesson we begin a new four part series of Bible studies in the Smyth-Helwys Formations series under the general theme of "The Miracle of Healing." This theme should be interpreted in the broadest manner possible if one is to pull together the four sets of scripture passages from 1 Corinthians, Acts and Romans. Otherwise, no real rationale exists for the grouping of these passages together.

As usual, we will let the sacred scripture set the agenda for our study, rather than super imposing an externally derived structure down onto the text itself. In chapter three of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the motifs focus mostly on the superficiality of the Corinthians in splintering the fellowship of the various house churches over their preferred spiritual leaders. Different attitudes toward Paul and Apollos existed in the Christian community, some preferring Paul's leadership while others favored Apollos. Paul addresses this issue in chapters three and four. Our study will focus on just a part of that larger discussion, but we will attempt to place it in this larger context. In this way, we can hopefully avoid missing some important points that can be understood more accurately from considering the larger picture.

I Context

Both the historical and literary contexts for our passage are easier to determine here than is typically the case in even the other Pauline letters. Plus, the historical setting behind chapter three will play a very significant role in making clearer sense of the verses themselves.

Because of having touched on some other passages in 1 Corinthians, I will draw from that material as it is relevant to our passage. For details see the studies on 1 Corinthians [11:17-34](#) and [1:18-31](#).

Paul's letter to the Christian community at the ancient city of Corinth represents a significant part of his writing ministry. Some irony exists concerning this community, and Paul's correspondence and personal ministry to them. First Corinthians reveals a community riveted by factions, extreme moral problems and theological assertions that border on the bizarre. Yet, for many Christian groups today, Corinth

represents the model church, primarily because of the practice of speaking in tongues. Paul's writing ministry was intended as a substitute for his personal presence. And it was intended to answer questions and address some

of these problems that had arisen in the various house church groups over this Greek seaport city.

The ongoing history of Christianity in this Greek city reflects a tradition of problems that continued for a long, long time after Paul led in the establishment of Christianity there during the middle 50s of the first century. A fascinating letter to the church at Corinth came almost half a century after Paul's ministry from the spiritual leader in Rome. [First Clement](#) helps one see some of this problematic history decades after Paul. By AD 96, when 1 Clement was written, the tone of Christian experience had profoundly changed. Political language carried the day along with an intense demand for absolute obedi-

The early history of the Christian community in Corinth centers largely upon challenges to its unity.

ence to those in authority. But through all this smoke screen from Clement of Rome, one can trace out a community at Corinth still plagued with problems and struggles. In some ways this is helpful to us, in that it led to Paul putting in writing his thoughts on a number of important issues in the Christian experience, even though not all problems would be solved..

a. Historical

The **external history** of first Corinthians focuses upon the “reporter” questions about the composition of First Corinthians. Who wrote it? When was it written? Where was it written? To whom was it written? Why was it written? et al. In my reconstruction of [Paul’s ministry to the Corinthians](#) at Cranfordville.com, this letter comes as the third point of contact with the Corinthians. The first letter is tentative and less certain. This has important bearing on the relevancy of 3:1-23. The implication of the reference in 5:9, “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons...”, alerts us to the existence of some serious problems in the Christian community there.

Paul most likely dictated the contents of the letter to a writing secretary and then added the final Conclusio in his own hand writing as a verification of the contents to the Corinthian readers, as is implied in 16:21 where he says, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.” Unfortunately, we do not know the identity of this person, as we do regarding Romans where Tertius identifies himself in 16:22 with the statement, “I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord.”

The first readers of this letter were in the ancient seaport town of Corinth, as is described in the *Eerdman’s Dictionary of the Bible*:

An important city controlling the isthmus connecting mainland Greece and the Peloponnesian Peninsula. Although its “golden age” was five centuries before Paul’s visit, Corinth had enjoyed a return to prominence and a resurgence of building during the 1st century A.D.

Corinth had a leading role in the uniting of the Greek city-states into the world-wide empire of Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander. Two centuries later Corinth was a leader in the failed Achaean League’s attempt to stop Roman expansion in Greece. Severely damaged and punished in 146 B.C. in the war with Rome, Corinth was restored in 44 to economic and political prominence by Julius Caesar and in 27 became the provincial capital. New colonists from many areas joined

locals seeking their fortune in this commercial center. An important city for Roman government as the capital of Achaea, Corinth was the residence of the Roman governor (before whom Paul appeared in A.D. 51 when Lucius Junius Gallio was governor). In Roman Corinth, old temples were restored and enlarged, new shops and markets built, new water supplies developed, and many public buildings added (including three governmental buildings and an amphitheater seating perhaps 14 thousand). In the 1st century Corinth’s public marketplace (forum) was larger than any in Rome. All these improvements suggest that when Paul visited Corinth ca. 50 it was the most beautiful, modern, and industrious city of its size in Greece. The well-traveled Aristides commented that if beauty contests were held among cities, as reportedly was done among goddesses, Corinth would rank with Aphrodite (i.e., first).

This flourishing economic life also contained a mixture of religious corruption, generated largely by the fertility based worship of the goddess Aphrodite. S.J. Hafemann (“Corinthians, Letters to the,” *Dictionary of Paul and His letters*) summarizes:

As a wealthy hub for commerce and seafarers, Greek Corinth was evidently renowned for its vice, especially

its sexual corruption, and for its many religious temples and rites. Aristophanes (c. 450–385 B.C.) even coined the term *korinthiazesthai* (“to act like a Corinthian,”

i.e., “to commit fornication”) in view of the city’s reputation. Plato used the term “Corinthian girl” as an euphemism for a prostitute (Murphy-O’Connor, 56). And although its historical accuracy is disputed, Strabo’s account of 1,000 prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite does reflect the city’s image, in which the many temples played their own role in the immoral tenor of its life (cf. Strabo *Geog.* 8.6.20, first written in 7 B.C. and revised slightly in A.D. 18).

Thus into the mixture and immoral atmosphere came the gospel message, preached by Paul and others. The blossoming community of faith in the various house churches struggled to cope with both coming out of and at the same time trying to live within such an atmosphere as faithful Christians.

The **internal history** of the passage centers on the relationship of Apollos to the Christian community at Corinth, with emphasis upon Paul’s connection as well. We begin first with Paul’s relationship with the church.

1 Corinthians contains many fascinating aspects. Even though our text comes from the document titled 1 Corinthians, this was not the first letter that Paul wrote to the Christian community at

Corinth was an important city controlling the isthmus connecting mainland Greece and the Peloponnesian Peninsula.

Corinth. It was his second letter. All together Paul dictated at least four separate letters to this group of believers and we have only two of them preserved in our New Testament. Thus it becomes helpful to survey Paul's relationship with the believers in the ancient city of Corinth. At [Cranfordville](#) I have an outline summary of the points of that relationship, which is reproduced here:

1. **Initial Ministry**
 established the church on the second missionary journey
 AD 50-51
 Sources: Acts 18:1-17; 1 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1:13-17; 2 Thess. 3:1-5; 1 Cor. 3:5-10; 11:2, 23, 15:1; 2 Cor. 11:7-9
2. **Prior Letter**
 written before 1 Corinthians, now lost
 may be partially contained in 2 Cor. 6:14-71
 AD 52 (?)
 Sources: 1 Cor. 5:9
3. **1 Corinthians**
 written from Ephesus while on third missionary journey
 to respond to questions from the household of Chloe (chaps 1-6) and the Corinthian delegation (chaps 7-16)
 AD 54-55 (spring time)
4. **Painful Visit**
 purpose: to try to correct ongoing problems in the church
 AD 55
 Sources: 2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1,2
5. **Sorrowful Letter**
 written from Ephesus after return from Corinth
 possibly contained partially in 2 Cor. 10-13, but most likely lost
 AD 55
 Sources: 2 Cor. 2:4; 7:8
6. **2 Corinthians**
 written from Macedonia after leaving Ephesus on third missionary journey
 prompted by joyous report from Titus regarding the relief offering etc.
 AD 56 (?) possibly only containing chaps 1-9, if 10-13 are a part of the 'sorrowful letter'
7. **Third Visit to Corinth**
 AD 57
 Sources: Acts 20:1-3

From just a quick glance at the above outline, one can easily tell that Paul's relationship with the believers at Corinth is complex and quite involved. Also evident from this is the very summary nature of Luke's depiction in the book of Acts. If our only source



of information was Acts, we would have just points 1 and 7. If Paul's writings were our only source, point 7 would not show up. Plus, an overview perspective to serve as a conceptual framework would be much more difficult to construct. Our letter, called 1 Corinthians, comes then after Paul's initial ministry on the second missionary journey in the early 50s. When he arrives at Ephesus on the third missionary journey in the mid-50s for the lengthy two plus year stay there, he is forced by troubles in the Corinthian church to spend time and energy trying to help the Corinthians get on top of numerous problems. During that Ephesian ministry, he wrote three letters and made one trip to Corinth (Luke doesn't mention this one in Acts). Two dynamics emerge. (1) The Corinthian believers, although growing in number, especially in house-church groups, developed a host of serious problems, both morally and theologically.

Paul's relationship with Corinth is more complex than one would suppose from just a casual reading of First Corinthians.

This demanded increasing amounts of time and energy from Paul. (2) Paul's relationship with

the Corinthian church became increasingly strained, at one point, so bad that he had to send Titus to try to work out the strained relationships, instead of going himself. The nature of that strained relationship is not entirely clear, but from 2 Corinthians (cf. chaps 10-13) it centered on a serious questioning by the Corinthians of Paul's claim to being an apostle. From

all indications this was not based on the Judaizing challenge to his apostleship, like at Galatia (cf., Gal. 1-2). The net impact was that the Corinthian church became one of those “troubling making” congregations that had some kind of internal conflict going on constantly. Ironically, when Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthians at the close of the first century ([1 Clement](#)) the church was still a source of ongoing problems, some 50 years later.

1 Corinthians comes in the early stages of Paul’s lengthy ministry at Ephesus on the third missionary journey and was prompted by two things: (1) a report by members of the household of Chloe about problems [chaps 1-6, cf. [1:11](#)], and (2) a list of questions sent to Paul by the Corinthians wanting his feedback [chaps 7-16, cf. [7:1](#)]. When these two things are added together, one has a long list of serious matters plaguing the Corinthian church. These range from divisions centered over a “favorite preacher” (chap. 1) to a member living in an incestuous relationship with his birth mother (chap. 5) to some members questioning the resurrection of Christ (chap. 15). Thus, since Paul could not at that time make another trip from Ephesus to Corinth to address these issues personally, he did the next best thing - he wrote them a letter giving his perspective. This is not a church that a young, inexperienced pastor should want to tackle! What I find even more curious is that this church, probably the most problem plagued church in all of Paul’s ministry, is most often held up as the example for modern churches to emulate! As a pastor, I prayed that God would never call me to pastor a church like the one at Corinth!

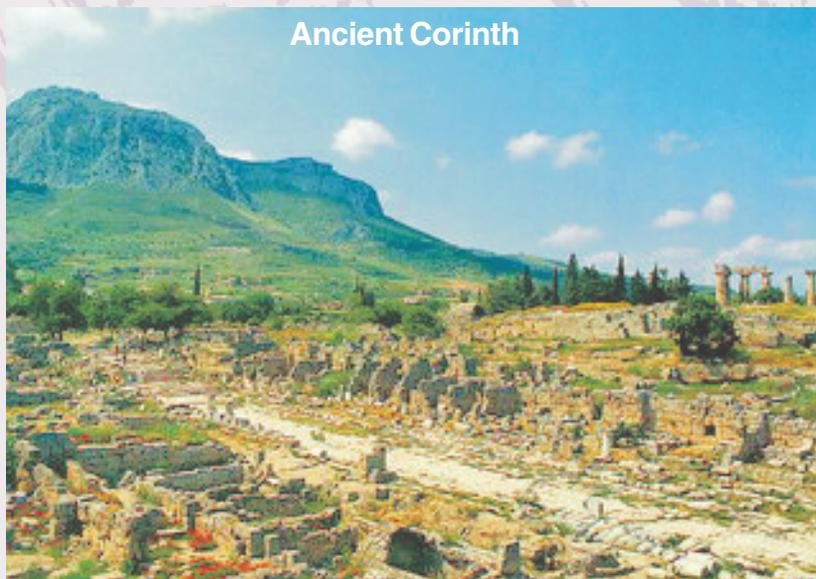
That this letter called 1 Corinthians was the product of the apostle Paul is not questioned by virtually any biblical scholar, even the most radical ones over the past 200 years. That this letter was dictated by Paul to a writing secretary is confirmed by his statement in 16:21, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand” (NRSV). From a previous study we learned that a statement like this,

very typical in ancient formal letters, indicated that the official sender of the letter, as indicated in the Adscriptio of the letter (cf. 1:1), has taken pin in hand to write in his own handwriting at least a part of, if not the entire, Conclusio of the letter as a verification that the contents of the letter represent his thoughts, even though written in another’s handwriting. Unfortunately, that person is not named here, like in Romans and 1 Peter.

The connection of [Apollos](#) with the Christian community in Corinth is less clear. A helpful summary is found in the *New Bible Dictionary*:

[An Alexandrian Jew \(Acts 18:24\)](#). The name is abbreviated from Apollonius. He came to Ephesus in AD 52 during Paul’s hasty visit to Palestine (Acts 18:22). He had accurate knowledge of the story of Jesus, which may have come to him (possibly at Alexandria) either from Galilean disciples of our Lord or from some early written Gospel. He combined natural gifts of eloquence (or learning) with a profound understanding of the OT, and he was enthusiastic in proclaiming such truth as he knew (Acts 18:24–25). The conspicuous gap in his knowledge concerned the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the consequent rite of Christian baptism. This was made good by the patient instruction of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26). From Ephesus Apollos went on to Corinth, where he showed himself to be an expert at Christian apologetics in dealing with the Jews (Acts 18:27–28). At Corinth there sprang up factions in the names of Paul, Apollos, Cephas and Christ himself (1 Cor. 1:12). Paul seeks to show that this was not due to himself or Apollos, who were both working together under the hand of God (1 Cor. 3:4–6). All belonged to the Corinthians, including himself and Apollos (1 Cor. 3:21–23), and there could be no cause for party spirit (1 Cor. 4:6). The factions were probably due to the preference of some for the polished eloquence of Apollos. His desire to lessen the controversy may be the reason for his not returning to Corinth despite Paul’s request (1 Cor. 16:12). He is last mentioned in Tit. 3:13 as making some sort of journey.

Since the time of Luther, Apollos has often been suggested as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is possible, if he used the



allegorical exegesis of his native Alexandria, but it is by no means proved. Our passage picks up in the Corinthian situation after he had ministered there, and subsequently had become a favorite preacher of some in the Christian community there.

b. Literary

The literary form, that is, the **genre**, is obviously an ancient letter, and is written in the style of ancient, not modern, letters. [1 Corinthians](#) has the traditional Praescriptio (1:1-3), Proem (1:4-9), Body (1:10-16:18), and Conclusio (16:19-24). The Body of the letter revolves around two parts. The report of the situation at the church that the household of Chloe brought to Paul in Ephesus is found in chapters 1-6. Then Paul's response to a letter from the church itself with several questions occupies chapters 7-16. Thus the **literary setting** of our passage comes in the first seg-

Structure of Ancient Letters:

Praescriptio
Superscriptio
Adscriptio
Salutatio
Proem
Body
Conclusio

ment of the letter Body. It stands as an important part of the first major part dealing with matters of unity and division (1:10-4:21). The divisiveness in the community centered in difference of opinion about the preference for one leader over another in terms of those missionaries who had passed through the city giving instruction to the members of the Christian community, such as Paul, Peter, Apollos etc. No indica-

tion points to a division over local leadership. Nothing seems to indicate that this preference emphasized doctrinal differences, at least, that gained from the teaching of these leaders. But there may have been some difference of belief developed inside these groups and then attributed back to these leaders. Instead, it appears to have mostly been a preference over the style of teaching of these leaders, and perhaps their different personalities.

II. Message

The internal **literary structure** of chapter three plays mostly off three images: slaves working in a vineyard (vv. 1-9); construction workers building a temple (vv. 10-17); wise/foolish people (vv. 18-23).

a. Slaves, vv. 1-9

Greek NT

3:1 Καὶ γὰρ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ. 3:2 γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρωμα, οὐπω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε, 3:3 ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε. ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε; 3:4 ὅταν γὰρ λέγη τις, Ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἕτερος δέ, Ἐγὼ Ἀπολλῶ, οὐκ ἄνθρωποι ἐστε; 3:5 τί οὖν ἐστὶν Ἀπολλῶς; τί δέ ἐστὶν Παῦλος; διάκονοι δι' ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε, καὶ ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ κύριος ἔδωκεν. 3:6 ἐγὼ ἐφύτευσα, Ἀπολλῶς

NASB

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? 5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the

NRSV

1 And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? 4 For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human? 5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants

NLT

1 Dear brothers and sisters, I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. 2 I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, 3 for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the

ἐπότισεν, ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἠΰξανεν· 3:7 ὥστε οὔτε ὁ φυτεύων ἐστίν τι οὔτε ὁ ποτίζων ἀλλ' ὁ αὐξάνων θεός. 3:8 ὁ φυτεύων δὲ καὶ ὁ ποτίζων ἓν εἰσιν, ἕκαστος δὲ τὸν ἴδιον μισθὸν λήμψεται κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον· 3:9 θεοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί, θεοῦ γεώργιον, θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἐστε.

Lord gave opportunity to each one. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. 9 For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

Lord. 4 When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I prefer Apollos," aren't you acting like those who are not Christians? 5 Who is Apollos, and who is Paul, that we should be the cause of such quarrels? Why, we're only servants. Through us God caused you to believe. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. 6 My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow. 7 The ones who do the planting or watering aren't important, but God is important because he is the one who makes the seed grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work. 9 We work together as partners who belong to God. You are God's field, God's building – not ours.



Notes:

One fascinating observation is the different number of words used by each of the three translations to express the ideas of Paul from the original Greek text. None were able to use as few words as Paul did, and the New Living Translation in the far right hand column used considerably more words. Perhaps, this is a signal of how tightly Paul could pack ideas into few words, but how difficult it is to express those ideas in the same number of English words.

In [2:1-5](#), Paul characterized his initial preaching of the gospel at Corinth by distancing himself from a flowery oratorical style of preaching that gave a superficial appearance of being quite insightful and wise. This was a deliberate attempt to avoid being associated with the [Sophist philosophers](#) who traveled from place to place advocating their version of how life is supposed to work successfully. They

gained a reputation of being money grabbers and were condemned by the “orthodox” philosophers of the time. Paul in [2:6-16](#) came back to advocate that his teaching of the gospel represented God’s wisdom that had been hidden from the unspiritual person. For this wisdom to be understood the Spirit of God has to be present and active in the listener.

Thus in 3:1-4, Paul reminds the Corinthians that he had fed them “spiritual milk” rather than “spiritual food” in that initial evangelizing ministry on the second missionary journey in the early 50s, described in [Acts 18:1-17](#). Luke describes an eighteen month stay by Paul in Corinth, during which the Christian community began to flourish -- enough to attract the attention of the Roman authorities as well as the hostility of the Jewish synagogue community.

During that lengthy stay Paul wanted to move the Corinthians beyond the ABCs of the Christian faith in order to ground them in their understanding of their new religious faith. But he had trouble moving them forward. As he now is writing to them from Ephesus on the third missionary journey several years later, he realized from the report of the members of Chloe's household that the Corinthians were still failing to grow in their spiritual understanding. Perhaps some of his frustration may have stemmed from the enormously fruitful ministry going on at this time in Ephesus (see [Acts 19:1-20](#)) when he received this report about the Corinthians. So many wonderful things were happening in Ephesus that the report of so many problems at Corinth seemed even more negative to the apostle.



The key indicator of the lack of spiritual growth by the Corinthians is seen by Paul as their divisions over popular preachers (v. 3): “For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?” Then he illustrates what he meant (v. 4): “For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely human?”

Such divisiveness reflects failure to understand the role of the preacher in delivering the gospel message. They are never to be the object of devotion and to be elevated to some high level of loyalty. That borders on the blasphemy of lifting them to the place of devotion belonging exclusively to God and His Son.

In order to define the true role of the preacher Paul uses two graphic analogies. First, in vv. 5-9, the preacher is compared to an ancient slave. The term *diakonos* (διάκονος) is used against its most common first century non-religious meaning: a slave living and working in the home of an aristocrat. Although it usually referred to the slaves who prepared and served food inside the aristocrat's home, Paul focuses it as a designation of those slaves who worked outside in the fields planting and irrigating the crops that would produce the food for eating.

He compares himself and Apollos to two such slaves working outside in the fields. The slave Paul

was on the cultivation and planting team. To get the ground ready for planting and then to do the planting were labor intensive jobs. Apollos was on the irrigation team. One the wheat and grape vines began to grow they would need much water in order to produce a good harvest. If you have ever worked where irrigation farming is

done, you understand just how labor intensive this job can be. In the ancient world's dependency on ground based irrigation, rather than the typical modern spray based method, one could hardly find more demanding and exhausting work. Paul's agricultural metaphor makes a point easily understood. When the planting and irrigating work is done, the real job of plant growth and maturing is beyond their capabilities and responsibilities. In our world farmers will commonly say that its now in mother nature's hands. Whether or not a harvest day comes in beyond their control. In Paul's metaphor and as well in the vocabulary of modern Christian farmers, not “mother nature” but God is the one responsible for producing growth.

The field slaves do their work with limited responsibilities. They receive the reward of their labors: they are provided a place to stay and food to eat. Little, if any distinction, is made between them. Certainly, one is not perceived as more important than the other, since both roles are required in the farming. Their role, then, is minimal. The achievement of harvest belongs to God, not to them.

Thus Paul slams the Corinthians for elevating the role of both he and Apollos to that belonging only to God. To do such is a sure sign of lack of spiritual insight and failure to understand the process of the spread of the gospel in God's design. In v. 9, Paul applies his farming metaphor in summary fashion: “For we are God's servants (συνεργοί), working together; you are God's field, God's building.” Instead of using the original label (διάκονοι), he stresses the common task of the two field slaves with *συνεργοί* (*sunergoi*), fellow laborers.

What can we learn from these words of Paul? The list is long! The number of Baptist churches that

have split over loyalty/antagonism toward a pastor is extensive. The inclination to like one pastor over another is inevitable. But when that preference elevates a preacher to a place where we begin “worshipping” our favorite preacher, we have exposed a serious lack of spiritual insight. Paul’s words here condemn us in such action. Such is carnal, of the flesh and not spiritual, of the Spirit.



The challenge is to refocus our understanding on the role of preachers. They are nothing more than “field slaves” of God. They work hard to be sure. The one who “plants the gospel” in our lives can easily become more important to us. Or, the one who “waters our lives” spiritually by helping us gain more understanding of our religious faith can take on special importance. But in so attaching ourselves to them, we run the risk of allowing them a level of importance beyond what God allows. We risk making “idols” of them and thus blaspheming God.

Now, the metaphor also doesn’t allow us to denigrate their roles as having no importance. In proclaiming and teaching the gospel, they are seeking to get the life saving message of salvation rooted and growing in the hearts of lost sinners. That’s not an insignificant task! To the contrary, it’s one of the most wonderful jobs a person could have. It deserves our respect and admiration. There is here a balance in our attitude toward preachers. We appreciate the wonderful work they are doing. But we recognize

their roles in the larger scheme of God’s design. The basic credit for spiritual accomplishment belongs to God, rather than to the preacher. Our loyalty must always center on God, and never on any man or woman.

The Corinthians failed to understand and do this. Thus, their community was torn with strife and division. The litany of problems ticked off in the body of First Corinthians is astounding: members suing one another in the legal courts; Christian men regularly going to brothels; a member living in open sexual relationship with his birth mother; members questioning the very resurrection of Jesus etc. One is amazed that Paul could find anything about the Corinthians to praise. By treating the problem of division over leaders at the beginning of the letter body, Paul seems to imply that much, if not most all, the other problems stemmed from this spiritual failure.

One sad note that emerges from the later history of the Christian community at Corinth is that [First Clement](#), written to this same group, some 50 years later, still largely focuses on leadership problems at Corinth. The problem has shifted from loyalty to outside leaders such as Paul and Apollos, to local leaders. But it still is a leadership issue dividing the community and causing serious problems.

This may suggest a source of many of the problems found in churches today. If we never come to a healthy view of the role of spiritual leaders, we will suffer perpetual problems in our congregation. Certainly, the lack of spiritual wisdom stands at the source of these problems, just as it did at Corinth.

With his summarizing statement in v. 9, he also introduces his second metaphor explaining the role of the gospel preacher: a building under construction.

b. Construction Workers, vv. 10-17

Greek NT

3:10 Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὡς σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων θεμέλιον ἔθηκα, ἄλλος δὲ ἐποικοδομεῖ. ἕκαστος δὲ βλεπέτω πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ. 3:11 θεμέλιον γὰρ ἄλλον οὐδεὶς δύναται θεῖναι παρὰ τὸν κείμενον, ὃς ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. 3:12 εἰ δέ τις

NASB

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any

NRSV

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus

NLT

10 Because of God's special favor to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. 11 For no one can lay any other foundation than the one we already have – Jesus Christ. 12 Now

ἐποικοδομεῖ ἐπὶ τὸν θεμέλιον χρυσόν, ἄργυρον, λίθους τιμίους, ξύλα, χόρτον, καλάμην, 3:13 ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον φανερόν γενήσεται, ἢ γὰρ ἡμέρα δηλώσει, ὅτι ἐν πυρὶ ἀποκαλύπτεται· καὶ ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον ὁποῖόν ἐστὶν τὸ πῦρ [αὐτὸ] δοκιμάσει. 3:14 εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον μενεῖ ὃ ἐποικοδόμησεν, μισθὸν λήμψεται· 3:15 εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται, ζημιωθήσεται, αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται, οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός. 3:16 οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν; 3:17 εἴ τις τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φθειρεῖ, φθερεῖ τοῦτον ὁ θεός· ὁ γὰρ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν, οἵτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς.

Notes:

Paul signals a shift in metaphors with the term θεοῦ οἰκοδομῆ ἐστε (theou oikodome este; “God’s building you are”) in verse 9b. This sets up the discussion in verses 10-17 around the image of the construction of a building, which happens to be the temple of God. This second metaphor is also intended to explain the role of the gospel preacher as did the field slave metaphor in vv. 5-9. Some differences of emphasis exist in the second metaphor and they advance the understanding of this role considerably.

In the background here is the tradition of [Roman architecture](#) which produced massive buildings still standing today some 2,000 years later. In Corinth itself this image of a religious building would suggest impressive and massive structures. The temple of Aphrodite was located on the top of the hill in the picture to the right. The remains of the temple of Apollo is in the foreground of the picture.

In the metaphor of a temple under

man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — 13 the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14 If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

anyone who builds on that foundation may use gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. 13 But there is going to come a time of testing at the judgment day to see what kind of work each builder has done. Everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value. 14 If the work survives the fire, that builder will receive a reward. 15 But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builders themselves will be saved, but like someone escaping through a wall of flames. 16 Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? 17 God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you Christians are that temple.

Corinthian Temple of Apollo Remains



construction, Paul shifts to focus largely to himself, rather than to himself and Apollos. This in large part, because a new emphasis in this metaphor is personal accountability of the builder. The building metaphor as depicted by Paul still has echoes of Apollos with the statement (v. 10): “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and *someone else is building on it.*” Paul compares himself to a σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων [*architekton*; “skilled master builder” (NRSV), “wise master builder” (NASB); “expert builder” (NLT)]. This single use of the term here in the entire Greek NT reaches out to the world of building construction in the ancient world. Anthony Thiselton (*NIGTC*) provides the following background on the term:



Shanor’s study sheds light, first, on the term σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων, **skilled master-builder**. Contracts were made with individual workers, but because of his professional **skill** one person usually assumed a particular coordinating role, maintaining an overview of the work, but not as paymaster. Even in the case of large buildings, Shanor argues, the number of participants in the actual building process who were contracted was small. Hence the image of a small team coordinated by the ἀρχιτέκτων whose skill was recognized by the others rings true to the application of the analogy to ministry at Corinth. We have already discussed the importance of “co-workers” for Paul (above, 1:1, and on Holmberg, Clarke, and others). In lexicographical terms, ἀρχιτέκτων brings together τέκτων, a worker in wood or stone, i.e., *carpenter* or *mason*, with ἀρχι-, *chief*, or *leader*, here perhaps as first among equals, more probably leading in experience and skill rather than in managerial status.

Unlike the modern term architect, which is derived from this Greek word, the ancient ἀρχιτέκτων was a builder who did a lot of the actual construction work, rather than just design the building and supervise others who do the construction work.

Paul, interestingly, see himself as a ἀρχιτέκτων who only builds foundations, leaving the remainder of the construction work to others.

The foundation that Paul attempted to lay spiritually was Jesus Christ. The spiritual building under construction had to be build on a foundation that

would hold the building up in times of severe testing. The apostle was convinced the only foundation that would survive is Jesus Christ. Commitment to him was what Paul had pressed the Corinthians for in his initial ministry to them in the early 50s. Paul was convinced that he, as a σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων, had laid a solid foundation that

would hold up.

The risky part of the construction work is the type of building erected on that foundation. In the application of the metaphor to spiritual ministry, Paul warned those builders to be cautious about this (v. 10b): “*But each man must be careful how he builds on it.*” This warning sets up the discussion of accountability.

Two approaches to constructing the building are described in v. 12: “if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,...” Although some possibility of an allusion to Solomon’s temple may be present here, most likely two difference types of building material are in the apostle’s mind: non-combustible and combustible materials. The testing of the quality of construction is envisioned as an extremely hot fire (v. 13): “each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.” Fires in the cities of the ancient world were dreaded extremely, and they happened with regularity. The Corinthians would have well understood the direction Paul’s analogy was going, as the [Wikipedia article](#) says: “The Romans under Lucius Mummius destroyed Corinth following a siege in 146 BC; when he entered the city Mummius put all the men to the sword and sold the women and children into slavery before he torched the city.”

But Paul has something beyond a physical fire in mind here. He sees the Day of Final Judgment at the coming of Christ when each Christian will stand before God to give account of his service to Christ ([2 Cor. 5:10-11](#)): “10 For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences.” The severity of that testing is such that an

entire life of service (“the building”) may be destroyed and the builder managing acceptability to God only barely (vv. 14-15): “14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” The depth of humiliation from a wasted life of service to Christ in final judgment before God is hard to imagine.



Paul in application of his building metaphor declares to the Corinthians (vv. 16-17): “16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.” This is no temple to Aphrodite or to Apollo that is being built in Corinth. It is the temple of God Himself. But it isn't being built from the massive

stones used to build the temples to Aphrodite and Apollo in Corinth. Rather, the Corinthians believers themselves were that temple, both individually and collectively. Each believer was simultaneously both a building and a builder, as they lived out their faith commitment to God in Christ. Temple building is serious business. It is the habitation of God's own Spirit. The danger is expressed in v. 17 with a play on words expressed in axiomatic form: “If one φθείρει (phtheirei) God's temple, God will φθερεῖ (phtheirei) that individual. The Greek heightens the stylistic play on these words with the sequence: one - destroys; destroys - God. This forms the chiasmatic pattern: AB//B'A'. To destroy God's work is to invite destruction upon oneself.

What can we learn from this text portion? The work of building a life of acceptable service requires the right foundation. And this is commitment to Jesus Christ. No other basis for living will prove enduring in the final test of eternal judgment. Also, building that life requires the use of the right materials. What are they? Measured against the day of accountability, those materials are the ones that will stand up under God's scrutiny and evaluation. Anything less will be eliminated by that judgment of fire. So the question comes in a haunting manner: Am I building my life out of materials that will stand up on that Day? The Corinthians' divisiveness is an example of building materials that won't stand the test.

Thirdly, the strong sense of accountability for our living and service to God as believers is inescapable from this passage. We must never approach the Christian life as though nothing matters. We can't do whatever we want to. We will be held strictly accountable for how we live out our lives.

Fourthly, Paul's sense of being a foundation builder while other do the framing and finish work suggests different gifts for different types of ministry. His later discussion of spiritual gifts will expand this idea in direct form. But it is important to realize the different abilities to serve. God's examination day will test us over what each one was expected to do. That is, His final exam will be customized for each one of us, rather than being a single exam for everyone.

c. Sages, vv. 18-23

Greek NT

3:18 Μηδεὶς ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω· εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ

NASB

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he

NRSV

18 Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this

NLT

18 Stop fooling yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's

αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός. 3:19 ἢ γὰρ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν. γέγραπται γάρ, Ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν 3:20 καὶ πάλιν, Κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σοφῶν ὅτι εἰσὶν μάταιοι. 3:21 ὥστε μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις· πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστίν, 3:22 εἴτε Παῦλος εἴτε Ἀπολλῶς εἴτε Κηφᾶς, εἴτε κόσμος εἴτε ζωὴ εἴτε θάνατος, εἴτε ἐνεστώτα εἴτε μέλλοντα· πάντα ὑμῶν, 3:23 ὑμεῖς δὲ Χριστοῦ, Χριστὸς δὲ θεοῦ.

is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; 20 and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS." 21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," 20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 21 So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

standards, you will have to become a fool so you can become wise by God's standards. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say, "God catches those who think they are wise in their own cleverness." 20 And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are worthless." 21 So don't take pride in following a particular leader. Everything belongs to you: 22 Paul and Apollos and Peter; the whole world and life and death; the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Notes:

In verses 18-20, Paul returns to the emphasis upon true and false wisdom found in [1:18-25](#). The wisdom of the cross is foolishness to worldly people who consider themselves wise. And (1:25), "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength." The dramatic difference of God's wisdom from human wisdom requires a willingness to appear foolish humanly in order to access that divine wisdom. Paul supports this contention in vers. 18 with a couple of quotes from the Old Testament.

First, from [Job 5:13](#)

("He takes the wise in their own craftiness; and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end.")

in verse 19

("He catches the wise in their craftiness")

and then from [Psalm 94:11](#)

("The Lord knows our thoughts, that they are but an empty breath.")

in verse 20

("The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.")

The Corinthians had considered themselves to be wiser than others in their preference for Apollos, Paul or one of the others. But Paul castigates this

as an expression of the world's phoney wisdom, rather than being wisdom from God. It has failed to understand God's grand design for his preachers, and instead has followed worldly wisdom in elevating them to rolls that belong only to God himself. No one should be boasting about preachers.

In God's design an inter connection of everything is set up as Paul asserts in vv. 21b-23:

For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

This structure precludes any bragging or boasting. Everything leads to God, who alone is worthy of praise.

Wow! What a powerful indictment on so much of modern church life. We claim to be spiritually wise but exemplify worldly wisdom far more often. Status seeking inside God's church is wrong, wrong, wrong! Dividing up into competing and hostile sides is abominable! In a US society becoming less acceptive of Christian claims, we believers need urgently to "get our act together." Nothing less than the wisdom of God will enable us to flourish and spread the message of life eternal in Christ Jesus as Lord.

Greek NT

3:1 Καὶ γὰρ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλήσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ. 3:2 γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα, οὐπω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε, 3:3 ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε. ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε; 3:4 ὅταν γὰρ λέγη τις, Ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἕτερος δέ, Ἐγὼ Ἀπολλῶ, οὐκ ἄνθρωποι ἐστε; 3:5 τί οὖν ἐστὶν Ἀπολλῶς; τί δέ ἐστὶν Παῦλος; διάκονοι δι' ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε, καὶ ἐκάστω ὡς ὁ κύριος ἔδωκεν. 3:6 ἐγὼ ἐφύτευσα, Ἀπολλῶς ἐπότισεν, ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἠΐξανεν. 3:7 ὥστε οὔτε ὁ φυτεῦν ἐστὶν τι οὔτε ὁ ποτίζων ἀλλ' ὁ αὐξάνων θεός. 3:8 ὁ φυτεύων δὲ καὶ ὁ ποτίζων ἓν εἰσιν, ἕκαστος δὲ τὸν ἴδιον μισθὸν λήμψεται κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον. 3:9 θεοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί, θεοῦ γεώργιον, θεοῦ οἰκοδομὴ ἐστε.

3:10 Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὡς σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων θεμέλιον ἔθηκα, ἄλλος δὲ ἐποικοδομεῖ. ἕκαστος δὲ βλέπετω πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ. 3:11 θεμέλιον γὰρ ἄλλον οὐδεὶς δύναται θεῖναι παρὰ τὸν κείμενον, ὅτι ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. 3:12 εἰ δέ τις ἐποικοδομεῖ ἐπὶ τὸν θεμέλιον χρυσόν,

NASB

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not walking like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? 5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which

NRSV

1 And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? 4 For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human? 5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. 9 For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. 11

NLT

1 Dear brothers and sisters, F12 when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. 2 I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, 3 for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord. 4 When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I prefer Apollos," aren't you acting like those who are not Christians? 5 Who is Apollos, and who is Paul, that we should be the cause of such quarrels? Why, we're only servants. Through us God caused you to believe. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. 6 My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow. 7 The ones who do the planting or watering aren't important, but God is important because he is the one who makes the seed grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who

ἄργυρον, λίθους τιμίους, ξύλα, χόρτον, καλάμην, 3:13 ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον φανερόν γενήσεται, ἡ γὰρ ἡμέρα δηλώσει, ὅτι ἐν πυρὶ ἀποκαλύπτεται· καὶ ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον ὁποῖόν ἐστὶν τὸ πῦρ [αὐτὸ] δοκιμάσει. 3:14 εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον μενεῖ ὁ ἐποικοδόμησεν, μισθὸν λήμψεται· 3:15 εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται, ζημιωθήσεται, αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται, οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός. 3:16 οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν; 3:17 εἴ τις τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φθείρει, φθερεῖ τοῦτον ὁ θεός· ὁ γὰρ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν, οἵτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς.

3:18 Μηδεὶς ἐαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω· εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός. 3:19 ἡ γὰρ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν. γέγραπται γάρ, Ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν· 3:20 καὶ πάλιν, Κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σοφῶν ὅτι εἰσὶν μάταιοι. 3:21 ὥστε μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις· πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστίν, 3:22 εἴτε Παῦλος εἴτε Ἀπολλῶς εἴτε Κηφᾶς, εἴτε κόσμος εἴτε ζωὴ εἴτε θάνατος, εἴτε ἐνεστώτα εἴτε μέλλοντα· πάντα ὑμῶν, 3:23 ὑμεῖς δὲ Χριστοῦ, Χριστὸς δὲ θεοῦ.

is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; 20 and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS." 21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — 13 the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14 If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

18 Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," 20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 21 So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world

waters work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work. 9 We work together as partners who belong to God. You are God's field, God's building — not ours.

10 Because of God's special favor to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. 11 For no one can lay any other foundation than the one we already have — Jesus Christ. 12 Now anyone who builds on that foundation may use gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. 13 But there is going to come a time of testing at the judgment day to see what kind of work each builder has done. Everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value. 14 If the work survives the fire, that builder will receive a reward. 15 But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builders themselves will be saved, but like someone escaping through a wall of flames. 16 Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? 17 God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you

come; all things belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Christians are that temple.

18 Stop fooling yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you will have to become a fool so you can become wise by God's standards. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say, "God catches those who think they are wise in their own cleverness." 20 And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are worthless." 21 So don't take pride in following a particular leader. Everything belongs to you: 22 Paul and Apollos and Peter; the whole world and life and death; the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Greek NT Diagram

3:1	Κἀγώ, ἀδελφοί, 1 οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ '
2	(ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν) ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ.
3	3:2 γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, 4 (ἐπότισα) οὐ βρῶμα, 5 γὰρ οὐπω ἐδύνασθε.
6	ἀλλ ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν 6 δύνασθε, 7 γὰρ
7	3:3 ἔτι σαρκικοί ἐστε. 8 γὰρ
8	ὅπου ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ 9 κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε;
10	3:4 γὰρ ὅταν λέγη τις, Ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, δέ ---- (λέγη) ἕτερος, Ἐγὼ Ἀπολλῶ, 10 οὐκ ἄνθρωποί ἐστε;
11	3:5 οὖν τί ἐστὶν Ἀπολλῶς; δέ 12 τί ἐστὶν Παῦλος; 13 διάκονοι (εἰσιν) δι' ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε, καὶ 14 ἐκάστῳ (διάκονοι εἰσιν) ὡς ὁ κύριος ἔδωκεν.

15 ^{3:6} ἐγὼ ἐφύτευσα,

16 Ἀπολλῶς ἐπότισεν,

ἀλλὰ

17 ὁ θεὸς ἠΐξανεν·

^{3:7} ὥστε

οὔτε

18 ὁ φυτεύων ἐστίν τι

οὔτε

19 ὁ ποτίζων -----

ἀλλ’

20 ὁ αὐξάνων θεός (ἐστίν τι).

^{3:8} δὲ

21 ὁ φυτεύων καὶ ὁ ποτίζων ἓν εἰσιν,

δὲ

22 ἕκαστος τὸν ἴδιον μισθὸν λήμψεται

κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον·

γὰρ

23 ^{3:9} θεοῦ ἐσμεν συνεργοί,

24 θεοῦ ----- γεώργιον,

25 θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἐστε.

^{3:10}

Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ

τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι

ὡς σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων

26 θεμέλιον ἔθηκα,

δὲ

27 ἄλλος ἐποικοδομεῖ.

δὲ

28 ἕκαστος βλέπετω

πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ.

^{3:11}

γὰρ

29 θεμέλιον ἄλλον οὐδεὶς δύναται θεῖναι

παρὰ τὸν κείμενον,

ὅς ἐστίν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.

^{3:12}

δὲ

εἰ τις ἐποικοδομεῖ... χρυσόν,
ἐπὶ τὸν θεμέλιον
ἄργυρον,
λίθους τιμίους,
ξύλα,
χόρτον,
καλάμην,

30 ^{3:13} ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον φανερόν γενήσεται,
γὰρ
31 ἡ ἡμέρα δηλώσει,
ὅτι ἐν πυρὶ ἀποκαλύπτεται·
καὶ
32 ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον... τὸ πῦρ [αὐτὸ] δοκιμάσει.
ὅποιόν ἐστιν

^{3:14}
εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον μενεῖ
ὃ ἐποικοδόμησεν,
33 μισθὸν λήμψεται·

^{3:15}
εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται,
34 ζημιωθήσεται,
δὲ
35 αὐτὸς σωθήσεται,
δὲ
οὕτως
36 (αὐτὸς σωθήσεται)
ὡς διὰ πυρός·

37 ^{3:16} οὐκ οἶδατε
ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε
καὶ
τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ
ἐν ὑμῖν;

^{3:17}
εἴ τις τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φθείρει,
38 φθερεῖ τούτον ὁ θεός·
γὰρ
39 ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν,
οἵτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς.

40 ^{3:18} Μηδεὶς ἐαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω·

εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι
ἐν ὑμῖν
ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ,
41 μωρὸς γενέσθω,
ἵνα γένηται σοφός·

^{3:19}
γὰρ
παρὰ τῷ θεῷ
42 ἡ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία... ἐστιν.

43 γὰρ
γέγραπται,
ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς
ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν·

3:20 καὶ
44 πάλιν,
(γέγραπται)
Κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σοφῶν
ὅτι εἰσὶν μάταιοι.

3:21 ὥστε
45 μηδεὶς καυχάσθω
ἐν ἀνθρώποις·

γὰρ
46 πάντα ὑμῶν ἐστίν,
3:22 εἴτε Παῦλος
εἴτε Ἀπολλῶς
εἴτε Κηφᾶς,
εἴτε κόσμος
εἴτε ζωὴ
εἴτε θάνατος,
εἴτε ἐνεστῶτα
εἴτε μέλλοντα·
πάντα ὑμῶν,

3:23 δὲ
47 ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ,
δὲ
48 Χριστὸς θεοῦ.