

Sermon

The Church & Spiritual Growth into Unity

1 Corinthians 3:1-18

Jeff Jackson

“Living For the One Who Branded Us...Jesus“

INTRODUCTION:

Alexander Strauch

Behind most church fights and unresolved divisions is ugly human pride. And the worst kind of pride is religious pride, the Pharisaical pride of self-righteousness and superiority...Most often, people who say that others have no love are themselves the ones most lacking. They think the new commandment says, "Love me or I'll destroy you and your church." They sit around waiting for other people to love them. How easy it is to see the speck of lovelessness in another's eye but miss the log of self-centeredness, hypocrisy, and anger in your own eye (*Matt. 7:3-5*).

Division is created when the focus becomes on an individual or a group rather than on Jesus. Jesus is drawing all people to Himself, but the reason many reject it is because there seems to be many hurdles of division one must jump to get to Jesus. We as a church must never be guilty of this.

TEXT:

1 Corinthians 3:1-18

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. ²I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, ³for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world? ⁴When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I follow Apollos," aren't you acting just like people of the world?

⁵After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. ⁶I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. ⁷It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. ⁹For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building. ¹⁰Because of God's grace 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. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. ¹²Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. ¹³But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. ¹⁴If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames. ¹⁶Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? ¹⁷God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. ¹⁸Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise.

¹ *Leading With Love*, Lewis and Roth, 2006, p.167, 87-88,

I. Recognize What Control's You?

- A. Are you acting immaturely?
- B. Are you controlled by your sinful nature?
- C. Are you creating divisions and quarrels among the fellowship?
- D. Three attitudes that create division:

The Bible in a Year

All of these stem from an inflated view of our own importance. These are 'unspiritual' attitudes. These sorts of attitudes are all too common in fallen humanity, infecting the world, and sadly the church too.

We need to understand that all of us are utterly dependent on God. One plants a seed, the other waters it, but *God* makes it grow (v.6). Planting and watering are important, but they are relatively easy. Only God can do the difficult bit and make plants, people and churches grow.

Romans 8:14

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Galatians 5:16-18

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

II. Remove the Worldliness

Hebrews 12:1-2

...and let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

C.S. Lewis

You and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness

Remember the Goal is the Reflection of Christ

1 John 2:6

Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, DO YOU SEE CHRIST IN ME AT ALL?

Brother Lawrence

When in prayer: “Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld him in my heart as my Father, as my God.... Sometimes I considered myself there as a stone before a carver, whereof he is to make a statue; presenting myself thus before God, I desire Him to form his perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like himself.” (The Practice of The Presence of God, 31-37)

CONCLUSION:

The church as God’s vehicle to reveal his character. The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to “the principalities and powers in heavenly places,” the final and full display of the love of God. *Ephesians 3:10*

Growing in the Lord

A group of tourists visiting a picturesque village walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one tourist asked him, “Were any great men born in this village?” The old man replied, “Nope, only babies.”

Every person who is a born-again believer starts life as a baby in Christ. Whether the new convert is six or sixty, that person is still a new Christian and needs to grow in the Lord. A baby Christian who has been saved for forty years is a tragedy. God intends for us to grow and mature so that we can be a positive influence in the lives of others. Until we learn to dig into the meat of the Word for ourselves, we will never grow.