

Series on First Corinthians

23-0702p - 1 Corinthians 3:5-23, Scott Reynolds

Bible Reader: Roger Raines

These Sermon Notes by Scott Reynolds

See the transcript: [Transcript HTML](#) - [Transcript PDF](#)

(Transcription by TurboScribe.ai)

Chapter 3: The Strong Church

By Doug Hamilton, Junction City Church of Christ, Junction City, KS

[Doug Hamilton Video link](#)

Scripture Reading

Bible Reader: Roger Raines

1 Corinthians 3:5-23,

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; ²⁰ and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." ²¹ Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. ²³ And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

I would like to share with you a sermon from Douglas Hamilton, preacher at the Junction City Church of Christ, Junction City, KS.

Douglas Hamilton entitled his lesson on the 3rd chapter of 1st Corinthians: *The Strong Church*.

Chapter 3 The Strong Church - Part 2

In 1 Corinthians chapter 2 we talked about "The Strong Gospel." Today we are going to talk about "The Strong Church." Here's a spoiler alert: it has to do with **unity**. Because any church that isn't unified isn't strong. United we stand, but divided we fall is so true in many ways.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4,

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 follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

In chapters 1 and 2, the Corinthians appeared divisive in their approach to each other. It was a culture who elevated great sophists speakers, demonstrating their superior debate skills. Apollos had taken the lead in the continuance of spiritual growth for the Corinthians and they began to see him as a more eloquent speaker than the apostle Paul.

Many of the church members were downplaying Paul's apostleship based on his less eloquent style of speaking.

2 Corinthians 10:10

For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."

Equally, the Apostle Peter was lumped into the sophist rating system, being mentioned in 1:12. This would be dealt with in Paul's correspondence. The Corinthian church was a divided, dysfunctional, group. Within the remainder of the chapter are four thoughts that eliminate division from within a congregation.

Just like division occurred in the first-century Corinthian church, the same can happen to the twenty-first century church. How do churches effectively deal with division? There are 4 realizations God's people must embrace [for] ...

Dealing with Division in the Church

#1 Realize we are fellow-workers in God's Field.

1 Corinthians 3:5-9,

*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.***

Douglas says

Agriculture was great in ancient Corinth. Anyone living there at the time would have known [these] basic horticulture concepts. Without planting seed and watering the fields, there would be no crop. The two primary human forces which aided in growth of the Corinthian church were Paul and Apollos. Paul brought the gospel, Apollos watered with teaching, but it was God who brought [forth] the crop of new converts. Hence, as it is written, *"Paul planted, Apollos water, but it was God that caused the increase."*

The church family is no different today, for we also are all working in the same field owned by a common Master with the hope of sharing in the crops. Some of us plant, some water, some fertilize, some weed and some harvest. We are ONE with the same purpose and must never forget it.

SR

The Corinthian church was lining up in factions behind men. Perhaps their favorite speaker, their favorite song leader, or their favorite teacher... That doesn't happen today, right?! Paul points out that even he and Apollos were just men. They had responsibilities but in reality it was God that made everything work. No one is above another we are all fellow workers.

Douglas says

Notice in verse 9 that he makes a transition from a field to a building. He is now furthering a similar thought by discussing the kingdom in building terms.

#2 Realize that we share the foundation of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15,

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 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.

The word that Paul uses to describe himself is ἀρχιτέκτων (architekton), being translated as an "architect". Today, architects [are] professionals who draw up the plans for a structure. In the first-century, they were the ones who laid the foundation of the structure. In ancient Corinth, there were many of the great structures for which the foundations are still in place today.

Additionally, once a foundation was firmly placed, then a regular builder would begin his structure. He might use a variety of materials such as gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw. If it were a lesser foundation, then the lesser materials would be used. If a greater foundation were laid, then it would have the pricier structure placed upon it. The key was to live up to the foundation. In the end the sure way to know if the structure was sound would be during a time a trouble like an earthquake or a terrible storm. Long after the builder received his reward paycheck, the true strength of the structure could be weakened and even fall.

In Matthew 16:16, Peter made [his confession], *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Jesus' response was [a foundational reference], Matthew 16:18,19 *"upon this rock I will build My church;*

and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Simply put, Jesus is the foundation of the church and the church is the structure. Hence, when the church comes to the realization [that] Jesus is the foundation [on] which the church is built, then we, as the bricks in the structure, are unified.

SR

I particularly like the building metaphor. Jesus himself uses it saying the He will build His church (upon the confession that He is the Christ, the Son of God). And in Hebrews chapter 3 He is said to have more honor than Moses since the Builder of the house has more honor than the caretaker of the house. He is identified there as the Builder of God’s house.

Jesus is also identified as the Chief Corner Stone that aligns the foundation (the elementary teachings and the teachings of the Apostles and prophets) to God’s temple (Ephesians 2:19-21; Hebrews 6:1,2).

We share the foundation of Christ.

#3: Realize that we are the temple of God.

1 Corinthians 3:16,17,

*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.*

That’s right, the body is the temple of God and the Holy Spirit. This is mentioned more than once in the scriptures. For example,

1 Corinthians 6:19,20,

*Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

And again,

Ephesians 2:19-21,

*“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into **a holy temple in the Lord**”*

When we actually take the time to see the uniqueness of that statement, the end result is unification in the church. We will be too busy living for Jesus instead of comparing ourselves to one another in divisiveness.

#4: Realize that we are not know-it-alls.

1 Corinthians 3:18-23

***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 REASONINGS 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.

SR

Let no man deceive himself. To deceive is to "cause (someone) to believe something that is not true." It is possible to deceive oneself! That means it is possible for us to lie to ourselves. And what is one way we can lie to ourself? By thinking we are wise! Paul tells us in:

Romans 12:3 (ESV)

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Douglas continues

One of the biggest causes of division is when there are a group[s] of know-it-alls among the church members. When people are exalting themselves, it is because they self-perceive [that they] are "smarter and wiser" than a fellow saint, resulting in chaos. Take the route of humility by being a "not know-it-all".

1 Corinthians 8:2

"If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know"

SR

Notice that Paul likens us thinking more highly of ourself, thinking that we are wise in this age, to the wisdom of this world. He quotes Job 5:13 & Psalm 94:11 saying: "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and "He catches the wise in their craftiness," God relates one wise in their own eyes as someone who is crafty. Crafty is to be "clever at achieving one's aims by indirect or deceitful methods."

So Paul tells us "let no one boast in men." Boasting in men is a way for us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. And Paul tells us we don't need to do that in order for us to have value. Why? Because "all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God." Our value comes from God not from ourselves. He gives us worth, because we belong to Him through Christ.

DH

If we realize the importance of this, then we will eliminate division.

In Conclusion:

We are to always strive to keep division out of the church, but it is through holding to four self-realizations for which this can be done. We must realize that:

1. We are fellow workers in God's field,
2. We share a common foundation of Jesus,
3. We are the temple of God, and
4. We don't are not know-it-alls.

We can share the realization of true Christian unity if we share the self-realizations discussed by Paul.

Invitation

We are extending the invitation, now, to anyone who is subject to it. If you need to, **Come**,... while we stand and sing.