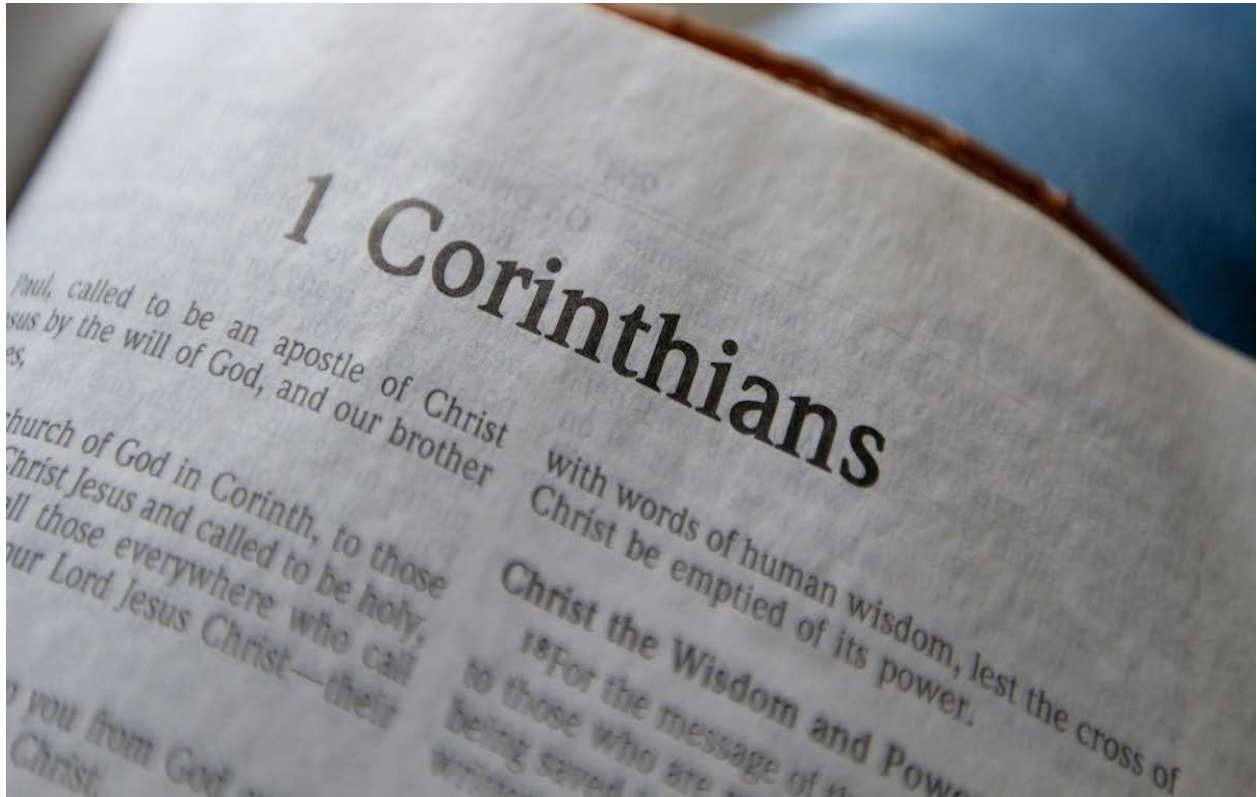


# Grow Up!

## 1 Corinthians 3

### 1 and 2 Corinthians Part 4



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

*Grow Up! 1 Corinthians 3*

Grow Up!: 1 Corinthians 3  
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 4  
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## Introduction to *1 Corinthians 3*

Paul ended chapter 2 with the reminder that we have the mind of Christ. The problems that had arisen among the churches in Corinth were the result of thinking like men rather than like Jesus. They had exalted men to the place of highest esteem and looked down on those who didn't agree with them. They vaunted themselves and their "tribe" as possessing ultimate wisdom, when in fact they were living like fools.

Paul exposed their sinful divisiveness and called them to turn from it and live like people who belong to God, not to men. In chapter 3, therefore, Paul began to reset the Corinthians' view of the faith, of themselves, of one another, of those who lead them, and of their calling.

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We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Grow Up!

*Pray Psalm 32.1-4.*

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
Whose sin is covered.  
Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
When I kept silent, my bones grew old  
Through my groaning all the day long.  
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.  
*Selah*

*Sing Psalm 32.1-4.*

(Hendon: *Take My Life and Let It Be*)

Blessed are they whose sins the LORD has forgiven by His Word!  
Pure their spirits are within; them He charges with no sin;  
them He charges with no sin!

When in silence I remained, groaning in my sinful pain,  
You Your hand upon me lay; all my strength You drained away,  
all my strength You drained away.

*Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 3.1, 2.*

*Preparation*

1. What did Paul not use in his ministry in Corinth?
2. What did the Corinthians' divisions demonstrate?

*Meditation*

Paul turns from telling it slant to telling it blunt: The Corinthians were immature, childish, and carnal in their faith. They needed to grow up, and quick.

During the nearly two years Paul was with them, he only managed to get the Corinthians started in the faith. He could only feed them the “baby food” of the Gospel, not the “solid food” every believer needs to keep growing in the Lord (vv. 1, 2).

But the Corinthians misjudged their level of maturity and, rallying to this or that teacher or preacher, settled into a carnal—fleshly, merely “natural”—way of faith. The divisions they had fallen into were proof of that fact. They were “behaving like *mere* men” (v. 3)! Paul had to go back to square one with the Corinthians and teach them how to think about themselves, the life of the faith, and the role of godly leaders and teachers.

But first they had to face up to their childish conduct, get refocused, and open their self-centered hearts to the teaching of the Spirit Paul would offer in this epistle. Chapter 3 is a reset chapter in 1 Corinthians. Paul has been trying to get the Corinthians to see their folly. In these verses he gets right in their face: Grow up!

Because deep and important truths will follow in this book, and the Corinthians would need a total reset to receive and act on them.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.*

Although David first penned these words, we can hear Paul asking these same questions of the Corinthians;

and by extension, through David and Paul, God is delivering this same query to us:

“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?  
Or who may stand in His holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,  
nor sworn deceitfully.  
He shall receive blessing from the LORD,  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.  
This is Jacob [the mature in Christ],  
the generation of those who seek Him,  
who seek Your face” (Ps. 24.3-6).

All of our life and work and worship and meaning and purpose are, or should be, fully related to the LORD: “Have mercy up me, O God...Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight...Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts...Make me hear joy and gladness...Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me...Restore to me the joy of Your salvation...The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise...” (Ps. 51.1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 17).

Everyone of adult age wants to be treated like an adult. And others like to do business with an adult—as does God, Who longs to do adult work with us. He has work for us to do: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2.10). As mature adults in Him—not mere humanity (1 Cor. 3.3).

Many people, especially for example farmers of old, used to train their children to do the work of the farm, to carry on the business generation after generation. But they would never expect a newborn to drive a team of oxen to cultivate the fields in the spring. The parents, though, had great plans and anticipation of that happening one day. As does God. He knows the thoughts and plans He has for us, “thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give [us] a future and a hope” (Jer. 29.11).

But we must be mature enough in our faith to take on His work; for in truth, as the metaphor states, “one bad apple can spoil the barrel”. Envy, strife, and divisions within the Body of Christ are sure signs of carnality, worldliness, and a church filled with mere men—spoil the atmosphere with captivity to sin, for “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2.14). Mere men and women behaving like sinful humanity when they could be behaving like Christ, filled with His mind and His Spirit (1 Cor. 2.16).

We have been “called out of darkness and into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2.9).

Paul shouts to us from centuries ago: “Grow up! Adulthood in Christ—for the glory of God!”

*For reflection*

1. According to Paul, what are the signs of immaturity in Christians? What are the signs of maturity?
2. How would you counsel a new believer to press on to maturity in the Lord?
3. In which areas of your own walk with the Lord do you hope to realize greater maturity in the year ahead?

*Men may have much doctrinal knowledge, yet be mere beginners in the life of faith and experience. Contentions and quarrels about religion are sad evidences of carnality. True religion makes men peaceable, not contentious. But it is to be lamented, that many who should walk as Christians, live and act too much like other men. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on*

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*1 Corinthians 3.1-4*

*Pray Psalm 32.5-11.*

*Devote yourself to the Lord. Confess and repent of any sins. Call on Him to be your Teacher and Guide, and rejoice that you belong to Him.*

*Sing Psalm 32.5-11.*

(Hendon: *Take My Life and Let It Be*)

I confessed my sin to You; You forgave me, ever true!  
Let confession's pleading sound reach You while You may be found,  
reach You while You may be found!

When flood waters threaten me, You my hiding place will be.  
O'er them I will rise above, buoyed by Your redeeming love,  
buoyed by Your redeeming love.

Teach me, LORD, how I should live; sound instruction ever give.  
Let me never stubborn be; let Your eye watch over me,  
let Your eye watch over me.

Though the wicked wail and weep, they rejoice whose souls You keep.  
Trusting, we exult with praise, joyfully singing all our days,  
joyfully singing all our days!

## 2 Servants, not Stars

*Pray Psalm 119.36, 37.*

Incline my heart to Your testimonies,  
And not to covetousness.  
Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,  
And revive me in Your way.

*Sing Psalm 119.36, 37.*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)  
To Your holy testimonies, turn my heart, O gracious LORD.  
Let me covet nothing worthless; my delight is in Your Word.  
O revive me! O revive me, in Your way, most holy LORD!

*Read 1 Corinthians 3.1-15; meditate on verses 5-10.*

*Preparation*

1. How did Paul say the Corinthians should regard him?
2. What was the result of his doing this?

*Meditation*

Paul intended to reset the Corinthian's thinking. He ended the last chapter by scolding them (indirectly) about thinking more like mere men than with the mind of Christ. He began this chapter by describing them as carnal and childish. If he'd been writing via an email subscription service, many would have "unsubscribed" at that point.

Happily, the Corinthians didn't have the opportunity. This letter would have been read in its entirety in the various house churches in Corinth. Imagine the chagrin, the embarrassment, and perhaps even the resentment many of these believers would have experienced hearing Paul's words.

But the tone changes here as Paul taught them how to think about the leaders God had sent to them—not as stars to be idolized but as servants leading them to God.

We need all the leaders God gives His churches. When they are faithful—serving as they should and not posing as a star—people are brought to saving faith, their hearts and minds are lifted Godward, and they begin to see themselves as occupying a field of service where much fruit can be harvested. They are one "building"—one temple, Paul will later insist (v. 9)

Paul and Apollos were not in competition; they were one (v. 8), each doing his own work faithfully—Paul sowing, and Apollos cultivating the seed (v. 6). Individually, they were "nothing" (v. 7), and happily so, for all they wanted to do was connect God's people with Him.

The Corinthians needed to refocus on God and see themselves and their churches in His light, not their own. Oneness in the Body of Christ can only be sustained on such terms. We need to "take heed" (v. 10) how we try to build our churches—by setting our minds on the things that are above, where Christ is seated, and not on the things below (Col. 3.1-3).

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Beyond the scold, there is a gold mine of information about working in our Personal Mission Field. As Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered..." (1 Cor. 3.6). Each of us is called to our specific space on earth to do our

particular and even seemingly peculiar work. We have not been called to our neighbor's field, or our best friend's, or our relative's, or our co-worker's, or our fellow church member's field—just our very own—and when everyone works properly, all the bases get covered in the work of the Kingdom.

And God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3.6, 7). The results are accomplished by Him, and Him alone. All the credit and glory go to Him. (Superstars need not apply.)

Gideon had to whittle down his army. God said so. How would he do this? All the volunteers got taken to the water to see how they would drink it. Now, from Vacation Bible School days, I never bought into the line the teachers were adamant to get across, that Gideon chose the bravest men. What? Those that either lapped water like a dog or slurped it up in their hand whilst on bended knee were great soldier material? No. I think God was just dividing up the group and maybe finding those that were trumpet players and ambidextrous—I mean, could you play a trumpet, hold a torch covered by a pitcher, and break the pitcher simultaneously? (Judg. 7.4-22). All to say that each person had important work to do, and God chose them to do it.

We may not be ambidextrous trumpet players, but we have equally challenging and exciting work to do. That God has specifically planned, prepared, and called us to (Eph. 2.10).

We only need to be careful that whatever we do is built and based upon Jesus.  
“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid,  
which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3.11).

He is our life. He is our calling. He is our work.

“...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12.1-3).

“For we are God's fellow workers...” (1 Cor. 3.9).

*For reflection*

1. How can you avoid looking at your pastor or favorite teacher as a “star”?
2. You have a Personal Mission Field. Have you identified it? Watch [this brief video](#), download the worksheet, and get started doing your part as a servant in God's Kingdom.
3. Where do you need to grow as a servant of the Lord?

*Paul and Apollos had different functions, but everything they did was of God.* John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* 8.5.

*Pray Psalm 119.38-40.*

Pray about the day ahead. Commit yourself to serve others in the Name of the Lord. Call on the Lord to fill you with His Spirit and to guide your steps.

*Sing Psalm 119.38-40 .*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Set me firmly in Your statutes, for Your servant, LORD, am I.

Fearing You in sweet devotion, let me live until I die.

Let no dread, let no reproach obscure Your judgments from my eye.

For Your holy precepts, Jesus, my whole heart longs earnestly,



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for Your judgments all are good; Your Word is a delight to me!  
In Your righteousness revive me! For Your goodness I would see!

### 3 Build on the Foundation

*Pray Psalm 118.7-9.*

The LORD is for me among those who help me;  
Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me.

*It is better to trust in the LORD*

Than to put confidence in man.

*It is better to trust in the LORD*

Than to put confidence in princes.

*Sing Psalm 118.7-9.*

(St. George's Windsor: *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*)

For the LORD stands next to me; He will give me victory!

Over all who hate my life I will triumph through the strife!

In His grace I refuge find, in His steadfast love so kind.

Trust not princes, trust not men—Christ shall be our haven then!

*Read 1 Corinthians 3.1-15; meditate on verses 11-15.*

*Preparation*

1. What is the foundation of the Church?

2. What is the purpose of our works?

*Meditation*

The fundamental mistake of the Corinthians was to think that Paul or Apollos or Cephas was the foundation of their individual church. And each church wanted to be more like the one they regarded as their founder.

Where do people get such dumb ideas?

Paul set them straight. Not only is Jesus the Foundation of the Church (v. 11), He is also the Cornerstone (Eph. 2.19-22). The foundation of a building determines its horizontal shape. The cornerstone shapes the building as it rises. So every church where Jesus is Foundation and Cornerstone should only ever want to look like Jesus. Should only aspire to Jesus, focus on Jesus, makes its aim—both members and congregation—to grow to maturity in Jesus (cf. Eph. 4.12-16).

Everyone has something to contribute to building on the Foundation of Christ (v. 12). Whatever we contribute should go into the project of glorifying Jesus only. Our works will be judged, and those that have not contributed to our becoming more like Jesus, our making Jesus known and glorified in our Personal Mission Field, and our contributing to the growth of His Church and the progress of His Kingdom—works that don't contribute to these will be purged by fire (vv. 14, 15), though our salvation will remain.

Strive not to be too long in the burning when Jesus comes to judge our works. We're not saved *by* works but *for* them, to do that which proclaims, manifests, and celebrates Jesus everywhere we go, everyone we're with, whatever it is we're doing.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“Some people arrive in heaven in the same receiving blanket that they were born in”—so said our spiritual mentor Pat Hunter, to explain verses like these: “If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3.15). Baby Christians who never grew, never ministered in their Personal Mission Field, and never did the work planned for them to do (Eph. 2.10).

Since we want to get out of that receiving blanket and into big people's clothes, spiritually speaking, we must first base our faith on the correct foundation: Jesus Christ.

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation,

A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation...” (Is. 28.16).

Jesus. The Alpha and Omega, Immanuel, Morning Star, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Lamb of God, The Good Shepherd, The Bread of Life, Messiah, The Word of God.

Jesus said of Himself, “I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14.6). He is that Sure Foundation upon which everyone can safely build their life, hopes, dreams, expectations, worship, and work.

But we must dress properly for the work at hand, getting out of our baby clothes and putting on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, Gospel-based shoes, a shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the protection of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph. 6.10-18).

In the same way Lazarus had to be extricated from his graveclothes to get busy living his regained life (Jn. 11.43, 44), so we must remove all that encumbers and ensnares us (Heb. 12.1), and get busy with our grown-up, adulting Kingdom work.

Built and founded on Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

*The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;*

*She is His new creation, by water and the word:*

*From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy bride;*

*With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.*

(Samuel J. Stone, 1868)

*For reflection*

1. How do you experience Jesus as the Foundation of your life?
2. Your works build on the Foundation of Jesus. But which works? When?
3. Whom will you encourage today to build on the Foundation of Jesus?

*Let us not dare to join a merely human or a carnal life with a Divine faith, the corruption of sin with the profession of Christianity. Christ is a firm, abiding, and immovable Rock of ages, every way able to bear all the weight that God himself or the sinner can lay upon him; neither is there salvation in any other. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3.10-15**

*Pray Psalm 118.14-29.*

Call on the Lord to be your strength today. Look to Jesus, exalted in glory, and seek the filling of the Spirit to be made more like Him. Be ready to share your love for Jesus as the Lord gives opportunity today.

*Sing Psalm 118.14-29.*

(St. George's Windsor: *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*)

In the Savior we are strong! He is all our strength and song!

To His grace now raise your voice; in His righteousness rejoice!

For the LORD does valiantly; we shall live eternally.

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Praise His works with all your breath, you whom He redeems from death.

All who know Christ's righteousness, His great Name now thank and bless!  
Through His gate the righteous pass, He our saving mercy has.  
Cast aside and left alone, Christ is now our Cornerstone!  
God has made His Son and Word our salvation: Praise the LORD!

Blessed are they who in His Name come and Jesus' grace proclaim.  
God His light upon us shines in the Savior's sacrifice.  
Praise and thanks to You, O LORD; we extol Your holy Word!  
Thanks to You for You are good! Thanks to our great loving God!

## 4 Temple of God

*Pray Psalm 71.1-3.*

In You, O LORD, I put my trust;  
Let me never be put to shame.  
Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape;  
Incline Your ear to me, and save me.  
Be my strong refuge,  
To which I may resort continually;  
You have given the commandment to save me,  
For You *are* my rock and my fortress.

*Sing Psalm 71.1-3.*

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

In You, O LORD, I refuge claim; O let me never be ashamed.  
In righteousness deliver me; incline Your ear and hear my plea.

*Refrain v. 3*

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;  
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

*Read 1 Corinthians 3.1-17; meditate on verses 16, 17.*

*Preparation*

1. How did Paul identify the Corinthians?
2. How did he warn them?

*Meditation*

Paul sets forth another reason for not allowing ourselves to be divided as followers of Christ. We are a temple of the Lord, each one of us who believes, because the Spirit of God has come to dwell in us (v. 16). Later, Paul will add yet more strength to this image by saying that all believers *together* are the Lord's temple. He dwells in us singularly and corporately. We are, individually and together, the place where the eternal God has been pleased to take up residence in space and time.

If we believe this, we will not allow our oneness to be easily fragmented or forgotten. To do so would be to “defile” the temple of God. The word is actually “destroy”, the same as appears in the second part of verse 17 (φθειρεῖ. *phtheirei*). That's scary language. You are the temple of God. But you can “destroy” the Lord's dwelling place by losing sight of it as your proper dwelling and project. We *are* the temple of the Lord, and we are *becoming* the temple of the Lord as we build upon the Foundation and Cornerstone of Jesus. Fail to build on who we are, and we “destroy” what we should be becoming.

And in doing so, we set ourselves up to be “destroyed” by God. God knows how to bring discipline against His people when we become misguided or neglectful or outright rebellious against His plan for us (Heb. 12.3-11). The unravelling that was occurring among the Corinthian churches—social, spiritual, liturgical, ethical, and moral—was the result of God's “destroying” them. They were laying bricks like the people of Babel on temples of their own choosing. God was tearing those sinful temples down so that Paul could lead the Corinthians to rebuild His temples as they ought.

Better to keep focused on who we are and who we are becoming in the Lord.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

*Row, Row, Row Your Boat* is a round that can be sung ad infinitum, but with great harmonies.

But this rather rousing ditty that Paul penned for us is repeated in the church, over and over, generation after generation, ad nauseum, and it altogether lacks harmony. The positives are outstanding, but the negatives are terrifying:

You are the temple of God.  
The Spirit of God dwells in you.  
If you destroy that temple,  
God will destroy you.  
The temple of God is holy.  
You are the temple of God.

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven,  
and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.  
And the day which is coming shall burn them up,  
says the LORD of hosts,  
‘That will leave neither root nor branch.  
But to you who fear My name  
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise  
with healing in His wings...’” (Mal. 4.1, 2).

If we were tasked with building our own home, we would certainly choose gold, silver, and precious stones as our work materials, rather than things like wood, hay, and stubble (1Cor. 3.12 KJV) which are more flammable. God calls us to build His Church and the temple of our lives with substantial things—faith and trust in Him, and obedience and reliance on His Word—so that His Church will be beautiful, the joy of the whole earth (Ps. 48.2).

We are the temple of God.  
The Spirit of God lives in us.  
We will not destroy it with sin.  
We will not be destroyed by God.  
The temple of God is holy.  
Yes, we are the Temple of God!

Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life in Him’s supreme!

*For reflection*

1. What does it mean to you to know that you are a temple of the living God?
2. What is your approach to daily building the temple of the Lord?
3. How can you make sure that you’re not destroying the temple of the Lord by what you do?

*Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. Christians are holy by profession, and should be pure and clean, both in heart and conversation. He is deceived who deems himself the temple of the Holy Ghost, yet is unconcerned about personal holiness, or the peace and purity of the church. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3.16, 17*

*Pray Psalm 71.14-18.*

How will it be evident in you today that you are a temple of the Lord? Pray about the day ahead, calling on the Lord to make His indwelling Presence known in all your words and deeds.

*Sing Psalm 71.14-18.*

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

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But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!  
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

*Refrain v. 3*

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;  
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

O LORD, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.  
Forsake me not when I am old, 'til I Your mercies all have told!

*Refrain*

## 5 Wise Fools

*Pray Psalm 119.129-131.*

Your testimonies are wonderful;  
Therefore my soul keeps them.  
The entrance of Your words gives light;  
It gives understanding to the simple.  
I opened my mouth and panted,  
For I longed for Your commandments.

*Sing Psalm 119.129-131.*

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

Your testimonies, LORD are sweet; I hide them in my soul.  
Your words give light unto my feet, and make my thinking whole.  
I open wide my mouth to You: LORD, feed me with Your Word!  
I vow that all You say I'll do: I love Your precepts, LORD.

*Read 1 Corinthians 3.1-20; meditate on verses 18-20.*

*Preparation*

1. What did Paul say about those who considered themselves “wise”?
2. What advice did he give those people?

*Meditation*

The basic problem among the churches in Corinth was one of ego. Each group was saying, as it looked upon the other groups, “Truly, we are the people, and when we die, wisdom dies with us” (cf. Job 12.1). But whereas Job was mocking his “counselors”, these folks were serious. They had adopted a pattern of worldly thinking, set aside the mind of Christ and His goal of oneness, and were vaunting themselves and their views above those of their Christian brethren.

Paul is blunt and persistent in exposing the folly of such thinking. The Corinthians deceived themselves by acting like the religious and political groups in the world (v. 18). Those same groups—Pharisees, Sadducees, various religious sects, political groups—regarded Paul as a fool. Which is why they repeatedly beat him up and banished him.

Paul’s advice: Be like me. In the folly of Jesus and the Gospel is true wisdom (v. 18). To act like you are the benchmark and keeper of wisdom is to look foolish in the eyes of God (v. 19). That’s right, Corinthians, all your boasting about men, vaunting your views, and belittling your brethren looks *foolish* to God! And believe me, Paul adds, God knows how to catch the foolish in their folly (v. 19). And He knows all your thoughts, which, because you hold them you think yourself so wise; God says your “I am of Paul” and “I am of Apollos” and “I am of Cephas” sectarianism is *futile*. It bears no fruit. Has no power. Does not move the Kingdom one inch forward in any direction.

Makes you wonder why we continue this folly in our day, doesn’t it? “I am of Calvin!” “I am of Rome!” “I am of Luther!” “I am of Wesley!” The folly and futility of such “Christianity” is becoming more and more apparent. And yet we persist, with hardly a thought about oneness in Christ.

I’d say we’re out of our minds, except that’s where we should be. Out of ours, and into Jesus’.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

If, when confronted with this truth about divisiveness, we deny doing it—in any shape or form—I fear we



are falling into the warning John issued when he wrote: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1.8).

Self-deceit is a terrible thing, and then add to that, thinking we are wise, and we are in a most unfortunate position. Frightening really, as it is pre-destroying behavior (1 Cor. 3.17).

“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov. 26.12).

“Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
fear the LORD and depart from evil” (Prov. 3.7).

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them” (Eph. 5.6, 7).

Deceit has been going on since time began, since God said to Eve, “What is this you have done?” and she replied, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen. 3.13). From the very beginning.

As Paul said, “Sin...deceived me, and by it killed me” (Rom. 7.11).

The antidote to this malady of “self-wisdom and deceit” is to focus only on Jesus—His way, truth, and life (Jn. 14.6). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9.10).

The litmus test for true wisdom is this: If it is from above, it is first “pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (Jms. 3.17, 18). Never in our own wisdom. Never deceiving ourselves. Only, ever, building on the foundation of Jesus.

Absolutely no law against that (Gal. 5.23).

#### *For reflection*

1. How might you be able to tell if you are deceiving yourself on some matter related to God’s will?
2. What does Romans 12.21 call us to do when we realize we are self-deceived?
3. What is our responsibility to one another as believers when it comes to being deceived?

*To have a high opinion of our own wisdom, is but to flatter ourselves; and self-flattery is the next step to self-deceit. The wisdom that worldly men esteem, is foolishness with God. How justly does he despise, and how easily can he baffle and confound it! The thoughts of the wisest men in the world, have vanity, weakness, and folly in them. All this should teach us to be humble, and make us willing to be taught of God, so as not to be led away, by pretenses to human wisdom and skill, from the simple truths revealed by Christ. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3.18-23*

*Pray Psalm 119.132-136.*

Pray that God will direct your path today, that He will empower you to be a fool for Jesus as you serve Him in your Personal Mission Field.

*Sing Psalm 119.132-136.*

(No Other Plea: *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

Look on me, LORD, with mercy as on all who love Your Name.  
Direct my steps to keep Your paths, and all Your Word proclaim.  
Yes, let Your Word my shelter be; rule over all my soul,

*Grow Up! 1 Corinthians 3*

and keep me from iniquity; my every way control.

Redeem me from oppression, LORD, from those who hate Your way,  
that I may keep Your holy Word and serve You day by day.  
Shine on me with Your glorious face; Your servant, LORD, am I.  
So teach me by Your holy grace; Your Word to me supply.

LORD, see the world in lawlessness, how love has grown so cold.  
Look down, O LORD, to save and bless; let grace and peace take hold.  
Though many look on You with awe, rejoicing in Your Word,  
I weep for those who void Your Law and spurn Your grace, O LORD.

## 6 Live Where You Belong

*Pray Psalm 40.4, 5.*

Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust,  
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.  
Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your wonderful works  
*Which* You have done;  
And Your thoughts toward us  
Cannot be recounted to You in order;  
*If* I would declare and speak *of them*,  
They are more than can be numbered.

*Sing Psalm 40.4, 5.*

(Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.  
Countless wonders, LORD, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.  
LORD, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

*Read 1 Corinthians 3.1-23; meditate on verse 21-23.*

*Prepare*

1. Why should the Corinthians not boast in men?
2. To whom do they belong?

*Meditation*

Those who believe in Jesus belong to Him and through Him, to God the Father (v. 23). We have the mind of Christ, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Every day God says to us, “I have called you by your name, and you are Mine!” (Jer. 43.1). We are not our own; we have been bought with the blood of Jesus, and we belong to Him (1 Cor. 6.19).

We belong to God. We have been seated with Jesus in heavenly places (Eph. 2.6). Paul’s point, as he wraps up his case against the Corinthians’ worldly ways, is that, since we belong to God, we should live like those who belong to Him, boasting only in Him and accepting as gifts all that He daily supplies (v. 22). And that includes all those gifted teachers and leaders who fulfill their ministry by pointing us to God and urging us to live as those who belong to Him.

How absurd to boast in mere men (v. 21), every one of whom will die or already has. We do not belong to men, as if they were our masters and we their servants. We belong to Jesus, and those who belong to Him look only to Him, boast only in Him, praise and bless Him alone, and live to turn the eyes of others to Him.

If we were more focused on Jesus, our differences would not divide us. We would gladly share our gifts with one another—the world, our lives, all that we have in the present, our soon passage to glory, and all the great people who shape our souls for Jesus—and offer them all up in praise to God through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We belong to God; let us live for Him only.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.*

Slow down. Read and assimilate those words:

“You are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3.23).

Think about it. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, doodles your name in His Book of Life (Rev. 21.27), thinking about you. He loved you so much, He was willing to die a heinous death for you, conquer death, and rise to rule the world for you. He invites you to live in His Kingdom. He is preparing a place for you. He is coming again to get you and take you to this home in His glorious Kingdom (Jn. 14.1-4). Now really, have you ever heard anything more spectacular?

Jesus said, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (Matt. 10.40). Just as Paul said, “Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3.23).

We belong to Christ. Christ belongs to God. He is our Shepherd.  
We will not want for love from Him.  
He makes us lie down in beautiful green and peaceful pastures;  
He leads us beside pure and still waters.  
He restores our soul.  
He leads us in the paths of righteousness,  
for His name’s sake.  
Even when we walk through difficult, dangerous, even deadly times  
we won’t fear evil; because we know that He is truly with us.  
We are comforted by His guidance and discipline.  
He prepares a sumptuous feast for us  
where our enemies can observe His bountiful care.  
He gently anoints us with His mercy and tenderness—  
our cup overflows with His goodness.  
His goodness and mercy are poured upon us  
so that those gifts will follow us  
wherever we go.  
We will leave the fragrance of His love behind us.  
This is what dwelling with God looks like. Forever. (Ps. 23.1-6).

When we truly know that we are Christ’s, it changes how we experience our life, and how we perceive and receive others. We will safely rest in belonging to Him, for “The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33.27).

“You are Mine” (Jer. 43.1). Yes, I belong to Him.

*For reflection*

1. How would you explain to a friend what it means to you to belong to God?
2. What privileges and blessings does this belonging bring to you?
3. Whom will you encourage today to think more closely about what it means to belong to God?

*If we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. Believers are the subjects of his kingdom. He is Lord over us, we must own his dominion, and cheerfully submit to his command. God in Christ, reconciling a sinful world to himself, and pouring the riches of his grace on a reconciled world, is the sum and substance of the gospel. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3.21-23*

*Pray Psalm 40.1-3, 6-10.*

Thank God that you belong to Him through Jesus Christ. Make this a day of boasting in the Lord. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to encourage other believers and to talk with unbelieving friends about Jesus.

*Sing Psalm 40.1-3, 6-10.*

(Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,  
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!  
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Offrings You do not require – open now my ears, O LORD!  
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.  
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

LORD, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,  
nor will I my lips restrain – let Your precious ways resound!  
Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving LORD.

## 7 Reset

*Pray Psalm 147.19, 20.*

He declares His word to Jacob,  
His statutes and His judgments to Israel.  
He has not dealt thus with any nation;  
And *as for His* judgments, they have not known them.  
Praise the LORD!

*Sing Psalm 147.19, 20.*

(St. Anne: *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

His Word He to His Church bestows—His promises and Law.  
No other nation God thus knows: Praise Him with songs of awe!

*Review 1 Corinthians 3.1-23; meditate on verses 5-11.*

*Preparation*

1. How did Paul refer to himself and Apollos?
2. What foundation did he lay for them?

*Meditation*

Paul ended chapter 2 with the reminder that we have the mind of Christ. The problems that had arisen among the churches in Corinth were the result of thinking like men rather than like Jesus. They had exalted men to the place of highest esteem and looked down on those who didn't agree with them. They vaunted themselves and their "tribe" as possessing ultimate wisdom, when in fact they were living like fools.

Paul exposed their sinful divisiveness and called them to turn from it and live like people who belong to God, not to men. In chapter 3, therefore, Paul began to reset the Corinthians' view of the faith, of themselves, of one another, of those who lead them, and of their calling. All the men they had exalted as leaders of their tribes were but servants of God who worked hard to lead the Corinthians to Him. They laid the foundation of faith for the Corinthians—belief in Jesus, and Him crucified. Each believer must build on that foundation by growing in grace and doing good, so that Jesus may be made more visible, both in each believer and in their churches.

We belong to God, and He grants us every good and perfect gift that we may be the people He has called and saved us to be and do the work that shows we belong to Him.

So Paul called for a serious *volte-face* on the Corinthians' view of things: Stop thinking and acting like people of the world. Accept that God has called you and purchased you to Himself through Jesus Christ. And strive to build toward and live like Him to Whom you belong.

The Spirit of God dwells in us to make us true temples of the Lord. We must not allow the spirit of men or the times to rob us of God's best. We have the mind of Christ; we belong to God. Let those amazing facts renew and reset your soul every day.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Often in the Kingdom things might seem topsy-turvy. Or unusual. Or not quite what we expect. But that is the exciting thing about the Kingdom—it doesn't make sense—starting with "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5.8).

Naaman traveled all the way from Syria to Samaria, with lots of reward money in hand, and a letter of

recommendation from the king of Syria to the king of Israel, looking for an exotic and elaborate healing for his leprosy. As it turned out, word was sent to him from the prophet Elisha to go and bathe seven times in the Jordan river. This did not meet Naaman's sense of decorum, so he refused. After counsel from his servants, he did what Elisha said, and was fully healed (2 Kgs. 5.1-15). God chose a way to heal that took all eyes off people and put all the focus on His glorification. As Naaman said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel..." (2 Kgs. 5.15). That is the way all Kingdom activity works.

In order to "live like people who belong to God" we need a mind reset. Nowadays it seems everybody gets a trophy. No one is supposed to feel unworthy, so even when producing mediocre work, yep, you get a raise! Or for the kids, your grades are not up to par, but "You've passed!" Thankfully, life in the Kingdom is not like that.

Jesus told His disciples an explanatory story, when they requested of Him, "Increase our faith" (Lk. 17.5). He used the servant/master relationship as the theme: "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?"

But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Lk. 17.6-10).

On the upside, Paul wrote: "Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor. 3.8).

Reset. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us how: "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Heb. 12.2, 3).

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Phil. 2.5). Reset.

*For reflection*

1. What could you do, every day, to reset your soul to be a true servant of the Lord?
2. What do we learn from the Corinthians about what can happen when we fail to make this reset?
3. Whom will you encourage today to reset their soul for serving the Lord?

*We should not put ministers into the place of God. He that planteth and he that watereth are one, employed by one Master, trusted with the same revelation, busied in one work, and engaged in one design. They have their different gifts from one and the same Spirit, for the very same purposes; and should carry on the same design heartily. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3.5-9*

*Pray Psalm 147.1-7.*

Praise the Lord for the many gifts He has invested in you and the members of your church. Pray that church members will discover how much God loves them and how important their work is to His.

*Sing Psalm 147.1-7.*

(St. Anne: *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

*Grow Up! 1 Corinthians 3*

Praise God, for it is good to sing loud praises to the LORD!  
With joy our songs of praise we bring to God and to His Word.

The LORD builds up His Church and He His people gathers in.  
The broken hearts He tenderly repairs and heals their sin.

He counts the stars, He knows the name of every chosen soul;  
His pow'r is great, and great His fame Who understands us whole.

The humble God exalts above; the wicked He casts down.  
Sing thanks to this great God of love; let songs of praise abound.



*Grow Up! 1 Corinthians 3*

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Why did the Corinthians need a “reset”?
2. How are we to think about those who lead us in our churches?
3. What does it mean to belong to God? To be a temple of the Lord?
4. What must we do to “build on” the foundation of Jesus, so that we may grow to be more like Him?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.