

I CORINTHIANS 2

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Corinthians chapter 2, as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Last week we spoke of how this book is divided up. We said that in I Corinthians chapters 1-6 Paul is dealing with problems in the church, trying to correct their errors, their sin.

Then, in I Corinthians chapters 7-16 Paul is basically answering questions that the church in Corinth had and most likely was found in the letter that was sent to Paul, as well as word of mouth by those who brought the letter from Corinth.

Now, to set the stage for what we will be studying tonight, keep in mind that before Paul went to Corinth he went to Athens where he encountered the Epicurean philosophers who felt the chief purpose in life was pleasure, happiness. It wasn't that they denied the existence of god, but they felt the gods did not interact with man.

Also, Paul encountered the Stoics who were pantheistic in their beliefs, believing that everything was god and god was everything.

Both these groups were the intellectuals of their day and they were trying to explain life but in doing so they negated the Giver and the Sustainer of life, Jesus Christ!

And as Paul spoke to these philosopher's on Mar's Hill in Acts chapter 17, he did so in a philosophical way, he touched briefly on the resurrection but mostly spoke on their level.

The result of his efforts, **“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.’ So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed . . .”** Acts 17:32-34a.

These men, like many people today, like to hear new things, new information but that is all it is, *NEW!*

It doesn't change them, it doesn't move them and the words that Paul shared with them went in one ear and out the other.

Many of the people who listened to Paul left just as they came, lost and dead in their trespasses and sins outside of Christ!

Now you would think that maybe Paul should have a band go along with him, and maybe a smoke machine with a great light show to get their attention. Maybe that is what he should do when he goes to Corinth!

Some may feel that way, but not Paul. As Paul goes to Corinth, he continues to keep the main thing the main thing! What is the main thing?

It is *JESUS CHRIST AND HIS RESURRECTION* of course!

One writer summed it up for us like this,

Paul proclaimed the gospel of Christ crucified constantly in his ministry to the Corinthians so that their faith would stand in God's power, not men. In so doing, he brought them into a relationship with the Holy Spirit, the source of all true spirituality.

- Dan Mitchell – First Corinthians – Christianity in a Hostile Culture, p. 35

But remember that the Corinthians were a wild group of people. In fact, they were known for their immoral lifestyles! They loved philosophy, they loved human wisdom, and this had come into the church and it started to divide the church!

And, as we have seen and will continue to see, Paul is going to address that carnal spirit that they had, even though they thought they were so spiritual! They were not!

And, as we will see as we look at I Corinthians chapter 2, Paul continues on speaking about what he spoke of in chapter 1. He is speaking of the cross and the power of God to salvation.

Remember what he said in I Corinthians 1:21-24, **“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”**

You see, man’s wisdom says that you have to do some great thing, you have to accomplish some great feat to get to heaven or come before God.

But Paul was telling them that it is not through human wisdom that we are saved, we are saved by the life and death of Jesus Christ as He paid in full the penalty for our sins. It is what Jesus has done and not what we have done. It seemed foolish to the Greeks and to the Jews, it was a stumbling block because they felt the only way to approach God was through sacrifices.

They were partly right. It was ***THE*** sacrifice of Jesus for our sins that paid our debt, a debt we could never repay for our sins. It was a once and for all sacrifice, not a daily sacrifice. A lamb could never take away your sins, but ***THE LAMB***, Jesus Christ could!

We must come to God through Jesus and Paul is going to continue showing us that this is a heavenly wisdom and not a human wisdom.

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

I CORINTHIANS 2

VERSES 1-5

When Paul arrived in Corinth, you can read of that in Acts chapter 18, he met a Christian couple named Aquila and Priscilla. They were tent makers, as Paul was. And as Paul ministered to the people of Corinth for more than a year and a half, he supported himself by his tent making!

What I want you to see here is that Paul did not come to Corinth as some philosopher or salesman. No, he came as a *witness* of the living God, Jesus Christ!

And for Paul, I think he was down after his time in Athens. Things did not go well there, there was not much fruit there and now he is in the middle of this wicked, immoral place called Corinth! Make no mistake about it, Corinth was a very dark place!

And he was so overwhelmed by it all that we are told that he came to them “**in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.**” I Corinthians 2:3.

And you look at this, and you wonder, “Are you kidding me? Paul was weak? Paul was fearful? Paul trembled at the work that was before him?” Yes, yes and yes!

What did Paul do? Did he drop out of ministry? Did he just hide in fear? Did he just disappear, and nobody saw him anymore? No, no and no!

Listen to what he went on to say, “**And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**” I Corinthians 2:4-5.

Paul first shared his human ability, his human strength, and that was not good.

But Paul did not come to Corinth in the power of his might, but in the power of God. And his preaching was not just worldly ideas but in the power of God's Spirit working in and through Paul and the salvation message went forward, and many came to know the Lord!

That is a good perspective to have. He saw his weakness and thus, in II Corinthians 4:7 he was able to say, "**But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**"

And, as I said as we opened up, we need to keep the main thing the main thing. What is the main thing? Listen to what Paul said in I Corinthians 2:2, "**For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**"

He did not get caught up in philosophical debates or side issues, but Christ crucified, the power of God unto salvation.

Many cults, false religions will love to take you down these rabbit holes of debating all kinds of things. Keep the main thing the main thing – Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead!

You see, if a preacher or any Christian for that matter, is not careful, he will get in the way of the gospel instead of being a servant of the gospel. They can obscure Jesus by their preaching, either in the presentation or the message.

Let me explain it like this. There was this little girl who went to church with her dad. And the pastor was a big man and he filled the pulpit, so much so that it was hard for the little girl to see the stained-glass windows behind him, which had a picture of Jesus on it.

One Sunday the usual pastor was not there, and a smaller man was there at the pulpit. And during the service the little girl asked her dad, "Where's the man who usually stands there so we can't see Jesus?"

That is the main thing and folks, may we keep it the main thing as Paul said in Romans 1:16-17, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”**

And as you look at I Corinthians 2:5 again, I think it is important to understand what Paul is saying. You see, many today try to draw people into the church with all kinds of different things.

But let me say this. What you draw them with is what you draw them to! Don't use man's wisdom to bring people to Jesus, but the wisdom of God that is found in the Word of God and illuminated by the Spirit of God!

It is as Spurgeon said, “The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls, nor does it lie in the preacher's learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.” Absolutely!

VERSES 6-8

This is what amazes me. People, even in the church, grab the wisdom of this world and Paul tells us that this wisdom, human wisdom will come to nothing. What wisdom is he speaking of? It is simple; psychology, evolution, philosophy and-so-on. It is any wisdom of man that is in opposition to the living God and it will be done away with as many of man's ideas have come and gone!

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

Do you see that? We are complete in Christ and if you are seeking after worldly wisdom, you are being cheated, you are being ripped off! You see, the so-called “great” philosophy of today will be the empty rhetoric of tomorrow.

And please understand this. Just because Paul would not cater to the Corinthian love of human wisdom does not mean that his message had no wisdom. In fact, there is a vast wealth of wisdom sealed off to everyone except the Christian. God has given to us His Word; the Bible and those words are opened up to us by the Spirit of God as we will see as we read on in a few minutes!

Now, when Paul speaks of these **“rulers of this age”** is he speaking of human rulers or demonic rulers?

Probably both human and demonic rulers, for behind the scenes of human rulers are demonic forces pulling their strings.

Did Satan and His demonic forces know that the Messiah was to be born and die? I believe that they did. They knew what the Scriptures said. What they didn’t know is what His death and resurrection would bring to us, everlasting life as our debt of sin was paid in full!

Thus, **“they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”**

Now you can play that out in human terms as well and apply the Jews and the Romans to this. You see, if they knew who Christ was, **“they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”**

VERSES 9-11

As some read I Corinthians 2:9 they believe it is speaking of the glories of heaven. But I don't think that is what Paul is speaking of here. It doesn't flow with what he is speaking of as we continue reading through this chapter, how God's Spirit reveals to His children the things of God!

You see, man, on his own, through human reasoning, could never come to these truths that have been revealed to us in the Scriptures.

We have five senses that reveal things to us but there is one more for the Christian. And that is the Spirit who speaks to our hearts and opens up the Word of God to our lives!

You see, Paul is telling us that the natural eye cannot see the things of God, the natural ear cannot hear the things of God, and the natural heart cannot know the things of God, the wisdom of God! These things are spiritually discerned!

The reality is, I can't even know what another person is thinking let alone Almighty God! Then how can we know God?

Because, like I have said, His Spirit will reveal the deep things of God to us, to those who love Him, to those who are searching for Him with their whole heart, to those who call upon Him!

Let me give you this perspective to think about regarding this. Imagine you are reading a book and you finish it and you don't seem to understand fully what has happened. And you try and try but you just can't figure it out.

The only accurate way to find out what really happened is that you need to go to the author of the book and ask him what really happened!

And that is exactly what happens in our own lives. As we read God's Word, as we pray over verses and we just are not sure what is meant by them, the Author of the book will show us by His Spirit! That is just what we need, no human wisdom but the wisdom of God!

Now we can't know everything about God, but He will reveal to us the things we do need to know as we read the Word of God and the Holy Spirit opens up the Word of God to us. But what about the things we don't know?

In Deuteronomy 29:29 we are told, **“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”**

We have so much that God has told us, so much that He has shown us and thus, we need to apply those things to our lives instead of worrying about what we don't know!

VERSES 12-13

The Holy Spirit teaches and that is exactly what Jesus said of the Holy Spirit in John 16:13, **“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”**

Now what if you are lacking in wisdom in a given situation, what should you do? Ask for it, for God will freely give to each of us what we need, just ask and trust in God's Word, apply His Word to your life.

James put it like this, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”** James 1:5-8.

We need to ask in faith and then, as God shows us, we need to walk by faith or do those things that God is showing us.

And think about this. You have direct insight into the mind of God through the Spirit of God!

Thus, as we are taught, we can teach others what God has given to us!

VERSES 14-16

Paul is going to speak of the natural man, the spiritual man and then, as we get into the next chapter, he will speak of the carnal man.

First of all, let's look at the natural man. The Greek word that Paul uses for **“natural man”** is PSUCHIKOS (psoo-khee-kos') and it is a term that speaks of someone born into this world through the natural process but not born-again supernaturally through the Spirit. It is speaking of a material person, one who lives for the day, it speaks of unregenerate man!

And the picture here is a person who lives to satisfy his bodily appetites. They are really no different than an animal because that is what is on the mind of animals, fulfilling their bodily appetites, whatever they may be!

Now please understand that I am not saying the natural man is not smart, but, even though they are alive physically, their spirit is dead and thus, they can't know the deep things of God. Their communication with God is broken and they just can't appreciate the things of God.

Think of a blind man and how he can't appreciate a sunset or a deaf man can't appreciate music. The same is true with the natural man, they can't enjoy the things of God because they are dead to God!

Thus, to go to a Bible study is foolish when they can have fun or go to work or do this or do that, because they just don't get it! And tragically, they keep searching and searching for this fulfillment in life, and they will never find it outside of Christ. Just ask Solomon, or really read the book of Ecclesiastes and you will find that out!

And it is not only that they don't want the things of God, but they also can't understand them because they are spiritually discerned!

The Psalmist understood this and said, "**Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.**" Psalm 119:18. May that be our prayer as we open the Word of God!

In regard to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, listen to what these men had to say. We are told,

Martin Luther said, "The Bible cannot be understood simply by study or talent; you must count only on the influence of the Holy Spirit."

John Calvin said, “The testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For . . . these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.”

Also, Vance Havner gives to us this insight on the subject. He wrote, “The wise Christian wastes no time trying to explain God’s program to unregenerate men; it would be casting pearls before swine. He might as well try to describe a sunset to a blind man or discuss nuclear physics with a monument in the city park. The natural man cannot receive such things. One might as well try to catch sunbeams with a fishhook as to lay hold of God’s revelation unassisted by the Holy Spirit. Unless one is born of the Spirit and taught by Him, all this is utterly foreign to him. Being a Ph. D. does not help, for in this realm it could mean ‘Phenomenal Dud!’”

Now, in verse 15 Paul is saying that the natural man is not equipped to judge a spiritual man, he has no basis.

That is not to say that the spiritual man is above criticism, for Paul is dealing with errors within the Corinthian church in this letter.

The thing is the natural man does not see things as they should be, he says that good is evil and evil is good and thus, for an unsaved person to recognize something wrong with a saved person means that their sin is so blatant that even the unsaved recognize it and that is truly sad when that happens!

Now look at the spiritual man. Paul uses the Greek word, PNEUMATIKOS, (pnyoo-mat-ik-os’) and the idea here is that this person is spiritually minded. His mind is dominated with the Word of God, the will of God and the work of God.

I believe that is the idea that Paul is bringing forth in I Corinthians 2:16 when he speaks of the “**mind of Christ.**”

Make no mistake about it, this person lives on an entirely different level of existence than does the natural man.

Now here, in I Corinthians 2:16, Paul is quoting from Isaiah 40:13 which is speaking of the mind of the Lord or the mind of **YAHWEH**.

Interestingly enough Paul inserts Christ for “**LORD**” because, even though the Jehovah Witnesses disagree, Jesus is **YAHWEH!**

Folks, we can know the mind of God because the Spirit of God can be understood by each and every one of us. You see, Christians, who take the time to study the Word of God, listen to teachers and are obedient to what the Holy Spirit is showing them, what God has already given to us, we are seeing into the mind of God and we are renewing our minds with the things of God!

I CORINTHIANS 3

VERSE 1

We have spoken of the natural man, the spiritual man, and now Paul speaks about the carnal man. And let me say this. Some have a hard time with this because they don't believe you can be a Christian and still be carnal.

But Paul clearly shows us these are immature Christians, carnal Christians for he calls them “**brethren**” and he calls them “**babes in Christ.**”

In other words, they are not growing up!

The Greek word that Paul uses for “**carnal**” is SARKINOS, (sar'-kee-nos) and it speaks of being “characterized by the flesh” or being dominated by the flesh.

Folks, we need to understand that the message of the cross is more than justification, it also speaks of our sanctification.

But if you are allowing the world to control your life, you will remain carnal, fleshly, you won't grow up in the Lord!

And Paul is going to speak about the carnal man, the carnal Christian because that was the church in Corinth. They saw themselves as spiritual and Paul is telling them that they are far from that.

It reminds me of little kids who think they are something, strong or whatever, when in reality, they are just little kids. That was the church in Corinth, they were not growing up in the Lord and yet, they saw themselves as so spiritual!

VERSE 2

Paul had ministered 18 months there in Corinth and yet when he left, he considered them still babies in their faith and then at the time of this epistle he says, “**even now you . . . are still carnal.**”

What we see here is a group of people that saw themselves as very spiritual, using the gifts of the Spirit and yet Paul says they are carnal, immature, babes in Christ.

Instead of digging into the meat of the Scriptures, they still were taking only milk, baby food!

They may have seen themselves as being ready for the deeper things of God, but they were not living up to the basics they already had, the things they were already taught!

Here is another problem and we see this in the church today. Pastors who are just feeding the people that God has entrusted to them milk, week after week after week! One writer had this to say about that,

For a Christian preacher or teacher to give only milk week after week, year after year, is a crime against the Word of God and the Holy Spirit! It cannot be done without neglecting much of the Word and without neglecting the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit, the supreme Teacher and Illuminator.

It is also a terrible disservice to those who hear, whether or not they are satisfied with having only milk. The appetite must be created. Nothing is more precious or wonderful than a little baby. But a twenty-year-old with the mind of an infant is heartbreaking. A baby who acts like a baby is a joy; but an adult who acts like a baby is a tragedy.

It doubtlessly grieved the Holy Spirit, as it grieved Paul, that the Christians in Corinth had never gotten out of their spiritual infancy. This tragedy is immensely worse than that of the physically or mentally retarded, who have no responsibility for their conditions.

Spiritual retardation, however, is always primarily our own doing. We may not have the best human preacher or teacher, but every believer has the perfect Teacher within, who longs to instruct him in the things of God (cf. I John 2:20, 27).

If we do not grow spiritually, the reason is always that we are still fleshly. The believer's growth times are those times when he walks in the Spirit (Gal 5:16-17). It is essential to understand that carnality is not an absolute state in which a believer exists (Rom 8:4-14), but a behavior pattern he chooses one moment at a time. To say it another way, a Christian is not fleshly in the sense of being, but in the sense of behaving.

- John MacArthur

Exactly. Now, look at the evidence for their carnality!

VERSES 3-4

Yes, Corinth was very wicked, very immoral and the church was influenced by these worldly activities, these worldly things.

But make no mistake about it, this was also an internal matter, a matter of the heart as they allowed their feelings to cause divisions, they were envious of others, they quarreled with each other!

These are not the gifts of the Spirit but works of the flesh! The Corinthian Christians thought of themselves as spiritual, but their divisions showed that they are in fact fleshly.

It is as Fee said, “Spiritual people are to walk in the Spirit. If they do otherwise, they are ‘worldly’ and are called upon to desist. Remaining worldly is not one of the options.”

VERSES 5-7

The church in Corinth were fighting over who is the greatest; Paul or Apollos and Paul is basically telling them they are fools fighting over that which is nothing, which **“nothing”** is greater!

Ironside put it this way, “Imagine a household divided over servants!”

It sounds so foolish, when in reality, that is exactly what they were doing.

And be careful here. If you think that this is not a problem today, it still is!

I know someone who was talking with another brother in the Lord and this brother asked about evangelism and what they were doing. They said that they are going to be in the Christmas parade in town with their church. This other brother asked, “Can we help?” And he was told, “That is for our church!” Very sad when you think about it. Yes, it still happens today.

But let’s look at this with the picture that Paul is painting for us here. We may provide the environment for growth, just as the farmer does, but the Lord brings forth the new life.

Folks, like Paul and Apollos, we are not in competition with each other but working together for the cause of Christ – don’t lose sight of that fact!

As we read on, Paul is going to focus on this thought next, working together for the common goal of Christ!

VERSES 8-9

In combating the Corinthian desire to divide among leaders, Paul reminds them they are all on the same team.

Imagine a football team that was divided. Each player wanted the attention, they wanted the glory. It doesn’t work, you will not succeed! We are working together, not to build up our church, our ministry, our this or our that, but the Kingdom of God. Never forget that!

And notice what Paul says here, it is “**according to his own labor**” and *not according to our own results*. God will bring forth the fruit, we just need to walk!

Years ago young preachers used to ask G. Campbell Morgan the secret to his preaching success. He would answer, “I always say to them the same thing: work; hard work; and again, work!”

Folks, think of all the opportunities that God has given to each of us, and I can speak for myself, I am totally unworthy and totally uneducated, untrained in the minds of many, but that is the point.

It is not because I am so special, so good, so smart, but God is and has empowered me for the work and you for the work!

And as we use the gifts that have been given to us, as we serve the Lord, we are working as a team building up the kingdom of God – not in competition but complementing each other in the work and what a beautiful picture that is being painted for the world to see, *the love of God!*

VERSES 10-15

How could Paul do what he was doing for the Lord? He tells us that it is “**the grace of God which was given to me.**”

You see, it is not something he deserved, nor do we deserve, but God freely gives us these things and in return, He gets the glory. How can we be doing these things for the Lord? It is because of “**the grace of God which was given to me.**”

As I have said before, you can never be too small for God to use you, but you can be too big!

Now, what is the foundation that Paul laid down in Corinth?

The foundation was and must always be Jesus Christ. Peter said in Acts 4:11-12, “**This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**”

Thus, don't remove the foundation as you teach the things of God but build upon the solid foundation, Jesus Christ.

We see people and churches today doing just that, removing Christ or making their own Jesus, but that is an unstable foundation without Christ! May we not forget that!

In fact, in Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, he warns them. In II Corinthians 11:3-4 we are told, **"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted - you may well put up with it!"**

And make no mistake about it, this is not just for leaders, it is for all of us who serve the Lord and we all do.

Our work will be tested through the fire to see what the motives of our heart were in serving, what were we building with.

Also, God is going to judge the quality of our work and Paul picks up on this for us when he wrote in II Corinthians 5:9-10, **"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."**

This is not judgment for salvation but for rewards or crowns and I believe as the Lord rewards us with these crowns, we will present them right back to Him for it is the Lord who has given us the ability to do these things. And in Revelation 4:9-11, and this is from the King James Version of the Bible, we are told, **“And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”**

I believe the twenty-four elders represent Jews and Gentiles, the body of Christ here in Revelation.

You see, we are saved by faith and thus, as I have said, it has nothing to do with our salvation or judgment in that regard, but our rewards.

In fact, Paul tells us that here in I Corinthians chapter 3, verse 15, **“If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”**

Don’t you want to cast your crowns before the Lord? Of course you do and thus, serve the Lord with a pure heart so as your works are tested in the fire, they won’t be burned up!

And keep in mind what Jesus said in Revelation 22:12, **“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”**

In knowing that, can we then say what John said in Revelation, **“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”** Revelation 22:20.

Now the Roman Catholic Church teaches that this verse speaks of Purgatory and thus, before you can go to heaven you must pass through the fire and be purified.

That is not what this passage is teaching, the fire does not purify the worker, Jesus does that! The fire though does test our works, the things we have done in this life for Christ!

Paul makes it clear in Romans 6:23, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the [free] gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Also, in Ephesians 2:8-10 he said, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

We are saved by grace through faith and not by the Law through works! Thus, store up for yourself treasures in heaven, the crowns that you can one day cast at the feet of Jesus!

VERSES 16-17

Make no mistake about it. We are, in a sense, the temple of God and he does not use the Greek word HIERON for **“temple”** which speaks of the whole structure, but NAOS, which speaks of the sanctuary or the holy place, the place where God dwells.

You see, the reason this is true is because the Spirit of God dwells in us!

Now is this speaking of our physical bodies? Yes, I believe we should care for these bodies that God has given to us, not going crazy because they are going back to the dust of the earth, but keep in mind also that it is where God’s Spirit dwells!

Is this speaking of our spiritual bodies or our spirits? Yes, I believe we need to feed our spirit the things of God so we may grow and mature in the faith – starve the flesh and feed the spirit! Don’t fill your spirits with junk, but with the things of God!

Now the bigger picture here is the church and if you turn from the church, if you are causing division, living in carnality, false teaching and-so-on, you can destroy the church by your actions.

In the Greek, the word “**you**” in these verses is in the plural and it is not necessarily speaking of the individual but Christians collectively, and that is what makes up the church, not a building but Christians, people! Something to think about.

Now, in verse 17, where Paul says, “**If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.**”

Who is Paul speaking of when he says that “**God will destroy him**”? I believe that this passage is speaking of false teachers who are not true believers in the Lord Jesus. And when you look at the destruction, the division that false teachers bring into the church, we should not be surprised that God will deal with them.

VERSES 18-20

I think Paul is being a little sarcastic here in verse 18 because the Corinthians considered themselves wise in this world! That was their problem, their love of worldly wisdom and it led to pride in their lives and that pride caused divisions in the church!

And please understand that Paul is not saying you have to become a fool, become brain dead, an idiot to become a Christian, a mature Christian.

Remember, like I have said, the Corinthian’s were lovers of human wisdom, philosophy and it was brought into the church. Thus, Paul is saying they needed to forget humanism or a man-centered philosophy and have a Christ-centered look on things.

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

The Living Bible puts these verses like this, **“Don’t let others spoil your faith and joy with their philosophies, their wrong and shallow answers built on men’s thoughts and ideas, instead of on what Christ has said. For in Christ there is all of God in a human body; so you have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ. He is the highest Ruler, with authority over every other power.”**

Now, as we surrender to God, the world tends to think we are foolish, but God says we are wise for we have the wisdom of God in our lives and not the wisdom of this world, which is in a constant state of flux!

VERSES 21-23

How often are we more excited in seeing a movie star or going to see football stars or whatever instead of going to church or reading God’s Word?

You see, as we do we are boasting in men instead of God. It is not wrong to go to a football game or whatever, but it is wrong if it takes your time away from God, if it replaces what you are doing for the Lord, if it comes between you and the Lord!

And we tend to boast over so many different things, and yet, listen to what we are told in Jeremiah 9:23-24, **“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord.”**

May we not lose sight that it is all the Lord’s and He has given to us all that we need. So don’t think you are more important than anyone else, we are all servants of God ministering to the people of God and to the people of this world the love of God.

As we have seen, this chapter spoke of the divisions that were going on in Corinth, in the church, and here is the solution to overcoming these divisions- ***JESUS CHRIST!***

If your relationship with Jesus is right, then your relationship with your brothers and sisters in the Lord will be right. If your relationship with the Lord is right, then your relationship with others will be right. If your relationship with the Lord is not right – ***LOOK OUT!***

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 6:17, **“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”** We belong to Jesus; thus, may we act that way!

As I close this evening let me leave you with this to think about.

In I Corinthians 3:22 Paul said, **“all are yours”** and that speaks of our Christian liberty that we have in Christ, we are free to do whatever we want!

Now before some go crazy over this, Paul also said in I Corinthians 3:22, **“and you are Christ’s”** which puts things into balance for us, it gives to us our Christian responsibility.

And yes, all Christians belong to Christ but some in Corinth were claiming to belong to Him to the exclusion of all others. That is a mistake and what happens is these little groups form and they think they are better than you, they are better than me, they are the ones who are following Jesus, or so they say.

We need to remember that we are Jesus' servants even as He was the Father's servant. What an example He has given to us.

And I will leave you with this, I promise.

Paul said in I Corinthians 3:16-17, **“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”**

Thus, what temple are you, who is residing in your life, who is on the throne of your heart? May it be the Lord Jesus Christ! Because whoever it is, that is what will be manifested in your life!