

1 Corinthians Study 4

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-17

KEY VERSES—

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the increase. So that neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” (3:6-7)

SUMMARY—

The problem of division in the Corinthian church grew from two sources—not only from the envious, self-promoting teachers, but also from the strife-filled brethren who were dividing over such things. Stumbling over the most basic things, they were unprepared to receive the greater spiritual truths the apostle had for them. In chapter 3, he addresses the folly of following men (cf. Matthew 15:14). Dividing and following men is a sign of spiritual immaturity and carnality (3:1-4; cf. Jude 19). It elevates teachers to a place that is not theirs (3:5-9), because there is only one foundation (3:10-11). Teachers are not the foundation, they merely build on the foundation—some with good material, others with bad material—and difficulties such as the ones they are facing will prove the mettle of these brethren (3:12-15). At the same time, anyone who is instrumental in defiling this temple of God, is doomed (3:16-17).

QUESTIONS—

1). How does he describe those who are involved in the divisions of the church (3:1-4)? What had not yet happened to these people? What kinds of problems arise when we do not grow (3:1-2; cf. Hebrews 5:13-14)?

2) What began as a condition of spiritual denseness (2:14; 3:1) led to something even worse (3:34). What was it?

3) What were some of the proofs that they were still carnal—dominated by the flesh (3:3-4; cf. Galatians 5:19-21)?

4) In what three stages did this problem manifest itself (3:3)?

⇒ Began with—

⇒ Led to—

⇒ Ended in—

5) Is the spirit which aligns itself with prominent men and teachers dead today, or do we still see it in various ways? Can you give some possible examples? Does our alignment with those particular men show we are greater than other brethren?

6) What is the proper place of teachers in God's plan (3:5-6,8-9)? Note the word "ministers" (3:5). What does it mean? What does it imply about the position of teachers and preachers?

7) Although men actively benefit the church, who is instrumental in its growth (3:6-7)?

8) How should teachers view themselves (3:7; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:5,7; 12:11)? Why is it dangerous to exalt men? 1 Corinthians 13 Lessons by Rob Harbison

9) What is the proper view of teachers—should we elevate and honor them (3:3-4)? Should we respect and appreciate them (3:8-9)?

10) What four things in this context all belonged to God? Thus, what was there to be divided over?

⇒ 2:7,12-13—

⇒ 3:5,9a—

⇒ 3:7—

⇒ 3:9b,16—

11) What is the reward for the teacher of the gospel (3:8,14)? Is it fame, success, prominence, or something else?

12) What had Paul's relation to the Corinthian church been (3:10; 2:1-2)? What should these other teacher's relation to the Corinthian church be (3:10; cf. 3:6-8)?

13) Paul had laid the foundation—what was that foundation (3:10-11)? How many foundations are there (3:11)? What were the other teachers laying as a foundation for their teaching?

14) Strangely, division was occurring over those who built on the foundation—but who had actually laid the foundation (3:10)? Was he trying to unite or divide them? What should these teachers have learned from Paul's example?

15) If there is only one foundation, what does this division do to the house of God (cf. Matthew 12:25)? Did even the apostles claim to be part of the foundation, or did they just lay the foundation (3:11; cf. Ephesians 2:20-22; Isaiah 28:16)? Is the “cornerstone” part of the foundation, or is it laid as the foundation itself?

16) In what way do we build on the foundation (3:12)? What are these materials? What is their nature?

17) What is the “work” that will be tested by fire (3:13-15)? What is the purpose of the testing? What is the nature of it?

18) When will every man’s work be tested by fire (1:8; 3:13)? In what sense? Is there any other time that work will be tested (1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13)? What does it show at that time?

19) In what sense is the destiny of the builder unaffected by the quality of the building material? How is he rewarded if his work survives (3:14; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)? How does he suffer loss (3:15)? Is it a personal loss or some other sense (cf. Philippians 2:16; Galatians 4:11)? How can the teacher suffer loss but still be saved (3:15)? 1 Corinthians 14 Lessons by Rob Harbison

20) What is this foundation (3:11) and building material (3:12; cf. 1 Peter 2:3-5) built into (3:16-17; cf. Ephesians 2:20-22)? What makes it “holy”?

21) How serious is it to defile the temple? How was God's temple being defiled according to this context?

22) In what two ways could it be said we are God's temple—how does God dwell in us (3:16-17; 6:19-20)?