

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:1-9

**The Corinthians' improper view of self—3:1-4**

- 1) Their condition led to an inability for Paul—3:1<sup>1</sup> *And I (emphatic), brothers, was not able to speak to you<sup>pl</sup> ...*
  - a) Positively—*as to spiritual [pneumatikos] people,*
  - b) Negatively—*but as to fleshly [sarkikos] (flesh-like), as to infants (childish) in Christ.*
    - i) Cf. the unsaved [psychikos] in 2:14; the mature [teleios] in 2:6
    - ii) Children are often attention seeking and demanding.
- 2) How Paul had ministered to the Corinthians—3:2-3
  - a) Their past inability—3:2a <sup>2</sup> *I gave you<sup>pl</sup> milk to drink and not solid food,*
    - i) Why? *because until now you<sup>pl</sup> were not capable.*
  - b) Their present inability—3:2b-3a *Indeed, even now you<sup>pl</sup> are not yet capable,*
    - i) Why? <sup>3</sup> *because you<sup>pl</sup> are still fleshly [sarkikos] (flesh-like).*
  - c) Two rhetorical questions that give evidence that Corinthians are fleshly—3:3b-4
    - cf. 1:10-13
    - i) *For since these is jealousy and strife, and divisions among you<sup>pl</sup>,*
      - (1) *are you<sup>pl</sup> not fleshly [sarkikos] and behaving [peripateo] according to (the standard of) people?*
        - (a) Cf. use of *peripateo* in Galatians 5:16
      - ii) <sup>4</sup> *For whenever someone says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos,"*
        - (1) *are you<sup>pl</sup> not fleshly [sarkikos] (flesh-like)?*

**The Corinthians' improper view of spiritual leaders—3:5-9 (a farming illustration)**

- 1) God-ordained servants—3:5
  - a) Question: <sup>5</sup> *So, what is Paul, and what is Apollos,*
  - b) Answer:
    - i) *but servants through [dia] whom you<sup>pl</sup> came to trust,*
    - ii) *and to each as the Lord (God the Son) gave?*
  - c) They are farmhands assigned by Christ to a task, not Christian celebrities.
- 2) Relatively insignificant servants—3:6-7
  - a) Real human, complementary effort—<sup>6</sup> *I (emphatic) planted, Apollos watered (irrigated), cf. Acts 18:1; 19:1*
    - i) God's sovereign results—*but God was causing it to grow.*
  - b) Relative human value—<sup>7</sup> *So that neither the one who plants is anything, nor the one who waters,*
    - i) God's value—*but God who is causing it to grow.*
  - c) Focus on God alone, not His human instruments. He alone saves and sanctifies.
- 3) Unified servants—3:8a <sup>8</sup> *Now, the one who plants and the one who waters are one,*
- 4) Diverse yet equally accountable servants—3:8b *and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*
- 5) God's servants—3:9
  - a) <sup>9</sup> *For we are coworkers who belong to **God** (emphatic).*
  - b) *You<sup>pl</sup> are **God's** (emphatic) (cultivated) field, **God's** (emphatic) building.*
    - i) The construction theme is developed in 3:10-17.

**Take-home truth:** God owns the field, the crops, and all the workers. The glory is all His.