

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 5/11/11 Wednesday Evening
1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Review: Some important factors in the study of 1 Corinthians...

- Corinth was a large commercial city, and had a population of about 250,000 free persons, 400,000 slaves
- Corinth contained 12 temples, the most notorious to Aphrodite, the goddess of love
- A very immoral society
- Paul penned the book we call 1 Corinthians from Ephesus around 55 A.D. In this letter he addresses a series of problems that were hindering the church. The first problem, as we've seen in previous studies, pertained to divisions in the church. Paul confronted this problem head-on beginning in 1:10.

Dealing with Divisions: What We've Seen So Far (Chapters 1-2)

- First, Paul put the spotlight on the Cross (ch 1).
Discuss: Why did Paul accomplish by doing this?
- Next, in ch. 2, Paul explained how his ministry was characterized by three things: God's power (1-5), God's wisdom (6-10a), and God's Spirit (10b-16). The Corinthians had twisted, distorted views of all three things. Because of this misunderstanding, internal strife developed.

It's no different today. Wrong thinking leads to wrong living. If we cling to false ideas about biblical truths, it will show up in our relationships in negative ways. That's why it's so critical to emphasize careful Bible teaching and accurate doctrine in the church. If we don't *think right*, we won't *live right*.

The Angor Church: In 1968 God saved the first Angor. In the next decade or so, He brought others to Himself and the first Angor church came into existence. Around 1990 different teachers (from a Pentecostal persuasion) brought new ideas to the village and the church split. Another splinter was formed in the late 90's. Today there are three Angor "churches."

Ironically, one of the areas of difference pertains to how the various groups view their leaders/pastors/elders. The first group has a fairly low view of its pastors—they do not bring them food or any support, consequently, the pastors must work in the gardens full time to support themselves and prepare their sermons whenever they can find time. The second group has a higher view, and the people bring their shepherds food, etc., to enable them to devote more time to spiritual ministry.

After the dedication of the NT, two of the churches came together for a combined church service (the third group refused to come).

The problem Paul confronted in Corinth is alive and well on the planet today. It's certainly as close as the human heart. We need to pay attention to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 1-4.

Tonight: 1 Corinthians 3

In chapter 3, Paul confronts the problem of divisions head-on. Why did the problem exist? He expresses four reasons. There were four inadequacies in the Corinthian church:

- I. Inadequacy #1: Inadequate maturity (1-4)
- II. Inadequacy #2: An inadequate view of Ministers (5-9)
- III. Inadequacy #3: An inadequate view of the Ministry (10-15)
- IV. Inadequacy #4: An inadequate view of Themselves (16-22)

Let's take a look at these...

I. Inadequacy #1: Inadequate maturity (1-4)

Here's the first reason there were divisions in the church. It's a fundamental reason. The people lacked spiritual maturity. They hadn't grown as much as they should have.

Q: What's the significance of how Paul begins the charge in chapter 3, his use of "brothers"?

A. You are worldly, not spiritual (1a).

Paul says he couldn't address them as "spiritual" people, a reference back to his comments at the end of ch 2. What is a "spiritual" person? See 2:14-15

Q: Why couldn't Paul address them as "spiritual"?

Note: The KJV uses the term "carnal." The Greek term is *sarkikos*, meaning "fleshly." Unfortunately, some have used this designation to create an entity called the "carnal Christian."

Discuss: What is often meant by this term? How does Paul's use of the term differ from the common use of the term?

Is it possible to make a verbal profession of Christ, then live a godless life, and claim to be a "carnal Christian?"

B. You are infants, not mature (1b).

Q: What's true of infants?

C. You are not ready for solid food, only milk (2).

Q: Why not? See Heb 5:12-14

To compound the problem...

1. *You weren't ready before.*

2. *You still aren't ready.*

Christians are not the same. Churches are not the same. The Philippian church was different from the Corinthian church in many ways, including this one—spiritual receptivity to truth.

Q: What are some reasons Christians grow at different rates?

D. You have jealousy and quarreling among you (3a).

Q: How did this problem show itself?

E. You are acting like the rest of the world (3b-4).

Q: How so? There's supposed to be a difference between the way we live, treat each other, view our leaders, and in every other way...

II. Inadequacy #2: An inadequate view of Ministers (5-9)

Paul uses three word-pictures to clarify what ministers of the gospel are...

A. Ministers are servants (5).

Q: What is a servant? How will we approach ministry if we view ourselves as servants?

Notice the divine/human cooperative...

1. *The Lord has purposed to reach people.*
2. *He uses people to reach people.*

B. Ministers are farmers (6-8).

Q: How so?

1. *One person plants the seed.*
2. *Another person waters the seed.*
3. *Only God can make seed grow.*

C. Ministers are construction workers (9).

Note: Don't miss the pronoun contrast "we/you."

1. *We work with God.*

What a great privilege and how important to see ministry this way!

2. *We work with God's possessions.*

You are *God's* field and building. The people with whom we minister are not our own.

Discuss: How will this truth affect the way we minister?

Some Implications for Us...

1. *We must not condone spiritual immaturity, but address it.*

As Paul did here.

Discuss: When should we overlook immature behavior and when should we address it?

2. *In addressing problems, we must use God's truth, not our opinions.*

That's what Paul did here with the Corinthians. And so must we.

3. *If we are exhibiting a spirit of humility, we'll put the spotlight on the Lord, not ourselves.*

Humility is essential for God's people. Paul modeled it here. Sadly, it's rare in many churches today. In fact, it's often looked down upon as an undesirable trait, a weakness. Why so?

Next Time...

III. Inadequacy #3: An inadequate view of the Ministry (10-15)

IV. Inadequacy #4: An inadequate view of Themselves (16-22)