Everything is Yours

1 Cor. 3:1-3 REV

And I, brothers and sisters, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to people of the flesh, as to babies in Christ.

I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. No, even now you are not able,

for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and are you not walking like unsaved people?

When the apostle Paul spoke to the Corinthians, he confined his message to a worldly-oriented presentation of the gospel. In this chapter he continued this approach using analogies to describe spiritual growth.

Human Growth Spiritual Growth

Pre-born Unsaved people

Born Born again of God’s spirit

Babies Immature in Christ

Milk to drink Christ Crucified

No solid food Still of the flesh (mentally oriented)

Solid Food Sacred Secret

Mature Spiritual people (mentally oriented)

This comparative way of sharing spiritual realities is common in the Church epistles. Paul regularly uses familiar physical analogies to describe new spiritual realities. For example, in this chapter we’ll see: #1. Physical growth is like spiritual growth. #2. Physical walking is like life in the spirit. #3. Spreading the gospel is like growing a plant. #4. Ministers are like stewards. #5. Growing an individual saint and the church is like building a building. #6. The church is like the temple of God. These comparisons help immature believers wrap their worldly-oriented minds around new spiritual realities. These realities are necessary to learn so we can think and “walk” spiritually. These analogies help us transition from being only physically orientated to becoming spiritually savvy while still physically aware.

1 Cor. 3:3,4

for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and are you not walking like unsaved people?

For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

I can imagine the conversations went something like this, “Apollos is such a powerful speaker and leader! I want to ally with him!” Another responds, “Well, what was I before Paul’s preaching? I was an Aphrodite priestess, diseased and distressed. Paul’s simple preaching got me delivered and delighted in God! My loyalty stays with him!” What a mess! Where did the jealousy and strife come in? Probably from their past as insecure, class-conscious natural people, which scab was picked by an evil spirit influence from a worldly-minded church member. Instead of spiritual mindedness, the evil influence had the saints looking at things from an insecure “Who’s better?” perspective. The truth was “All sin and fall short of the glory of God”, not “Paul is better than Apollos”. No one is better than anyone else in the church. “We’re all Bozo’s on this bus!” is an old saying. Our only value is in Christ, not in affiliation with something or someone holy, or wealth, or class status, or … whatever worldly concern we could name that is incomparable to our inheritance in Christ.

1 Cor. 3:5-7

Who then is Apollos? And who is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, and each serving as the Lord gave to him.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

So then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only the one who is giving the increase—God!

The idiom we saw in chapter two returns. I will add the assumed emphasis for clarity.

1 Cor. 3:5-7 [With additions for emphasis]

Who then is Apollos? [Is he anything special?] And who is Paul? [Is he anything special?] [We are only] Servants through whom you believed, and each serving as the Lord gave to him.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

So then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything [special], but only the one who is giving the increase [is the special one,] God!

What the growth analogy demonstrates is that anyone can plant and water, but the key contributor is God who works to grow the gospel from a seed to fruit. “Adding life” is a God thing, not a human thing. All man can do is speak the gospel and add encouragement and exhortation. In my time as a Bible teacher, one of the most amazing things I’ve experienced is watching the change that occurs to audiences as they hear God’s word. Because I get to stand in front, I get a bird’s eye view of the transformation in the faces and lives of the gathered. The change is a God outcome, not a teacher or public speaker response.

1 Cor. 3:8

Now the one who plants and the one who waters are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

“One” means “working together toward the same end”. Although they are “on the same team” each are paid differently “according to their own labor”. Who decides who gets what? Not the laborers, but the paymaster. That means that someone is consistently watching because no one’s “punching the clock”! How long will these rewards last?

Matt. 6:19,20

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust ruin them, and where thieves break in and steal,

but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not ruin them, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

There’s nothing wrong with treasures on the earth **if** you keep them in perspective. They are only for a short time and are uncertain. Those with abundance now can even leverage that into eternal treasures.

1 Tim. 6:17-19

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant or to set their hope on riches, which are uncertain, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy.

Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, and willing to share,

thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they take hold of that which is truly life.

Once you personally experience someone you know die, you realize that we never really own anything. Ownership is an illusion. We only really “rent” or “lease” stuff (houses, bank accounts, property, businesses, etc.) while we live, then someone else gets it. The inheritor could be family, the government, or someone else. Whoever it is, it isn’t the one who previously “owned” it, because they are heading for “the coming age”. Did they “take hold on that which is truly life” or did they let it slip through their fingers while they stared at “shiny earthly objects”? It’s a crucial question that we should ask ourselves regularly.

1 Cor. 3:9

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

“We”, Paul and Apollos, are God’s fellow workers. Paul describes himself and Apollos as farmer-partners. We, as the church, are the field that Paul planted, Apollos watered and where God is giving the increase. The implied encouragement is that God wants us to spiritually grow up and produce fruit. That’s the purpose of a seed – growth, maturity and fruit (which holds more seeds!). Now God switches analogies to builders and building.

1 Cor. 3:10-12

According to the grace of God that was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But let each one be careful how he builds on it.

For no one is able to lay a foundation other than the one that has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ.

But if anyone builds on the foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, straw—

This is what’s being said: “According to the grace of God that was given to me [Paul], as a wise master builder I laid a foundation [when he began the church at Corinth and then left 18 months later], and another [Apollos] is building on it. But let each one [Apollos or any other minister] be careful how he builds on it [the foundation, Jesus Christ].”

The items listed in verse 17 were building materials at that time. Silver and gold were involved in the tabernacle and in the later Temple construction usually as adornments. The costly stones were not what we call precious stones but building stones that were expertly quarried and shaped at great expense. Anyone who has seen the stonework in the Temple mount in Jerusalem appreciates this. Here’s some insight from Wikipedia on these stones:

“Freeing the stones from the bedrock was an elaborate process: Wide grooves were chiseled with metal tools around the intended stone block. The block was then freed up by driving metal wedges into the grooves. The initial dressing of the stone was probably accomplished on site before transport. Many of these stones were very large, weighing between two and five tons. (The largest found, in the Western Wall Tunnel, measures some 12.8 meters in length, 3.4 meters high and 4.3 meters deep; it weighs about 660 tons.) Once moved to the building site, further fine chiseling was done and the blocks were hauled into place using ramps, cranes and crow bars.”

Can you imagine the manpower expense of these “costly stones”? Wood was also an ancient building material as well as hay and straw, which made bricks. All six materials were important in construction and have another similar trait. They can all be destroyed by fire. In the ancient world, fire was used to symbolize judgement because fire purifies raw materials, separating the valuable from the discardable.

1 Cor. 3:13-15

each one’s work will become plainly seen, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire itself will test each one’s work, and show of what kind it is.

If anyone’s work that he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, but it will be like escaping through a fire.

“Each man’s work”, meaning Paul’s, Apollos’s or any other minister’s work – will become plainly seen. How? “The Day will make it clear”. What “Day”?

2 Cor. 5:10

For we must all appear and be exposed before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be repaid for the things done in the body, according to what he has made a practice of doing, whether good or evil.

What?! I thought that we will avoid judgment because of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf!

John 5:24

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever is hearing my word and is believing him who sent me has life in the age to come, and does not come into condemnation, but has crossed over from death to life.

The Bible tells us that we will avoid judgment for eternal life or death but will be judged for rewards according to what we did in this life. In other words, we have a ticket for the flight of eternity, but where we sit and what we take with us is up to Christ’s future judgement on our works. There will be a “day” or a specific time when this judgment occurs after the Rapture. If the deciding factors are “the things done in the body”, then after we get the new spiritual body spoken of in 1 Cor. 15:35-49, the qualifying period for rewards is over and the tally will be tabulated. We have eternal life – guaranteed by Christ’s work. The quality of that life is determined by our works, not Christ’s. Nevertheless, he will be the judge.

Now, what if a Christian hardly does any good works in their life – or none at all? Will they still be saved from judgement, condemnation and eternal death?

1 Cor. 3:15

If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, but it will be like escaping through a fire.

Let me add some clarifying comments. “If anyone’s work is burned, [because their works weren’t good] he will suffer loss, [loss of rewards] but he himself will be saved, [no judgement, condemnation or eternal death - he still gets saved] but it will be like escaping through a fire.”

When someone escapes through a fire, they get out without anything but maybe the clothes on their back and perhaps, their hair on fire! But… at least they get out! Once again, salvation was accomplished by Christ and is guaranteed – because … it was accomplished by Christ! Rewards are our business. It seems like this judgment will be like a power wash on a patio. The dirt and trash will be blown away, while the worthwhile items (chair, table) are left. Christ’s judgement will “burn up the trash” in our past lives and leave only the good with its corresponding rewards. What incredible, stupid mercy and grace!!!

Now the temple analogy begins.

1 Cor. 3:16

Do you not know that all of you together are God’s sanctuary, and that the spirit of God lives in you?

If anyone mars the sanctuary of God, God will mar him, for the sanctuary of God, which all of you together are, is holy.

How is the church as a whole, “all of you together”, like the sanctuary? Because the sanctuary of the tabernacle and later the temple, was where God’s presence was. You can read about it in the Old Testament, when someone damaged God’s dwelling on earth, there were consequences. Ask the Babylonians or the Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who defamed the Temple in 167 BC as reported by the Greek historian Diodorus:

“Antiochus sacrificed a great swine at the image of Moses, and at the altar of God that stood in the outward court, He commanded likewise that the books, should be sprinkled with the broth made of the swine's flesh… and forced the high priest to eat swine's flesh."

Talk about spitting in God’s eye! What happened to this guy? This from Jewish history:

“…he was seized with a pain in his bowels, for which there was no relief, and with sharp internal tortures—and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions… And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body. Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay.” — 2 Maccabees 9:5–9 (NRSV)

Let’s assume they did cremation for this guy’s funeral. Some folk’s demise warrants a celebration – like this guy. A later incident of a “marring of the temple” was in 70 AD when the Romans didn’t leave one stone on top another on the temple mount, as Jesus foretold. In fact, some of those stones still lay today where they fell 2000 years ago. So, what were the Roman consequences for the temple’s destruction? There was none. Why not?

John 2:19-22

Jesus answered and said to them, “If you destroy this temple, I will raise it up in three days.”

The Jews then said, “It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?”

But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

What made the Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple special? Was it the gold, the artwork, or the architecture? No, it was the presence of God. There were other buildings taller, bigger or fancier, but they didn’t house the one true God, Yahweh. God was in Christ. He was the temple of God while alive. That’s why when he died, the curtain of the sanctuary was ripped open for all to enter (and God to exit). When Jesus was “marred”, God marred those who marred His true temple. The building destroyed in 70 AD was a temple in name only. THE Temple was marred 40 years prior. And those responsible paid the price.

Matt. 21:33

“Listen to another parable. There was a man, the head of a house, who planted a vineyard, and put a wall around it, and dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower, and rented it out to some farmers, and went away on a journey.

And when the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the farmers to receive his fruit.

And the farmers took his servants and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Again, he sent other servants, more than the first ones, and they did the same to them.

And last of all he sent to them his son, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

But the farmers, when they saw the son, said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’

And they took him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

Now, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers?”

They [the Jewish religious leaders] say to him, “Those wretched men—He will destroy them in a wretched way, and will rent out the vineyard to other farmers, who will give him the fruit in its season.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures, The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This came from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’

“Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls it will grind to powder.”

And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them.

Israel was “ground to powder” in 70AD (including God’s previous residence, the temple). Today there is talk about a third temple being built. From the Jewish Voice website:

“Since 1987, when the Temple Movement began preparations for the rebuilding of the Third Temple… It is Orthodox Jews who revived the Sanhedrin, the religious body who intend to see it rebuilt in a proper way. Gershon Salomon is director of the Temple Mount Faithful, an organization trying to prepare Israeli society to accept and promote the rebuilding of the Temple through demonstrations at the Temple site, the construction of a cornerstone for the Third Temple, and the making of various Temple-related utensils. Rabbi Richman, also a member of the Sanhedrin, has been heading a project to restore the sacred Red Heifer to Israel. According to Numbers 19, the ashes of the Red Heifer mixed with water are a necessary element for purifying Jews to enable them to do service in the Temple. During the time of the First and Second Temples, approximately 1,000 years, only nine Red Heifers were used. According to Jewish tradition, the tenth one will be used by the Messiah. He is utilizing the technique of implanting the frozen embryos of the Red Angus cattle, which come from North America, into Israeli domestic cattle. A red heifer cannot be transported to Israel for use in the Red Heifer ceremony, because the animal cannot have ever worn a yoke and must be born in the Land of Israel. The project is the culmination of years of research at the Temple Institute that fuses ancient religious texts and modern science.

The Sanhedrin and the Temple Movement also hold reenactments of Temple ceremonies for the training of those who are from the priestly class. This training involves special schooling on the duties of the priests, the use of ritual vessels created for use in the Third Temple, and practice on a newly constructed altar of burnt offering. This altar is unique because it was designed to be disassembled and quickly reassembled in its proper permanent location. When the time is right, it will be re-assembled on the Mount in the Temple, enabling the sacrificial service to be resumed without delay.

Are you kidding? Orthodox Jewish ’special forces’ have a pre-fab altar ready to set up on the Temple Mount?! What’s the genuine Temple of God today? Look in the mirror and at your brothers and sisters. We are! (And we don’t need a red heifer!) God resides in His children. Although it may not seem like it at times, but we are God’s address in this world!

1 Cor. 3:18

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone thinks that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool, so that he becomes wise.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He is the one catching the wise in their craftiness,

and again, The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are worthless.

The biggest problem with worldly wisdom is that you think you know something when you really don’t, and it closes you off to learning something better.

Prov. 11:2 New Internation Version

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

True wisdom and knowledge come to the humble, open mind. The Corinthian saints needed to quit thinking and boasting about which leader was the best. Why?

1 Cor. 3:21,22

So, let no one boast about human beings! For everything is yours—

whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—everything is yours,

“Everything is yours”. Think about that emphasized, repeated statement. “What’s ours?” you might ask. The answer is “Paul, Apollos, or Cephas”. “Wait, I thought I belonged to Paul’s group or Apollos’ group,” some might respond.

Eph. 4:8,11

This is why it says, When he ascended on high, he took captives, and gave gifts to people.

And he himself gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Here are five gift ministries that Jesus gave to the church. They are gifts to the church. The ministries belong to the saints. They saints don’t belong to them! Their abilities are not gifts to the ones who hold the ministries, the ministries are gifted to serve the church. You can’t belong to Paul. His ability belongs to you! How do we get things so turned around?

What else is “ours”? “The world, life, death, things present, or things to come”. We saw last chapter that we will judge the world, remember? We know that we have life, now and in the age to come, right? We know that Jesus defeated death for us, right? We know that in all life’s situations we are “more than conquerors in Christ”, right? We know that nothing will (in the future) separate us from the love of God, right? Christ redeemed us so that he could restore all that Adam lost. What did Adam have? Everything. What do we have? Everything! Some of it we have now, and the rest we’ll get when Christ returns and we shall be like him. “Everything is yours!” Shocking! Is this too good to be true? No, it’s so good because it is - so true!

1 Cor. 3:23

and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

We are bought and paid for. We belong not to any man, denomination or group but to Christ. And Jesus knows whom he belongs to, and ultimately, so do we - our Father, God.