

1 Corinthians 03 - Spiritual Immaturity; Bema Seat Judgment; A Warning Against Destroying the Church; Human Wisdom vs God's Wisdom

II. Conditions reported to Paul (1 Cor 1:10—6:20)

- (1) By Chloe's household: divisions (1:10—4:21)
 - (C) Carnality hinders wisdom (3:1-4)
 - (D) The role of God's servants (3:5-8)
 - (E) Judgment on those who build with human wisdom (3:9-17)
 - (F) Paul's plea for his audience to acquire divine wisdom (3:18-23)

1 Corinthians 3

(C) Carnality hinders wisdom (3:1-4)

1 And I, **brothers and sisters**, could not speak to you as **spiritual people**, but *only* as **fleshly**, as to **infants in Christ**.

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.

1 Brothers, I couldn't talk to you as spiritual people but as worldly people, as mere infants in the Messiah.

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

- "...brothers and sisters" - the use of the vocative and 2nd person plural pronouns in v1-2 indicates Paul was addressing the entire church, not a smaller group

— Remember, Paul is writing to Christians: they are sanctified in Christ (1:2; 2:14), they received the Holy Spirit (2:13), and Paul called them brothers (3:1)

- "...could not speak to you" - while Paul was in Corinth for 18 months; during that time, although he was speaking with born-again believers with the indwelling Holy Spirit (Cf. 2:12), they were men of the flesh

- Most people think there are two types of people in this world...saved and unsaved. You're either a child of God or a child of the devil. You're either going to heaven or you're going to hell. This is the depth of thinking among most Christians. But Paul is a little more sophisticated and nuanced than that. In this verse, Paul gives us three types of believers:

- "...spiritual people" - believers who are growing in their faith, becoming mature in Christ, utilizing their gifts in ministry to others, studying the Word, and in prayer
- Not a person who is sinless, but a person who is sinning less
- "...fleshly" - *sarkinos*, a word pertaining to performing at a disappointing level of behavior; a carnal Christian; someone who has "backslidden"; someone whose sin nature is dominating their daily and moment-by-moment decisions every day
- Carnal means controlled by the old nature; failure to make progress in their progressive sanctification; sensual and fleshy. Paul himself was once one of them (Cf. Rom 7:14).
- When a person first comes to faith in Christ, they continue performing sin because they are accustomed to that lifestyle
- Paul could not speak to them as spiritual men (mature believers) because they were not demonstrating the discernment that typically marks a believer (the reason why is given in v3)
- "...infants in Christ" - new believers; those new in the faith, without the knowledge or experience to become "spiritual men" yet
- These are limited in what they can understand and perform
- Immaturity is not blameworthy if someone is very young; however if a person has been a Christian for some time, and is still immature, their condition is blameworthy (Cf. Eph 4:14). Believers should eventually become spiritual by developing the mind of Christ (Cf. 2:16).

2 I gave you **milk** to drink, **not solid food**; for you were not yet able to *consume it*. But **even now you are not yet able**,

2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to *receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you weren't ready for it. And you're still not ready!

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

- "...milk" - what infants need to grow and develop into having the mind of Christ. It includes elementary teachings (Heb 5:12—6:2).

- "...not solid food" - Paul did not give them solid food (more advanced teaching and doctrine) because they "were not yet able to consume (understand) it."

— Growing spiritually is just like growing physically; a newborn baby requires milk before they grow and develop enough to begin intake of solid food. Likewise, new believers need elementary teachings explained and practiced before they can understand more advanced teachings and practices.

— The normal process of spiritual growth is to learn a teaching or doctrine, then immediately put it into practice. By following this pattern, new avenues of understanding

are opened.

- "...even now" - it had been five years since Paul had preached the gospel to them and given them milk to drink. Then Apollos came and gave them more milk, yet they still hadn't developed into spiritual men.

- "...you are not yet able" - the Corinthian believers had been in a state of carnality for a long time (at least five years); they were still not able to digest the solid food of the Word
- This verse describes how you can identify a carnal Christian...someone who cannot handle the meat of the Word, but only wants the milk

— They don't want to leave church challenged in their walk, they want to leave after hearing a feel-good message that alleviated some of their guilt, and they want to leave on time

— Another way you can identify a carnal Christian is through jealousy and strife (v3)

3 for you are **stillfleshly**. For since **there is jealousy and strife among you**, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like **ordinarypeople**?

3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

3 That's because you are still worldly. As long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, you are worldly and living by human standards, aren't you?

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

- The reason why Paul could not teach the Corinthians more advanced theology was that they were still "fleshly." It was their behavior that hindered their learning and maturity process, not their intellectual capacity.

- "...still" - linked to "even now" (v2); Paul is calling them out that by this time in their Christian life, five years after he originally preached the gospel to them and they were saved, they should've been further along in their Christian maturity (Cf. Heb 5:12)

- "...fleshly" - *sarkikos*, natural, carnal, unspiritual; walking in the flesh; a Christian who continually yields to their sin nature, because they have not yet discovered their resources in Christ, and are not appropriating them moment-by-moment in faith

— Two slightly different Greek words are both translated "fleshly" in v1,3. In v1, *sarkinos* refers to the essence or substance of (Cf. Rom 8:4-5); in v3, *sarkikos*, refers to the appearance of the characteristics.

— Also translated as "of the flesh" [NRSV]; "controlled by your sin nature" [NLT]; "influenced by the flesh" [NET]

— The reason why Paul could not give them more advanced teaching was that their flesh still dominated them. They were making provision for the flesh to fulfill its desires (Cf. Rom 13:14) rather than following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

- Many churches (Reformed Theology in general) deny the fact that a believer could be carnal—that they even exist. The reason why is because they believe we are in the kingdom today. If you believe we're in the kingdom now, the carnal Christian disappears...there's no such thing.
- However, it's the Church Age that is an age of grace (unmerited favor); you're not going to have that kind of grace in the kingdom. It will be an age of justice.
- In Rev 2-3, 5 of the 7 churches are in a backslidden condition and Jesus commands them to repent; this cannot be describing the kingdom. In this age, it's more accurate to say that the world has possessed the Church than to say that the Church has converted the world.
- There are a large number of passages in the epistles that deal with apostasy within the Church: Rom 1:18-32; 10; 16:17-18; 2 Cor 11:1-15; 13:5; Gal 1:6-9; 5:1-12; Phil 3:2,18-19; Col 2:4-23; 2 Thess 2:1-12; 1 Tim 1:3-7; 4:1-3; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:11-26; 3:1-9; 4:15; Titus 1:10-16; Heb 2:1-4; 3:7—4:13; 5:12—6:12; 10:26-31; 12:14-17; 1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 3:3-10; 1 John 2:18-23; 3:4-12; 4:1-6; 2 John 9; Jude 3-23. It is the main topic of books such as Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, and Revelation.
- "...there is jealousy and strife among you" - these are both deeds of the flesh (Cf. Gal 5:19-21). The Corinthians were divided and quarreling with one another (1:10-11)
- Their inability to get along with other Christians showed that their flesh controlled them; they were not only immature, they were carnal
- "...ordinary people" - "mere men"; unbelievers; the "natural person" (Cf. 2:14), who does not possess the Spirit of God
- Paul says that when he looks at these carnal believers in the Corinthian church, he sees no difference between them and an unsaved person. Their daily lives were indecipherable from non-believers.
- An out of fellowship Christian can out-sin an unbeliever any time
- Paul is telling these carnal Christians that they are missing out on maturity, growth, and if you read later in the chapter, he warns them that if they continue in this behavior, they will have an unfavorable ruling at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- Although every believer receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation (Cf. 12:13; Rom 8:9), His presence within does not automatically cause spiritual growth. The believer must do as Paul explained and take advantage of the Spirit's presence by heeding his teaching (Cf. 2:10-13; Gal 5:16ff)
- This is why it is impossible to judge whether someone is a believer or not based solely on performance

4 Kinds of People from 1 Corinthians 3:1-3



If you still don't believe that sin can reign in the lives of believers, just look at the life of David. Is there any question whether David was a believer? None. But there was a season in his life where you'd be hard-pressed to look at his life and say he was a believer...yet his eternity was never in jeopardy. There were plenty of temporal circumstances that plagued David until his dying day because of his sin (warfare in his own house, family strife, etc.), but there was never any question that David was a believer. See [Soteriology 16 Good Works \(Eph 2:8-10\)](#) for more information about habitual sin in a believer.

Seven Truths About A Carnal Christian (1 Cor 3:1-4)

1. Carnality hinders one's growth & spiritual maturity, but never his position in Christ (1 Cor 3:1)
2. Carnality affects one's desire and ability to hear and digest the Word of God (1 Cor 3:2; Cf. 1 Peter 2:1-2; Heb 5:11-14)
3. Carnality may be due to weakness or willfulness (1 Cor 3:1-3)
 - Weakness - when you're young and dumb, you wander off and do stupid things

- Someone said that youth is wasted on the young...when you're young and have energy, you're doing stupid things
- Young people do dumb things; they haven't had enough life experience
- Willfulness - willful indulgence in carnality, because sin is fun (for a time)
 - There is always a window of pleasure associated with sin
 - The problem is that we are never told about the long term consequences for sin; the window of sin is fun, but it's momentary...the consequences for that sin go on for a long time (maybe your entire life)

4. Carnality is not automatically connected with time (1 Cor 3:3)

- This one really makes the Reformed Theologians upset...
- The assumption is that if someone has been saved for 20 years, they should be at some higher level of spiritual maturity
- v3- "for you are still carnal" - Paul is not dealing entirely with new Christians, but with people who should've "grown up" a long time ago
- They had been believers for some time, yet they never came out of their carnal state
- In the parallel passage (Heb 5:11-14), v12 says "For though by this time...". They had been in the Lord for an extended period of time, yet they had not grown or reached a level of maturity to take on their normal responsibilities
- As kids grow up, they get more responsibility around the house. If they reach 18-19 years old and have no responsibilities, that is not age appropriate. They should have taken on basic responsibilities a long time ago.
- It's the same way in the church...believers in the Lord for a number of years should be taking on responsibilities in the church, ministries in the church a long time ago, but haven't because of their carnal spiritual state.

5. Carnality is evidenced by the works of the flesh in your life (1 Cor 3:3)

- The manifestation of the sin nature in our lives is evidence of carnality
- A list of these is found in Gal 5:19-21
- Many of the works of the sin nature found in 1 Cor 3:3 are also found in Gal 5:19-21

6. Carnality is oftentimes characterized by self deception (1 Cor 3:3-4)

- The Corinthians masqueraded their divisions and strife by cloaking it in a "spiritual" dispute about who was the best teacher
- Paul tells them they are deceived, and that the oratory skills of their favorite teacher was not the issue, but a smokescreen for their divisions, strife, envy, etc. The problem was their sin nature (carnality).
- We're so blind to our sin nature that when it rears its ugly head, we like to cloak or "baptize" it in spiritual language. That is the sin nature manifesting under self deception.

7. Carnality in the believer's life causes him to walk like an unbeliever (1 Cor 3:3)
 - v3- Paul says "are you not carnal, acting like "mere men" (unbelievers)
 - He's saying you Corinthians, as Christians, are acting just like unbelievers do
 - An out of fellowship Christian (carnal Christian) can out-sin even an unbeliever any day of the week (Cf. 1 Cor 5:1)
 - If as a believer you go back to the sin nature and allow it to control you, you can exceed the level of sin that you committed while you were an unbeliever
 - Paul is rebutting Calvinism directly here...he is saying that you can be in Christ, but look and act and behave just like an unbeliever
 - Consider Lot...
 - In Gen 13, he "pitched his tent toward Sodom"; he began to think what life would be like if he lived in Sodom and Gomorrah
 - In Gen 19, Lot was living in Sodom; not only residence, but at the city gate (a place of authority)
 - He offered his virgin daughters to a sodomite crowd who wanted desperately to sodomize the two angels who visited Lot's house
 - His family laughed and mocked him when he told them they had to leave, based on the instruction of the two angels. Lot had no spiritual credibility even within his own family because of his sinful lifestyle.
 - His life ended in a cave, drunk, having incest with his two daughters; from this night came the Ammonites and the Moabites, two perennial enemies of Israel
 - However, Lot was saved...
 - In Gen 19:22, the angel told Lot that he "could not do anything" (destroy Sodom and Gomorrah) until Lot and his family left
 - Lot's departure from Sodom and Gomorrah was a *prerequisite condition* to the wrath of God falling on Sodom and Gomorrah
 - 2 Peter 2:7-8 - Lot is called a "righteous man" 3x
 - How could Lot be "righteous" after reading the OT record? He was righteous positionally, not practically. He was justified, not sanctified. The references to his righteousness are to the imputed righteousness of Christ, not his actions or behavior.
 - The Corinthian church was behaving *worse* than the unsaved world
 - In 1 Cor 5:1 says: "A man is actually living with his father's wife!" (incest)
 - Then Paul goes on to say that the church was actually "proud" of the man's behavior (v2)

Consequences of Yielding to the Old (Sin) Nature

1. Lack of power (Gal 5:16; 1 Thess 5:19)

2. Grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30-32)
3. Loss of joy (Ps 51:4,12; Gal 5:16,22-23)
4. Loss of spiritual sight & eternal perspective (2 Peter 1:2-9; Luke 15:18-19)
5. Lack of growth (1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Peter 2:17-18)
6. Unfruitfulness (John 15:5,8; 2 Peter 1:8)
7. Lack of purpose/direction/meaning in life (Eccl 1:2-3,8; Mark 8:34-38)
8. Lack of stability (Gal 3:3; 2 Tim 2:18; 2 Peter 3:17)
9. Loss of victory over the world (2 Peter 2:18-22)
10. Conviction (2 Peter 2:7-8; Ps 32:1-5)
11. Divine discipline (Heb 12:5-11; Rev 3:19)
12. Premature death (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16; Rev 2:22-23)
13. Loss of reward (1 Cor 3:10-15; 9:27; 2 Tim 4:6-8; 2 John 8; Rev 3:11)
14. Loss of fellowship (Luke 15:11-24; 1 John 1:3-10)
15. Excommunication (1 Cor 5:4-5; Matt 18:15-17)
16. Temporal consequences (Gal 6:7-8)
17. Unanswered prayer (Ps 66:18; 1 Peter 3:7)
18. Loss of testimony (Gen 19:14; Matt 5:10-16; Phil 2:13-16)
19. Loss of faith (2 Tim 2:13)
20. Loss of biblical beliefs (2 Tim 3:12—4:4)
21. Loss of leadership privileges (1 Tim 3:1-13; 2 Sam 12)
22. Loss of ministry to others (Matt 20:28; Heb 6:10)
23. Loss of assurance of salvation (2 Peter 1:9-11)
24. Loss of faith (2 Tim 2:11-13; 4:1-5)

4 For when one person says, "I am with Paul," and another, "I am with Apollos," are you not *ordinary* people?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men?

4 For when one person says, "I follow Paul," and another person says, "I follow Apollos," you're following your own human nature, aren't you?

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

- Partisanship (divisions) is a manifestation of fleshly/carnal behavior

— All the philosophical schools in Greece had their chief teachers, and there was competition among them. There were strong preferences among the students as to who was the best.

— This attitude is totally inappropriate when it comes to evaluating the servants of Christ. It is completely contrary to the mind of Christ, who stooped down to raise others up.

— Paul rebukes their lack of maturity and encourages them to grow in grace, knowledge, faith, love, and holiness (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18)

Verses 1-4 make it clear that it is possible for genuine Christians to behave as, and appear to be, unbelievers (Cf. Matt 13:24-30,36-43). The behavior of the Corinthian church indicated carnality, not lack of eternal life.

(D) The role of God's servants (3:5-8)

5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? **Servants** through whom you believed, **even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.**

5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

5 Who is Apollos, anyhow? Or who is Paul? They're merely servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord gave to each of us his task.

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

- The Corinthian church had a radical and misguided perception of the nature of the church and its leadership, which Paul attempts to correct here, in particular the proper role of teachers

- "...Servants" - *diakonoi*, one who executes the commands of another

— A pastor is not a minister of a particular church but rather a minister of Christ's gospel

- The names of Apollos and Paul are mentioned 3x (v4,5,22), but always in a different order to de-emphasize any particular one. Paul wanted the Corinthians to focus on the work, not the person.

— A Christian worker is never to be idolized. Only Christ should receive glory and honor.

- "...even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one" - better translated "and to each as the Lord has given" referring to the ministry that the Lord had given both Apollos and Paul

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God kept everything growing.

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

- This is a verse that many pastors and ministry leaders need to read and understand.

Many pastors act like their leadership and changes within a local church are the keys to growing their ministry. However, Paul, the most prolific and successful minister of the gospel in history, says clearly here that "God was causing (present tense) the growth."

— Any pastor or ministry leader who speaks as if they are somehow relevant or significant in the growth or success of their ministry does not have the proper view of how their ministry or the church should work

- "...planted" - *phyteuō*, Paul planted the church in Corinth because he was the first apostle to go to Corinth, preach the gospel, and provide basic teaching ("milk") to the new believers
 - The verb is in the aorist tense, meaning the work of Paul was completed
 - "...watered" - *potizō*, Apollos watered the seeds Paul planted because he continued to provide teaching. Also in the aorist tense, meaning the work of Apollos was completed.
 - "...[God was] causing the growth" - *auxanō*, God is the one who used Paul's preaching and Apollos' teaching to bring about a harvest of faith in Corinth. This verb is in the imperfect tense, meaning that God's causing of the growth is an on-going action, not a past event.
 - God deserved the credit for the church in Corinth, not the "planter" or the "waterer"
 - Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand this and stop exalting himself and Apollos, and instead focus on the Lord (v7)

7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but **God** who causes the growth.

7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is significant, but God, who keeps everything growing, is the one who matters.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

— "...God" - *theos*, stands last in the Greek structure of this sentence, receiving the emphasis

— Next to God, the "planter" and "waterer" were nothing. The Corinthians needed to give God His due and Paul and Apollos needed to become less in their eyes.

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**.

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

8 The one who plants and the one who waters have the same goal, and each will receive a reward for his own action.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

- The "planter" and the "waterer" are one in the sense that they both have the same purpose, which is to facilitate spiritual growth

- "...according to his own labor" - note that it is our "labor" that will be the basis of our "reward" not the *fruit* of our labor. Rewards are the result of faithfulness; they are not the reason for, or the goal of, the servant's labor.

(E) Judgment on those who build with human wisdom (3:9-17)

9 For we are God's fellowworkers; you are God's field, God's building.

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

— For we are God's co-workers. You are God's farmland and God's building.

— For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

- "...fellow workers" - we work with God, alongside God, and for the purposes of God

— Paul and Apollos were called co-workers not because they bring anything of themselves, but because God used their work after He had rendered them capable of it and has furnished them with the necessary gifts

— Elsewhere, Paul also spoke of believers as fellow workers "with" God (2 Cor 6:1)

— "Without Him, we can't; without us, He won't." God has chosen to accomplish His work through us!

- "...you are God's field" - the Corinthians were a cultivated field in which both Paul and Apollos worked under God

- "...God's building" - the Corinthian church was a structure that belonged to God, which Paul will go on to develop further in the following verses...

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But **each person must be careful how he builds on it.**

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

10 As an expert builder using the grace that God gave me, I laid the foundation, and someone else is building on it. But each person must be careful how he builds on it.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

- In this passage Paul transitions from discussing believers as God's building to how believers build the local church, the temple of God

— The foundation of Christ crucified has been laid (2:2,5), and now believers can build on that foundation with either enduring or combustible materials. If one builds the local church with enduring materials, he will be rewarded, but if he builds with combustible materials, he will lose reward (yet still be saved).

- The bottom line is that believers should build the local church with enduring materials that consist of God's wisdom rather than the wisdom of this world
- Some interpret this passage to describe the building of the Christian life...we build on Christ, and some use good materials while others use poor materials, and the type of materials you use determines the kind of reward you receive. This may be a valid application, but it's not a valid interpretation.
- "...each person must be careful" - Paul is urging believers to live their life carefully, making sure you're building on Jesus Christ by way of service, using the right materials (under the Holy Spirit's power with the right motives)
- Now that Paul had departed and others were building on the foundation he laid, each man must be careful in how he builds on it. They must consider the quality of materials they use to build the structure of the local church.
- By breaching this subject, Paul is opening the door to the possibility of a non-abiding/persevering believer. He's not approving of it, he's saying it's an unfortunate possibility. By the very fact that Paul is warning about this shows that it is possible. There's no sense in warning about something that isn't a realistic possibility.

11 For no one can lay a **foundation** other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

11 After all, no one can lay any other foundation than the one that is already laid, and that is Jesus the Messiah.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- The Corinthians were effectively trying to lay another foundation by their emphasis on human wisdom, which had removed the power and wisdom of the cross and defiled the local church (v17)
- But Paul insists that no man can lay any other foundation other than the one in which he laid, which is Jesus Christ
- "...foundation" - Christ is the foundation of the church (Matt 16:18; Cf. Is 28:16; Rom 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6)
- Any other foundation, even one built on an apostle (i.e. Peter), is faulty. Jesus taught the same thing in Matt 16:18 when He said to Peter, You are a pebble, and upon this bedrock I will build My church (while pointing at His chest).
- Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, and the apostles and prophets only secondarily complete the foundation as His agents (Cf. Is 28:16; Eph 2:20). A church could never be built on Peter, just like a church could never be built on Paul.

12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with **gold, silver, preciousstones, wood, hay, or straw,**

12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

12 Whether a person builds on this foundation with gold, silver, expensive stones, wood, hay, or straw,

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

- Even though the quality of the foundation was the best, the condition of the building depends on what others build on top of the foundation

— In Paul's day, and today, builders use a combination of durable and flammable materials to build a structure

— Paul gives us a list of six commodities, in descending order of worth, all building on the same foundation, but with vastly differing results

— "...gold, silver, precious stones" - non-combustible; these durable materials represent activities that come from a reliance on Christ and Him crucified (the foundation). These works contribute to the permanent spiritual strengthening of believers.

— Building with enduring materials consists of actions that stem from the wisdom of God such as teaching the Word, training in evangelism, refuting error

— "...wood, hay, or straw" - combustible materials; these represent activities that arise out of human "wisdom" in all its forms such as introducing human philosophy, marketing, fundraisers, motivational speaking, psychology, and social work devoid of the gospel

— These works make no *lasting* contribution, although they may have served some temporary need.

Three are products of a creative act, not growth or development. Three are the result of natural growth and development. (old nature?) The largest load of hay or wood may be worth less than the smallest diamond...don't confuse size with preciousness.

Bema Seat

- Tribunal seat, judicial bench, judgment seat, throne
- Matt 27:19; John 19:13: Jesus brought before Pilate
- Acts 12:21: Herod Agrippa I addressed the people of Tyre and Sidon
- Acts 18:12,16-17: Paul accused before Proconsul Gallio (relic still among the ruins in Corinth)
- Acts 25:6,10,17: Paul brought before Festus at Caesarea

For additional information about this judgment & crowns, please see [Daniel](#)

[57 Resurrection Unto Reward \(Dan 12:3\).](#)

Paul wrote about the Bema Seat when he told the Corinthians about our final confrontation with Christ to determine the gain or loss of rewards (2 Cor 5:10-11). He echoed similar remarks in Rom 14:10-12.

Peter also wrote on the judgment of believers in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

John encouraged his disciples ("little children") to work now so that later they "may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28). This suggests that an unrewarded believer will withdraw in shame. It's a shrinking back from Christ, perhaps from a sense of guilt, with the believer producing the action rather than Christ putting the believer to shame.

This judgment of the believer, despite all failures, will have the praise of God (1 Cor 4:5; Cf. Rom 14:10; Eph 6:8; 2 Tim 4:8; Rev 22:12). Some build on sound doctrine and a love of God's Word. Others lead shallow lives with only a veneer of Christianity, satisfied with "wood, hay, and stubble." The first three are permanent. The second three will perish.

The Purpose of the Bema Seat Judgment of Believers

This judgment revolves around believer's gain or loss of rewards...it has nothing to do with a believer's salvation (John 5:24; 10:28-30; Rom 5:1-2; Phil 1:6). The provision of rewards for faithfulness is intended by the Lord to provide *motivation* for His people while we remain on the earth.

Paul was well aware of the prizes offered to athletes who competed at the Isthmian Games of his day (in fact, Paul was in Corinth during the games in Spring of 51 AD).

1 Cor 9:24-27:

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Paul admonished the church at Colosse:

Col 2:18: Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Paul encouraged Timothy from his death bed:

2 Tim 4:6-8:

- 6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.
- 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
- 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The apostle John warned:

2 John 8: Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Most Christians act as if a reward in heaven provides no vital motivation for more faithful living and Christian service. Some might wonder: Why do I need a reward or crown in heaven? Isn't it enough to be assured of heaven with the Lord Jesus forever? Even Jesus was motivated by the anticipation of a reward (Heb 12:2). The answer is clear: the crown a believer might receive will be for His honor, not our own. We will cast our crowns before His throne, for He is the only One worthy to receive glory and honor (Rev 4:10-11). Presumably then, we will be embarrassed and ashamed to have nothing to cast down before Him. It is surprising how often Scripture uses rewards to motivate obedience. The notion that believers should simply do our duty for duty's sake and never think about a reward is quite unscriptural. If God takes the trouble to urge our obedience with the promise of a reward, we should embrace that promise with gratitude, not despise or reject it. We should do good works for this reason. This, of course, is not salvation by works or merit...there is no sense that we have, in any way, shape or form, have paid God what the reward is worth. Jesus said that even if we have done everything commanded of us (and no one has), we have done no more than our duty (Luke 17:7-10). In that case, we are "unworthy" servants. Elsewhere, Scripture represents the reward as something out of all proportion to the service rendered (Matt 19:29; 20:1-16; 25:45-47; Luke 7:36-50; 12:37).

Judgments

Throughout most of church history, there has been an expectation of a single judgment that would follow Christ's return. This is reflected, for instance, in that part of the Apostles' Creed which states that Christ "...ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, whence he will come to judge the living and the dead." The Reformers seem to have affirmed this expectation without sensing a need to elaborate multiple and distinctive judgments. John Calvin, applauding the integrity and reliability of the Apostles' Creed, understood this statement to imply a single judgment following Christ's return.

However, as we increase the "resolving power" of our interpretation of Scripture, we see that there are indeed multiple judgments. Observing the reference in Rev 20 to two resurrections separated by 1000 years in which Satan is bound, it is evident that the resurrection of the righteous is distinct from the resurrection of the lost. Correspondingly, the judgment of the lost is distinct from that of believers (the second resurrection to appear at the "Great White Throne" judgment pertains only to the lost).

Timing of the Bema Seat Judgment of Believers

Most dispensational premillennialists believe the Bema Seat judgment will occur in heaven after the pre-Tribulational Rapture of the church and before the Second Coming. The primary argument for this is made in Rev 19:8. The "Bride" (the Church) is in heaven, and clothed in the "righteousness of the saints" (19:8), indicating that she has already been rewarded. The "righteousness of the saints" does not refer to the imputed righteousness of Christ. Rather, it refers to the righteousness that has survived examination and become the basis for reward.

However, other passages imply that the believer's judgment may occur after the Second Coming, during the Millennium: Matt 16:27; Luke 9:26; 1 Cor 4:5; Rev 22:12.

Scripture's Five Crowns

(Rev 4:10; 3:11; 2 John 8)

SCRIPTURE	CROWN	PURPOSE
1 Cor. 9:24-27	Incorruptible	Gaining mastery over the flesh
1 Thess. 2:19-20	Rejoicing	Soul winning
Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10	Life	Enduring trials
1 Pet. 5:2-4	Glory	Shepherding God's people
2 Tim. 4:8	Righteousness	Longing for His appearing

What do we do with these crowns, should we earn them? We cast them on the glassy sea, before the Throne of God.

13 each one's **work** will become **evident**; for **theday** will show it because **it is to be** revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each one's work.

13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

13 the workmanship of each person will become evident, for the day of judgment will show what it is, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's action.

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for theday shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

- "...work" - refers to the six commodities listed in v12

- "...evident" - at the future judgment seat of Christ (Cf. 2 Cor 5:10); it is the durability of our works that will become apparent: did your contributions originate from the wisdom of God or the wisdom of men?

- "...the day" - the day believers stand before God and give an account of the stewardship of their life (Cf. Luke 19:11-27; 1 Cor 1:8; 2 Cor 5:10; Phil 1:6,10; 2 Tim 2:12,18; 4:8; Rev 22:12)
- "...it" - the "work"; note that it's not people who are put into the fire, but rather their "works." Thus this can't be describing the fires of purgatory or hell, but the fire that tests whether works are enduring or combustible.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on **itremains, he will receive a reward.**

14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

14 If what a person has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

- "...it" - the foundation of Christ
- "...remains" - if the believer has made a lasting contribution to the building of the church, by emphasizing some aspect of the gospel, they will receive a reward
- Permanency: whatever you have done for Christ will remain after the fire. Everything else will burn.
- "...he will receive a reward" - the quality of materials we use to build the local church are either rewardable, or not. If we pursue building with the wisdom of God, keeping our focus on teaching the Word, training in evangelism, and refuting false doctrine, we will be rewarded for that contribution to the church.
- But if we pursue building with the wisdom of men, focusing on human philosophy, marketing, fundraisers, etc., they we will suffer a loss of reward for not making a lasting contribution to the local church.
- The rewards in view seem to refer to opportunities for responsibility and to glorify God by serving Him (Cf. Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27)

15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will **suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet only so as through fire.**

15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

15 If his work is burned up, he will suffer loss. However, he himself will be saved, but it will be like going through fire.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

- Paul warns the carnal Corinthian church about losing rewards at the judgment seat of Christ because their works (not them personally) would go through a fire, and those works done outside of Christ would be burned up (amount to nothing, be unrewarded)

- If Paul was an Arminian, he would've told them that if they didn't have enough good works, they would lose their salvation...but Paul was clearly not an Arminian. If Paul was a Calvinist, he would have told them that because they didn't have enough good works, they were never really saved...but clearly Paul was not a Calvinist.
- "...suffer loss" - we don't know how severe the "loss" is, but with every loss there is at least momentary frustration and regret. This is the reason Christians need to keep our thoughts, hearts and lives under control at all times...not because we'll miss the Rapture, but because we'll forfeit rewards at the Bema Seat of Christ (Cf. 1 John 2:28).
- We all can identify what suffering loss feels like...the loss of a friend, a relationship, a financial loss, etc. Paul here is saying that non-persevering believers will have these same feelings/emotions when their works are burned up and they are unrewarded
- When Paul uses the term "loss" in describing a person who is "saved" he is describing a non-persevering believer. The loss here is the loss of something that was available to them (rewards) but that they didn't earn. The loss is regret for missed opportunities that they didn't take advantage of throughout their life.
- That which is done for sake of personal gain, popularity, influence, or its impression on the world, will be for nought (John 15:16)
- Paul uses the future Bema Seat judgment of believers as motivation for us to good works in this life. Some will ask, Why should I care about rewards if I'm already in heaven? First, because God told us about them (see quote from Samuel Hoyt below).
- But at the same time, we need to be careful not to turn heaven into hell by thinking that there will be some sort of punishment for the believer whose works are burnt up, as that will not be the case. There will be some temporary regret at the fact that God fervently desired to give us rewards, and provided the power for us to receive those rewards, but we either didn't utilize our resources in Christ or were ignorant of them.
- "...he himself" - in context, a carnal Christian, a believer with little to no good works to show for in their life or remaining after going through the fire. This verse shows that there will be people in heaven who have performed absolutely no good works at all during their time on the earth.
- "...will be saved" - *sōzō*, future tense, referring to our glorification. The materials that believers build with can never remove the foundation of Christ, who is perfect. The focus is on the believer's works, but assurance is given even if the works are not enduring.
- This verse is a death blow to Arminianism and Calvinism's doctrine of perseverance of the saints. The believer who had no good works, all of his works were worthless and burned up, yet Paul clearly says that he is still saved.
- "...yet *only* so as through fire" - the carnal Corinthians would still make it to heaven, they are still saved, but they will smell of smoke when they enter

— Paul compared an unfaithful servant to a man pulled to safety through the flames of his burning house (Cf. Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). A believer will have greater or lesser opportunities to serve God—during the kingdom and in heaven—in proportion to our faithfulness now.

— Lot (2 Peter 2:8): Abraham was not vexed; he had separated himself from the world. God destroyed Sodom but saved Lot, "yet as by fire." Everything he had lived for was burned up.

[1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Peter 3:3-5; 1 John 2:28; 2 John 8; Rev 3:11]

The Bible describes the judgment seat of Christ for one main purpose: to affect the way we think and live—to motivate us to anticipate with joy His return and to live our lives to please Him and not worry about the way others treat us or what they may think about us.

The judgment seat of Christ might be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have been graduated, and they are grateful for what they did achieve. To over-emphasize the sorrow aspect of the judgment is to make heaven into hell. To under-emphasize the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential.

Inheritance vs. Reward		
Distinctive?	GIFT	REWARD
Received by?	All believers	Some believers
Basis?	God's child	Faithfulness
Example?	Inheritance	Crown
Scripture?	Col 1:12	1 Cor 3:15; 9:24-27 2 John 8 Rev 3:11

Dennis Rokser, UNRAVELING A CONFUSING VERSE: ANOTHER LOOK AT "INHERITING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, p. 4.

All through Corinthians, Paul never challenges their salvation/justification. In fact, in 1 Cor 1:2 Paul calls them (positionally) "sanctified" and also calls them "saints." They certainly

weren't being *progressively* sanctified in their daily lives, but they were positionally sanctified, indicating that they were believers in Christ.

The most important thing you can do in life is to trust Jesus for your salvation, because that determines your destiny. The next most important thing you can do in life is to, rather than live for yourself and do what you want, is to give your life to Christ and become a bondservant. We don't do this to determine our salvation...that is already determined based on our faith in Christ. We do it to determine degrees of reward in heaven at the Bema Seat. There remains the prospect that believers can forfeit rewards.

Once our rewards are received, we cast them at Jesus' feet (Rev 4:10), not to pay Him back (we can't pay Him back), and not to earn salvation (salvation cannot be earned), but to, out of gratitude, glorify Jesus Christ for what He has done through me.

12 Areas of Judgment for the Believer

1. How we treat other believers (Heb 6:10; Matt 10:41-42)
2. How we exercise our authority over others (Heb 13:17; James 3:13)
3. How we employ our God-given abilities (1 Cor 12:4,11; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10)
4. How we use our money (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 9:6-7; 1 Tim 6:17-19)
5. How we spend our time (Ps 90:12; Eph 5:16; Col 4:5; 1 Peter 1:17)
6. How much we suffer for Jesus (Matt 5:11-12; Mark 10:29-30; Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17; 1 Peter 4:12-13)
7. How we run that particular race which God has chosen for us (1 Cor 9:24; Phil 2:16; 3:13-14; Heb 12:1)
8. How effectively we control the old nature (1 Cor 9:25-27)
9. How many souls we witness to and win to Christ (Prov 11:30; Dan 12:3; 1 Thess 2:19-20)
10. How we react to temptation (James 1:2-3; Rev 2:10)
11. How much the doctrine of the Rapture means to us (2 Tim 4:8-9)
12. How faithful we are to the Word of God and the flock of God (Acts 20:26-28; 2 Tim 4:1-2; 1 Peter 5:2-4)

Our secrets will also be judged (Luke 12:2-3; Rom 2:16). These "secrets" include the motives behind our thoughts, words, and actions. God is infinitely concerned about the true reasons why we do and say things.

We will also be evaluated on the basis of how much we knew of His will and Word (Luke 12:48). Ignorance of His will is culpable: we should do everything possible to learn what His will is for our lives through reading/studying His Word. He sees and knows everything (Heb 4:12-13). He judges without partiality (Col 3:23-25; 1 Peter 1:17).

The NT writers spoke of these rewards, symbolically, as "crowns" (Cf. 9:25; Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Rev 2:10; 3:11). It is perfectly proper to serve Christ in order to gain a crown to one day lay at the feet of our Savior (Cf. Matt 6:20). The "crown" is a symbol of a life of faithful service that we performed out of gratitude for His grace to us (Cf. Rev 4:4,10). If the idea of serving God for a reward makes you uncomfortable, may I suggest that you read again the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). There Jesus repeatedly appealed to His hearers to follow His teaching with the prospect of receiving an eternal reward for doing so. Scripture appeals to us on many levels to serve the Lord. Certainly love for Him should be our primary motivation. However, the biblical writers also urged believers to serve the Lord out of love for other people, the fear of the Lord, the prospect of having to give an account of our lives to Him at the judgment seat, and for other reasons. But interestingly, the motive of reward is more prominent throughout the NT than the motive of love or fear.

This section is usually taught to refer to an individual believer's life. That is a proper application, but not a proper interpretation. The interpretation is how each believer contributes to the local church. What ideas is the believer bringing into the local church? Are they bringing ideas that originate in human reason and experience into the church to try to bring about growth? Or are they bringing ideas that originate in God's revelation into the church? The difference will be seen at the judgment seat of Christ when each believer's work is evaluated and eternal rewards are given.

A Warning Against Destroying the Church

16 Do you not know that you are a **temple** of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

16 You know that you are God's sanctuary and that God's Spirit lives in you, don't you?

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

- "Do you not know" - a rhetorical question Paul used 10x in this letter as a mild rebuke (Cf. 5:6; 6:2,3,9,15,16,19; 9:13,24); each time the question introduces an indisputable statement and the answer is strikingly obvious

— "you" - plural, referring to the collective believers in Corinth who made up the church

— "...temple" - *naos*, singular, referring to the Corinthian church (a group of believers) as God's temple

— The Greek has two words for "temple": *hieron* refers to the entire Temple compound; *naos* refers to the most holy place where Shekinah Glory was enthroned above the winged cherubim on the lid of the ark of the covenant. The local church is likened to the *naos*, the most holy place, and a dwelling of the Spirit of God.

- This indicates that the local church (the congregants) are holy (set apart by God)
- This passage refers to the local church (specifically, the one in Corinth), not individual believers; this is clear from Paul's use of the plural "you" and the singular "temple." However, individual believers are also the temple of God (Cf. 6:19; 2 Cor 6:14-16), as is the universal church (Eph 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5).

17 If anyone **destroys** the temple of God, God will **destroy** that person; for **the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.**

17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

17 If anyone destroys God's sanctuary, God will destroy him, for God's sanctuary is holy. And you are that sanctuary!

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

- "...destroys" [2x] - *phtheirō*, better translated as "ruins" or "corrupts"

— You "ruin" or "corrupt" the temple of God (the local church) by introducing human wisdom into the purposes of the church, then God will "ruin" or "corrupt" that person (referring to divine discipline)

— This is the strongest warning in the NT about taking the Church lightly and destroying it with the world's wisdom and division. If any servant of the Lord tears down the Church, instead of building it up, God will destroy them (Acts 9:1-4); He usually does this by temporal discipline, one way or the other.

— "...the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" - the reason God will unleash divine discipline upon those who bring in worldly wisdom to build the church is because they bring a corrupting influence into the most holy place (the local body of believers)

— The church is "holy" in that God set it aside to glorify Himself, even though it is not always as holy in its conduct as it is in its calling

— Believers should not bring human wisdom into the plans for the local church. Marketing gimmicks, financial campaigns, the music of the world, mysticism, humanist philosophy, legalism, licentiousness, etc. are the ways of the world. However they are often used to try to build the church, produce holiness, and expand horizons, but Paul says they bring a corrupting influence into the holy place.

Human Wisdom and Limited Blessing

Paul now forms a preliminary conclusion to the argument he began in 1:18: if his readers continued to take the natural view of their teachers and form divisions of followers, they would limit God's blessing on them needlessly.

(F) Paul's plea for his audience to acquire divine wisdom (3:18-23)

18 *Take care that no one deceives himself.* If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, **he must become foolish**, so that he may become wise.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.

18 Let no one deceive himself. If any of you thinks he is wise in the ways of this world, he must become a fool to become really wise.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

- "...deceives himself" - self-deception is a threat that all believer should be aware of and guard against. In Corinth, the self-deception was that human wisdom gives one an edge in contributing to the well-being of the local church. But in reality, it was just causing divisions.

- "...he must become foolish" - the right course, according to Paul, was for them to become foolish from the vantage point of the world in order to know the true wisdom of God

— Paul urged his readers to turn away from the "wise" attitudes of the world and adopt God's viewpoint ("become foolish" from the world's perspective), so they could become truly wise

— What truly gives one an edge in the local church is the indwelling Holy Spirit, who emphasizes Christ and Him crucified (Cf. 2:2)

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the sight of God. For it is written: "*He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE BY THEIR CRAFTINESS*";

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "*He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness*";

19 For the wisdom of this world is nonsense in God's sight. For it is written, "*He catches the wise with their own trickery*";

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*.

- The reason Paul says to "become foolish" (v18) is because the best wisdom man can produce ("the wisdom of this world") is "foolishness" compared to the wisdom God revealed in His Word

— In 1:18-25, Paul said the wisdom of God ("Christ crucified") is foolishness to the world. Here, he makes the same point in reverse: the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God.

- "...THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE BY THEIR CRAFTINESS" - Paul quotes Job 5:13 here (and Ps 94:11 in v20) as evidence that the OT taught the same principle: the highest wisdom of man is foolishness to God when compared to the revelation of the wisdom of God by the Spirit who searches the depths of God (2:12-13).

- In Job 5:13, Eliphaz the Temanite compared God to a hunter who catches Job in his craftiness. Man's ability to reason cannot stand up against God's sovereignty.
- Unbelievers come up with crafty arguments, but the Lord catches their errors. The Lord knows their reasoning processes are devoid of truth.

20 and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE THOUGHTS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE useless."
 20 and again, "The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless."
 20 and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are worthless."
 20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.
 - Quoted from Ps 94:11 (see note on v19 above)
 - Ps 94:11 [LXX]: "of the men" is replaced by "of the wise" in Paul's interpretation
 - The "thoughts of the wise" of this world are useless regarding the most important issues of life
 — Arrogant men boast that they are safe because the Lord neither sees nor pays attention (Ps 94:7); such opinions are futile and useless (Cf. Rom 1:21)

21 **So then, no one is to be boasting in people. For all things belong to you,**
 21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you,
 21 So let no one boast about human beings, since everything belongs to you,
 21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's;
 - "So then" - *oste*, Paul now gives us his logical conclusion...
 - "...no one is to be boasting in people" - since human wisdom is foolish before God and devoid of truth, we should not boast in men. It is human wisdom to boast in men, like the Corinthians were doing when they exalted Paul, Apollos, or Cephas (1:12; 3:4).
 — It was wrong for the Corinthians to line up behind certain of God's servants, as that not only limits God's blessing on them, but rejects God's good gifts by preventing them from appreciating all the people that God has sent to teach and bless them.
 - "...For all things belong to you" - there was no reason for the Corinthians to claim only one servant of God when He had given them "all things" (hyperbole)

Perhaps we cannot help but have our personal preferences when it comes to the way different men minister the Word. But we must not permit our personal preferences to become divisive prejudices. In fact, the preacher I may enjoy the least may be the one I need the most! [Wiersbe]

22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the **world or life or death, or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,**

22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,

22 whether Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, the present, or the future— everything belongs to you,

22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's;

- All of God's servants, including Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (Peter), were His gifts to the Corinthians. Paul's point is why limit God's blessing by siding with one servant when God has given them several?
- "...world" - even more than giving them servants, God had given them the world in that they would one day inherit it and reign over it with Christ. Everything belongs to the Christian in the sense that they will inherit it and reign over it with Christ one day.
- "...life" - life contains many blessings for the believer who has the indwelling Spirit (2:12-13)
- "...death" - even death is a good gift for believers because it ushers us into the presence of the Lord (Cf. 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23)
- "...things present" - the things of this life
- "...things to come" - the things of the next life
- This list is similar to Rom 8:32,38-39; the figure of speech used is a *merism*, describing objects that are poles apart that are intended to encompass everything between them
- "...all things belong to you" - again Paul uses hyperbole (Cf. v21) to emphasize all the good things that God has given to bless Christians
- He does this because the Corinthians were limiting God's blessings by adopting human wisdom that taught them to side with one servant over another. Paul called this self-deception (v18).

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

23 and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

23 but you belong to the Messiah, and the Messiah belongs to God.

23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

- All the Corinthian believers belonged to Christ, not just those of the "Christ party" (Cf. 1:12); they belonged to Him, not to one of His servants
- "...Christ belongs to God" - in the sense of being His beloved Servant and the one under His protection and authority
- Since the Corinthians belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God, then the Corinthians belong to both Christ and God and were under His protection and authority. Because of this reality, there was no logical reason to limit God's blessing to just one servant. They had a much larger pool of blessing to draw from.

— If the Corinthians would boast in Christ and Him crucified, rather than argue and debate about their favorite teacher, it would bring about the unity that thus far had not yet been achieved in Corinth (Cf. 1:10)