

**Lesson 12: “All Belongs To You”****1 Corinthians 3:16-23****Craig Crawshaw**

In our study companion book “Be Wise,” the author, Warren Wiersbe, points out that in chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians Paul is speaking about the Word of God being used in three different ways:

1. As food for the soul – either milk or meat
2. As seed for growth – planted and watered by faithful laborers
3. As building materials – for growing God’s temple, the Church

In these metaphors we FEED upon the Word, we PLANT the seed of the Word, and in today’s passage we BUILD the church by the correct teaching of God’s Word, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 3:11** *For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

This verse is the key to the chapter, for it is Jesus Christ (and Him crucified) upon which every God-honoring church must build. And failure to do so was part of the problem with the Corinthian church, and sadly, of so many churches today. Building on the foundation of Jesus should give (1) forgiveness of the past, (2) strength for the present and (3) hope for the future.

In verse 12, Paul speaks of materials one could use to build on this foundation, which I take to mean the teaching and ministry of the Word. There could be (metaphorically) gold, silver or precious stones, which would be the precious lessons and doctrines taught in truth and love. Or there could be (metaphorically) wood, hay or straw, which would be the “cheap” teaching of watered-down doctrine or trivial ministries that were not true to the Word or expressed in love.

Paul goes on to say in verses 14 and 15 that the quality of the “building materials” used will be judged, and that poor teaching will come to no eternal value, resulting in a loss of reward on the part of the teacher(s).

And then in verses 16 and 17 the implication is that to build on the foundation of Jesus with poor and shoddy teaching is to “destroy” the very temple of God that is the Church. And this brings us to our passage of the day.

**1 Corinthians 3:16-23** *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 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.*

*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. 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”; and again, “The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.”*

*So let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 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, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.*

**THE TEMPLE OF GOD (verses 16-17)**

Now verse 16 is a commonly quoted verse – another of the special “3:16” verses of the New Testament. But it is usually quoted in reference to an individual Christian being the temple of God, dwelt by the Spirit. The problem with this interpretation is the verse that follows, which says *“if any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him.”* This would seem to indicate that suicide (destroying the temple of the body) would be punished by God, possibly “destroyed” in hell. Yet this is not the teaching of the Bible.

No, even though we Christians are indeed individually a “temple of God” indwelt by the Spirit (as Paul will affirm later in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20), this is not the meaning of this verse. In context, we see Paul talking about the building of the Church on the foundation of Jesus Christ and the importance of building upon that foundation with appropriate building materials. So the context of verse 16-17 must be: “do you not know that you, the Church, is a temple of God” where the Spirit dwells. And if someone uses inappropriate spiritual building materials he will be judged and be destroyed. And this word “destroyed” is better understood as “desecrated.” So he who “desecrates” the temple of the Church, God will “desecrate” or punish, probably indicating lack of reward.

The application to us as individuals should be clear. Jesus is building His church, and since “the gates of hell” (Matt. 16:18) cannot prevail against it, then neither should I attempt to do so. I must seek to build up the church with my gifts and talents, with my love and devotion to Jesus, the Head of the Church, and with my best God-assisted efforts to be “holy as He is holy.”

**1 Peter 1:15-16** *But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

## PERILOUS BUILDING

So what are the perilous building materials that are like “wood, hay and straw”? What are the dangers that Paul here warns of as we strive to build a healthy and holy church?

1. Disregard for the foundation of Jesus Christ alone – forgetting our “first love” (Rev. 2:4)
2. Shoddy building materials of lazy and watered-down Scripture messages
3. Being part of the problem (as critics) and not part of the solution (as diligent defenders)
4. Relying on worldly wisdom and methods (verses 18-20) and human answers (verse 21)

## ALL THINGS BELONG TO YOU

So now, finally, we come to the positive encouragement and reinforcement of how we are to build properly as both an individual and a church. Paul moves from warnings to soaring perspective.

“All things belong to you” (as a church and a believer) is our FREEDOM IN CHRIST. The potential is boundless when “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13) and “nothing is impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37). Here these words of God’s riches of Self given to His children:

**Romans 8:32** *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*

**2 Peter 1:3** *Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature ...*

“Partakers of the divine nature” – WOW! This is sharing in the very being of God – an invitation we really can’t refuse, if we understand its immensity. This is “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) that we can share, but also His very being. This is the true meaning of “communion” – that deep, intimate relationship that is a melding of divine and human until we become more and more like the divine and less and less like the human.

I said earlier that this “sharing in the divine nature” because “all things belong to you” is FREEDOM IN CHRIST. This was Paul’s message to the Galatian churches:

**Galatians 5:1** *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.*

Freedom! All things belong to me! No boundaries! Yes, but then Paul reminds the Corinthians and us in verse 23:

**1 Corinthians 3:23** *And you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.*

All things are ours for the taking, discovering and enjoying – but always in the understanding that we are “owned” or belonged to by Christ, and He by God the Father. Christ and the Father’s holy perfection binds us to not use our freedom as a license to do anything inappropriate as we build our lives and our church. Here is Paul’s respective qualifier to the Galatian churches:

**Galatians 5:13** *For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

## CONCLUSION

As we at Oaks strive to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, reinforced with solid Bible teaching and tireless loving ministry to those in need, may we never forget that both our church and The Church

universal is a holy temple of God, wherein resides the very Spirit of God. May we treat her with reverence as to the "bride of Christ."

And let us never deceive ourselves into thinking that we can bring the wisdom of the world to perform the wisdom of God. We must not be about political causes, philosophical ideologies, consumerism, individualism and political correctness. We must be about loving God, loving our fellow man, sharing the gospel, meeting the needs of the downtrodden, making disciples and pleasing and glorifying God above all else.

And we do this by "sharing in the very being of God"! I close with a delightful and provocative story as told by Bob Benson, who was a Nashville music publisher and popular Christian speaker. May this speak to you about how much we need to know that "all things belong to you."

### **THE BALONEY SANDWICH** (a story told by Bob Benson)

Do you remember when they had old-fashioned Sunday School picnics? I do. As I recall, it was back in the "olden days," as my kids would say, back before they had air-conditioning. They said, "We'll all meet at Sycamore Lodge in Shelby Park at 4:30 on Saturday. You bring your supper and we'll furnish the iced tea.

But if you were like me, you came home at the last minute. When you got ready to pack your picnic, all you could find in the refrigerator was one dried up piece of baloney and just enough mustard in the bottom of the jar that you got it all over your knuckles trying to get to it. And just two slices of stale bread to go with it. So you made your baloney sandwich and wrapped it in an old brown bag and went to the picnic.

When it came time to eat, you sat at the end of a table and spread out your sandwich. But the folks who sat next to you brought a feast. The lady was a good cook and she had worked hard all day to get ready for the picnic. And she had fried chicken and baked beans and potato salad and homemade rolls and olives and celery. And two big homemade chocolate pies to top it off. That's what they spread out there next to you while you sat with your baloney sandwich. But they said to you, "Why don't we just put it all together?"

"No, I couldn't do that. I couldn't even think of it," you murmured in embarrassment, with one eye on the chicken. "Oh, come on, there's plenty of chicken and plenty of pie and plenty of everything. And we just love baloney sandwiches. Let's just put it all together." And so you did, and there you sat, eating like a king when you came like a pauper.

One day, it dawned on me that God had been saying just that sort of thing to me. "Why don't you take what you have and what you are, and I will take what I have and what I am, and we'll share it together." I began to see that when I put what I had and was and am and hope to be with what he is, I had stumbled upon the bargain of a lifetime.

I get to thinking sometimes, thinking of me sharing with God. When I think of how little I bring, and how much he brings and invites me to share, I know that I should be so filled with awe and wonder that I could hardly speak. I know that I don't have enough love or faith or grace or mercy or wisdom, but he does. He has all of those things in abundance and he says, "Let's just put it all together."

Consecration, denial, sacrifice, commitment, and crosses were all kind of hard words to me until I saw them in the light of sharing. It isn't just a case of me kicking in what I have because God is the biggest kid in the neighborhood and he wants it all for himself. He is saying, "Everything that I possess is available to you. Everything that I am and can be to a person, I will be to you."

When I think about it like that, it really amuses me to see somebody running along through life hanging on to their dumb bag with that stale baloney sandwich in it saying, "God's not going to get my sandwich! No, sirree, this is mine!" Did you ever see anybody like that—so needy—just about half-starved to death yet hanging on for dear life. You have been invited to something better, you know. You have been invited to share in the very being of God. It's not that God needs, your sandwich. The fact is, you need his chicken.