

## 1st Corinthians Chapters 2 and 3 – John Karmelich

1. When we left chapter 1, Paul was discussing the gospel message in comparison to the "wisdom of man". Paul's main point seems to be that human wisdom in its sum total is far inferior compared to the "foolishness" of God. The Gospel story is "foolishness" to human wisdom.
  - a) Without the grace of God, the message of the Gospel cannot be fully appreciated. One who doesn't believe the Gospel message may intellectually comprehend it, but that is different from a person who has the Holy Spirit inside of them who is now living for God.
  - b) Such an unsaved person cannot personally comprehend God living inside of us.
2. This leads us to Chapter 2. While the end of Chapter 1 was Paul teaching about accepting the gospel message, Chapter 2 opens with Paul himself explaining his purpose for being an apostle and his purpose of his 18-month stay in Corinth to start the church.
  - a) It would help to set the scene again. Paul had previously spent 18 months in Corinth preaching the Gospel and starting the first Christian church in that location.
  - b) Those 18 months have come and gone. Paul is now working in another part of Greece. He hears of problems and divisions among the Christians living in Corinth. Paul wrote this letter is to deal with those problems and give some "biblical insight" on how to deal with problems in this church.
3. My lofty title for this lesson is, "Understanding what we live for". This should be easy. ☺
  - a) As Christians we are to live our lives for God in all that we do. We are to understand that everything the "world" (things other than God) has to offer will eventually come to nothing. It is a waste of time to live for anything other than God.
  - b) That is Paul's main point in this chapter. Paul is trying to teach the believers to learn to live for God and not themselves. A problem with this church, as stated in Chapter 1, is that they were in factions. Some followed one teacher, some another. Paul is trying to teach them and us we all live for Christ and not some human teacher. Jesus is the focus of our living and no human teacher is any more important than any other Christian.
  - c) As you read this chapter and this lesson, think about ways in your own life (as I do mine) in which we are still "compromising" with the world's way of doing things as opposed to God's way of doing things and what aspect of our lives need to be changed!
  - d) On that scary thought, we'll start the chapter. ☺
4. Chapter 2, Verse 1: When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.
  - a) The first issue Paul brings up is his own apostleship and his purpose for preaching the gospel in Corinth. Remember that the first problem mentioned in Chapter 1 had to do with church divisions. Some Christians in Corinth followed Paul, others Peter, others Apollos. As I stated in the last lesson, Apollos was originally a disciple of John the Baptist and became an early disciple as mentioned in the book of Acts. Paul is trying to teach that they all should follow Christ and they all are preaching the same gospel message.
  - b) Here in Verse 1, Paul is saying he did not possess either eloquence speaking ability or superior wisdom to proclaim the Gospel message. Paul's point is that it is neither human wisdom nor "his own superior intelligence" in which he uses to preach the gospel. He only preached what God told Paul to preach.
5. Verse 2: For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
  - a) Paul's point is that his only motivation when he preached in Corinth was to tell people about Jesus, who He is, and the fact He is God and was crucified for our sins.
  - b) The implied point is Paul didn't care about money or fame for himself. All Paul wanted to do is preach the Gospel message and then let God worry about the results.

- c) Think about someone trying to preach a message to you. Our first thought might be, "OK, how much is this going to cost me? When's the financial sales pitch coming?" I think one of Paul's points is that he didn't come for personal gain or even to start a church based on "his" human wisdom, but strictly to spread the gospel message.
6. Verse 3: I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. <sup>4</sup> My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.
- a) Paul's point in Verse 3 is that he preached the gospel in "fear", not knowing what was going to happen to him, or how people would react to that message. If you study the book of Acts, before arriving in Corinth, Paul had suffered from persecution in some of the previous cities he has been too. Now here was Paul coming Corinth. The City of Corinth was known in the ancient world as an "anything goes" type of place. I can see why Paul was scared at this point in his life.
- b) Paul's main point of this section is that he wasn't preaching the gospel based on his own wisdom or his own speaking ability, but based on God's decision to work through Paul.
- c) When we have the privilege of leading others to Jesus, it is not because of our great ability to present the gospel message, but because God's grace was given to the person to accept Christ and accept the Gospel message. All the credit goes to God and none to us.
- i) That doesn't mean we don't have to try in the first place. God chooses to work through people. We don't preach Christ in order to get "notches in our belt for every person saved". It is God's job to save people. At the same time, Jesus said that if we are to be His disciples, part of our job is spreading the gospel message to others. Jesus called on all of us to make disciples.
- d) Paul's purpose for stating this is to get the Corinthian church to focus on their relationship with God and not the individuals that led them to Christ. Remember that this church suffered from "fractions". Paul's method of reuniting the church is for them to realize that all the gospel power comes from God and He alone, should get all the credit.
7. Verse 6: We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.
- a) Paul says he speaks of a message of "wisdom" among the mature. What did he mean by that? Most likely it refers to how to grow as a Christian as opposed to just the basic message of the cross. Paul will get more into this in Verse 13.
- i) Christianity is a lifetime learning process. We don't get any more saved than the first moment we accept Christ. At the same time God works in our lives to change us into the person He wants us to be. This is the "message of wisdom" Paul is talking about. The idea is once one is saved, we need to spend regular time learning about God and what He wants for our lives. This is the idea behind the "message of wisdom".
- b) Paul's other point is that the "message of wisdom" is based on what God teaches us through the bible about how to live. It is nothing that Paul just "came up with" or anything the world comes up for that matter. To live a life for God is usually contradictory to the "world's way" of doing things. The "wisdom and the rules of this age" are "coming to nothing" in that they will be judged for rejecting the Gospel message. This "age" refers from the time of Jesus 1st Coming to the events of Jesus 2nd Coming.
8. Verse 7: No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
- a) The message of the cross and the message of God dying for our sins was "hidden" until the event itself happened. One can get clues of the event in the Old Testament, but it was just that, clues. I doubt God expected Old Testament Jews to understand the Gospel message until the generation that saw the event itself.

- b) Paul's point is the event of the crucifixion was a mystery until the event happened. If the Jews and Romans of that time knew the crucifixion of Jesus led to a major religion, I'm sure the leaders in Israel in that day never would have agreed to crucify Jesus. Paul's speaking as if the Jews or the Romans had the power to change history.
  - c) There is an interesting "balance" to history in that 1) God knows all things and at the same time 2) He holds us accountable for our actions. Does God know in advance when we are going to mess up? Sure, but we are still held accountable for our actions. Whether or not we like those rules, we live in God's world, and He gets to decide the rules.
9. Verse 9: However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -
- a) This verse is referring to eternal rewards for the believer. No living human eyes have seen or heard or even correctly conceived of what God has planned for believers.
  - b) The reason Paul states this is to remind us of what is important. Remember a few verses back Paul stated his fear about preaching in Corinth. Here, Paul is reminding us that the eternal rewards are worth whatever suffering happens at this time.
  - c) Verse 9 is a quote of Isaiah 64:4. The idea is that no one knows what will happen to each of future. God works on our lives ultimately for His glory. We have to remember that as we go through various trials. The point is the human mind cannot comprehend the "plans" God has for our future.
10. Verse 10: but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.
- a) One can read Verse 9 as being about "eternal life". However, it also is about the life of the saved believer "here and now". The "here and now" is the important point here as Verse 10 states that God has revealed His plans to us through the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that God reveals all of our future plans to us. It does mean that God communicates to us what His desires for our lives and we can learn some things about our eternal future by studying His word and taking those words to heart.
  - b) Let's talk for a moment about the Holy Spirit himself. The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity is God-Himself in the 2nd person. We consider the Holy Spirit a separate entity in that He works through our lives and through people in the world. His primary function is to draw people to God. He works in unbelievers to convict their hearts of the truth and lead them to God. He works in the lives of believers drawing us closer to God.
    - i) As Paul alluded to earlier, it is not by human wisdom that people accept the Gospel message. It is the Holy Spirit convicting our hearts that the message is true. If we can remember that, we won't worry so much about our "presentation style" as we share the Gospel with others. Remember it is not our great speaking ability that leads others to God, but the Holy Spirit working in their hearts.
    - ii) The other thing to understand about the Holy Spirit is that He is the full "essence" of what God the Father is. No human can fully understand what another person is thinking and what another person "is" unless the spirit of that person can be transferred. Even a long term married couple cannot fully understand what the spouse is thinking, as we cannot fully get inside the "spirit of that other person."
    - iii) We as Christians have the privilege of understanding God as His spirit is working in our lives to teach us His will for our lives at any one moment. It doesn't mean we can understand everything about God or even know everything He wills for our lives on a day-to-day basis.
    - iv) It does mean we can communicate with God and we can receive His instructions for our lives as well as the fact He listens to us.

- v) God mainly communicates to us today through His word. At the same time God can communicate thoughts to us directly any time He wants.
  - vi) I've never accepted the idea that we have to "strain" to hear God's voice. If God is God, He can communicate with us anytime He wants, any way He wants to. God hasn't lost our phone number. If God has something He wants to say to you or me, He can do it anytime He wants, any way He wants.
  - vii) When someone tells me they have a message for me from God, my first thought is, "What, has God lost my phone number?" When someone gives me a prophecy about something in my life, I don't assume it to be true. I watch and wait and see.
  - viii) "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1st John 4:1 NIV).
  - c) Meanwhile, back to the text. As I alluded to earlier, no one knows the thoughts of another man unless one has his "spirit". At the same way, no one can know the thoughts of God unless one has His spirit in His life. If one is a born-again believer, one has the spirit of God living inside of them (us) and He wants to direct our lives.
    - i) Another key point is that even though God is living inside of us, God never forces His will upon us. We have the right to "rebel" at anytime against God's will.
    - ii) How do we know if we are doing God's will at any moment? For starters, one has to ask is what they are doing something the "bible" would consider acceptable. If one is stealing, one is not doing God's will for that moment.
    - iii) On many issues, it is not clear what is God's will. Often God wants to test us to see how we react and it is common for God to be silent in our lives at times on some key decision we have to make.
  - d) Another point the text makes is a reason we receive the Holy Spirit is to know what is God's will for our lives and to know we are saved. One can think of the Holy Spirit as a "down payment" of the eternal benefits being planned for as followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit living inside of us is our evidence of our salvation and evidence that God is working in our lives to change us for the better. (See John 14:17.)
    - i) OK, so how do I know if the Holy Spirit is living in me? For starters, is there should be a moment in time when one first remembers giving their lives to Christ. If one cannot think of such a moment, do it "now" for safety.
    - ii) Another sign is to ask oneself, "Am I interested in pleasing God? Do I want to live my life to please Him in all that I do? I am reading my bible for guidance? Am I praying regularly for God to guide my life? Do I want to spend time with other Christians? Those are all "signs" that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, ultimately for God's glory.
  - e) The Holy Spirit is there to help us understand what God has "given us". It is the Spirit that helps us to understand what is God's will for our lives. It is the Spirit that helps us to understand the bible as we read it and how to apply it to our lives. The Spirit is the one that convicts us of what is "truth".
    - i) A non-believer may be able to read the bible and understand what it means. The Spirit is the one who makes a person say, "What I am reading is "truth".
11. Verse 13: This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. <sup>14</sup> The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:
- a) This discussion of the Holy Spirit leads to Paul's next point: That is, what Paul is preaching is not based on human wisdom. What Paul is preaching is based on what was taught to him by the Spirit of God. The Spirit helps Paul and us express spiritual truths in words other people can understand.

- b) When we talk about God to others, it is the Spirit working within us to help us to express spiritual truth. When we sing songs to God in church, it is the Spirit working within us to believe those words and to realize what we are doing is pleasing to God.
  - c) Now let's look at Verse 14: The unbeliever cannot accept "spiritual things". They are foolish to him and he or she cannot understand them.
    - i) If an unbeliever reads the bible, that person may, with a little education, understand what that passage really means. The point is that person will not accept the words as "truth" unless the Spirit convicts that person's heart.
    - ii) With that said, I do encourage nonbelievers to read, say, one of the gospels. God is more than able to convict people's hearts of what is the truth. While God may use us to encourage people to go down the right path, it is still God through the Holy Spirit that does the actual converting of people's hearts.
    - iii) The nonbeliever considers it "foolish" to read and learn of the things of God. OK, what about cults and false religions? When you encounter such people, share with them the gospel truth and have faith that God is able to convict them of what is the truth. It doesn't mean they will accept your message. There is still "free will".
    - iv) What about the devoutly religious Jew, or Muslim for that matter? One cannot approach God based on "any religion". A person may be a generally nice person and pleasant to be around. That does not mean he or she is sinless before God. The problem is still the "sin issue". We cannot approach God based on our own goodness, and that is what man does through various religious efforts.
    - v) What about the person who dies and has never heard the Gospel message? I have faith that God judges all people fairly based on what they do know about Him.
  - d) Now let's look at Verse 15 in context of all of this. It says, "The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:"
    - i) First it says, the "spiritual man makes judgments about all things". What that means is we have the right and ability to look at people and look at ourselves and judge if a person is living a life pleasing to God at any one moment. It doesn't mean we get to decide who is and is not saved. It just means that God gives us the ability to judge "spiritual things". We can learn who is and who is not acting foolish at any given moment in time.
      - a) Can a nonbeliever tell when a believer is doing something wrong? Yes. That is not the point. The point is a spiritual man can judge "correctly" as a spiritual man or woman has the Spirit of God in them guiding them in terms of what is "correct" living.
    - ii) The second part says, "He himself is not subject to any man's judgment". Let's face it if we steal something, we definitely are subject to man's judgment. That's not the point. The point is "man" does not determine our eternal destiny. Only God has that right and privilege. "Men" can take away our lives on earth, but saved people are not subject to man's judgment on eternal matters.
      - a) Which reminds me, Jesus said, "The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22, NIV).
12. Verse 16: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.
- a) This chapter ends with the point that in order to be instructed by God, we have to know what it is God wants for our lives. Therefore, the Holy Spirit works in our lives to teach us what God desires for us.
  - b) Notice it says we have the "mind of Christ". One can see the "trinity" interacting in just this one verse. The word "trinity" is not in the bible. It is a term coined by the early Christian church to describe the fact that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each separate but at the same time are "one" in entity and desire.

- i) When people ask me for proof of the trinity, there are lots of verses one can go to. Let me share with you my favorite: In Matthew Chapter 28, Jesus gives the great commission. It says in Verse 19, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". It goes on from there. Notice the word "name" in that verse.
    - a) It does not say to baptize in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Greek word for "name" is definitely in the singular. It means that all three are one and somehow, unified and connected.
  - c) Back to the verse. The point is we can learn what God wants from our life, as we have the Holy Spirit inside of us convicting us of God's truth. The "trinity" is working inside of us to change us into the person God wants us to be.
    - i) We don't have to "strain" in order learn what God wants from us. God does call us to take the time to pray and study. At the same time, it is not a matter of "we have to pray harder in order for God to work in our lives". If we are interesting in living a life pleasing to God, He is more than willing to guide us along that way.
    - ii) Again, sometimes God is silent when it comes to difficult decisions as He is watching us and wants to see how we react. Sometimes God lets us go down the wrong path in order for us to learn it "is" the wrong path. God does not always teach us His will by direct revelation. Sometimes He teaches us by "trial and error" and let's us learn His will by simply living life.
  - d) To sum it up, being saved means we have the "Mind of God the Father and mind of God the Son working inside of us to guide us in His will." Even if one can't feel God guiding us at any moment. If one is saved, one has to trust in the fact that God is working in our lives to guide us in His will.
    - i) The main aspect on our part is we have to want God to work in our lives. If we are praying regularly, studying and spending time with other Christians, those are signs we want God to work in our lives. What one has to remember that God gets the credit for that as well. It is God guiding us to do His will.
    - ii) What happens when we mess up? We confess it as wrong and do our best to get back on the right path. Biblical confession simply means we acknowledge God was right and we were wrong on any given manner. We then work to change our behavior based on what God wants in that particular situation.
13. Chapter 3, Verse 1: Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. <sup>3</sup> You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? <sup>4</sup> For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?
- a) Remember that the chapter breaks were not added until about the 13th century. The verse numbers were not added until many centuries after that. When Paul wrote this, it was just one continuous letter with no chapter breaks.
  - b) Paul now states why the speech about the Holy Spirit and God working in our lives was necessary to give over the last two chapters. Paul considers a speech about the Holy Spirit and how God works in the life of believers and unbelievers to be the "basics".
  - c) The verses say that Paul gave them "milk, not solid food", like a newborn baby. Obviously, Paul is not being literal and not talking about the subject of food. Paul's point is that he still has to teach about the "basics" of Christianity as the church members in Corinth are not able to spiritually digest any more.
  - d) So what is "baby milk" versus "solid food" mean? A clue is in the book of Hebrews 5:12-14: "You need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food...But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

- e) Paul's proof of "spiritual babies" is the fact the church is divided. We're back to the point made in chapter 1. That is some people in this church follow "Paul", while others say they follow "Apollos" as if any one Christian is more important than any other Christian.
    - i) The problem with this church is not that they weren't saved. The problem is that their own misunderstands about Christianity were keeping them at a baby level, spiritually speaking. They have trouble distinguishing right from wrong!
  - f) Paul wants the Christians in this town to be spiritually mature. In order to do that, first they and we have to understand that we worship Christ alone. No believer in Christ is any more special than any others. All Christians are given gifts to use for the glory of God and to help benefit other members of the church.
    - i) In order for Paul to correct their problems, first he had to remind them of the basics. That is the speech of Chapters 1 and 2. That is the understanding of the role of God in our lives, how the Holy Spirit works and the differences between believers and unbelievers. All of this is the "basics" to Christian understanding.
  - g) To go on to "mature things" is not so much understanding more than the basic's, but to apply those things to one's life. Paul's point in these first verses of Chapter 3 is that the Christians in Corinth do not believe these things to the point of practicing them. If they did, they would not have these divisional problems.
    - i) If the Christians in Corinth understood that each of them was separated for the Gospel, they would not be complaining among themselves "you are following the wrong person". There would not be striving over which teacher they are emphasizing and who is baptizing them.
    - ii) In order to grow as a Christian, first one has to accept the basic message of Christianity. That message includes the fact that one is separated from the world and one has the Spirit of God living inside of them. We as Christians are then to work together to help each other grow in Christ. One of the great mistakes Christians make is to think we can go at it alone. God never intended the church to be a bunch of individuals who think they only need God. The idea is Christians are to work together to help each other grow in Him. That is where our spiritual gifts come into play.
14. Verse 5: What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. <sup>6</sup> I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. <sup>8</sup> The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.
- a) As to the church in Corinth, Paul "started it" in that he led in the first converts. Paul may have worked to set up the first house churches. Apparently after Paul left, Apollos worked to help the church grow. Paul's point is that no matter which person led which aspect of the church, God gets all the credit. God is the one who "makes it grow" as the Holy Spirit works in the lives of individuals to accept the Gospel message.
  - b) Verse 8 brings up a key "interesting" point. It says, "Each will be rewarded".
    - i) What that means is that each Christian will be rewarded in heaven based on what they did with their salvation.
    - ii) Remember that Paul is speaking to saved Christians. This letter is addressed to the church in Corinth. Paul makes it clear that despite their problems, they are still saved and nothing changes that fact.
    - iii) With that said, there is a concept of eternal rewards for believers. There are hints of this topic all through the New Testament. Revelation Chapter 20 describes two separate judgments. One is for believers and one is for unbelievers. The judgment for believers is probably the same thing as being referenced here in Verse 8.

- iv) The idea is that Jesus will judge all people one day. Believers will be judged based on what they "did" with their salvation. How much of an effort did they (and me) make for Jesus in their lives? Did we do what God called us to do?
- v) Again, our eternal rewards have nothing to do with our salvation. This is about whether or not we used the spiritual gifts God has given us and have we gotten involved in God's "game plan" to make a difference for Him.
- vi) Yes, God gets all the glory, but that should not be an excuse to be lazy. God calls us to go out and make a difference and we will be "judged" on our efforts. No matter what, if one is a believer, one is saved. Over and above being saved, there are rewards for those who work to make a difference for God.
- c) Verse 9 brings up another topic. It reads, "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building." When Paul says "we", he is referring to the Christians who are making a difference for God. Paul describes the people He is trying to convert as both a "field" and "God's building".
  - i) We as Christians are like a field, in that others are working in our lives to help us grow in faith in Jesus. At the same time, God calls us to be "workers" too and help other people grow in their faith.
  - ii) The second analogy is that we are called "God's building". The idea is that Christians are to work as a team to help each other grow in our relationship with God the Father and God the Son. In the sense we work together, we form a "building like" structure where everyone works as a team to help each other out.
    - a) I make a big deal about this, as if one studies the construction details of the Old Testament tabernacle in Exodus, one can read it as an "analogy" of the Christian church working in unison to glorify God in all that we do.
    - b) Did Paul definitely have the Old Testament tabernacle structure in mind when He made this comment? We don't know for sure. At the same time, many commentators argue that the "wood" that makes up the basic Exodus structure is a comparison to the church itself working in unison.
- d) To summarize all of this, Paul's main point is that no one person in the church is more special than anyone else. God gets the credit for all the new people that join the church. At the same time, even though God gets the credit, that is not an excuse for us to be lazy. If anything, we should be motivated as that is what God calls us to do. Any "rewards" we get in heaven is a bonus over and above the fact we are saved.
  - i) The next paragraph continues the discussion of "rewards".
- 15. Verse 10: By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.
  - a) Paul is describing how the church in Corinth got started. Paul started it, but he gives God the credit and stating that the foundation is based on Jesus and not on any person.
  - b) This is a good place for a quick discussion on the "foundation" of the church.
    - i) One time Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am and who do you say that I am". In one of Peter's few good moments, Peter said out loud, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God". Jesus then said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:16-18, NIV)
    - ii) Remember the word Peter means "little stone". Some people wrongly think that when Jesus said "rock", He was talking about Peter. What Jesus was saying is the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Christ ("Messiah", same thing) is the foundation of the church. People become Christians when they sincerely confess that Jesus is God and are willing to accept His death as payments for their sins.

- iii) That ties directly to these verses here in 1st Corinthians Chapter 2. The point is the church is built on Jesus, not on Peter. It is built on people confessing Jesus as God and changing their lives accordingly. That is what Paul is talking about here in Verses 10 and 11. Paul is comparing the Christian church to a building and the foundation is Jesus himself.
  - iv) When you study the structure of the tabernacle as described in the book of Exodus, every construction aspect is described in detail. It never occurred to me until I saw a model of that structure that there was no flooring in that building. Exodus had pages of details of how to build the walls and roof, but no flooring. It just occurred to me why that is, because Jesus Himself is the "foundation" of that tabernacle just as He is the foundation of the church.
  - c) This leads us back to the text of 1st Corinthians. Paul says if we add to this church, we have to be careful how we build it. The point is we need to get people to focus their lives on Christ. Whether we are involved in getting new people to become Christians, or helping others to grow in their relationship with Christ, the focus is always on Him.
    - i) Paul's underlying point is this church had problems, and they stem from false beliefs about how they should act as Christians. Paul is working on setting them on the right course. He wants to build a good "building" of believers.
16. Verse 12: If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,<sup>13</sup> his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.<sup>14</sup> If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.<sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.
- a) We are now back to the issue of rewards for the believer when we get to heaven.
  - b) The point is God is watching how we Christians live for Jesus. The works that we do as Christians is being compared to "gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw". What does Paul mean by that? He is not being literal. It is not about the use of gold, silver, or stones. ☺ The point is these materials are being compared to the works we do for God.
    - i) The point is these first three, "gold, silver and costly stones" can stand the test of fire. If you put those to a hot flame, that heat can mold them, but the elements are still there after it is heated.
    - ii) The point of the second three, "wood, hay and straw". These are all products that are all flammable and burn easily under flame. These are less valuable than gold, silver and costly stones as they can't stand the test of fire.
  - c) Now let's tie this analogy to what God wants us to do for Him. The point is God wants us to live a life that makes a difference for Him all that we do. Remember Paul is talking to believers. The subject is strictly about believers in Jesus.
    - i) If we use our lives after we are saved for the glory of God, it is being compared to gold, silver and costly stones. Once we are saved, if we use the talents God has given us to make a difference for Him, we will be rewarded. Our "works" will stand the test of a flame like gold, silver and costly stones.
    - ii) If we waste the resources God has given us, we are still saved, but our rewards in heaven will be minimal. Our "works" on earth will burn up like wood, hay and straw. The point is people like this have wasted their time on earth after they have been saved and Jesus will demonstrate that to them in the next life.
    - iii) Does all of this mean there are different levels of "joy" in heaven? That's the idea. Does this affect the size of the "mansion" I get in heaven? I don't know. ☺ I do believe some people are going to enjoy eternity far more than others. I do know from studying Revelation that saved people spend a lot of time in heaven praising God. I am convinced some will enjoy heaven far more than others.

- iv) What does this mean in terms of our lives here and now? Understand that this is a complicated topic in that it is different for every believer. If you are not sure what God has called you to do, pray about it and ask God to guide you. If you are not sure what "talents" you have, ask people that know you. They will tell you what you are particularly good at. If you are still not sure, talk to your pastor about opportunities to get involved in your local church. They will give you things to try out. You will know soon enough.
  - a) What if I am working full time or if I am a stay at home mom? That may be your full time ministry. God may or may not call you to other things over and above that. I'm not here to give you a lecture on what specific thing to do for God. My point is that we all need to get involved in "God's program". How we get involved is an individual calling.
  - v) One should be motivated based on love. Out of gratitude for our salvation, one should just want to do things that are the eternal equivalent of working with gold, silver and precious stones so that the works stand the test of flame. One's rewards in heaven should be a secondary consideration. I admit I do think about such rewards every now and then. To "grow" as a Christian is to be motivated by God's love for us and nothing else. Yes we are rewarded, but one's focus should be on God Himself, and not any benefit over and above that.
  - d) Last thing on these verses. Notice that the person who works with "wood, hay or straw" will have their works burned up, but they will still be saved. Again, these materials are not to be taken literally. If one has a job involving these materials, that is not relevant to the point of this text. The point is for the believer to live a life for God. If we waste the resources God has given the believer, then it is like "wood, hay or straw".
- 17. Verse 16: Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? <sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.
  - a) When Paul is comparing God's temple to "believers", it is a double comparison. Earlier in the text, the idea is that all Christians collectively form a "temple" to serve God and its foundation is Jesus himself. Here in Verses 16-17 the text is also saying that we as individuals are individual temples to God.
    - i) This is not a contradiction. ☺ The point is all Christians collectively form a "temple" in that we should all be working together for the common goal of glorying God the Father and God the Son in all that we do.
    - ii) At the same time, once one is saved, God lives inside of us. We are also "individual" temples to the living God.
  - b) In these two verses, the idea is that our "bodies" are individual temples to God. The text specifically says the Holy Spirit is living inside of us. When we first get saved, our bodies get a little more "crowded". The Holy Spirit is now living inside of us. It is "sharing space" with our souls inside our body.
    - i) Time for one of my favorite analogies about the "real us". Imagine a computer disk that is blank. Think of a blank "DVD". One can put computer software on that disk or a whole movie on that disk. What is interesting is the weight of the disk "blank" is the same as the weight if it is full of information. (I'm assuming there is no label on the disk. ☺) My point of this illustration is that the "real you" is like software. It can be transferred from one source (one body) to another. When we die, the "real us" gets transferred to a new body either in heaven or in hell. That is also how the Holy Spirit can live inside of us. There is no "weight" to the Holy Spirit just as there is no weight to the "real us" inside of our body.

- c) Now let's get back to the text. It says if that if anyone destroys "God's temple", God will destroy that murderer. In these verses, God's temple is describing the individual saved person. The basic idea is that if someone murders a believer, God will destroy that person for eternity. Does that mean there is no forgiveness for murder? The text assumes this murderer is not repented of their deed at the moment of their death.
    - i) So why bring up this point here? The point is our "bodies" are sacred to God because the "real us" live in those bodies as well as the Holy Spirit.
    - ii) The point is God's temple (the bodies of believers) is now "sacred" as those bodies belong to God as we have committed our lives to God. Is Paul telling us to eat healthy and take care of bodies? It's a good idea, but it misses the main point. ☺ The point is we as committed Christians have dedicated our lives to God. That means God resides in us. It is a call to live our lives for God in all that we do.
      - a) It is a call to take care how we live our lives. The temple that is our body belongs to God and our bodies are important to God as they are "His".
18. Verse 18: Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise.
- a) For those who were with me in my study of the book of Proverbs, we spent a lot of time talking about what is a "fool". The biblical definition of a fool is someone who does not care for the things of God and only lives for themselves.
  - b) Paul's point here is related to that concept. The idea is that if one is full of the "wisdom of this world", one should be a "fool" to that wisdom in order to learn the ways of God. Paul's point is about unlearning the ways of this world in order to learn the ways of God.
  - c) What does that mean practically? Let me give some examples: The way Christians are to conduct themselves in the business world should be based on biblical principals and not based on the way the "world" does it. If someone cheats you in business, God does not expect you to act likewise. We have to have faith that God will take care of us, even when others are acting unfairly to us.
    - i) Let's say we are a stay at home person raising kids or are spending full time taking care of a sick loved one. The "world's" way of raising children is different from what God called us to do. The bible is our guide on how we live our lives no matter what is our "calling" to do.
  - d) Remember why Paul is giving this lecture here: The Christians in Corinth are still saved, but they are acting in ways that are unpleasing to God. The only issue mentioned so far is the fact the church is divided into fractions. Other issues will come up later in the letter.
    - i) The point is the church is being influenced by the "world's way" of doing things and not God's way of doing things. That is why Paul is urging them to be "fools" to the world so as we may become wise to God.
    - ii) The application to us? If there is some aspect of our lives that is not pleasing to God because we are not doing it "His way", that needs to be confessed and we need to change our live in conformity to His will.
19. Verse 19: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness";<sup>20</sup> and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."
- a) Back in Chapter 1, Paul gave a "mini-lecture" on the wisdom on this world as compared to the "foolishness" of God. Paul's point here is the way a nonbeliever acts is "foolish" to God and one day, He will point that out to them (The unbelieving).
    - i) People who only live to work or only live to please themselves and their family will suffer the consequences of ignoring God with their lives.
    - ii) People who try to please God with their own efforts will suffer for that belief. I know a lot of nice people who don't want to commit their lives to Christ.

- iii) Whether they realize it or not, they are living for "themselves" and think they are capable of pleasing God based on their own efforts.
  - b) Remember what Paul's "problem" is at the moment: The Christians in Corinth are influenced by the "world" as much as they are influenced by God. That is why Paul called them "babies needing milk" earlier in the chapter. Paul is trying to emphasize what a "waste of time" it is to continue to follow the "world's way" of thinking as opposed to God's way of doing things for our lives.
    - i) Paul's point is not so much to emphasize the fall of those who refuse to turn to God, but to get Christians to focus on God and not on the world's way of living.
    - ii) The application for you and I is to occasionally examine ourselves and ask in what ways are we still doing things "the world's way" as opposed to God's way.
  - c) I hate to stop when I'm on a roll, but I have three more verses left to cover. ☺
- 20. Verse 21: So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours,<sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours,<sup>23</sup> and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.
  - a) One thing we tend to forget as Christians is that we will inherit all things. It's seems silly to live a life for material things because when we die we inherit all things. It doesn't mean one ignores making a living to support themselves and their family. The issue is what do we "live" for? Do we live for God or live for "things"?
  - b) Verse 23 says we (as believers) are of Christ and Christ is of God.
    - i) The point is to understand the "order" in heaven. God the Father and God the Son are part of the same Trinity. Yet, somebody has to "lead". God the Father is superior in that regard, even though all that He "is" is also part of the Son.
    - ii) The Christian church "marries" Christ and all that is His, is ours.
  - c) Now let's go back to Verse 22: It says that no matter what it "is", it belongs to the church.
    - i) Several times in 1st<sup>t</sup> Corinthians, Paul lists the names of "Paul, Apollos and Cephas (Peter)" together. What is interesting to note is that these three are never listed in the same order the same way in this book. That is Paul (or the Holy Spirit's) subtle way of saying no one in the Christian church is more important than anyone else.
    - ii) Remember that this church is divided into factions. Some followed Paul, some followed the teaching of Apollos and some followed the teaching of Peter. Paul wants the church to stop boasting about individual men and focus on God.
    - iii) It's hard for us to imagine how we can "own" all things and what we do with them? The way I see it is in heaven, we have no need of material things and such things are irrelevant to eternity. All Christians are still individuals in heaven, but somehow, we are all one body.
      - a) My personal view is that "heaven" exists in more than three dimensions. That is how all of us can be individuals and exist at the same place at the same time in heaven. I'll save my science theories for another day! ☺
  - d) Paul's main point is to get Christians to realize we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God the Father. If we comprehend that, we shouldn't want to be like "the world" and have our primary focus be on things of this world. It is about getting us to understand what is important in our lives and where to keep our focus.
- 21. Let's pray: Father, Help us to keep our focus on You and not on things of this world. Help us to understand what is the "calling" for our lives so that we can be pleasing to You in all that we do. May the Holy Spirit work in our lives to make a difference for You. May we go out today and live a life that is pleasing to You in all that we do. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.