

*God's Wisdom in an Age of Confusion*  
**1 Corinthians 3:1-21**  
*Distracted with Christ?*

**Introduction**

Good morning!

C.S. Lewis once said that “our desires are too weak.”

His main point in declaring this is that Christians are in danger of missing the mark, and settling for far, far less than what God in Christ is actually offering to us.

This morning, we will see how the Corinthians are in a similar situation, missing the mark of what real spiritual maturity actually promises to us.

Let's pray...

**Background to Corinth: Review**

Paul comes to Corinth, a beautiful yet corrupt city, to bring the good news of Jesus. I want to remind us of the wider goal that Paul has for the Corinthians, and really for all of his churches, including ours. Here is what we have found so far:

Paul's goal: *Fellowship with Jesus is the goal (salvation, eternal life)*

Paul's problem: *Due to the Corinthians sense of cultural pride and misplaced priorities (human wisdom, strength, and beauty) they are questioning Paul's ministry/message while competing with one another over who is more “spiritual”.*

Paul's approach to the problem: *Show the folly of human wisdom by comparing it with God's wisdom in the “foolishness” of the cross (Christ crucified).*

For Paul, the spiritual danger the Corinthians find themselves in is emptying the cross of Christ of its power by focusing on and boasting in human wisdom, strength, beauty. In short, they are in spiritual danger of missing the mark, the point of it all, which is Christ, His beauty, His sufficiency, His glory, and His magnificence. They are in danger of making men (humans) BIG and God very, very small.

**Exposition of 1 Corinthians 3:1-21**

*The Corinthians Lack of Maturity*

1 Cor. 3:1-4

Paul addresses the Corinthians lack of maturity by saying that their ongoing fascination with human teachers is only breeding division, rivalry, and that they are actually acting in accordance with “human thinking” rather than in accordance with Christ.

*Paul's First Correction: Human teachers are merely God's servants*

1 Cor. 3:5-9

Paul goes on to say that they are only God's servants, carrying out their assignments given by Him for His purposes. Some water, some plant, some sow, some reap – but it has nothing to do with them specifically, but rather with God who doles out the assignments. Each will receive their reward.

*Paul's Second Correction: God's servants will be evaluated by how they build on "Christ"*

1 Cor. 3:10-15

Paul says that he laid the foundation, the ultimate one that matters: Christ! That was his job – lay the foundation. And, according to his own testimony, he did so faithfully. Given this, he anticipates his future reward. He then goes on to say that if anyone else lays a different foundation, something other than Christ, or tries to build with materials that aren't ultimately pointing to Christ, then they will be judged accordingly. Here the judgement isn't so much about salvation, but rather faithfulness. Paul seems to indicate that it's possible to build on a faulty foundation, and to be saved, but just barely (refining fire).

*Paul's First Reorientation (1): In Christ, you are God's Temple!*

1 Cor. 3:16-17

Paul refocuses them to see who they really are – not people running to and fro with the latest fashionable teacher so their ears can be tickled; they are the temple of the living God. Remember: the Temple in the OT was to be the very place where God's Spirit dwelt, it was God's house. But now, God's Spirit dwells in those who belong to Christ. It's a temple not made of human hands or bricks or mortar, but by the very Spirit of God.

Do you remember what we saw last week from John 14? Jesus said, "My Father and I will make our home with Him."

Here Paul is reiterating that exact same truth for the Corinthians to realize. Anyone who messes with God's temple will be destroyed, so great care needs to be taken for how one builds. And the Corinthians need to recognize this and quit squabbling over who baptized who, who taught who, and so on.

*Paul's Second Reorientation (2): In Christ, you have received all things!*

1 Cor. 3:18-21

He repeats what he said in chapter 2 – you are too wise in your own estimation! If you want to know God and God's plan, you must become more of a "fool" by taking your eyes off human wisdom, human power, human significance, and put them squarely on Christ. Then, and only then, will you become truly "wise".

Notice what Paul assures them of here: that "all things" belong to them pertaining to "life" – Paul, Apollos, Cephas, world, life, death, present, future – it's all yours!

And then the climax...

*Paul's Third Reorientation (3): In Christ, you're destined for eternal glory (fellowship with Christ and the Father)*

And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Remember the words I shared with you last week from John 14:23.

Do you see what Paul is doing here? *He is refocusing their attention on to the things that matter the most – growing up together as God's temple, growing in their fellowship with Christ, because they belong to Him and will find life/meaning and purpose by pursuing His purposes for them, not their own. Paul is trying to give them a bigger vision for their life, beyond humans.*

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In other words, Paul warns them to not miss the mark! Don't miss what you are and what you have and who they belong to – Christ! And Christ has given them everything they need and could possibly want in Jesus Christ and the Father. God has withheld nothing from them!

He doesn't want them to be satisfied with less...

**Main Idea:**

*Preoccupation with human significance and prestige hinders spiritual growth. However, preoccupation with who we are (God's temple), what we have received (all things in Christ), and why (fellowship with God in Christ) produces spiritual maturity.*

**Application: How to Become Distracted with Christ!**

So how might we avoid the danger that the Corinthians found themselves in? The hard reality is that we too face the same spiritual dangers they do, with our own preoccupation with things that we think are significant or will give us prestige or meaning or value.

The spiritual challenge in every generation is basically the same: keep our eyes on Jesus by remembering who we are, what we have been given, and why as individuals, and as a church.

And so, if you are like me, the real challenge is to stay focused on Christ.

What if we think about distraction and preoccupation differently? What if instead of fighting preoccupation, we set ourselves to follow the example to become preoccupied with God, with Christ, the beauty and wonders of His glory? What might that kind of distraction look like?

A thought-experiment...what would it look like for us to become preoccupied and distracted with Jesus?