

The Wreckage and the Fire - Revival in a Corrupt City

4. THE PROTECTION HE COMMANDS

“If anyone destroys the temple...God will destroy him.”

THE PRINCIPLE IS CLEAR: What God fills...God fights for.

- He states it like a law of physics. If this, then this. Always.
- Phtheiro — to destroy, to corrupt, to ruin, to cause decay.
- The same Greek word used for destroying and for the consequence of destroying.
- The punishment mirrors the crime. The measure you use — God uses back.

Who is Paul talking about?

- The faction leaders who were tearing the Body apart.
- The teachers introducing corrupting doctrine into the church.
- Anyone whose agenda was causing the congregation to decay from the inside.

- And — this is the part we skip — believers who were destroying their OWN temple.

WATCH THIS: THREE DIRECTIONS OF DESTRUCTION

External Corruption — Division, Discord, Disruption

- The faction leader who weaponizes a congregation against itself.
- The teacher who introduces doctrine that erodes the foundation.
- The influencer inside the Body whose agenda is self-elevation, not Body-edification.

Corinth had all three. Every church has faced all three. Every one of them is phtheiro — decay introduced from the outside in.

You cannot build the Kingdom and tear down the temple at the same time.

Internal Corruption — Sin, Compromise, Carelessness

- Paul will address this directly in chapter 6 — the body as temple and sexual immorality.
- But the principle is established here: internal defilement is still defilement.

Carelessness with what God has called holy is not neutrality. It is destruction by neglect.

You can destroy a temple by burning it down. You can also destroy it by never maintaining what God built.

Neglect is not neutral. In the house of God, neglect is a choice to let holy things decay.

Intentional Corruption — Deception, Defiance, Deliberate Sin

- **This is the most severe category** — the person who knows what the temple is and defiles it knowingly.
- Not the immature believer stumbling in weakness. The one who has seen the glory and chosen the flesh.
- **Paul's language for this is not therapeutic. It is judicial.**
 - God WILL destroy him — future tense, certain outcome, not a maybe.

- The same severity God showed at the physical temple, He reserves for the living temple.

Different expressions... same enemy... same target: The dwelling place of God.

WATCH THE PATTERN THROUGH SCRIPTURE - Why God Responds with Such Severity

- **God's response to temple desecration has always been non-negotiable.**
- Uzzah touched the ark — he died on the spot (2 Samuel 6:7).
- Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire — consumed immediately (Leviticus 10:1–2).
- Belshazzar desecrated the temple vessels at his feast — handwriting on the wall that night (Daniel 5).

Not because God is cruel. Because God is holy. And holiness does not negotiate with defilement. It cannot. It is not in its nature.

God has never been casual about what He calls holy.

The Severity Is Not Cruelty — It Is Covenant

- In the ancient world, a king's palace was protected because the king lived there.
- You did not casually walk into the throne room. You did not treat the king's dwelling like a public street.

The severity of the protection was proportional to the glory of the inhabitant. God is not overreacting to temple defilement. He is responding proportionally to who lives there.

The question is not: why is God so severe? The question is: Do you understand WHO lives in you?

FOUR THINGS THE PROTECTION OF GOD DECLARES OVER YOUR LIFE:

He Covers What He Chose

- God did not accidentally inhabit you. **He chose you before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).**
- Chosen things are covered things. **What He selected, He shields.**
- The enemy cannot touch what God has deliberately, covenantally, intentionally chosen to inhabit.

You are not an AFTERTHOUGHT. You are not a CONSOLATION PRIZE. You are THE CHOSEN DWELLING PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH GOD and hell cannot evict a tenant that Heaven placed!

He Consecrates What He Calls

- **Hagios** — holy, set apart, consecrated. The Spirit who dwells in you is *hagios*.
- And the dwelling makes the dwelt-in holy.

You are not holy because of your performance. You are holy because of your inhabitant.

- The tabernacle was not holy because of its materials — acacia wood and linen are common things.
- It was holy because of what moved in. **The moment the Shekinah descended, common became consecrated.**

You were common before He moved in. The moment He did — common became consecrated.

He Contends for What He Carries

- Every time God's presence was threatened in Scripture, God responded.
- He contended for the ark when the Philistines took it — Dagon fell twice (1 Samuel 5).
- He contended for His people in Egypt — ten plagues. He does not quietly watch His presence be disrespected.

If the enemy has been coming against you — Consider the possibility that the attack is proportional to what you are carrying. Hell does not mobilize against empty vessels.

The intensity of the opposition is evidence of the significance of the inhabitant.

He Completes What He Commenced

- **Philippians 1:6 — He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.**
- God does not move into a temple and abandon the renovation halfway through.
- What He started in you on the day of your salvation, He is still building, still refining, still completing.

The carnal Corinthian believers were not abandoned projects. They were unfinished temples, BUT the Architect was still on site.

If God fights for His temple, and you are His temple, Then you are not as unprotected as the enemy has convinced you that you are.

I am not an easy target. I am a holy temple and God defends what He lives in.

If hell touches you... it has touched what God inhabits. Hell's greatest mistake is to touch God's dwelling place.

5. THE PERSPECTIVE HE CORRECTS

1 Corinthians 3:18–20 - LET NO ONE DECEIVE

HIMSELF. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their craftiness,' and again, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.'

THIS IS SELF-DECEPTION — NOT MISLED BY OTHERS... MISLED BY YOURSELF.

- Exapataō — to thoroughly deceive, to completely mislead oneself.
- Paul is not warning them about false teachers in this verse.
- **He is warning them about the most dangerous teacher in the room — themselves.**

THE CORINTHIAN CONFUSION — THREE DEADLY SUBSTITUTIONS

They Mistook Opinion for Wisdom

- **They were elevating personal preference and calling it spiritual insight.**
- "I am of Paul" was not a theological conviction — it was a taste preference dressed in theological clothing.
- Opinion becomes dangerous the moment it stops introducing itself as opinion.

- Corinth had opinions about preachers, about spiritual gifts, about who was more mature and they had stopped calling those opinions what they were.

The moment your PREFERENCE becomes your THEOLOGY you have crossed into SELF-DECEPTION.

They Mistook Division for Discernment

- The most self-righteous faction — I am of Christ — **used the name of Jesus as a weapon of separation.**
- They were not discerning error, they were manufacturing distance. There is a difference between biblical discernment and spiritual snobbery.
 - **Discernment protects the Body. Snobbery divides it.**
 - **Discernment names what is wrong so it can be healed. Snobbery names what is wrong so it can feel superior.**

If your discernment produces pride instead of intercession it is not discernment. It is arrogance with a spiritual accent.

They Mistook Preference for Spirituality

- Corinth had confused cultural **sophistication with spiritual maturity.**
- They measured the worth of a preacher by how impressive he sounded — not by the fruit he bore.
- The same city that worshipped Sophists for eloquence was now applying that same standard to the church.
 - They were not measuring preachers by the cross. They were measuring them by Corinth.
 - And when Corinth becomes your standard - carnality disguises itself as quality.

Nothing is more dangerous than a person who is confidently wrong and spiritually convinced.

THE KINGDOM CALL — "Become a Fool"

- ***Mōros* — fool, one who appears without wisdom by the world's standard.**
- Paul is not calling them to ignorance. He is calling them to surrender.
- Surrender the system. Release the standard. Reject the measurement.

WHAT TRUE WISDOM PRODUCES: THE TEST PAUL GIVES...

True Wisdom Builds, It Does Not Break

- **If what you call wisdom is producing division — it is not from God.**
- **The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason (James 3:17).**
- Anything that cannot pass that test is not wisdom. It is the world dressed in a spiritual disguise.
 - Ask yourself: **does what I am calling wisdom build the Body or break it?**
 - **Does it draw people toward Christ or drive them toward camps?**

If it does not produce UNITY, it is not wisdom. If it does not BUILD THE BODY, it is not from God.

True Wisdom Bows, It Does Not Boast

- Job 5:13 - God catches the wise in their own craftiness. The trap of the wise is always their own cleverness. It becomes the net they fall into.
- True wisdom recognizes the limits of human intelligence before the face of God. The wisest person in the room is usually the quietest one — not because they have nothing to say, but because they have learned that God is in the room and that changes everything.

The beginning of true wisdom is the moment you stop trusting your own assessment of yourself.

True Wisdom Begins at the Cross, Not at the Campus

- Psalm 94:11 - The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.

- ***Mataios* - futile, empty, vapor. God calls the best of human wisdom empty.**
- Not wrong - empty. It has no substance. It cannot carry the weight of eternity.

The CROSS is not the STARTING POINT OF WISDOM.

THE CROSS IS the wisdom. There is no wisdom beyond it.

6. THE POSSESSION HE CONFERS

1 Corinthians 3:21–22 - *So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future — all are yours.*

THE MOST SWEEPING DECLARATION OF INHERITANCE IN PAUL'S EARLY LETTERS

- Paul takes the very names Corinth was using as faction banners And says: all of them belong to YOU.
- You do not belong to Paul. Paul belongs to you.
- You do not belong to Apollos. Apollos belongs to you.

THEIR ERROR — PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE TO SERVANTS

- "I am of Paul" — pledging loyalty to the one who planted.
- "I am of Apollos" — pledging loyalty to the one who watered.

Paul says: you have the order completely reversed. The servant does not own the beneficiary. The beneficiary owns the servant. Farmers work for the harvest — the harvest does not work for the farmers.

You were never meant to be a follower of a servant. You are an heir of the King.

PAUL'S CORRECTION - HE EXPANDS IT - WATCH HOW FAR THE INHERITANCE REACHES

The World Is Yours - You Are Not at Its Mercy

- ***Kosmos*** — the created order, the systems of this age, the arena of human existence.

- Corinth was being shaped by the world — its values, its metrics, its definitions of worth.

Paul says: You are not subject to what you have been given dominion over.

- The world does not define you. You are not shaped by its pressures.
- You are an heir of God — the world is in your inheritance, not your inheritance in the world.

The world was given to you as an arena of mission, not as a master of your identity.

Life Is Yours - You Do Not Live on Borrowed Terms

- Zōē - life in its fullest sense. Not just biological existence. Abundant, purposeful, Spirit-breathed life.
- Corinth was living by Corinth's terms - status, eloquence, faction, performance.
- Paul says: you own life. You do not owe it to any system, any camp, any cultural standard.

**Stop living like a tenant in a life that belongs to you.
Stop asking the culture for permission to live as a child
of God.**

Life is yours — which means how you live it is an act of ownership, not obligation.

Death Is Yours - It Has Lost Its Sting and Its Dominion

- This is the most radical claim in the list. Death is yours.
- Not that you will escape death, but that death has been placed under your inheritance.
- 1 Corinthians 15:55 — O death, where is your sting?
O grave, where is your victory?

The believer does not fear what they own. You are not running from death. You are walking toward it as the door to something greater. Death is not your enemy. It is your final transition into the fullness of what you already are.

The Present and the Future Are Yours - God Is Already There

- *Ta enestōta* — the present things, all that is current, immediate, pressing.
- *Ta mellonta* — the future things, all that is coming, approaching, not yet arrived.
- **Both tenses of time belong to the believer.**

You are not a victim of your present - God is in it. You are not anxious about your future - God is already there. Time itself is your servant. The eternal God has placed even the calendar in your inheritance.

Why are you fighting over platforms...when you've been given possession of everything? Stop competing over fragments when you've been given fullness.

"All things are mine, because I am Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Somebody say: *"All things are mine!"*

7. THE POSITION HE CONFIRMS

1 Corinthians 3:23 - *And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

FOUR WORDS IN GREEK: *HYMEIS DE CHRISTOU = AND YOU ARE OF CHRIST.*

- **This is the most compressed theological statement in the passage.**

Paul has built an enormous argument about identity, protection, wisdom, and inheritance. And he anchors the entire thing in four words. **Everything you have been given flows from where you belong.**

(All on one Slide) THE DIVINE ORDER - THE CHAIN OF YOUR IDENTITY

- All things → You
- You → Christ
- Christ → God

*You are not disconnected...you are divinely connected.
You are not drifting...you are anchored in eternity.*

**YOU ARE HELD BY A CHAIN THAT REACHES ALL THE
WAY TO THE THRONE.**

**WATCH WHAT THIS CHAIN DOES TO EVERY
CORINTHIAN FACTION:**

- "I am of Paul" — that breaks the chain. Paul is not the anchor.
- "I am of Apollos" — that breaks the chain. Apollos is not the anchor.
- "I am of Cephas" — that breaks the chain. Peter is not the anchor.
- "I am of Christ" — only this statement keeps the chain intact.

**Every faction is an attempt to insert a human link
where only Christ belongs.**

**THE THEOLOGY OF BELONGING — THREE
DIMENSIONS**

You Belong to Christ - Which Means You Are Secured

- **Hymeis Christou — you are of Christ. Possessive. Covenantal. Permanent.**
- This is a legal declaration.
- You have been purchased, claimed, sealed, and identified as the possession of Jesus Christ.

No faction can claim you — you already belong to Someone. No culture can define you — your identity is already established. No enemy can own you — you are already owned by the One who defeated every enemy.

Christ Belongs to the Father - Which Means You Are Connected to the Source

- Christos de Theou - Christ is of God. The Son belongs to the Father.
- This is Trinitarian theology with pastoral application.
- Because Christ belongs to the Father - and you belong to Christ
- You are connected, through Christ, to the Father Himself.

- **Your chain does not end at Jesus. It runs through Jesus all the way to the throne.**

The Father's resources, the Father's protection, the Father's purpose - all flow down the chain to you.

You are not two steps removed from God. You are in Christ — who is in the Father.

The Chain Cannot Be Broken - Which Means You Are Sustained

- Nothing in all of creation can sever what God has joined (Romans 8:38–39).
- Not death. Not life. Not angels. Not principalities. Not things present. Not things to come.
- Paul has just told us that all those things — life, death, present, future — belong to the believer.

And now he tells us the reason: because you belong to Christ — who belongs to God. The chain is unbreakable because both ends are held by God.

You are not held by your own strength. You are held by a God who has never lost anyone He chose to keep.

THE FINAL WORD ON FACTIONS — WHY THEY ARE THEOLOGICALLY RIDICULOUS

The faction system is not just spiritually immature. It is theologically incoherent. You cannot simultaneously claim to belong to the chain and spend your life fighting over the links.

Say it! *"I am not Paul's. I am not Apollos's. I am not my denomination's. I am Christ's — and Christ is God's."*

You belong to the chain that reaches the throne!"

CONCLUSION: THE MIRROR THAT REVEALS

- Paul does not leave them with behavior. He leaves them with identity.

When identity is revealed...Behavior is recalibrated.

FINAL QUESTIONS

- Do your words reflect a temple... or a trash heap?
- Do your relationships reveal holiness... or hostility?
- Do you carry yourself like something sacred... or something common?

I AM NOT EMPTY. I AM NOT ORDINARY. I AM NOT INCIDENTAL. I AM INHABITED!

- You don't visit His presence...You live from it.
- You don't host Him occasionally...He dwells in you continually.

You are the temple. Now...Live like something holy lives inside of you.