

# 1 Corinthians

## *Gospel-Centered Living in a Sin-Centered World*

### Section 1: Unity and the Gospel

#### The Necessity of Maturity for Unity

#### The Family to be Indwelt

#### *1 Corinthians 3:16-23*

### Introduction

ILLUS: H.A. Ironside – New York Bishop Potter traveling to Europe on a passenger ship, met his roommate, took his valuables to the Purser for safe keeping because of his appearance, the Purser said don't feel bad, your roommate did them same.

Poet Robert Burns – “Oh, would some Power give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us.”

I will go one further – Oh that God would give us the grace to see ourselves in the way that He desires to see us!

In the past several weeks we have seen how Paul sought to do this very thing for the church in Corinth - Food to be Eaten, Field to be Planted, Foundation to be Built Upon, and Family to be Indwelt.

We are a Family to be Indwelt first ... As His Sanctuary

## As His Sanctuary (16a)

“Do you not know” – This is more than a question from Paul. It is a pointed rebuke to the Corinthian believers who place so much so much faith in the worldly wisdom they claim to possess but yet don’t realize the basics of the spiritual life.

Paul asks this same question 10 more times in this book.

“It is clear from their current behavior that they do not know, or at least have not seriously considered the implications of who they are as God’s people in Corinth.” (Fee, 158)

This is also true of the church today. What does it mean to be God’s people? At its most basic level, it means that church is not to be about us!

“Much of our failure to live the Christian life stems from ignorance.” (Phillips, 79)

And what was it that they did not know? That they were the temple of God.

NOTE: Corinth was a place know for its Temples. The most famous was the Temple of Aphrodite (temple prostitution), but also the Temples to Apollo, Athena, Poseidon, Artemis, and Hera.

But this term is not the one used to reference the temple complex, but the term that specifically refers to the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple.

It reinforces the fact that first and foremost, the church is not a gathering to do something, but to be something together.

We are to be the very gathering places of the manifest presence of the living God.

This happens ...

## By His Spirit (16b)

Without a doubt, this reference would have immediately brought to mind the dedication of Solomon's temple.

**Exodus 40:34, 38 (NKJV) — 34** Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle ... **38** For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

**2 Chronicles 6:18 (NKJV) — 18** "But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!

**Acts 7:48a (NKJV) — 48a** "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands

"Although God has no need of temples made of marble and gold, He condescends to live in the body of the believer ... this is the only way the Christ-life can become real in our experience." (Phillips, 79)

Many have taken verse 16 as a reference to individual believers. And while it is true that individual believers who possess the Holy Spirit are indeed God's temple.

**2 Corinthians 6:16b (NKJV) — 16b** ... For you are the temple of the living God ...

The "you" throughout this section is plural. Paul's focus here is not on the individual believer, but on the corporate family of faith. The same as he referenced in ...

**Ephesians 2:21 (NKJV) — 21** in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

And Peter echoed in saying ...

**1 Peter 2:5 (NKJV) — 5** you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The point Paul was making was that they had lost sight of the fact that their gathering were to be a place for the manifest presence of the Spirit of God.

"As a church body, they were (and we are) to visible represent the living God on earth." (Swindoll, 61)

Something, that they were to be very careful ...

## Not to Soil (17a)

Remember, that God said there would be a judgment of fire to come for believers regarding their works. That some would have treasure and crowns to present to Christ, while

the works of others would be burned up leaving them smelling like smoke.

“This threat takes the preceding warning (vv. 10-15) to its next step.” (Fee, ?)

The words translated “defile” and “destroy” are actually the same Greek term.

While it is true that even “the gates of Hades will not prevail” against the church of Christ as a whole, it is equally true that local churches can be and far too often are destroyed.

In general terms it means “to cause harm” so “destruction” in the sense of annihilation is not the focus.

It may help to think of it in terms of “ruin.”

For the Corinthians people were bringing ruin upon the church through division which divides Christ and hinders the work and movement of the Spirit of God.

**ILLUS:** This is still true today. 2022 – 13.2 million SBC’ers with 3.8 attending each week (29%) with 416 churches and 165 missions closing. Of protestants in 2019 (last year stats were available) – 4,500 churches closed.

Paul makes it clear that if there is one who “ruins” the church, God will “ruin” him.

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)

**1 Corinthians 5:5 (NKJV) — 5** deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Later Paul will address that fact that some were ill and others dead for taking the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner.

"This is one of the few texts in the NT both where we are exposed to an understanding of the nature of the local church (God's temple indwelt by his Spirit) and where the concluding warning makes it clear how important the local church is to the one and only God." (Fee, 162)

**1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 (NKJV) — 19** Do not quench the Spirit. **20** Do not despise prophecies. **21** Test all things; hold fast what is good. **22** Abstain from every form of evil.

This should be a sober warning for every believer whether pastors, staff, ministers, or members.

Family to be Indwelt – not just As God's Sanctuary and By God's Spirit, but also ...

## To be Set Apart (17b)

This the understanding the church today desperately needs to recapture.

We are to be Holy – Peter teaches us – Holy as God is Holy.

We think of this as reverent and religious but it is also practical – set apart – different.

## As Fools for Christ (18-23)

### Seeking the Wisdom of God (18-20)

Here Paul gets even more pointed in saying "don't deceive yourselves." You are not

really wise and the only way you can truly be wise is to become, in your eyes, a fool.

“Paul urges anyone who would be wise to become a fool. This is simply a vivid way of urging people to be humble enough to learn.” (Barclay)

Plato said: “He is the wisest man who knows himself to be very ill-equipped for the study of wisdom.” (Barclay)

Because what you think is wise, God says is nothing but foolishness.

“Even Christians, therefore, do not have a right to their own opinions about the things God has revealed.” (MacArthur, 88)

Paul then uses two interesting OT quotations.

Job 5:13

**ILLUS:** The imagery is a hunter being caught in his own trap.

This was Job’s “friend” Eliphaz who thought he knew why Job was facing the challenges. Yet in all his crafty wisdom, God proved Eliphaz a fool.

Psalms 94:11

Beyond that, one doesn't even have to voice their thoughts for God to know their futility.

Therefore, as a result we should be ...

### Boasting Only in God (21a)

Fee notes that these concluding remarks serve as an exhortation, theology, and doxology. (Fee, 165)

The exhortation is no one is to boast in man.

There is no boasting in man, because (as Paul will expound on in chapter 11) the head of every man is Christ and the head of Christ is God.

But also because we should be ...

### Recognizing Our Inheritance from God (21b-22)

What is this inheritance? ALL THINGS!

Do you understand? ALL THINGS! No, you don't get it! And neither did the Corinthians.

Remember, what started all of this?

#### **1 Corinthians 1:12-13 (NKJV) — 12**

Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I



am of Christ.” **13** Is Christ divided?  
Was Paul crucified for you? Or were  
you baptized in the name of Paul?

They cannot claim to be followers of Paul,  
Apollos, or Cephas not just because that  
would be boasting in those men, but  
because that is not how the Kingdom of  
God works!

This doesn't mean that there will not be  
leaders that God uses in special ways in our  
lives or that we cannot admire and be  
grateful to God for them.

**1 Thessalonians 5:12–13a (NKJV) —**  
**12** And we urge you, brethren, to  
recognize those who labor among  
you, and are over you in the Lord  
and admonish you, **13a** and to  
esteem them very highly in love for  
their work's sake.

Yet, we must be discerning because  
“Idolizing [men] leads to disappointment,  
disillusionment, and ultimately, a  
precipitous crash.” (Swindoll, 63)

However, in the church of God, we must  
always remember that God doesn't give  
members to leaders, He gives leaders to  
member – “they are yours!”

The church did not belong to them, they belonged to the church.

The church at Corinth didn't understand so Paul began to spell it out so they and we can understand

Paul is Yours:

The most noted apostle, radically saved on the Damascus Road, called to all the world, penned 13 books of the NT, planted churches, mentored pastors, and caught up in paradise ... he is yours!

Apollos is Yours:

Eloquent in speech, mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in Spirit, disciplined by Pricilla and Aquilla, pastored in Corinth ... he is yours!

Cephas is Yours:

Bold, courageous, passionate, defender and denier, remorseful and restored, failure and the feeder of sheep, the pebble Jesus would use to build His church, the preacher who led 3,000 to Jesus in one day ... he is yours!

Their stories are our stories! Oh, but it doesn't end there. Paul says you still don't understand. Let me tell you!

The World is Yours:

The world that God created and owns, the natural, beautiful, sinful, broken world ... is yours! You own it. It ultimately serves you.

**ILLUS:** Alcorn - Heaven

"This is my Father's world"

Life is Yours:

Not just life to come, but abundant life now.

**John 14:6a (NKJV) — 6a** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Every breath, word, deed, relationship, accomplishment, failure, joy and hardship ... are yours.

**John 10:10 (NKJV) — 10** The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

But not just life, but ...

Death is Yours:

**1 Corinthians 15:54–57 (NKJV) —**  
**54** So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” **55** “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” **56** The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where is the sting of death? That stinger was left in a cross on Calvary.

Death is no longer an enemy to be feared, but an usher that brings us home. We are not enslaved to death, death is a servant to us.

**Philippians 1:21 (NKJV) — 21** For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

**Psalms 116:15 (NKJV) — 15** Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.

Things Present are Yours:

We are not a slave to time, chance, or happenstance. We own the now.

“It includes the good and the bad, the pleasant and the painful, the joys and the disappointments, the health and the sickness, the contentment and the grief.”

(MacArthur, 92)

**Romans 8:28 (NKJV) — 28** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Things to Come are Yours:

The future is yours! Nothing will ever come to you that is not your servant. He who began a good work in you will complete it and you will become kings and priests, judge angels, live eternally in a glorified in the presence God and the glory of the Son.

**1 John 5:11–12a (NKJV) — 11** And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. **12a** He who has the Son has life.

Not a few things, some things, or even most things, but ALL THINGS ARE YOURS!

How Can This Be? By ...

### Knowing We are a Possession of God (23)

All things are our because as believers “we are Christ’s.”

**Romans 8:16–17b (NKJV) — 16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17b** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ ...

Chosen before the foundation of the world, covered by the blood, redeemed, forgiven, and adopted as brothers and sisters of and in Christ with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that will never fade away, and is reserved for us in Heaven!

“And Christ is God’s.”

He is God’s Son, God’s Word, God’s Express Image, His Beloved, The Radiance of God’s Glory, the Essence of His Being, The Bread of Life, The Light of the World, The Good Shepherd, The Living Water, The Resurrection and The Life, , The

One Who Was, and Is, and Is to  
Come, The Great I AM ... And He is  
Ours!

**ILLUS:** Picture of the Trinity and security.  
The Spirit indwells us, The Son Covers us,  
and the Father hold us!

“The greatest possible motive for  
maintaining the unity of the Spirit and for  
avoiding church division is knowing that we  
belong to Christ and that Christ belongs to  
God. Because we all belong to Him, we all  
belong to each other.” (MacArthur, 93)

**John 17:20–23 (NKJV) — 20** “I do not pray  
for these alone, but also for those who will  
believe in Me through their word; **21** that  
they all may be one, as You, Father, are in  
Me, and I in You; that they also may be one  
in Us, that the world may believe that You  
sent Me. **22** And the glory which You gave  
Me I have given them, that they may be one  
just as We are one: **23** I in them, and You in  
Me; that they may be made perfect in one,  
and that the world may know that You have  
sent Me, and have loved them as You have  
loved Me.

## Conclusion

“Be done with worry, feelings of insecurity, fears of  
insignificance, all craving for secondhand importance. You  
are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” (Piper)

**Romans 8:38–39 (NKJV) — 38** For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Family to be Indwelt

As God's Sanctuary, By His Spirit, Not to Soil, but To Be Set Apart (Seeking God's Wisdom, Boasting in Him, Recognizing Our Inheritance, and Knowing We are His Possession).

**1 John 5:12b (NKJV) —12b** ... he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.