



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 3

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- St. Paul continues to deal with the problem of division in this chapter
- Its seriousness is seen in its carnality, which prevented St. Paul from being able to speak as to spiritually mature people (1-4)
- St. Paul shows their relation to one other being the temple of God (5-17)
- St. Paul instructs them not to glory in the wisdom of this world nor in men (18-23)



Sectarianism Is Carnal (3:1-4)

- The brethren at Corinth had not reached the state of spiritual men
- They were carnal, undeveloped like babes
- When he was at Corinth he treated them as babes, teaching them the simple principles. Milk is metaphorically simple teaching
- Meat is stronger and deeper doctrines
- In the Church of God, like all others, the teaching must be adapted to the advancement of the learner



Sectarianism Is Carnal (3:1-4)

- They are carnal and not spiritual enough to receive the higher teaching, the hidden wisdom
- The proof that they were yet carnal was the existence of divisions in the church
- They exhibited the jealous and harsh spirit characteristic of men of the world
- The fact that they are divided by following different human leaders, instead of all following Christ, demonstrated that they were yet carnal

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- Their carnal-mindedness shows itself in choosing and following these human leaders
- Hence he asks, who is Paul, or Apollos?
- Only ministers, servants, subordinates, agents through whom they believed on Christ
- God gave to St. Paul and Apollos power to lead you to faith
- It was St. Paul's work given him to plant the seed of the kingdom

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- It was the work of Apollos to afterwards water or cultivate the Christian plants which had come forth
- But it is God who gave the growth; gave the seed its vitality and the plant its life
- The work of St. Paul and Apollos were as nothing; the power was all of God, who gave growth to the seed and plant
- He who waters and plants are one

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- One: essentially in their aim they are one, engaged in one and the same ministry; therefore they ought not to be made by you the occasion of forming separate parties
- Each will be rewarded as a servant, according to his own labor
- St. Paul and Apollos and all the servants are fellow-laborers belonging to God
- They are also fellow-laborers with each other

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- The Corinthian church was God's field in which they labored
- Another figure is now given, God's building
- St. Paul and Apollos are God's builders, and the church is the building they build
- The leading idea is that they are only God's employees
- How can St. Paul have a party, then, and Apollos another, when they are only employees of God?

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- When St. Paul was called, God gave him the grace of apostleship to be a master builder
- He had laid the foundation at Corinth, when he was preaching Christ
- Notice it is not a foundation, but the foundation, because God's spiritual temple can have only one
- After St. Paul left Corinth, Apollos and other teachers continued to build upon the foundation that St. Paul had laid

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- Since there is only one foundation of the temple: Jesus Christ, there should be most diligent building upon it
- To preach Christ is to preach the fundamental or foundation truth of the church
- The church or temple will be of the character of the material built upon it
- Gold, silver, precious stone: when the apostolic doctrines are molded into the image of Christ

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- Wood, hay, straw: the erroneous applications that cause division and carnality
- The kind of work will be examined
- The Day: the day of Christ's coming
- As fire destroys wood, hay, straw, but leaves gold, silver, precious stones, so the work of some builders, when tested, will vanish
- If the work stands the test of trial, such a builder will be rewarded

Watering, Working, Warning (3:5-17)



- If any man's work shall be burned, such one will lose his reward
- He shall be saved, because he intended well, but is barely saved, like one who escapes from a burning house where all his property is consumed
- We are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in us (Confirmation), so it is an awful sin to defile it and God will destroy whoever defiles it
- Carnal divisions defile God's house

Avoid Worldly Wisdom (3:18-23)



- After he explained the seriousness of defiling the temple of God by divisions, St. Paul is warning them against their philosophical tendencies
- If any man is wise in his own estimation let him deny this wisdom in order that he may become wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3:15)
- The wisdom of the world is foolishness in the judgment of God
- For it is written (Job 5:13)

Avoid Worldly Wisdom (3:18-23)



- This establishes the canonicity of Job
- God uses the world wisdom to be the very snare to catch those who think themselves so wise
- The thoughts of the wise are useless before God (Psalm 94:11)
- Therefore, let no man boast in men and do not be divided around human leaders
- All, the preachers as well as all beside, are ordained by God to prepare you for eternal glory

Avoid Worldly Wisdom (3:18-23)



- The world is not to be the master, but the servant of God's children
- Life is given to do God's work and to insure life eternal and to the saint death is gain (Phil 1:21)
- The things present whatsoever they are, shall work together for good to them that love God (Rom 8:28)
- The things to come to the Christian are the presence of Christ, and the joys of the New Jerusalem

Avoid Worldly Wisdom (3:18-23)



- He had obtained for us all things, but has bought us with a price
- Christ is God's: He is God's Son, and belonging to the Father
- All things are ours, but we are not our own!
- We own all else, but we do not own ourselves!
- Hence our duty to be consecrated to the service of Christ and not to be divided around men



Conclusion

- What is meant with milk and solid food in verse 2?
- What is the role of the ministers working in the field of God? What does it mean; each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor (verse 8)?
- One foundation for God's building but different building materials. A fire will test the work of every one. Explain.
- God is zealous for His holies. Which verse explains this fact?
- In verse 18 it talks about different kinds of wisdoms. How do I acquire the wisdom of God?