

**The Failure of Church Success:
“Worldly Walking”
1 Corinthians 3:1-9
1/17/10 a.m.
Jerry Grey**

Introduction:

210. " *The Scandal of Christianity.*" - Dr. Peter Ainslie, foremost apostle of Christian unity of his generation (Ecumenicalist), wrote a book with the title, *The Scandal of Christianity*. The book contains this pungent paragraph: "Half of Christian Christendom is not on speaking terms with the other half, separated by superstitions, ignorance, and fear. Whatever else this condition may reveal, it certainly is not Christian. But the denominationalist consoles himself that these conditions are matters of conscience, oblivious to the fact that Christian conscience has been bred largely in the hothouse of an unhealthy and biased theology." - from Dunnsville, Virginia 1867-1934. Pastor, Editor, Writer. Had Doctorates in Law and Divinity.

Consciences – the moral sense of rightness and wrongness. Inner feelings of goodness or of right behavior.

In our first message, *Lives Worthy of the Call*, I tried to present the church in Corinth to you as Paul saw them. Paul started his letter addressing them from a positive standpoint.

Paul noted the positive benefits and theological advantages they possessed.

They were called, sanctified, had been given grace and peace, enriched with speaking gifts and knowledge. Paul's witness to them was confirmed in them. They lacked no spiritual gifts, they eagerly waited on Christ's return. The promise of God to them for

strength and stability in this life and the next was taught, and the promise of being blameless on the day of the Lord. God's Faithfulness to them was promised..

With all these blessings, what could go wrong?

The What:

1. vv. 10-17 tells us they had divisions, schisma, no unity. They could not agree. Made wrong judgments.
2. Wrongly followed men and earthly leaders. Cultic.
3. Poor theology.
4. Emotionalism.

The Why:

Why were they this way? Why had the foundation of unity failed?

- The Foundation of Success is unity.
- The Failure of Church success is worldly walking.
- The Finality of Church success is worlding wisdom.

Read Text: Chapter 3:1-9

Worldly Walking

Verse 1: Paul could not address them or speak to them on a spiritual plain. They did not understand spiritual matters.

- a. Scriptural Ignorance - No study, no church polity, no doctrinal proficiencies.

- b. Experiential Ignorance – Had not walked with Christ so as to gain experience and growth.
 - c. Spiritual Disciplines Ignorance – Lacked Fruit of Spirit, lacked love, forgiveness, etc.
 - d. Holy Spirit Ignorance – The word Spiritual in verse 1 comes from the word **pneuma** which is "the Spirit."
- * They were ignorant of how the Holy Spirit worked.

* This is important now to bring out because when we get to chapters 12-14, it will be significant. My views there reflect what Paul says here. How can one claim they understood spiritual gifts when they were ignorant of the one who gives spiritual gifts?

They were worldly: **sarx σάρξ**

Carnal. Of the world.

Refers to flesh, the old man. Also literally, flesh one eats. Metaphorically it refers to passions and external vices. The desires of the flesh are not curbed. Hedonistic.

The Christians were infants. They got saved. They were sealed by the Holy Spirit then baptized. Made members of First Baptist Corinth and died spiritually. They became worldly or carnal Christians.

Babies: Nepios- νηπιος. This is a child that can't speak. A minor. This is a simple-minded person. An immature Christian.

Give me some characteristics of babies:

- Cry when they don't get their way.
- Have to be taught they don't always get their way.
- Have to be fed.
- Have to be changed.
- Must be powdered to be made comfy.
- Ignorant.

- They cry when they don't even know why.
- Have to learn to share.
- Very needy. Get rocked, soothed.

What Makes a Worldly Christian.

1. **Ingratitude** – Showing no thankfulness for what God has done to bring them salvation. It's disrespecting the blood of Jesus Christ. Being unthankful is a great sin.
2. **Lack of Discipleship** – The church does not disciple them.
3. **Lack of Discipline on their part.** There's only so much we can do to present programs, doctrine, teaching and counsel. You must take the bit sooner or later. Personal growth is personal growth
4. **Not really saved.** No change, No Christ.
5. **No progress** - They stay small. Babies cry, they must be tended to, they do not eat steak and peanut butter. When given meat, they choke. I have seen people come to WBC who have not been in church for awhile and watch them cry in the service for several months until they get used to being fed.

Verse 2: Worldly Christians live on milk. You can't work hard for Jesus if you stay on milk. Your spiritual muscles and bones have to grow.

Paul also says – **“You still”** are not ready for it. * This means they were in a pattern of inactivity. We grow spiritually until we die, or we die prematurely.

Worldly Christians are easy to see.

Galatians 5:16-26

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of sinful nature. ¹⁷ For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to

the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ **The acts of the sinful nature** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² **But the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Romans 8:5-9

⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The sinful mind is hostile to God.

It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by sinful nature cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

Don't you want to know the deep things of God? To experience the scriptural revelation of God's truth for your life in maturity is good.

Verse 3: Two things a church never needs to be known for –

1. **Jealousy - ζήλος Zeal** – passion that is misplaced. Indignation, Jealousy. Envy.
2. **Strife/Quarreling** – Contention, debate variance.

Paul asks them if they were not simply acting like ordinary men.

The standard of behavior should be different in godly men. There should be a marked difference between believers and unbelievers.

When believers act like unbelievers the church gets ripped apart.

Verse 4: Choosing up sides and claiming or following leaders as if they were gods shows immaturity. Leaders are not to have a following. (Give honor to whom honor is due).

This is the main cause of the divisions in the church. The members would not follow one leader – they were divided.

Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Christ. Many members don't follow anyone.

Reasons for Quarrels:

1. Differing spiritual gifts.
2. Jealousy and envy among ministries.
3. Not understanding church – conflict can be a good thing when experienced properly.
4. Lack of respect for leaders and others.
5. Selfishness.
6. Power trippers/ego – 5 people behind closed doors make all the decisions.
7. Problems with authority.

8. Tradition.
9. Group dynamics – some don't play well with others.
10. Nepotism.
11. Controllers – Money, decisions, direction, etc.
12. Disagreeable people – the emptier the pot the quicker it boils.
13. Lack of information.
14. Vision Hijackers.
15. Spiritual immaturity.
16. Wrong use of committees.

A church that functions under the Lordship of Jesus Christ can overcome this. That's Paul's overarching message to this church.

870 Quarrel Among the Tools. The carpenter's tools had a conference. Brother hammer was in the chair. The meeting had informed him that he must leave because he was too noisy; but he said, 'If I am to leave, Brother Gimlet (auger) must leave too; he is so insignificant that he makes very little impression.'

Little Brother Gimlet arose and said, 'All right but Brother Screw must go also; for you have to turn him round and round again to get him anywhere.' Brother Screw then said, 'If you wish I shall go; but Brother Plane must leave also. All his work is on the surface: there's no depth in it.'

To this Brother Plane replied, 'Well, Brother Rule will have to withdraw if I do, for he is always measuring other folks, as if he were the only one who is right.' Brother Rule then complained against Brother Sandpaper in these words, 'I don't care. He is rougher than he ought to be and rubs people the wrong way.'

In the midst of the discussion the Carpenter of Nazareth walked in. He had come to perform His day's work, so He put on His apron and went to the bench to make a pulpit. He employed the screw, the gimlet, the sandpaper, the saw, the hammer, the plane, and all the other tools. The day's work over and the pulpit finished, Brother Saw arose and said, 'Brethren, I perceive that all of us are laborer together with God.'

How careful we should be not to find fault with any of God's tools, for they are of as much use to Him as we are, and His work cannot go on without them! 2 Corinthians 6:1 – Naismith

2 Cor 6:1-2

As God's ***fellow workers*** we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.
NIV

Verses 5-6:

All God's tools should be ***servants***. The tools work together for one purpose.

* v.5 tells us that people come to Christ through servants. Servants never save souls. Servants are used by God to bring men to Christ. If you want to bring men to Christ, be a servant. You may not be the actual person that leads a soul to Christ but you are a tool among many that has helped. You may not pick the fruit but you have plowed or planted, or watered. Pruning and propping up are a job that is important to picking.

Each member serves at the task God has given.

God gives each man his task or his job in the field.

- One planted
- One watered
- God makes it grow

God is the one who blesses ministries. We must reveal His glory. We do His work. We serve together – God gives us the increase. He draws, He saves, He calls us to work. God gets the glory.

2 Thoughts:

1. Know your job or place.
2. Do your job.

You may plow up, plant, water, prune, fertilize, protect, and even harvest... but we are all seeking one result- fruit!

Verse 7:

- God is responsible for increase
- God is responsible for growth.

* My goal this year is to focus on God's Glory. God's magnificence. Work hard. Serve. Witness. Plant. Water.

- Leave the results to Him.

Nothing we do is successful without God's blessing.

As the Corinthian church was divided over their favorite preacher, Paul was teaching them that we are all nothing without God's grace. Every job is equal. Every servant important. The man that preaches and the person that changes a diaper are both working for the same fruit.

I love the terms Paul uses. They are gardening words. Extremely simple but deeply profound.

~**Plant-** φυτεω, which refers to planting or setting out in the earth. This is to instill doctrine in the heart. To implant.

The root of this word is φυσω, which means to puff or blow, specifically in the germination of seeds. This refers to a seed

swelling up or germinating. The shell of the seed breaks open and a little root appears. This is the term, “**spring up.**” Then the waterer comes along and the sun shines and we get heat. Then God makes it increase, **αυξανω**. Here again, all our work is for naught unless God makes it growth.

This is why we love to garden so much. Growing plants gets us close to God. The natural process of planting, work, and growth are exactly like the spiritual world. God is responsible for the growth. We cannot make a seed germinate. Only God.

Verse 8: ESV – “He who plants and he who waters are one.”
Not, should be, or hope to be... but are one.

Here is the difference –

Each is rewarded according to his labor.

Each man is judged by God and given wages and rewards due him by his weariness of labor. Some of you are always worried about what others are doing or not doing. That’s my job. I try from the pulpit to encourage people to participate. Yet, it is not my job to hound or pressure. I make suggestions and invite.

Verse 8 is my go to verse when I feel others are not doing their part. I work for Jesus and His kingdom. I will be rewarded accordingly.

Illustration: I hated group projects in college. Somebody always did the most work while others goofed off. I like to get according to my labor. God’s way is better than a college professors way. I like to be rewarded or disciplined based on my

own actions. I will always work until I am out of strength on anything. I will out work you.

*** I like God's economy** – We work and we do our work in unity, but each person is rewarded as to his effort.

If you are a slack dog, it will show up. But even if it doesn't, I'm not working for you.

Verse 9: Paul uses husbandry language to describe his thoughts.

- A field- **georgion**, a farm, husbandman, field, land owner, or cultivator.
- A building- **oikodome**, to edify, building, architecture, structure.

We are workers together to get a crop or build the structure of the kingdom. But ... the field and the building belong to God.

I have heard people say ---

“Preacher, you guys come and go, but we stay; this is our church.” Well, I want you to know we are all working for another. This is His building and His structure, and we are not sitting in the field or the structure. This building is not the entity about which Paul speaks. Paul's not referring to brick and mortar.

I've heard this – “Hey, you go to Jerry Grey's church – WBC, right?”

That's the way worldly people see it.

I'm your Pastor, I'm your leader, I'm responsible – but nothing or no one belongs to me. This building is not mine and the field is not mine. You are my sheep by way of God's gift, however, I do

not own you. The kingdom is your family. This is way bigger than me or you.

The text literally says we are **sunergos**, which is an adjective modifying the noun God. We are co-laborers of God. We belong to HIM.

We are both here for one purpose – Plant, water and watch God make it grow.

Closing: Acts 2: 42-47

Pray that WBC reflects this type of spiritual church and we not fail through worldliness.

Paul; teaches that no man is above another in importance. We are co-laborers. We all have a job and our jobs are all important. The brand new baby Christian is just as important as I am as the pastor.

Co-laborers

Plowing is hard. Some people are hard to reach. You have to soften the hearts soil so the seed goes in right.

Planting is hard. Many seeds are planted and no germination.

Fertilizing is hard. Sometimes we burn up the plants.

Fighting weeds is hard. Satan casts weeds all in our work.

However, picking fruit is awesome.