

Second Week of Lent

(this week's devotions come from 1 Corinthians 3:1-23)

Monday – *And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?*

This illustration may remind us of babies. Babies begin with milk because that is all their digestive systems can handle. They then move to cereal and soft food. As they physically grow, we expect them to eat regular table food.

Paul was explaining to the church in Corinth that when he began talking to them about Christ, he fed them with “milk.” Just as we do not expect a five-year-old to grasp high school math, he did not expect the new Christians to understand everything about the faith right way.

But here he is admonishing them—you are *still* not ready for solid food. You are *still* acting like toddlers, throwing tantrums when you don't get your own way. Consider today: in what ways are you mature in your faith, and where do you need to mature a little bit?

Tuesday – *⁴ For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul’, and another, ‘I belong to Apollos’, are you not merely human? ⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each.*

Once Paul left Corinth, people began to divide themselves into groups, based on which missionary had affected them the most. Some liked Apollos, some preferred Paul, and still others loved Peter. (See 1 Corinthians 1:12) But truly, everyone was supposed to be followers of Christ. Paul and Apollos and Peter were simply people who pointed the way to Christ.

In college I attended a church that was still healing after their former pastor abruptly divorced his wife and married a parishioner whom he had been secretly dating. The new pastor preached a sermon on this passage and discussed the things church members had been saying to him. People felt betrayed and disappointed, but some even questioned their own faith. Could they believe in God after their former pastor sinned like this? The pastor explained (kindly and gently) that we were not to identify too closely with Christian leaders, who are simply servants of God. People were human and fallible and sinful, so our eyes are to remain on Christ. What happens when people around you prove to be human and sinful? Do your eyes stay on Christ?

Wednesday – *⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. ⁹ For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.*

In these verses, Paul expands on the roles of missionaries who came to minister to the Corinthian churches. Paul and Apollos shared the gospel—they preached, they taught, they answered questions, they patiently explained things that people didn't understand. They were God's faithful servants. And it was okay to appreciate what they had done. But God is the one who brought about the spiritual growth. People were supposed to worship God, not the human beings who shared the Good News with them.

Where is God calling you to plant and water? Where might He be calling you to cultivate friendships with non-believers? Where might He be calling you to get more involved in the lives of people you already know?

Thursday – *¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.*

This verse reminds me of one of my favorite passages, Matthew 7:24-27, about one man who built his house on sand, and one who built his on the rock. When the storms came, the house built on the sand fell, but the house built on the rock was fine because of its firm foundation.

We can choose the foundation on which we build. We can build our lives completely on ourselves. In this day and age, we do not technically have to depend on God. We can provide for ourselves, and when the going gets tough, we can double down and work harder to solve our problems.

Or...we can choose to depend on God. We can make it a practice to pray and ask God what His will is for our lives. We can view the Bible not as a nice guidebook to consult when we have a problem, but as the living and active Word of God that tells us how to live day to day.

Next week we will be looking at the church in Laodicea, whose members had so many ways to provide for themselves that they became lukewarm in their faith. We definitely do not want that for ourselves. Let us always seek to build on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ in all we do.

Friday – ¹² *Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—* ¹³ *the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done.*

Why did Paul highlight these different building materials? Gold, silver, and precious stones were hard to come by, and resisted flame. The melting temperature of gold is almost 2000 degrees Fahrenheit. However, wood, hay, and straw were common materials, and all of them are highly flammable. These things could be used as kindling to get a fire burning.

Warren Weirsbe (*Bible Commentary of the New Testament*, pg 464) says this about the Corinthian church: *The Corinthians were trying to build their church by man's wisdom, the wisdom of this world, when they should have been depending on the wisdom of God as found in the Word.*

Christ is our firm foundation. What materials will we use to build on that foundation? What does your daily life look like right now? Where are you building on man's wisdom, and where are you building on God's wisdom?

Saturday – ¹⁶ *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*

There are places in the Bible where Paul says that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Each of us individually is a temple of God. In this passage, the Greek word "you" is plural. Collectively, Christians are God's temple. Furthermore, Paul declares that as God's temple, we are to be holy.

When we think of the word holy, we think of God. After all, we are human, imperfect, and sinful. How can we possibly be holy? Colossians 3:12-14 gives us some ideas: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

We are holy because God has set us apart as His people. Look at the list from Colossians and ask God how you are doing in these areas of life? How compassionate are you? How humble are you? How well do you bear with others even when their lives are messy and chaotic?