

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 – “Don’t Be a Baby!”

Introduction: Paul exhorts the Corinthians to mature in the faith by refocusing them on the God he serves.

1) Imitating Mere Men

- In the previous chapter, Paul spoke about being spiritual people rather than people with the wisdom of the world. Unfortunately, the Corinthians are acting more like they have been taught by the world’s wisdom, men of the flesh, infants in Christ.
- There is nothing wrong with being fed with milk, as long as you progress to solid food eventually. The milk is the good news about God’s redeeming grace, the basics of the gospel and the Christian response. However, the Corinthians haven’t grasped even that. Thus, Paul tells them they need to go back to basics. (see Hebrews 5:11-14)
- Paul can judge them this way because of the fruit he observes in them, jealousy and strife. These are not characteristics shown by a gospel-driven life. (Romans 13:13-14)
- We must not be ok with a “separate-but-equal” Church. Christ’s death has broken down all the man-made barriers in the church, and even some divinely instituted ones. (Galatians 2, 3) How then can we think that anything should stand between us as a body of believers, no matter how important to us? Instead, we must strive for unity by sacrificing our own desires, which is a demonstration of Christian maturity.

2) Honouring Mere Servants

- It is foolish for the Corinthians to divide into factions over Paul and Apollos, because they are merely servants of God. This is demonstrated in the metaphor of them as united labourers in God’s field. Not only are they simply taking orders from their master, they also lack the power to make the seed grow.
- Paul and the other labourers also are not expecting to be rewarded by the field itself, they are looking for a reward from their master, who is God. This is a better reward than the honour of the Corinthians. Of course, we must also recognize that, as HC 65 says, any reward that the servant of the Lord receives is “not earned, but is a gift of grace.”
- This is because it is truly God’s work from beginning to end. Paul emphasizes this in the last phrase, which could be rendered, “**Of God** we are fellow workers, **God’s** field you are, **God’s** building you are.” The characteristic of the mature believer is to focus on God and his glory.

Conclusion: We hope that our own church leaders could genuinely say of themselves, “Who am I but a servant?” as Paul does in verse 5. However, the application does not stop there. Do we allow issues to divide us from each other or prevent us from eagerly

worshiping God? If we can be honest with our answers, and desire Christ to destroy those barriers in practice, then we demonstrate that we are walking by the Spirit.