

RCC in the Word
1 Corinthians 3
Week of July 8

1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not ready 3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul" and another "I follow Apollos", are you not being merely human? 5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field. God's building.

Corinth was located about 45 miles south of Athens in Greece. Because of its location, it was a popular stop for trade routes. Because the nearby sea passage was so dangerous, ships would be carried on skids or rollers across that area of Greece bringing even more people to Corinth thus it was a major trade city not only for Greece but for much of the Mediterranean area, including North Africa, Italy, and Asia Minor. Corinth was also known for its immoral practices which were even low for the pagan culture of the city. MacArthur states "Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity. To "corinthianize" came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery". In 1 Corinthians chapter 6: 9-10 Paul lists some of the specific sins that the city was noted for. Many believers in the church of Corinth had come from these sins. MacArthur also points out that tragically, some of the worse sins were still found among the church members. Even the most pagan Gentiles would not practice these sins.

It is no surprise that Paul's letter deals with more corrective behavior within the church at Corinth rather than dealing with doctrine. Paul does use some doctrinal teaching to illustrate how the church can directly deal with the matters of sin and righteousness.

The beginning of chapter three Paul states that he cannot address the church as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. Imagine the church in Corinth receiving this letter. One can imagine there was great anticipation to open and read a letter from Paul who had started the church earlier (Acts 18). The members of the church at Corinth were intelligent people and thought very highly of themselves. This was the worldly view of residents in Corinth much like that of the church of Sardis (Rev 3:1-6). Paul strikes to the heart of the matter; "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it." Baby Cora has now moved on from milk to solid foods but when in infancy, that is all her body could digest. So, it is with a new Christian, no matter their age. Some will progress faster to solid food than others, but all should strive to progress to solid food, a deeper knowledge of doctrine and understanding of God and His desires for us. Spurgeon writes "How grateful we ought to be that there is milk, and that this milk does feed the soul- that the simplest truths of Christianity contain in them all that the soul wants, just as milk is a diet upon which the body could be sustained, without anything else. Yet how we ought to desire to grow that we may not always be upon milk diet but that we may be able to digest the strong meat – the high doctrine of the deep things of God. These are for men, not for

babes. Let the babes be thankful for the milk but let us aspire to be strong men that we may feed on meat." Yes, just as baby Cora could survive on milk alone, Christians can also survive on milk. To thrive as a Christian, we must desire to sink our teeth into the word and learn. We must also be willing to submit to the teaching of the word and apply it to our lives. See also Hebrews 5:12-14 and 1 Peter 2:1-2.

In verses three and four, Paul points out other signs of Christian immaturity in the church at Corinth. The members were still giving into the carnal desires of the flesh and were also creating divisions and strife. Many cliques had developed with many giving allegiance to Paul, others to Apollos, others to Peter and even to just Christ. Paul makes it clear that there is no difference between him and Apollos in the eyes of God. Paul who planted the church in Corinth and Apollos who watered the church after Paul, both are carrying out the will of God (v6-8). At RCC, it should not matter to us which elder preaches the word on any given Sunday. We are the field and they are the laborers in charge of that field (v9).

Hearing about brother's mission in the Middle East, I thought about this point. As he stated, there are other workers in his city who are also sharing the Gospel. They are not competing in the field but working together. The goal is to plant and water the field with the Gospel and God will reap the harvest.

Now taking that another step further since most of us at RCC are not elders. We too, according to the great commission, are to also share the Gospel. Some of us will plant seeds, others will water. Some might be present to see God harvesting the soul(s). At the end of the day, those who planted and those who watered all will receive a reward in eternity.

Also, if you plant seeds and never get to see that come to fruition as a harvest, you should not consider your work as a failure. It is easy for us to do so because of our fleshly desires. We want to see results. God will send workers to water the seeds you plant today. Again, I think of brother Stern and his mission. He has been in Oman for many years and he stated that there are very little converts in that country. Did he express frustration over that? NO! Ryan understands his duty and the job that God has called him to do. Therefore, let us not be frustrated but encouraged as we share the Gospel. We are one step in the process of the field.

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