

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? ⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Text: 1 Corinthians 3:1-11 A 1-29-17 1 Kings 19:9-18 John 4:15-26 Psalm 95 (Resp. Ps.: 62)
Hymns: 467, 473, 465, 370

JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH AND TEACHING

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

With so many different religions and beliefs and philosophies in the world people struggle with the same question Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, "*What is truth?*" (Jn. 18:38). Today in His Word God reminds us of the rock-solid foundation of our faith and teaching.

Our text is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. At the time Paul wrote those words, Corinth was a center of trade from all over that part of the world. It was an extremely wealthy city. It was also **filled** with pagan worship, worldly philosophy, and immorality. Sexual immorality of all kinds wasn't considered wrong at all. Corinth was very much like our country is today. Paul stayed in Corinth a year and a half, preaching and teaching God's Word. The Gospel bore fruit, and a large congregation was established.

Some years later when Paul was no longer in Corinth he wrote to the members of the congregation, "*I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal.*" The Corinthians still believed in Jesus as their Savior, as we can see by Paul's description of them as "*babes in Christ.*" But those words also point out their problem. They were "*babes in Christ*": spiritually immature. They were still Sunday-School level students, when by this time they should have

been on the level of adult Bible Class. They were still beginners in what they knew about God's Word and how God wants us to live. Paul says they were "*carnal*" – too much drawn to their sinful flesh and to the worldly thinking and immorality all around them there in Corinth. The Bible says, "*The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be*" (Ro. 8:7). Human wisdom and ways fight against God and His Word and His ways. Being carnally-minded instead of spiritually-minded, the Corinthians were still only able to absorb the basic teachings of God's Word.

Paul says, "*Where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*" Paul cites "*envy, strife, and divisions among*" the members of the congregation as evidence of their spiritual immaturity. Every congregation is made up of sinful human beings, and there can sometimes be problems between members. To be spiritually mature is to want to be like Jesus: kind and loving and forgiving. In their spiritual immaturity the Corinthians were acting childishly – many of them wanting their own way and not being considerate of each other. They were letting themselves be controlled by their sinful flesh, acting the way the world acts: "**I come first!**"

The Bible urges us in regard to pastors, "*Recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and ... esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*" (1 Thess. 5:12-13). We love and respect our pastors who faithfully teach us and help us with the Word of God. But we don't glorify our pastors; we give all glory to God. In their spiritual immaturity the Corinthians didn't understand how God wants us to view pastors. Paul tells them, "*When one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?*" They were taking sides over who they thought was their favorite pastor, focusing on the messenger instead of on God and His message.

Paul asks the Corinthians, "*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?*" Pastors are "*ministers*," or servants, called by God to serve Him and His people. We have the wonderful privilege of publicly proclaiming God's Word, through which God brings people to faith, and strengthens them in their faith. A pastor serves a congregation for a time, and then the Holy Spirit calls him to serve another congregation. Paul served the Corinthian congregation for a time, then, after he left, Apollos served them. Messengers change, but the message – God's Word – always stays the same. "*The Word of our God stands forever*" – Isaiah 40:8.

Paul says, "*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ... For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.*" Paul was the first one to teach about Jesus and His Word in Corinth, through which people were brought to faith and the congregation was formed. Apollos followed Paul, continuing to teach people about Jesus and His Word, through which the members of the congregation were built up in their faith and more people were brought to faith and added to the congregation. Paul and Apollos both taught the same

thing: the truth about Jesus and His Word. In the original text, Paul makes a strong contrast between himself and Apollos and what they did, and **God** and what **He** did. All glory goes to **God** who worked through what Paul and Apollos taught to create faith and strengthen faith in the hearts of people who heard it. Paul says in another place, *“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes”* (Ro. 1:16).

Paul says, *“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”* Paul and Apollos both had the same Gospel ministry. Both wanted those who heard about Jesus to believe in Him and be built up in their faith in Him. Both looked to God to grant success to the message they taught about Jesus. Both had the same *“reward”* in their ministries of seeing people brought to faith in Jesus, kept in their faith in Jesus, and die believing in Jesus and His promise of eternal life in heaven.

Paul says, *“According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.”* In the original Paul emphasizes the phrase, *“According to the grace of God.”* By the grace which God had given him, Paul was able to wisely build the Corinthian congregation on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word. *“According to the grace ... God”* had given Apollos, he wisely built up the congregation in Jesus Christ and His Word. Paul admonished future pastors there to continue to do the same.

Earlier Paul had told the Corinthians, *“I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, ... that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God”* (1 Cor. 2: 5). Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Everyone who believes in Jesus has all of his sins forgiven, and is saved. Jesus moves us out of love for Him to live our lives for Him, according to His Word. By faith in Jesus, one day He will take us to heaven to live with Him forever.

Paul sums up his whole message: *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* Dr. George Stoeckhardt says,

A true teacher will continue to build on the foundation that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. That alone will truly edify a church. But such a building can only so be accomplished when the preacher sticks to the Word of God. Jesus Christ must ever be in the center of his message. That is the heavenly wisdom which keeps hearers from foolishly following human whims and wisdom. (Lectures on the First Epistle Of Paul To The Corinthians, presented in English by Pastor H. W. Degner, 1969, page 20)

JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH AND TEACHING. “Dear Jesus, may this always be so for us all.” Amen.