

TITLE: THE ROLE OF LEADERS & FOLLOWERS IN THE CHURCH

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 3

INTRO: In **1:10-17**, Paul addressed the divisiveness of the Corinthian brethren in following different leaders. In **1:18-2:16**, we saw that the first and most important reason why this is wrong is because Christianity is a result of *God's* wisdom, not any man's. Now in ch. 3, he's going to explain the role & responsibility of these church leaders, as well as their "followers."

I. GOD'S BUILDERS (v. 1-15):

A. The minister's role (v. 1-7)

1. **(v. 1-4) According to human wisdom**

(v. 1-2) **Past:** *I couldn't speak to you as spiritual, but carnal (fleshly), as babes in Christ.* Spiritual vs. natural in **2:14-16**; now spiritual vs. carnal. The meanings are the same; those being addressed are the same. When Paul 1st met the Corinthians, he treated them like the babes in Christ they were, feeding them with spiritual milk, not meat. They still can't handle meat! (v. 3-4) **Present:** *Ye are yet (still) carnal.* These brethren are still 'natural' or 'carnal' (no stronger spiritually than when Paul met them)! This is seen in their leader affiliation (v. 4; **1:12**), which Paul calls "*envying, strife, divisions, walking as men (flesh).*" **Jam 3:16**—"*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (it's devilish—v.15)!*"

2. **(v. 5-7) According to God's wisdom**

(v. 5) Who is Paul (or Apollos)? Why would you claim this type of allegiance to me? I wasn't crucified for you (**1:13**)! We're ministers (servants) through whom God gave you the truth! Don't shoot the messenger, but don't *glorify* him either! (v. 6-7) Who is to be glorified? Paul planted (started the work—**Acts 18:1-17**), & Apollos watered (worked there afterward, helping them grow—**v.27-28**), **but God gave the increase. NOTHING** that Paul, Apollos, Peter, you, I, or anybody else can do or teach has ever come from any of us; **ONLY GOD** is to be glorified for giving truth, Christ, POS, etc. Nobody is worthy of such praise for simply doing our job! **Lk 17:10**—"*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*"

B. The minister's accountability in that role (v. 8-15) He's just made it clear that he and Apollos are simply ministers. They're not worthy of this praise that only belongs to God. But, this doesn't mean they're not worthy of a reward for their work.

1. **(v. 8-11) The foundation of his work**

(v. 8) Apollos and I are one (we aren't divided; we're not teaching different things; we simply had different roles based on the needs you had when each of us was there). We're one, but our rewards will be based on our individual work.

(v. 9) Again, *we are fellow workers of God* (we're not divided). And *ye are God's husbandry* (farm, field); *God's building* (house). You belong to God, not Paul (cf. **1:12**—"*I am of Paul*"). You're His House! **1 Tim 3:15**—the church is the house of God. This is the 'building' being discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

(v.10-11) He already described the work he & Apollos did as a plant, now as a building. I laid the foundation; Apollos built on it. The foundation is Christ – His death, burial, & resurrection, His words, His commandments, His doctrine (no other foundation)! So build on him, not on any man. The rest of the analogy focuses on others building on this foundation.

2. **(v. 12-13) The quality of his work**

He mentions several materials used to complete this building, the quality of which falls into two categories: durable (gold, silver, precious stones) and non-durable (wood, hay, stubble). Fire, the ultimate physical test, will prove the spiritual quality of our evangelistic work as Christians. We all have the responsibility to be evangelists. So often, we baptize them, then forget them (no further study and growth). But our work **will** be tried with fire (persecutions - **1 Pet 4:12**).

3. **(v. 14-15) The reward for his work**

a. (v. 14) Your building survives – *If any man's work abide (survive trials), he shall receive a reward (hire/wages)* – in this life (a new, strong brother & friend), and in the life to come.

b. (v. 15) Your building falls – *If...burned up* (if your new convert falls away), you'll suffer loss (that which you'd gained). But this doesn't affect your own salvation. We have the responsibility to teach others the truth. We are **not** responsible for their reactions to the truth. "*Your labor in the Lord is not in vain*" (**15:58**). You'll still be saved, but only if you yourself survive the fiery trial (**1 Pet 4:12**).

II. GOD'S BUILDING (v. 16-23):

A. (v. 16-17) The building defined & defended

Ye are the temple of God (cont. from v.9). The church is God's temple; His building. God doesn't dwell in physical temples (**Ac 7:48; 17:24**). He dwells in His church. *The Spirit...dwells in you.* In the OT, the temple was the location of worship. Now the temple is the church. No one can worship God outside the church. This is where God abides. *If any man defile...* –God had rules regarding the OT temple, protecting it from that which would defile/destroy it. He also wants His church treated properly.

B. (v. 18-20) What defiles the building – pursuing human wisdom. This may seem like a change of topic from the temple to human wisdom, but this is *how* the temple (church) can be defiled (context of ch.1-4). *Become a fool* (according to the world) *in order to be wise* (according to God). Nothing has changed today. In order to know & follow God, we must let go of the world's ideas of what's right (pluralism, etc.). Quote of **Job 5:13**—*He takes (catches) the wise in their own craftiness* (tricks); and **Psa 94:11**—*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.* These verses speak of those who *think* they're wise, but don't acknowledge God and His ways. They're deceiving themselves! Think of all the inaccurate views & ideas about God today. These exist because people reject God's Word in which He explains Himself. ****Remember, all this is in the context of 1:11-12.**

C. (v. 21-23) What strengthens the building – proper perspective regarding leaders, etc. Don't glory about a particular leader. *All things are yours* – everything God gives is designed to teach about Him and help us reach Heaven. The universe teaches of His existence. Paul, etc. taught of His will for man. God provided them for you. They're yours (for your benefit); they're **not** for you to follow and glorify! *And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.* All Christians are unified, & tied back to God through Christ.

CONCLUSION: Men are not to be followed as if they were the ultimate source of God's wisdom. Rather they are to be respected, & utilized for their *spiritual* wisdom and ability to help us grow (**4:1**). ***If this is true of inspired men, how much more so for elders & preachers today?**