

God owns the Church: 1 Corinthians 3v1-23

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 October 2015

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 0 0] page 1145 of your red church bible first corinthians chapter three brothers i could not address you as spiritual but as worldly mere infants in christ i gave you milk not solid food for you are not yet ready for it indeed you are still not ready you are still worldly for since there is jealousy and quarreling among you are you not worldly are you not acting like mere men for when one says i follow paul and another i follow apollos are you not mere men what after all is apollos and what is paul only servant through whom you came to believe as the lord is assigned to each his task i planted the seed apollos watered it but god made it grow so neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything but only god who makes things grow the man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose and each will be rewarded according to his own labor for we are god's fellow workers you are god's field god's building by the grace god has given me i laid a foundation as an expert builder and someone else is building on it but each one should be careful how he builds for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid which is jesus christ if any man builds on this foundation using gold silver costly stones wood hay or straw his work will be shown for what it is because the day will bring it to light it will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the quality of each man's work if what he has built survives he will receive his reward if it is burned up he will suffer loss he himself will be saved but only as one escaping through the flames don't you know that you yourselves are god's temple and that god's spirit lives in you if anyone destroys god's temple god will destroy him for god's temple is sacred and you are that temple do not deceive yourselves if any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age he should become a fool so that he may become wise for the wisdom of this world is foolishness in god's sight as it is written he catches the wise in their craftiness and again the lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile so then no more boasting about men all things are yours whether paul or apollos or cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future all are yours and you are of christ and christ is of god thank you chris well we're going to pray please keep your bibles open in first corinthians chapter three as we go through this section together and we continue in our studies messy church holy church let's pray together we have not received the spirit of the world but the spirit who is from god that we may understand what god has freely given us our father god we thank you for the wonderful gift of your holy spirit

and we pray for his help right now that he would give us understanding of these words that he would drive them deep into our hearts that he would help us to see who you are what you have done and what it means to be the holy church of God we need your help and we humbly ask for it and it's in Jesus name we pray amen would you ever grow up you're behaving like a baby I'm sure we all remember that rebuke from our parents if you keep behaving like a baby then I'll treat you like a baby well sadly it's a rebuke the church also needs to hear look at verse one of chapter three brothers and sisters I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly mere babies in Christ in fact he says you're about as mature as a baby on the bottle verse two I gave you milk not solid food for you were not yet ready for it indeed you are still not ready do you see we can we can start off with milk we can start off with the simple gospel of Jesus Christ who died for our sins and forgave us and rose again from the grave but we never move on into solid food not that we put the gospel aside but that we don't grow up in the gospel and when we don't grow up well then we mess up verse three you are still worldly for since there is jealousy and quarreling among you are you not worldly are you not acting like mere men like the rest of people for when one says I follow Paul and another I follow Apollos are you not mere men you see instead of this church being united by gathering around Christ and his cross they have divided by gathering around people and their status they each have their own little group of followers Paul they say well he's a powerful speaker he plants churches have you seen all that he does we're following him he knows what strategy is all about others were saying well we follow Apollos he's an educated man a great speaker do you see the way he draws in the crowds if the church is going to grow then we need a program that's going to be delivered in style we need pastors who are going to be successful and so the fights continue today Christians behaving like babies my youth group leader has more people coming to faith than yours well my pastor is a lecturer in a Bible college we've had people healed in our church well we've had more baptisms than you it's all worldly and immature instead of growing up in the gospel they are messing up

relying on people and their status you see if we were spiritually mature if we were spiritual adults well then we would understand that the church is God's have a look back at chapter 1 and verse 2 because this is how he wrote to the church reminding us at the very beginning chapter 1 verse 2 to the church of God in Corinth you see the church doesn't belong to any person and the success is not dependent on any program it's God's church he owns the church and we are to be united around God and the way in which he works so there's three things we're going to look at this morning three things that we're told about God and his church that will help us to grow to be spiritually mature here's the first one he tells us that the church is a field that God grows the church is a field that God grows so look at verse 9 this is back in chapter 3 he says for we are God's fellow workers you that's the church are God's field

God's building the church is to be seen as a large field that is meant to grow and produce a crop but all the growing that takes place is done by God look at verse 5 so they've been dividing and arguing about who they should follow and he reminds them what after all is Apollos and what is Paul but well they're only servants through whom you came to believe as the Lord has assigned to each his task Acts records for us this whole story of how the church began when Paul went first to Corinth he went persuading and reasoning that Jesus was the Christ and we're told that people came to believe and we're also told in Acts that when Paul left Corinth then Apollos arrived and he began to teach and to prove that Jesus was the Christ so we had two great teachers two great minds who came to this city working together well able to reason and debate with the best each of them building on the other each bringing the gospel and encouraging people in God's word but notice where the credit lies verse 6

Paul says I planted the seed Apollos came and watered it but God made it grow you see we can so quickly put all our attention on people and status we think it's about getting the right person with the right experience with the proven track record and if you get them then you will be guaranteed that your church is going to grow after all success and popularity will always draw a crowd but it's never about us or our gifts verse 7 so neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything only God who makes things grow it's crystal clear it's God who grows the church just as a farmer will plant and water his seed he has no control over the germination process no control over the fruitfulness of the crop he may have a full harvest the harvest might be sparse and in the same way we don't have control over the growth of the church

[12 : 33] God does it's his church he owns it and he grows it now that doesn't mean we're just useless bystanders just trotting along and letting God do everything no have a look back at verse 5 verse 5 tells us we are servants that God has gifted as the Lord assigned to each his task so God distributes amongst his church gifts as he pleases to each of his people and some of the people within church life will be those who sow the gospel seed and there will be others who water the gospel seed they build upon it it's a team effort everybody working together verse 8 the man who plants and the one who waters have one purpose our united desire together as

God's people is to see that the good news of Christ goes out that people are built up and growing in it that they come to faith one person may invite somebody to an event a different person might get to share the good news with them then another person might build upon it and teach them and explain it a little bit more and there will be another person who's praying for that person each one is gifted each role is vital and nobody can say well my part is better than your part should you only invite it I explained there's no superiority in all of this we have one purpose so neither he who plants or he who waters is anything it's not about us it's about

God who does all the growing so that's the first picture he gives us the church is a field that God grows the second is he says the church is a building that God tests the church is a building that God tests so in verse nine we're told yes we are God's field and then he uses a different metaphor he says we're God's building the church is to be seen like a great big building that God tests to see if it is structurally sound so that it will endure look at verse 10 by the grace God has given me I laid a foundation as an expert builder so what is the foundation that Paul has laid well look down at verse 11 he says no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid which is

Jesus Christ so when Paul arrived in Corinth the foundation that he laid was the message of Christ and his cross that's what he preached and people heard that good news and they believed in it and as a sign of their commitment to Christ they were baptized that's how the church in Corinth started and that's how this church here in Carigoline has started and that's how any true church starts so the gospel has been laid the good news has been rooted in people have come to faith but go back to verse 10 again let's read it he says by the grace God has given me I laid a foundation as an expert builder and someone else is building on it now I think the context is implying that there's a problem with the building that's going on on top of the foundation yes the foundation is solid but the bricks and blocks going up are a little suspect it seems

Paul is concerned here that new teachers have come along and they're not building with the gospel instead of preaching Christ and his cross instead of bringing people back to God's word they're more interested in programs and style they're more interested in clever arguments and clever people but what does he say the end of verse 10 but each one should be careful how he builds verse 12 if if anyone builds on this foundation using gold silver costly stones wood hay or straw his work will be shown for what it is because the day will bring it to light the day the day the day of the Lord's return when

[18 : 08] Christ will come back again to judge and when he comes back again to judge it will be complete and thorough no stone will be left unturned everything will be laid out in finite detail and everything and everyone will be tested look at the rest of verse 13 it will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the quality of each man's work when any large structure is built when it is finished it must be tested by the chief engineer the materials used in the building will be tested to see if it is structurally sound so that when the wind and the rain comes that building is going to remain strong it's not going to fall down in the same way when the

Lord Almighty comes to his church he's going to test it with fire to see that it is sound he will test to see what materials were used in the church so what did we use to build this church in Carigoline did we build with the gospel or did we rely on programs and style did we make the cross of Christ central to our gatherings was God's word the priority and the focus and did that drive everything we did or were we relying on people and their status anything that is not of God will be burned up and shown to be nothing verse 14 if what he has built survives well he will receive his reward if it is burned up he will suffer loss you see the church of

God will not escape God's judgment and all those who are involved in the building up of the church those who sow and those who water that is people like you and me we are not going to escape this judgment either we will have to be tested our work in Sunday school the things that we taught the children what we did at polo our conversations what the rock was all about what we teach our children in our own homes the things that we share with our friends at work our witness the work that I do as a pastor every single sermon and every talk that is given it's all going to be tested and if people have been saved because they heard the message of

Christ they will remain because it will be true and they will last but if people have just been trusting in programs and leaders and all sorts of other things then people's faith will have been in something that is not solid and it will be burned up and it will be shown for nothing can you see the picture that he's building here that we could do all kinds of things together as a church and have lots of people here and think my isn't it great that all these people have come to Christ but when it's all tested we discover that they haven't been trusting Christ they've been trusting in other things the shocking reality is that believers who trust in their methods rather than the message will just about escape

God's judgement look at verse 15 these are serious words he himself this is the end of verse 15 he himself will be saved as if just by the mercy of God he will be saved but only as one escaping through the flames just as a person would jump out the window of a burning building so God is saying the person who has built the church and invested in all sorts of other things rather than the gospel even though they believe they will just escape so let me ask us all the question what are we building this church with is it going to stand make every conversation count because it will be tested so it's a field that God grows it's a building that God tests and third the church is a temple that

[24 : 01] God protects a temple that God protects verse 16 don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you the Old Testament temple that we read about was central and the focal point of the city but more importantly it was the place where God came to dwell amongst his people of course this great and grand Old Testament temple it could never contain God it was simply a way for God to show his desire to be with his people in a sense God was declaring to his people I'm moving in with you I want to get close to you now all of that was a picture of the true temple to come which was the church God doesn't live in a building made of wood and stone look at verse 16 again don't you know that you yourselves are

God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you the local church carigoline baptist church has become God's home address where does God live here within his people he resides in his people he says I have moved into you by my holy spirit and because God has made his church his home he cares deeply for his home he is protective of his home he jealously guards his home verse 17 if anyone destroys God's temple God will destroy him for God's temple is sacred and you are that temple let me read verse 17 again and just change the word slightly if anyone destroys

God's church in Karigaline God will destroy him for God's church in Karigaline is sacred and you are the church in Karigaline can we see how protective God is of his church his home his people we're the holy church of God and he cannot tolerate any kind of unholy behavior so he's saying to them if you fight and squabble if you're the cause of division if because of your sinful behavior you start leading people away from Christ then look at verse 17 God will destroy you we can't treat God's house as we please and expect God to ignore it and say you know what it doesn't matter just do what you like it's alright no the church is special and precious to

God in other words God will see to it that they do not enter our eternal home the kingdom of heaven instead they will be shut out from his presence the church is God's holy temple where he dwells where he lives and he will protect it so we are a field that God grows a building that God a temple that God protects and if we are to follow that we will be a wise church look at verse 18 do not deceive yourselves the church doesn't belong to any person and its success is not dependent on any kind of program the church is

God's he owns it God alone grows it God will test it and he will protect it God is verse 18 if any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age he should become a fool so that you may become wise stop behaving like immature babies and grow up to be spiritually mature grow up to be adults who follow the Lord Jesus verse 19 for the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight following the ways of this world are never going to achieve anything we are to follow the wise ways of God verse 21 so then no more boasting about men it's not about pastors and their programs it's not about style and success it's all about

[29 : 42] God verse 21 let's read the rest of it there all things are yours whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future all are yours you see God God owns the church and God has given to his church leaders and teachers sometimes it's been somebody like Paul sometimes it's been somebody like Apollos or Cephas he gives all kinds of people to the church to gift the church and God is sovereignly in control over everything it tells us here that he over the world over life and death God rules over the present and the future and God works all of that for the good of his church so he says under

God all are yours everything belongs to you the church for the growing up and the building up of God's church because God owns everything because God rules over everything he gives it to his church for the building up and for its growth and the reason this is true look at verse 23 for you are of Christ or because you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God do you see what he's saying there all that belongs to God belongs to Christ and all that belongs to Christ belongs to his church so everything belongs to you for the growing and the building up of

God's church that's what it is to be wise not trusting in things of this world so he says to us don't be a baby and rely on the wisdom of the world in all their fancy programs and all their fancy styles and all the things that people go in for instead he says grow up and trust in the almighty power of God who rules and owns everything and gives it to you the church for its building and for its growth let's pray together our father god we thank you for the church we thank you that you have rescued us and saved us so that we can be a part of your church your family we pray that you would use each one here in all their gifts and abilities we pray we pray to build up your church that you would grow it to see people come to faith to see people grow in maturity and father we pray for your help that every gospel conversation we have that it would count that we would not sell our message cheaply but that we would be careful over every word and everything that we do and say because we want it to last and we thank you that you love the church we thank you that you protect it and we pray father god that we would follow your ways and not the ways of the world we ask for your help to each one of us in

Jesus name amen we're going to sing together it's a prayer that the Lord of the church that he would renew us that he would do his work within us that we would be everything that God calls us to be as we say thank you to him for his work in our lives so let's stand together as we sing Indeed O God of the church we pray for our renewing

Christ over all our undivided aim fire up the spirit