

The Church: God's Field & Temple

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: 09 February 2025

Preacher: Mike Loosa

[0 : 00] The sermon text for today is 1 Corinthians 3, verses 5 to 23, and at the conclusion of my reading, I'll declare this is the word of the Lord.

! And you the church in joyful response will get given to you here from the reading of the word will say thanks be to God. What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field and God's building.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

[1 : 14] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire.

And the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that God's spirit dwells in you?

If anyone destroys God's temple, you will destroy him, for God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. Let no one deceive you. If anyone thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool, that he might become wise.

For the wisdom of this world is folly with God, for it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness. And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.

[2 : 26] So let no one boast in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or of life, of death, or the present, or of the future.

All are yours, and you are Christ, and Christ is God's. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this word, which is your inspired, breathed out word through the spirit given to the saints.

And Lord, as we attend to this word, God, I pray that you would speak to us, that you would change our hearts, that you would build your church as you've been doing for the last 2,000 years.

God, would you be glorified as we give ourselves to this text right now. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Well, good morning, church. Thanks for being here.

Tredging through the snow, shoveling this morning, driving on the slushy roads. It's weird. We've been filling this place out for the last few weeks to have so many less people.

[3 : 44] But welcome to all those on the live stream. We're glad that you're able to join in. And if any of you on the live stream are tuning in and you haven't ever been to Shoreline, we would love to have you here on a Sunday morning.

We are in 1 Corinthians 3, as Dave just read for us. And, you know, we live in a time and in a culture that seems to be increasingly polarized, doesn't it?

Like it doesn't take a lot of deep thinking to realize how polarized our nation is. You know, good old-fashioned, cordial, charitable, public debate, public discourse, that feels sort of like an ancient relic, like something of a bygone era.

And, you know, this is obviously true in the political realm. But this kind of divisive, I'm right, you're wrong mentality, this kind of, you know, that person's a saint and everything they touch turns to gold, or like that person's the devil, like that kind of mentality, it's affecting all aspects of our culture,

including the church.

Now, it doesn't help that as a church in America especially, but in the Western church, we've witnessed moral failure after moral failure of church pastors and leaders, whether highly prominent ones or lesser known.

[4 : 58] And, you know, that has led us to cling, I think, more tightly to the leaders that we admire and to grow in skepticism or even opposition to the ones that we disagree with. So how ought we to actually view the ministers of the word?

How ought we to view the ministries of the church? How ought we to view the church itself? How ought we to view the church itself? Now, by God's grace, we'll leave here today with a wiser perspective on these things that is more shaped not by culture, but by God's word.

That's what we want. We want this perspective to be shaped by God. So if you haven't already, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, 5 through 23. If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles on the back table.

They should be bookmarked to today's passage. You're welcome to take one. And there are also kids' worksheets, as there are every week. So even if the adults want to follow along with the sheet and color, the outline is there.

Feel free to take one of those. The title of the sermon today is The Church, God's Field and Temple. I wrote building there. It's God's Field and Temple.

[6 : 06] The building is the temple. And, you know, last week we considered how true spiritual wisdom, as opposed to the counterfeit wisdom of this world, is found only in God, right?

And that wisdom, which is portrayed chiefly through the cross of Christ, is revealed to the saints through the Holy Spirit, who has given us, as Paul says, the very mind of Christ.

The mind of Christ. And the saints are then to reflect that wisdom in their actual lives together. And the Corinthians, they were failing to reflect this Christ and cross-centered wisdom.

And specifically, as we're reading in these chapters, in their perspective on leaders in the church.

This is what Paul has been talking about for the last two chapters now. And in the first few verses of chapter 3, he transitioned us back to that topic directly.

Some of the Corinthians sided with Paul. Some with Apollos. Some with Cephas. And this was not over theological differences, as we said a few weeks ago. It was all a power play. It was the assimilation of the self-seeking, competitive spirit of their culture into the church, right?

[7 : 19] This sort of prideful one-upmanship to gain social status, to gain influence. And into that worldliness, Paul seeks to apply the spiritual wisdom of Christ and him crucified.

And Paul is arguing in this text for today that all things, this is the main point of the sermon, that all things are servants for the building of God's church, which grows only by his power.

Okay, all things. That's where he's going at the end of this text. All things are servants for the building of God's church, which grows only by his power. And the implication that we're going to see at the end is, therefore, as Ethan exhorted us earlier, and Megan, therefore boast not in men, but in God.

All right, that's where this is going. And Paul begins with this principle in verses 5 through 9 on ministers. Workers work. God gives the growth. Okay, that's the first point.

Workers work. God gives the growth. What then is Apollos? Paul says, what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each.

[8 : 27] He's saying, look, you're all busy trying to grab power by association with Paul or Apollos, as if that even mattered in the slightest. It's like, we're just servants.

He doesn't even say, who is Paul? Who is Apollos? He says, what is Paul? What is Apollos? You know, you don't rally around a servant, right? In fact, you don't even really notice the servants.

They're in the background, right? They're working away while the master is in the foreground, receiving the praise, receiving the glory. The master tells the servants what to do. He tells them where to go, when to be there.

And, you know, that's what Paul means when he says, as the Lord assigned to each. He's not talking about the Corinthians. He's talking about Paul and Apollos, the tasks that have been assigned to Paul and Apollos.

Namely, verse 6, I planted, Apollos watered. So God had assigned Paul to this planting work, right? We read this in Acts 18. God called and empowered Paul to establish the local church in the city of Corinth.

[9 : 29] And then God assigned Apollos to watering work, right? God called and empowered Apollos to this effective ministry of the word within that fledgling church. But God gave the growth.

Verse 6. But God gave the growth. You know, there are a few farmers in this room, those that grew up in the Midwest or maybe in rural New York, but probably a lot more gardeners, right?

I think a number of us like to garden. You know, Laura's not here, but she's like a professional gardener. You can build the most amazing garden structure, right?

You can plant all kinds of vegetables, and then you can design and build this automatic irrigation system that waters them as many times a day as they need to be watered. But you can do nothing to actually make those vegetables come up out of the ground, right?

In fact, the best thing, the best thing that you can do, this is my brilliant gardening advice, the best thing you can do, as Jesus tells us in the parable of the growing seed in Mark 4, is go to sleep.

[10 : 33] That's the best thing you can do. You've planted. You've watered. There's nothing more for you to do. Staring at the dirt ain't going to bring the vegetables up from the ground, right? God must cause the life to grow.

That's true physically, and that's true spiritually all the more. God must cause life to grow. Paul's conclusion in verse 7 is, so neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

Now, this is not a statement about human worth in God's eyes. Paul says later that we have been purchased by the blood of Christ, right? The saints matter to God.

So this is not a statement about human worth. This is a statement about power. Christ's servants have no power in themselves whatsoever to affect spiritual, eternal change.

Okay? True wisdom, true power, as we said last week, it's bound up with God alone. And this is what Paul's been arguing for the last two chapters. And therefore, if true wisdom, true power is bound up with God alone, it is therefore God alone who causes spiritual growth to spring forth.

[11 : 47] But lest we throw up our hands and absolve ourselves of any responsibility, Paul provides this counterbalancing truth in verse 8. He says, So the first thing we see here is that to further dissolve any notions that Paul and Apollos are actually opposed to each other, he says they are one.

In other words, they are of one purpose. They are, as Paul says next, God's fellow workers. Now, that isn't to say that they're co-workers of God, working alongside God, although that is true.

What he's saying is they're co-workers of one another, right? They are striving, as Paul urges the Philippians to do, this is Philippians 1.27, they're striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Paul and Apollos are not in opposition to each other, even though the Corinthians are making it out as if they are. And Paul and Apollos, they have been gifted uniquely by the Spirit and then assigned to specific tasks within the church.

And their partners in the great gospel are one purpose. They're one. And each of them, Paul says, will receive his wages according to his labor. It's like Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25, right?

[13 : 07] Each of the master's servants are given different talents to steward, to invest. Paul and Apollos, likewise, they're going to be held accountable for the work to which they have been assigned.

So this counterbalancing truth, right? So God provides the spiritual growth by his power alone, but also in his sovereignty, God has decided that he will do so through the faithful ministry of his servants, who have to give an account to God of their work.

And then Paul offers the Corinthians these two memorable analogies to drive these truths home. You, he says, you are God's field, God's building.

Now, if you look at verse 9, in each of those three phrases there, God is the emphasis of the way that it's constructed. God's fellow workers, we are. God's field, you are.

God's building. And each of these two analogies helps us to remember that workers work, but God gives the growth. Workers work, but God gives the growth.

[14 : 12] Now, we've been talking about the field analogy already, and then Paul's going to take that building analogy, and then he's going to carry it forward into the next sections of his argument. Before we follow him there, let's just stop for a second and consider how these truths apply to us today.

You know, Paul here is, he's correcting the Corinthians' faulty view of gospel ministers, right? They were viewing them as the world views leaders, as men of power to either align oneself with or to reject entirely.

And Paul's saying, no, no, no, we have no power. Only God has the power. So stop viewing us like the world views its leaders. And we do the same thing today, right?

We align ourselves with particular leaders, and then we utterly reject other ones. We treat them all as if they're something more than they are, namely servants, coworkers working in God's field.

You know, we're all too familiar in this culture with the various personality cults that have been built throughout the American church, many of which have led to those churches' destruction.

[15:19] And I just want to say, may we, may Shoreline, may we never become such a personality cult here. May Shoreline never become the church of Mike Lusa, or the church of, insert the name of elder you most relate to.

May Shoreline never become that. The elders, the deacons, the community group, and the ministry leaders, and every one of the saints in this church is a servant in God's field, planting, watering as the Lord assigns to each.

And then God is the one who brings the growth. Now, in light of that, let us constantly depend on the Lord, who alone can raise the dead to life, who alone has the power to defeat sin and cause growth and holiness, who alone enables us to love like Christ for the sake of unity.

Let's seek his face, his favor. Seek the Lord through the word, through prayer, that we might continue to work and see his awesome power in our midst.

We need to depend on the Lord. And then when we see signs of growth and flourishing, let us give credit to where credit is due.

[16:42] Let us ascribe praise and glory to God, who has brought about this growth. Let us not seek glory for ourselves as if we did something to bring about that change.

You know, we're about to hear a slew of testimonies. So excited for this. From Frank, and then the McDermott's, and then the Vanderbollens are usually over there. And then there's several other people that we're walking through right now, through the membership process.

And you know, these testimonies, they're stories of God's grace. They're stories of God's power in the lives of the saints. It's not, I did this, and then I did that, and then I did this, and then look at me. No, no, no. It's, I was in the jaws of death. I was devoid of any hope. I could do nothing of my own, but Christ reached down, and he pulled me up from the grave, and he united me to himself, and he adopted me into his kingdom and his family.

Look at what God has done. That's what testimonies are. God is the one who brings the growth. So let's give glory to God. Glory to God. This is not our doing.

[17:45] It's all for his glory. Workers work. God gives the growth. Paul then, he carries this building analogy forward to say a word about ministry.

So this is the second thing, on ministry. Some work lasts, some burns. Some work lasts, some burns. Look at verse 10.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.

So Paul, Paul's referring again to this planting work, but this time in the language of building construction, right? Which he eventually goes on and just outright calls the temple in verse 16.

Paul laid the building's foundation. Now, since Apollos is not actually with the Corinthian church at the time of Paul's writing, and I think because Paul commends the faithful work of Apollos, I think the someone else here that Paul is referring to, likely the current leaders of the Corinthian church, who are allowing this divisive partisan mentality to propagate in the church, someone else is building upon it.

[19:03] Let each one take care how he builds upon it, right? The foundation that's already been laid. Now, why should they take care? Verse 11, For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The foundation that Paul has laid is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the word of the cross. Any other foundation would be a counterfeit, right? Only one foundation is the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ.

Anything else is a counterfeit. There is no church without the gospel, right? There is no Christian without the cross of Jesus Christ. There is no salvation apart from his name, for there is salvation in

no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. That's Acts 4:12. Like Christ, remember how Paul started this? He said, was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? No, no, no. Jesus Christ, he's the one who laid down his life to vanquish sin, to vanquish death, to call people that were dead to life in his name.

[20 : 13] He's the one. It's into his name that we are baptized, dying to sin, rising to resurrection life in Christ. This is the gospel. Apart from that word, there is no church.

It doesn't exist. He is the rock upon which the church is built. There is no church apart from Christ. And if you have not believed in the name of Jesus, I beg that you would.

Find life in his name this morning. There is salvation in no one else. As prophesied in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ is the stone that the builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone. Peter says that in 1 Peter 2, quoting from Psalm 118, and we see similar verbiage in the book of Isaiah. So this glorious cornerstone, this foundation, having been laid, any future church ministry, any future construction work, it must be built using appropriate materials, right?

Consistent with that precious foundation. So Paul says in verse 12, Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

[21 : 38] You know, gold, silver, precious stones, those are the valuable materials used by Solomon in the building of the temple in Jerusalem. You can see this in 1 Chronicles 29.

David had all these materials set aside for the work that Solomon was going to do. And you know, the new temple in the new Jerusalem, it's also described as being built with such precious materials.

And these materials, they represent true gospel ministry, right? They represent kingdom work that aligns with the precious foundation that is Christ.

It's ministry according to spiritual wisdom, to true wisdom, which we get from the Lord, right? Which we get from the Holy Spirit. It's according to the mind of Christ, and not according to the passing wisdom of this world.

Whereas building with worldly wisdom is choosing to build with wood, hay, and straw. These are materials that are inconsistent with the precious foundation of Christ that has been laid.

[22 : 37] It's building according to principles of human achievement and human success. It's building in pride and for self-glory, rather than in humility and for the glory of Christ.

And when the day comes, meaning after Christ returns, when we all appear before the throne room of God, we will all have to give an accounting of our lives.

This is what scripture tells over and over again. We're going to have to give an account of our lives before the Lord. And the fires of God's judgment will test what sort of work each one has done. What kind of work?

What quality of work? This isn't quantity, and this is the quality of the work. That's what's going to be tested. And Paul says, If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

And if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. Though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. So he's saying that for those who faithfully labored to build God's temple, consistent with the foundation of Christ, their work will last, right?

[23 : 43] The fire will reveal that it was eternal in value. It was spiritual in nature. It lasts through the fires of judgment, and they will be rewarded, right?

They'll be rewarded. Now, what are these rewards? We don't know. We don't know. But they're heavenly. They're heavenly rewards. There's a good chance that it might involve the saints themselves, right?

If we're investing in one another, then one another might actually be the rewards that God's talking about here. We don't actually know, though. But I can guarantee you that you will not be disappointed with heavenly rewards from God, the God of all glory and goodness, right?

It's not like when you pulled out that, you know, ancient sweater that your aunt gave you for Christmas, and you're like, Oh, thanks, Aunt May. You know, I don't have an Aunt May, so that was not a personal comment. You know, like, you're going to receive a reward from the Lord with awe and with gratitude, and no doubt that's just going to get turned right back into praise of God.

These are going to be good rewards. But for those who labored to build God's temple according to the wisdom of this world, right, inconsistent with the gospel, inconsistent with the word of the cross, that work will burn.

[25 : 02] God's fires will reveal the low-grade quality. There was no spiritual value. There was no eternal value. Now, Paul does say that for these servants, he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

So this is not a judgment of the worker, his eternal state, nor of the foundation, of course. The foundation is Christ. This is a judgment of the work done upon that foundation.

That is to say that one can truly belong to Christ, secured eternally in him, and yet work in self-strength, self-wisdom, right, producing no lasting effect.

Now, at this point, we might say, well, if the workers are saved anyway, then, like, why even work? Like, why labor? If I'm going to be saved, why work? And I just want to say three responses to that. First of all, because you're playing with fire. Like, this is a precarious place to be in, to claim once saved, always saved, and then manifest no saving evidence of faith.

[26 : 14] That's a really precarious place to be. The Bible is clear in the New Testament. It is by our fruit that we are known, right? Without visible fruit, how does one know whether you're going to be the branch cut off from the vine by the Father, or whether you're this person that's saved is through fire?

Peter urges the saints in 2 Peter 1, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. You're playing with fire.

You know, the second thing is, you're forfeiting the power by working with perishable materials that are going to be burned. We're forfeiting our opportunity for God to actually use us for the advancement of his kingdom, right?

This is where God's power is at work. It's in the church. It's through the gospel. This is where God's power is on display, right? We have the ability, saints, we have the ability to live a life in the power of God, experiencing the power of God, a life of true joy, a life that matters, a life that God uses to save the lost and build up his church.

Why would we forfeit that opportunity? You're forfeiting the power. Third thing is, we would be robbing God of glory. And this is ultimately the greatest tragedy because God aims to receive glory through us, through his saints, and he deserves it.

[27 : 42] Does he not? God deserves the glory. But he's not glorified by our attempts to build the church in worldly wisdom, right? For our own glory with the philosophies of this world.

Now, Shoreline, your elders, we desire to be building with imperishable materials. Like, we want to be building with gold and silver and precious stones that prove themselves through the fires of God's judgment to be eternal and spiritual in nature.

And I just want to say, if you believe, if you ever believe the elders of Shoreline to be subscribing to worldly wisdom, if you believe us to be deviating from the true gospel, say something.

Like, don't remain silent. If you see evidence of self-seeking pride in me or in the other elders of this church, speak up. Don't remain silent. And you know, Paul also tells the church in Ephesians 4 that the work of ministry, it's not for leaders alone, right?

Leaders are given to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. So that means that all of us, all of us, look around the room, all of you, all of you on the live stream, if you're part of this church, we are called to labor building upon the foundation that has been laid of Christ and Him crucified and to labor with gold, silver, precious stones.

[29 : 08] And we're all coworkers striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. So after this church service, talk to the person next to you.

considering this question, what does it look like for us as a local body to build with materials that will last? Talk to your neighbor about that. What does it look like?

What does it look like? If you're on the live stream, talk to your family, talk to those in the room after the service. What does it look like for you and for me to do our part in that gospel work? That'd be a good conversation to have.

So Paul, he corrects the Corinthians misunderstanding about ministers and then about ministry and then he moves to talking about the church itself. On the church, it's God's temple filled with God's spirit.

It's God's temple filled with God's spirit. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?

[30 : 15] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy and you are that temple. You know, the temple in Jerusalem was a place where God chose to manifest his glorious presence to Israel, right?

That temple was finally completed under the work of King Solomon and then it was dedicated in 1 Kings chapter 8 and you can read about it there that the Ark of the Covenant which symbolized God's special relationship with his chosen people Israel, it was brought into the most holy place in the temple by the priests.

And it says here in verse 10 of 1 Kings 8, and when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

Can you just picture that scene? Priests come out of the temple, God's glory fills that place showing that my presence is here among my people.

In his prayer of dedication right after that, Solomon prayed no doubt with fear and trembling, no doubt with humility and awe. He says, but will God indeed dwell on the earth?

[31 : 44] What's the answer to that question? Yes, he will. And you know what? Saints, in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church itself, not a building, not the Holiday Inn or some other building here, the church itself, the people of God, chosen and redeemed by the blood of Jesus, become the very temple of God's presence.

the church itself, the people of God are filled with the Holy Spirit. It's his holy presence among us that gives us our identity.

His presence is here. It's here. We need to be reminded of that like all the time. Every single day, I need to be reminded when I get up in the morning, I need to be reminded that I am a temple of the Holy Spirit.

He's here. His presence is here because of what Christ has done on the cross. We need to be reminded that when we gather, this is not a normal thing going on here. God's presence, the living God, he's here among us.

This is amazing. We are the temple of God, the holy temple of God. And you know, the Corinthians need to be reminded of this fact and they need to be issued this severe warning from Paul.

[33 : 04] The church is not merely a social club. Okay? It's not an arena for our self-indulgence, for our status-seeking. It's the dwelling place of God on earth.

So for us to destroy, here's the word of warning that Paul's giving. For us to destroy, for us to defile his holy sanctuary with this divisiveness, this competitive rivalry, is to play, again, with fire.

It's to bring judgment upon ourselves. One commentator writes that the Corinthians are playing with forces that threaten the holiness of God's own temple. In effect, pitting themselves, this is not a good place to be, in effect, pitting themselves against the Holy Spirit.

By their attitude, they also despise the humility of the cross and the love of Jesus. You know, God cares a lot, a lot, about the building and the flourishing of his church.

He's chosen to dwell there, here, among the saints. He cares a lot about the building of his church. And this word says that he opposes and ultimately will destroy all those who would seek to destroy it.

[34 : 21] Saints, that's not just a word of warning for those who are going about the kind of Corinthian mindset. It's also a word of encouragement for us because God is destroying the opposition to his church.

But you know, it's true that demolition work is a lot easier and faster than building and reconstruction work, right? Did you know that Notre Dame, that amazing cathedral in Paris, was constructed over the course of two centuries, like in the 1100s, the 1200s, two centuries of work to build that magnificent cathedral.

And yet, if you recall just about six years ago now in 2019, that tragic fire, that serious damage occurred in just hours, right? Hours of fire and destruction came upon that cathedral which had been standing for a lot of years.

And then, with all of our modern technology, it took five years for that to be repaired and then reopened, which just happened in December. And reconstruction work is going to go on, actually.

It's planned to go on until 2027. Building and reconstruction work is far more difficult than demolition work. So saints, let's be about the slow, hard work of building God's holy temple.

[35 : 41] It takes time. It takes patience. It takes work. It takes energy. Let's lay aside our sledgehammers, okay? Put down the sledgehammers. Put down the matches of pride or gossip or slander or one-upmanship or clinging to our personal preferences.

Let's equip ourselves instead in the power of the Spirit with tools for building humility, selflessness, sacrificial love, laying aside personal preferences for the sake of unity, denying the sins of the flesh. Why? That the holiness of God in Christ would be on display. Church, because of the cross of Christ, the Lord is here. The Lord is here.

The Spirit is in our midst. The dwelling place of God is with man. And that changes everything. Church is God's temple filled with God's Spirit.

So Paul said a word about ministers, about ministry, about the church, and then finally he zooms way out to the big picture to say, boast in God for all things are yours in him.

[36 : 59] Boast in God for all things are yours in him. And first he returns to the theme of true versus worldly wisdom. Look at verse 18. Let no one deceive himself.

If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise for the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness.

And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are futile. Why does Paul need to say, let no one deceive himself?

Because the Corinthians were deceiving themselves? Because we continually deceive ourselves by subscribing to the wisdom of this world? Paul's calling us once again to forsake that fleeting wisdom that the world offers all kinds of wisdom.

He's saying forsake that. Embrace the wisdom that appears as foolish but is actually the true and effective wisdom of God in the cross of Christ. And then Paul goes on. He's quoting two more Old Testament passages to drive his point home.

[38 : 12] Job 5.13 and then from Psalm 94.11. And it's worth noting that in Paul's argument, he is quoted five times from the Old Testament in chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Five different times in making this argument. And this is a model for us, right? This is a model for our own correction, our own counseling of one another. Let us appeal to what God has to say, not to what we have to say.

That's what Paul's doing. He's appealing to the Lord. This is what the Lord says. This is what the Lord says. This is what the Lord says. And this is what it means for us. And what does God have to say? What God has to say is that if you want to be on the right side of history, then side with him. That's what he's saying. You know, there's a lot of talk in our day about being on the right versus the wrong side of history. And the world thinks that they know who's on what side. That's the funny thing.

But let me tell you, it's not actually determined by the world. By those who hold political power. By those who hold social power. By the well-educated, you know, elites of our society. They don't determine who is on the right versus wrong side of history.

[39 : 19] God does. He is the right side of history. God is the right side of history. So let us get on his side. And this applies to so many situations going on today.

But God is the right side of history. And you know, what's baffling is that he has made a way for us to actually join him in spite of our sin because of the cross of Christ.

We can join God on his side. So let no one boast in men. That's Paul's conclusion here. Let no one boast in men.

God has chosen to act in history confounding the wise and the powerful of this world, bringing salvation through the foolishness of the cross and exalting what is low and despised.

Ethan read for us that passage in 1 Corinthians 2 or the end of chapter 1. Exalting what is low and despised. And Paul had said there in chapter 1, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

[40 : 20] And again, you know, therefore, at the end of chapter 1, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. The gospel undercuts all prideful boasting of men.

And their petty achievements. It undercuts that, right? The gospel calls forth the humble and joyful boasting of sinners saved by grace in God and in Christ.

That's our boast. He's our boast. And you know, in light of today's passage, we've been reminded that no minister in the church, no matter how gifted, can cause even the slightest bit of growth. Only God gives the growth. So let's boast in him all the more. And then here's where Paul, he really zooms out here to declare a truth of just baffling glory.

He says, God help us believe this, for 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.

[41 : 22] And you are Christ's and Christ is God's. God's. Okay, now what is Paul actually saying here? We can't understand. We can't believe it if we don't understand what it says. What is Paul saying? Because you know, all I own is this modest house on Glenwood Avenue with a couple cars that turn no heads.

I used to have this really cool red Honda Accord coupe and it would turn some heads, kind of. Now I have a Subaru Forester that blends into all the other cars in New England. And I have a bunch of kid-destroyed furniture and appliances.

Like, are these the all things that Paul is talking about? Hope not. What has Paul been talking about?

He's been talking about the unstoppable growth of the church in this text, right? The temple of God which flows from the fact that Christ died on the cross for our sins.

That's what he's been talking about. And you know, where this is all headed where history is going unstoppably is that one day the church the bride of Christ is going to be presented in spotless beauty to her groom.

[42 : 33] They're going to be joined together perfectly no separation no veil anymore and we're going to be granted authority with Christ ruling and reigning with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords forever.

That's where all of this is going. And that means church that God is using all things to bring this to completion. All things.

All things. Whether pastors or church leaders or even political parties. Whether trials or tragedies. The present or the future. The world itself Paul says or life or death. All things he's saying are servants available to the saints for the building of the church of God.

He's saying Corinthians don't stake your claim upon nearly one human leader. Right? Paul or Apollos or Cephas as if that's the only territory that you've been allotted.

[43 : 37] You've been given all things in Christ. You know if somehow you own the entire United States of America let's just say for a day you own the whole you're not you're not the president it's your property you do whatever you want with it.

It'd be pretty foolish to remain say within Connecticut and then tell everybody how amazing Connecticut is and never stop talking about Connecticut you have access to the Rocky Mountains right?

You have access to the coast of California or to the Everglades in Florida or to Niagara Falls like why would you stake your claim just on Connecticut? The whole thing is yours. So Paul is saying here that everything is yours stop staking your claim on Paul.

No, no, no you also have Apollos and you have Cephas and you have all things for your upbuilding in Christ. He's exhorting the Corinthians and us to see that the big and glorious picture of what we have been given through the gospel in his super abundant grace one commentator writes God can use all things for the building up of the believer and of the church.

God help us to think this way. It's so hard to think this way. Like this is not easy to assimilate into daily life. It's supernatural.

[44 : 55] Like when I'm offended by a sibling in Christ it's hard for me to believe that God is using that offense to build his church. when I experience a devastating loss it's hard for me to trust that that loss belongs in the category of all things and yet it does.

You know when political leaders enact policies I disagree with it's hard for me to see how that will advance construction work on the temple of God. God's giving us a spiritual vision here.

He wants us to have a spiritual vision not a worldly vision. See Paul doesn't offer any caveats or exception clauses to all things. All things are under the domain of God in Christ and we belong to him.

We belong to him. All things. in all these things we are more than conquerors through your local pastor who loves you.

No. Right? No. If anybody was listening no. Not through your local pastor who loves you. I do love you. You are not more than a conqueror through me. No. Through your denominational affiliation and leaders.

[46 : 20] No. Right? These are servants. These are merely servants with no power to affect spiritual change. Paul is able to make such an unqualified statement in Romans 8. I'm quoting Romans 8.

37 here because it's through him who loved us. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. It's through God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He's the one who guarantees the growth of his church. He's the one who ensures that all things will be wielded for the good of his saints and the advancement of his kingdom.

You know it's like a sailboat with a master sailor. He's going to ensure that whatever direction the wind is blowing it will be captured and used to make forward progress.

I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it Jesus says. Let's pray. Amen.