

The Church is God's Field // 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

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[0:00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! As infants in Christ, I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you are not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 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? For when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Paulos, are they not being merely human? 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.

[1:21] 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.

For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, God's building. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. Please be seated.

One of the more important Bible professors of our time is a man named Vern Poitras. He even has a great name.

You know, he is known for writing many different books, but his personal commitment to the Bible may be most impressive about him. One of the seminary students, he teaches at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.

One of the seminary employees saw Dr. Poitras eating lunch one day in the dining hall, whispering over his Bible. The employee asked, what are you doing?

[2:29] He said, memorizing the book of Habakkuk. The employee questioned, why Habakkuk? Habakkuk, after all, is one of the minor prophets, not a book of the Bible people often read.

Maybe you've never read it. And certainly not one of the books of the Bible people memorize. So why Habakkuk? And Dr. Poitras responded, because it's the next one.

The next book of the Bible, he is memorizing. Now, after hearing 1 Corinthians 3, 1 to 9 read aloud, you may be thinking, why study these verses?

After all, when people think of their favorite verses from 1 Corinthians, they think of verses like, whatever you do, do all for the glory of God. They think about love is patient and kind, love does not envy or boast, or Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

But I doubt anyone thinks of these verses as their favorite. Doubt they're hanging in Cracker Barrel. And haven't we heard enough about all this quarreling and conflict?

[3:46] So why study these verses? Well, one answer we could give is because they are the next ones. The benefit of going verse by verse and chapter by chapter through the Bible is that we take up verses of Scripture we would not normally take up.

Doubt many had a burden to preach these verses. And so in many ways, I began my sermon prep this week, ready to take up these verses, because they were the next one, not so much because I was especially drawn to them.

But it seems, in my opinion, that in God's providence and wisdom, this text supplies us with the vital perspective we need.

One commentator says, These verses are the longest section. Now, he's talking about all the way to verse 18, but these verses are the longest section in the New Testament devoted to how the church and its leaders relate to one another.

And it just so happens that unless you tell us something scandalous in the next seven days, we plan to ordain and install Gil Botts as one of the leaders of this church next Sunday.

[5:02] These verses, I think, are an invitation to us to kind of step back and say, What exactly are we doing together? What is a church?

What is a pastor? What is this all about? And these verses, the answer is not what we'd imagine. These verses do not imagine the church as a business in which the pastors or the chief executives in the congregation are in sales or admin or HR or logistics.

Though if we needed to hire for logistics, we'd hire Mandy Tinsman in a moment. Well, she runs so much, whether you knew it or not. Nor do these verses envision the church as a show in which the performers are on stage, the preachers, the worship leaders, the singers up there on stage with everyone else just gathered to listen.

That's not the way he envisions a church. Nor do these encourage us to view the church as just a gathering of believers. I mean, after all, isn't a church anywhere two or three are gathered? And that's not the way these verses talk about the church.

The Apostle Paul takes up the metaphor of agriculture and says, The church is a field where God is at work. The church is not a meeting or a building or a business or even just a people.

[6:19] The church is a field. The church is God's field. God has sent workers in to plant and to water. God has ensured that the seed of the gospel is strewn about all over the place.

And God is at work. The seed that passes through thoroughly, ordinary hands with God's help bears much fruit. And it's God's field.

He's the master. Watching over everything that happens in his field. Ordering it according to his plans.

And so these verses, these next ones, have so much to say to us. Trinity Grace Church. Seven and a half years into this exploration.

To help us see what is a pastor? What is a church? What are we doing together? More importantly, what is the hope of our life together? What is our confidence as we press into an unknown future together?

[7:18] Together. In a word, where we're going, main point if you will, the gates of hell will not prevail over the church because the work of the gospel depends on God alone.

So we're going to break this out in three points. The first is leaders are God's servants. So he has this image of a field. This agricultural image.

And he's trying to help the Corinthians have a right view of servants. A right view of leaders. The right view of leaders is to receive them as God's servants. But before he can define a right view, the apostle Paul corrects a wrong view of leaders.

If you see right there immediately, he says in verse 3, there's jealousy and strife among you. They had drawn lines, if you remember. They had picked sides, you know. That's the way we like to go. I'm with this camp or I'm with that camp.

Well, that's what was going on there. I'm with Paul. I'm with Apollo. I'm with Cephas, which is Peter. So I'm with one of these guys. I'm in this camp. And so the apostle Paul is returning to what he talked about.

[8:26] In many ways, he talked about the gospel from 118 all the way to 216. And then now in chapter 3, he's returning to this division. And you might think, we've already heard so much about this division.

Do we need to really hear more? But the apostle Paul is doing something incredible here. It's not merely division and rivalry. This I'm with this one. I'm with that one. That often happens in a church that was happening in Corinth.

That is his concern. His concern is what it says about the gospel. What he does in this letter and in many other places, he gathers this concern up and holds it up in the light of the gospel, the lampshade of the gospel, and reinterprets it.

So he says, and he's already said, only Christ deserves your allegiance because he died for you. And Paul and Apollos and Cephas, they may have preached to you, they may have baptized you, but they didn't die for you.

And he called you when you were nobody. So you should be humble and boast in God alone. What he's saying in these first couple of verses is that when you go back to boasting in men, you're turning the gospel onto its head.

[9:39] The gospel says the only difference between any other man in this world, the one who is perishing and the one who is being saved, the only difference is because of the gospel. So when

you go back to this rivalry, you're turning the gospel on its head, and the gospel welcomes all who trust in Jesus Christ.

That's what the apostle has been saying up to this point. But if you notice in these first couple of verses, he says, you were not ready for it. Look at verse two.

I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready. He continues, and even now you're not yet ready. Threading through these verses also is a reference to the flesh, people of the flesh. Look at verse one, people of the flesh. Verse two, for you are still of the flesh. Are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way among a people known for its pursuit of the spiritual gifts? He said, I cannot even talk to you about spiritual things because you're so unspiritual. In fact, he goes on to say, you're like an infant that's learning to wean off its mother's milk and keep spitting out the food.

[10:55] Now, an infant can be forgiven for spitting out the food, but what's going on with you should not be. Now, lest we be confused and lest we deviate off what we have ready for us today, Paul's not saying you are not a Christian.

Now, again, similar to last week, he's taking their terms and using them against them. He's not saying you're not a Christian. He's not even saying you're a carnal Christian, which was a popular title in the 70s.

He's saying you are a Christian. You've been born of the Spirit. You have all the resources to grow, but you're acting like a child.

You're a man child. Now, sometimes in our culture, we can laugh about the man child, the person who rejects responsibility and lives in his mother's basement lying around in sweatpants all day.

It's an issue in our culture, a failure to launch is this psychological category. In many ways, we might laugh at that. We might say, I'm not a man child. I got a job. I got a wife. I got a house.

[12:01] But what I want to ask is, are you a man child spiritually? Are you still playing with toys? Are we still playing with toys? Or are we men of God?

Are we men of prayer and devotion, generosity and serving? Are we growing? The Apostle Paul is shocking them in these terms. We can be a man child. We can be a woman child.

Paul says, you are just a child. I couldn't tell you like it was because you couldn't handle it. So he says, don't pay allegiance to Paul and Apollos and whomever because all allegiance belong to Christ.

And now he turns to the next stage of his argument and says, don't pledge allegiance to Paul or Apollos or whomever because they're just servants. Look what he says.

You know, so you've got to imagine he's talking about all these human ways of thinking and jockeying for position that he sees in the culture. And look at verse 5. He says, what then is Apollos? What is Paul?

[13:05] What in the world really are they? Servants. Not masters. Servants.

Servants. Not the wise and important. Servants. Not philosophers. Servants. The metaphor is of laborers in a field. So leaders of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are not those lining the halls of power which is the way the first century Corinth thought.

No, it's those who are bending over, working in the field. The metaphor is meant to be rich with meaning. You can almost feel the sweat, the dirt, and the grime gathered up under the fingernails. Leaders. It's a provocative statement about leadership in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The pastor is not another prophet, priest, and king. I don't know what you've heard. He's not God's anointed.

He's not God's man. I've heard someone say that around here. That's not who the pastor is. God has a man. His name is Jesus. What is the pastor then?

[14:16] Someone who comes after Jesus and walks in his footsteps and bows to serve, to give his life away. These verses urge us to not think too highly of leaders.

They're just servants. They're feet of clay. Their work is important but it's not the only work going on in the field. It's vital.

These verses also urge us not to think too lowly of leaders in the local church either. Some have prayed for their pastor. Lord, you keep him humble and we'll keep him poor.

There can kind of be an attitude like that sometimes. There can sometimes be this attitude of resentment towards them. Why would we want to have that attitude? We want these are servants through whom you believed.

How did you come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? You came through a servant who preached to you, who prayed for you, who nurtured your faith. Surely mom and dad, but who were the leaders that were there?

[15:18] If so, if there were some, if you've come to faith, you have God to thank. He sent servants. He continues, leaders are fellow servants. Look back there in verse 5.

He says, servants through whom you believe as the Lord assigned to each. There's a division of labor in the field. That's what's being envisaged here.

Some may plant sowing seeds. Some may water tending to what is planted, but they're all engaged in the same work of preparing the field for harvest. The same is true with ministry.

The apostle Paul says, continuing this metaphor of agriculture, he says, I planted and Apollos watered. What is he talking about? Not an order of hierarchy or something like that, but a division of labors, different guys doing different things.

He continues, look down there in verse 8. He says, he who plants and he who waters are one. And so he who plants and he who waters are not in competition unless you walk around saying, I follow Paul or I follow Apollos.

[16:22] No, he who plants and he who waters are one. There's a union of labor in the kingdom of God and in the field of the Lord.

And so leadership in the local church should not be built around one man. Should not be a platform for his ministry. The church shouldn't be a base for his operations. There should not be one pastor and a lot of juniors.

Leadership in the local church is to be shared. I'm so thankful for the leaders of this church and because leadership as it's shared is complementary with an E.

That doesn't mean you walk around saying thanks to one another. It means you complete one another, so to speak. Can't think of that without thinking of Jerry Maguire. But the idea that you enhance, you make one another better.

So I'm not the pastor of Trinity Grace Church. Thankful for that. I'm a pastor. There are others. Taylor and Buddy serve in this church in so many ways.

[17:26] And another one, another provision from God in Gil if he doesn't screw it up this week. We put some bets out. A couple young guys, Daniel, talked to him this week at Pastor's College.

Man, just burning, as you guys know, burning to get back. Paul is a pastoral resident serving us. Seven deacons that I met with this week. Leaders.

What we like to say is pastors are called to be servant leaders and deacons are called to be lead servants. What do we want? We want this wonderful sense of servitude.

Right? Because we're following the great servant, capital S, did not consider, or did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And so leaders are servants together. They are fellow servants. They are God's servants. Look in verse 9. He says, for we are God's fellow workers.

[18:31] Now some have said this means we're working with God. Like God does some parts, we do some parts. We're kind of working together in this thing. That is not what this means. That would overturn what the Apostle Paul has already said.

He's saying, we're not workers with God. We're God's workers. We belong to Him. We do what He says. We go where He says to go. We remain where He says to remain.

We prepare ourselves to give an account to the Master. That's what a servant is. What a servant means in this context. What a worker means in this context.

The word servant is precious to the Apostle because it reminded him of whose he is. Now the reality is, all of us are servants, unworthy servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This, like if you study this, I have a book called Slave of Christ. We're reading it as pastoral team right now. Incredible. It is one of the richest metaphors for how the Apostle Paul describes himself in the New Testament.

[19:36] And it is provocative to this culture. Because what it says is your life is not about you. You do you is not true. Your life is all about being bound to another.

And it's so helpful, so vital. And so leaders are God's servants. Point two, growth is God's work. Growth is God's work. Who does the work in this field?

You know, after defining a right view of leaders, Paul turns and defines a right view of growth. Look in verse 6. I planted Apollo's water, but God gave the growth.

You know, the ministry is like agriculture, in which servants go out in the field to plant and water and cultivate. You don't take new fields for Christ without going out and doing that.

But you're waiting on the Lord. You're waiting, just like in agriculture, you wait on the sun to shine and the rain to come down for growth to be produced. Well, the same thing goes on in the field of the Lord. We're waiting and we're asking, we're praying for God to come in.

[20:43] And so, in the same way that if God makes the field fruitful, God alone makes the work of the ministry fruitful. That's what's underlying these verses. And so he said, these are just beautiful verses, in my opinion, even though they're kind of wonderfully division of labor-like.

They're beautiful. He's saying, growth is positively, entirely of God. Look at that. I planted Apollo's water, but God gave the growth. What he's saying is, there is a division of labor in the field, but there is no division of fruitfulness.

There may be a division of labor, like people doing different things, but only God brings about the fruitfulness. Servants are responsible for labor, but God is responsible for growth.

God alone makes the gospel take root and bear fruit. This is the most freeing news in the world. You don't have to carry the world on your shoulders, because God's at work.

There are things you must do. There are things, though, you are depending on God to do. This, man, if you apply this, this could just change the way you relate to so many things in your life, where you work and move outside your sphere of response.

[22:10] One thing about maturity is beginning to understand what are you responsible for and what is God responsible for. a big part of maturity is drawing the line clearly where the line is.

Think about parenting. If you just focus on what you're responsible for. Train them up. Discipline them. Rod drives out the foolishness.

But you know what? Growth is in the hand of God. So what does it lead you to do? Not to work harder. To pray. Appeal to the Lord of the harvest.

Come, Lord, make a harvest in my home or whatever. Evangelism, all these things. I love the way Martin Luther, I love the way he talked about this when he talked about the Reformation. He was the great igniter of the Reformation. In 1517, he talks about how he depended on the word alone in and throughout the Reformation.

He said, I opposed indulgences in all the papists. That's just the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church. But never with force.

[23:17] I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's word. Now he's not saying I'm adding to the scriptures, but talked about God's word. Otherwise, I did nothing.

And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Armstorff, the word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it.

I did nothing. The word did everything. I just wonder if we could have that type of mindset of asking God to work by his word and work by his power depending on him.

And so growth is positively entirely of God, but he continues, it's negatively nothing of man. Look at what he says. So, look at verse 7. This is that beautiful section.

So, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. Now, a moment ago he said, what are Paul and Apollos? He said, servants. Now, he essentially says, what are Paul and Apollos?

[24:21] He says, nothing. Absolutely nothing. I love this. He's not saying, he's emphasizing the relative importance of leaders.

He's not saying leaders are of no value. How can they hear? How can they believe unless someone preaches to them? Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

So, he's not saying that. He's not saying leaders are of no value, but they are of no ultimate consequence. They don't change things.

So, he's helping us to see that when it comes to who will accept the gospel and who will reject, those who will be saved or those who will be hardened, leaders are of no consequence.

Only God gives the growth. He's just, it's wonderfully giving you this image of he is the Lord of the harvest. He determines everything and we see that clearly throughout the scriptures.

[25:17] We also see it in the parable of the sower and you remember that parable. I think it's in all four gospels, one of the most famous parables. The man went out to sow the seed, right? Some fell along the path that was trodden down, right?

So, it just bounced along the ground and the birds came and devoured it. Some fell on the rocky soil. Perhaps it was on the outline of the edges of the field.

It wasn't trampled often and it sprang up quickly but because it didn't have good soil, it died away quickly. Some fell among the thorns, the weeds in the field and the thorns choked out the fruitfulness of the word.

Now, others fell on good soil and the parable says and it bore 30 and 60 and 100 fold. Now, I think we often hear that parable and we think about it in the wrong way.

We think one guy went out and had a heart for evangelism. It didn't have a good technique. So, it just bore very, very little fruit.

[26 : 31] One guy had an even bigger heart and his technique was a little bit better so he bore some fruit as well but still not as much. The next guy, he had the technique right, you know, but he had a little bit more of the technique right and he bore some fruit and then along came this fourth guy.

He had everything. He had smoke and fog and all you can think to draw in the magic. He bore lots of fruit but that is not the parable. I think sometimes we read it like all the focus is on the sower but all the focus is on the soils.

What he is saying is we all sow the same seed but only God causes the soil to bear fruit.

Only God causes it to grow. So you can imagine it's so what Paul's saying is isn't it ridiculous that you're praising Paul and Apollos and Cephas?

Isn't it ridiculous? Because God caused all the growth. So it reminds us that our responsibility is not fruitfulness but faithfulness.

[27 : 40] Not in the fruit but in the labor. If God causes us to grow how do we grow though? I was thinking about this this week. How do we grow?

You know if God just does it what do we do? I was thinking one caution and one encouragement. The caution would be don't mistake serving for growing.

Serving's got to be a part of growing but don't mistake serving for growing. Sometimes we Christians mistake doing Christian things for becoming more like Christ. We become almost in effect professional Christians.

We know when the ooh at the right times ah at the right times and say bless his pee picking heart at the right times or whatever it is. And so we think about that and we think well because we're talking so much about Jesus then we must be growing so much about Jesus as well.

I can tell you how it often happens in my life when I'm caught up in so many things about Jesus.

God alerts me to a proper view of myself. This week God brought me to great humility through sin of anger in my heart and it was a tremendous gift.

[28 : 52] I think that was what God was doing is awakening. Don't mistake serving for growing.

What we're after as a church is not a lot of people that get in line and get in the right place.

Please do us a favor and don't do that. What we're after is people that are growing to be more like Jesus Christ. Together pressing on together wanting to see him wanting to know him and another so that's the caution don't mistake serving for growing and so sometimes you may need to dial back for a season and Mandy will come find you when you need to dial back up again and just kidding but you know but and then one encouragement don't make it complicated the Christian life is hard enough you don't have to make it more complicated you don't have to make it harder you don't go to a buffet to build your biceps you don't start a movie at 10 if you want to have satisfying devotions in the morning you don't go to a bar if you want to find good friends make it easy I remember right after we became a Christian one of my friends we were all had no money and trying to figure that out trying to follow Christ one of my friends had this little sports car this Mazda sports car on the front of it it actually had a bumper sticker it said every tribe tongue and nation I thought that was the weirdest thing I've ever seen in my life you know but I didn't know what he meant in his Old Testament about God taking the gospel but he would always park the car on a hill because it wouldn't start if it was on flat ground and he would stick the key in the ignition and he would start pushing the car down the hill jump in and start it up well you know spiritually park on a hill like set your Bible out for the morning when you lay out your week move some things from the category of optional to commitments and you're just starting with the car on the downhill like you're not going through that decisive am I going to do this no no we've already decided that's what you're going to do and you're starting with the car going downhill hill you're not making it so complicated you're instead pursuing growth actually

Jonathan Edwards said one time how do you grow to be more like Christ and this is Edwards language I won't use it all he said lay yourself in the way of allurements what he's saying is God

grows in your life through the use of means and so friendships are means we need more of them like Taylor was talking about community group is a means the Bible is a tremendous means prayer is a means accountability is a means all these things are means and what you're doing is instead of like going out into a field asking God to speak to you no no instead you're just going to where where you might be allured to him and so don't make it so complicated God hates giving you all the resources he calls you to be born again by the spirit now he wants to help you grow thirdly the church is God's field the church is God's field after defining a right view of leaders and a right view of growth

Paul defines a right view of the field now look down there in verse 9 for we are God's fellow workers I've already unpacked that we are God's field God's building which really introduces the next subject that we'll handle next week but we are you are God's field that is plural second person plural you all y'all are God's field is what he's saying on the one hand this is surely a smack in the face because they're saying man I'm so high and mighty I'm with Apollos or I'm with Cephas or I'm with Paul he's saying no no no their servants you're the field like you're just where the dirt is definitely a smack in the face but the reference to the field of the Lord is filled with Old Testament echoes and that I believe is what the apostle is indicating as he has this metaphor driving through so many other books that he's written you know on the one hand

Ezekiel and Hosea compare the people of the Lord to a growing vine Isaiah 5 compares the Lord to a vine dresser who has a vineyard on the top of the hill where the Lord dug it up and moved out all the stones from the field threw them all to the sides the Lord planted in the field the choice vine a choice vine that he placed in the middle he prepared the field in every way for fruit and growth and he waited for the harvest he found himself a place to sit and wait for the vine that he had provided for in every way to begin to bear fruit later when the Lord calls Jeremiah he commissions him with these words and I think we have these for you he said this is Jeremiah 1 I have put my words in your mouth see I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms to pluck up and to break down to destroy and overthrow to build and to plant and that's what Jeremiah did because this field this vineyard of the Lord that it was it was it was created to be devoted to the Lord that turned to other gods the people that were freed from Egypt to serve God served others gods the vine the Lord that was prepared for the harvest is overthrown with weeds and so God said Jeremiah [34 : 30] I got a plan for your life I want you to go and preach preach down this people and tell them the holy God is coming to pluck up and break down to destroy and overthrow because of how this people strayed from him and rejected him and that's what Jeremiah did he's called the weeping prophet because it seems that all he did was weep but for the people of Israel they must have wondered who is going to build and to plant Jeremiah we understand who broke down and destroyed but who is going to build and plant and this is where the Bible just opens up to us if you remember in Caesarea Philippi the Lord asked his disciples who do you say that the son of man is some say John the Baptist they said others Elijah others Jeremiah or one of the prophets but Jesus said to them who do you say that I am and Peter said you are the Christ the son of the living God and the Lord said

I tell you Peter I will build my church that's not a statement about papal succession it's a statement about Jeremiah the Lord did not forget his promise to Jeremiah I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it and so he says the church is his temple his building his spiritual household but that's not all on the night he was betrayed Jesus said to his disciples in that final conversation I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears my fruit what the Lord Jesus was saying is I will plant my church I will work in my church I will tend it I will cause it to grow I will cause it to flourish the Lord is saying in these verses you are my vine if you're in my field you're my vine you're my garden you're my chosen possession you're my people the Lord is unspeakable what he is saying yes the whole world is the Lord's but the field is the Lord's in a different way the Lord is saying

I'm working in you I'm working in y'all I'm working in this place I believe that's what God is saying he's got the whole world in his hand but he has a special regard for the church those who are no longer of the world the whole world is not his field the church is his field the church is what has his attention the church is where God's best stuff is getting done week in week out the question is how in the world are you in the field what are you doing in the field there's so many layers to this Paul's preaching to a largely Gentile church and calling them the vine of the Lord and all of us are Gentiles too so he's saying I am at work it's my church I'm at work in you on the other hand

I think the Lord is exhorting us in these words and saying I got work for you to do you're in the field time to grab the shovel years ago a church member sent me this I think it was before we first received our first batch and new members it is admittedly quite cheesy but hey if it doesn't fit in this message it'll never fit said what is the garden of the Lord what do you do in the garden of the Lord first plant four rows of peas presence promptness preparation and perseverance next to these plant three rows of squash squash gossip squash indifference squash critics then plant three rows of lettuce let us be unselfish let us be loyal let us love one another and no garden is complete lest you forget without turnips turn up for meetings turn up with a smile turn up with new ideas turn up with determination to serve your Christ at any cost but it does capture a lot doesn't it captures a lot of the way

Christian life is meant to be lived a couple years ago I read a story about a farmer in Bruno Nebraska I don't even know where that is because of a rising creek the barn was that he owned was 29 inches underwater he invited a few friends over to his barn for a barn raising not a constructing of a new barn but moving the entire 17,000 pound barn to a new foundation 143 feet away what Ostry needed was a barn moving so he took his barn and on the edges of the barn he designed steel tubing to be nailed bolted and welded on the inside and outside of the barn then he attached hundreds of handles all along the outside of the barn he attached hundreds of these handles and 344 volunteers showed up and slowly walked the 17,000 pound barn up a slight incline with none of them carrying more than 50 pounds and in just three minutes his barn was on a new foundation isn't that amazing well here's what

[40:49] God has for you he's saying I want you to grab a handle the church is like a barn raising we don't want this church to ever become a place where 20% of the people do 80% of the work and it's not that way now we don't want it to be a place where 20% give 80% of the money either we want to be a place where everyone grabs a handle not equal in gifting or equal in gifts or any of these things but equal in our sacrifice equal in selling our hearts out for what God is doing so the field is the Lord's you are in the field you are the Lord's and God means for you to grab a handle you may have grabbed a handle years ago but are you still holding are you still lifting you can imagine how many of those 344 people might have been tempted to step away and just let 343 carry it what would it look like for you to grab a handle to begin serving or giving what would it be what would it look like you stop waiting for relationships to come to you begin pursuing others

God has put you in the field he didn't put you there to sit there but to help carry this thing what in the end God is giving the people in Corinth new slogans they're saying I follow Apollo I follow Apollo I follow Cephas he says we are God's servants you are God's field you are God's building that's a better slogan gates of hell will not prevail over the church because the work of the gospel depends on God alone let us pray Father in heaven we humble ourselves before you we thank you for the word of God which is able to make us thoroughly equipped for every good work we pray God that you would seal up the word in our hearts that anything unhelpful would be forgotten now and everything helpful would be sealed in our hearts so we want to grow to be more like you to press after you with all our heart help us we pray in Jesus name

Amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at