

Jeff Corinthians 8

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[0:00] Moving to chapter 3 now, and we're spending a little bit more time on the early chapters. There's no way you can give this book full coverage, but I think the early chapters do accomplish some foundational things that show us Paul's thinking, that show us Paul's strategy, in particular, that show the function of the gospel in this letter. So I want to turn to chapter 3, and when we come there, it's important to realize, this is actually the same outline that we started, I think I said that, but it's important to see Paul is continuing his argument. The outline I gave you under 2a shows chapter 1, verse 10 to 421 as a complete unit. Again, just as a reminder, chapters 1 and 2, Paul deals with divisions in the church by speaking of the cross as the heart of the gospel, and how the very nature of the gospel undercuts and judges, really more than undercuts, but it judges human wisdom. The cross doesn't flatter us, the cross doesn't exalt us, the cross doesn't confirm our self-importance or reinforce our pride or strengthen our self-sufficiency. The gospel is, as you men know, a call to self-renouncing, to self-emptying, to a self-abandoning flight to Christ, and how glorious that is. Now in chapter 3, because the divisions were bound up in the Corinthians' identification with certain Christian leaders, Paul now turns and says, okay, how are we then to view leaders in the church? Do you see? So it's still part of his argument. And because of this, and I alluded to this at the end of the day yesterday, because of this, this chapter is invaluable in shaping our conceptions of pastoral ministry, shaping our conceptions of leadership in the church, shaping our conceptions on what we are called to do. There's few better places in this letter to gain, in the New

Testament for that matter, to gain this kind of clarity on leadership, on pastoral ministry than these chapters. And so we will see in this letter, there are places where, so chapter 15, the most concentrated teaching on the resurrection in the New Testament. Chapter 13, of course, the most concentrated teaching on love. Chapter 7 is going to be the most concentrated teaching on marriage.

Well, in chapters 3 and 4, we have the most concentrated teaching in the Bible on the nature of leadership and pastoral ministry. And that's the angle I'm going to come at it. I'm going to sort of exposit it through that lens.

Again, just as a reminder, Paul, as he continues his argument, he continues to deal with an issue that is not on the surface theological. These are factions aligning with people, not aligning with different theological positions. Yet, as he does throughout this letter, again, just to remind you, he takes an issue that's not explicitly theological and he holds it up to the light of the gospel and diagnoses it theologically. And so, in chapters 1 and 2, he worked that theological ground by exploring the Christ-exalting, wisdom-revealing nature of the gospel. Then he turns to them. Look at chapter 3, verses 1 to 4. But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you're not 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 Apollos, are you not being merely human? So, these factions, fueled by jealousy, fueled by pride, revealed a fundamental flaw. They're not just divided.

It's not merely disunity. They're distorting the very gospel that saved them. Instead of the gospel, humbling them and rebuking their arrogance and chastening their ambition to increase their status, to be seen favorably by others because of who they identify with, the gospel became a vehicle of their own pride. Leaders then became no longer heralds of a gospel, but embodiments of their own sinful, culturally informed preferences. Again, that's fundamental in Corinth. That's what's happening.

[5:11] And we've alluded to this a few times. The gospel is being accommodated to the culture. In other words, thought of and applied in terms consistent with cultural standards and values. And so that's the ground Paul must clear before he addresses leadership. So he takes them back to first principles.

And then he turns to address leadership here, to address you, to address me in light of the gospel. So given the gospel of Christ and him crucified that we looked at yesterday, the very wisdom of God, the power of God for salvation, what does leadership look like? What does pastoral ministry look like?

And here is Paul's answer to the Corinthians, to each of us over against cultural values, pressures, agendas, what we see online in the midst, even among evangelicals, in the midst of a confused and even compromised evangelical landscape. This is the clarity Paul delivers to pastors, to guide us, to protect us, to protect us, maybe even to correct us. Simply put, and this is how I would sum up this chapter. It's the gospel alone that informs a pastor's identity and that governs a pastor's labor. Sounds simple, but it's actually profound. It's the gospel alone that informs our identity as pastors and governs our labor as pastors. It's fundamental. It's perennially relevant. It's never been more relevant. And by its very nature, we were talking a little bit about this in terms of our own heart stance towards the gospel, but by its very nature, this is a mandate that Paul gives us that requires ongoing, continual reflection and examination and evaluation. Again, the gospel isn't merely a message we proclaim. It's the reality that shapes our existence. Okay? So, regardless of what happens in culture, regardless of what's happening in other churches, the gospel is the only reliable measure for our lives and our labor. It's like a giant, you know what a plumb line is? It's a construct, it's a, it's used in construction now, they use lasers, but it's a string with a weight on it. And you hang it up against a wall to make sure that the wall is plumb, wall is straight. Okay? So, it's something that you evaluate, the straightness of walls and things like that. Well, that's what the, the gospel is like a giant plumb line that comes up against our lives to ensure everything is properly aligned, solidly grounded. It clarifies who we are and what we're called to do. That, I think, is Paul's main burden here.

And right before our eyes, in chapter three, he's applying the gospel to pastoral ministry, speaking to pastors. So, look, let's look as he continues to unfold this argument. Verse five, I'm just going to read a longer section here. 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, 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. 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. The fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has done on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

[9:44] 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, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy and you are that temple.

God's temple. It's a sobering ending to this section. Now, I think in this instruction, we can see, and this is how I'm lining it up on your outline, we can see five marks of a faithful pastor. That's how I'm going to approach this. This is what it looks like when our identity is governed by the gospel and our labor is governed by the gospel. So, I think these are going to inform us. I think they position us. I

think they will have, I think if we take them to heart, they will help us endure in pastoral ministry to remain faithful in pastoral ministry. All right, so should be on your outline mark number one. One, he is discerning of the spiritual state and needs of his people. So, a pastor must match the spiritual food he provides to the digestive capacities, if you will, of the people that he serves. And Paul's wording here is packed with meaning. Look at what he says here. I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people. Pneumatikoi. Remember that word? We've alluded to that before. I could not address you as pneumatikoi, spiritual people. Some in Corinth have criticized Paul for failing to provide the kind of wisdom they wanted, for failing to align with their cultural expectations, for failing to provide sufficiently advanced instruction. Paul turns their words on them. They feel like they are the pneumatikoi.

Paul says, well, you know what? I couldn't address you in accord with your self-proclaimed status as pneumatikoi. And one thing to realize here, the metaphors he uses, adult and infant, solid food and milk, these are stock terms, stock vocabulary in the spheres of philosophical and religious instruction in the ancient world. So, Paul is not coming up with a metaphor, coming up with an illustration that would be helpful for them. He's using their categories and he's turning their categories on their heads.

And instead of where they think they are at the top of the ladder of religious and philosophical achievement, he's putting them at the bottom of the scale of religious achievement.

[12:47] I couldn't even address you this way. Now, one note here, where it says, I could not address you as pneumatikoi, but as people of the flesh. People of the flesh. You see that? The word is sarkonos. You recognize, you know, you know the word sarks, right?

So, sarkonos is what he calls them. Literally, made of flesh or fleshly. Greek adjectives, when you, when you take a noun, and you, when you take a noun and you create an adjective out of it in Greek with a new omicron sigma.

Okay? Are you with me? So, you take a noun. Of course, the, the root of this is sark, sark, the stem is sark, not sarks. So, when you create an adjective out of that with a new, new omicron sigma, that, the nos ending, that means composed of, or made of.

So, this is not, then, a negative statement. So, and the next phrase shows this. I could not address you as people of the flesh, as people, as fleshly, made of flesh.

And so, it's not a negative statement because he says, no, as, I could not address you as, I could not, I'm sorry, I could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as sarkonos, as infants of, in Christ.

[14:45] Now, look at verse 3. For you are still, what? Of the flesh.

That's a different word. That is not sarkonos. He changes the word. It's sarkikos.

When you take a Greek noun and you form and form it into an adjective with a kappa omicron sigma, that means characterized by the flesh or belonging to the flesh.

You see what he's doing? Think about 1 Corinthians 15, 44. You don't have to turn there necessarily.

You can. He's talking about the resurrection. And he's speaking about the resurrection body. And he says, it is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.

[15:56] A, the word is, that new body that we are going to have is new, new matacon.

K-O-N, meaning what? Not composed of spirit, but, not made of spirit, but, what? Characterized by the spirit.

Responsive to the dictates of the spirit. In other words, a body, not made of spirit that's like a ghost, but a body adapted to the new conditions of heavenly existence.

In other words, a body fitted for the new age. Isn't that glorious? So, we're not going to be floating around like ghosts. We're going to have a body that's characterized by the spirit, that's adapted to the new age, that's fitted for that new heavenly existence.

And the new heavens and new earth. So, here, Paul, he begins, not negatively. I could not address you as sarkinos, as pneumaticone, as spiritual people, but people of the flesh.

[17:09] Sarkinos, composed, made of flesh. In other words, infants of Christ. But now, you are still of the flesh. Now, you are still, after this time, you are sarkikos.

You're still characterized by the flesh. This is basically equivalent to Paul's katasarka, according to the flesh.

So, what's he saying? Well, they're still, after all this time, you know, when he first came, they were infants in Christ. But now, they're still dominated by the flesh.

They're walking according to their sinful desires, their sinful tendencies. Looking at life through a this-worldly perspective. So, the statement in verse 1 is largely neutral.

There is no culpability. There's no culpability of being an infant in Christ, of being a child in Christ. Unless you stay there.

[18:15] Unless that condition is perpetuated. There is culpability on the Corinthians part, because they were still immature when they ought to have been advancing to maturity.

That's his critique of them. So, what is neutral in verse 1 becomes derogatory in verse 3. And the rest of verse 3 illustrates that.

You are still sarkikos. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? So, jealousy and strife then characterize the flesh.

Characterize a this-worldly orientation. Characterizes a mindset that discounts God, that views life only through human terms.

That's what they are doing. Jealousy and strife characterize the flesh and their presence among the Corinthians, evidenced by these factions, belies their supposed spirituality.

[19:21] Gives the lie to their supposed spirituality. Shows that they are not as spiritual as they think they are. Now, another point that I just want to make about this text.

This passage is often used, and in American context, famously so, to create different levels of believers.

To justify the idea that there are different levels of believers. And so that in English, the way that flesh word was translated, going back to the King James, but even in more modern translations at times, carnal.

Do you know that word? Carnal. Carnal. Carnal. Carnal. Carnal. It means meat. If you go to a Mexican restaurant and get carne asada, it's a steak, carne.

But in sort of the history of translations, there's this idea of we're carnal. And so some people would say, oh, okay, well, there are carnal Christians, and then there are spiritual Christians.

[20:28] So the fleshly people, in verse 1, carnal, then get identified with the person in verse 15 whose work is burned up.

He'll suffer loss, though he himself will be saved. So the idea, and this was really common in some evangelistic materials by a particular college ministry that grew and became a worldwide Campus Crusade for Christ.

This isn't a criticism of them. They're now crew. Have you ever heard of that? Are they in Ethiopia? You haven't? Well, many, many years ago, they had evangelistic tracts and other tracts that were just widespread.

And God has used Campus Crusade immensely. But the idea was there are carnal Christians and there are spiritual Christians. The carnal Christian, so this is like a, they had these little pictures in there.

This is like a throne, okay? So the carnal Christian, there's a throne there, and so this is Christ, okay?

[21:51] So this is a carnal Christian. They're saved. They know Jesus. They've made Jesus their Savior, okay? But he's not on the throne. To be a spiritual Christian, you take the next step, and that's what this tract was calling people to do.

A spiritual Christian, then, is someone who doesn't know Jesus only as Savior, but they know Jesus as Lord. So Jesus then sits on the throne of your life.

But the idea, then, okay, that's what Paul is talking about, different levels of believers. And then chapter 15, he's talking about believers who get their works burned up, etc. We just have to remember, I mean, we're talking about characteristics of a faithful pastor.

The person in chapter 15, we'll look at it in a few moments, whose works are burned up is not a Christian. It's not a carnal Christian. That is the Christian leader. Paul is setting forth a theology of

leadership in these verses.

This is only, now, is there a secondary application to regular believers having your works burned up? I think there's an illegitimate secondary application.

[22:59] But what this is speaking about is a pastor, the leader, the Christian leader who's working. Okay? So, again, that's the first mark of a faithful pastor. He is discerning of the spiritual state and needs of his people.

Mark number two of the faithful pastor in light of the gospel. He is ever aware of his dependence upon God. All right. Well, the second mark of a faithful pastor in light of his dependence or in light of the gospel is he's aware, ever aware, of his dependence upon God.

Simple but indispensable. We never mature beyond this. We don't educate ourselves out of this.

In fact, the more pastoral experience you gain, I can now speak to this with a little authority, having done it a while, the more education you have, the more you need this.

The more you become aware, hopefully, you better become aware of your need for God. So, in verse five, Paul moves from, again, their quarrels to their perceptions of leaders.

[24:13] And here's where he's really building this theology of leadership. What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each.

There's actually a... There's a conjunction there in verse five. ESV translates it, what then is apostle.

We might translate that or to render the sense of that conjunction. What is Apollos really? What, after all, is Paul?

That's sort of the sense of the phrase. And then Paul lays out, as I said, a theology of leadership.

And he uses two metaphors. Verses five to nine, he uses an agricultural metaphor. Verses 10 to 15, he uses an architectural metaphor.

And these metaphors make various points, but perhaps foremost is this. Different workers have different tasks, but any credit for growth or progress is reserved exclusively for God.

[25:33] People planted, people watered, but did you notice what he says? He says it two times in the text. God gave the growth.

So, 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. You see the emphasis that he's placing on that.

God uses means. Yes, he does. He uses pastors. But there is only one with causal power. There's only one eternally existing cause.

One source of spiritual life and change and growth and fruitfulness. And brothers, it is not you and it's not me. We are not the source of anyone's growth.

God gives the growth. We must never forget that. So, what are we? Given the realities of the gospel, given the economy of salvation, meaning given the way in which God has purpose to work, the way he set things up, what are we?

[26:50] Verse 5, we are servants. And as the metaphor unfolds, we will see what kind of servants. Servants in God's field.

Field hands. Do you know that phrase, a field hand? Someone who works in the field? Verse 9 underlines this.

We are God's fellow workers. Which does not mean, I heard it preached this way one time. It does not mean we are workers with God.

So, I heard a man preach this one time and say, we are, it's amazing what he said. We are co-workers with God. Us and God are working.

Paul says an amazing thing here about pastors. It's like, God and us. Here we are and then it's the rest of you. It's yes, me and God. That's not what that means. We are co-workers of God, meaning co-workers owned by God.

[27:58] Co-workers belonging to God. And the word God there is emphatic in the text. To render it literally, of God we are co-workers.

Belonging to God we are co-workers. Responsible to God we are co-workers. So the pastor, you and me, we are owned by God. We are sent by God.

We are working solely for God. We don't own the field. We're field hands. And having worked in the field, all the fruitfulness is entirely from God.

Do you see? Now, metaphors do double duty. Metaphors do double duty. They communicate truth, but metaphors also create a mood.

They have an affective force. Kind of like an illustration that you use in a sermon. The illustration has a point. It communicates content, but it also creates a mood.

[29:03] And these metaphors, so Paul is using an agricultural metaphor, they evoke something.

A work, a field worker. What does that evoke? The dust. Picture a person in a field. Dust of the field. The dirty work of farming. The hard, sweaty, dirty, dusty work of farming.

In other words, Paul goes blue collar on us here. You know that phrase, blue collar? Paul goes blue collar on us here. So he, and think about the context.

He transfers the Corinthians' perceptions of leadership from the corridors of power and philosophical spectacle and impressiveness.

[30:06] That's what they associated with leaders. That's what they were impressed by. Well, Paul uses a metaphor that transfers their perceptions to the farm.

Which, by the way, would have been a despised profession in the eyes of Corinthian power brokers. So, you see what he's doing?

He is chastening any self-importance we might have as pastors. It's humbling.

So, where are we deriving our identity as a pastor? You, as a pastor's college student, serving in various ways, serving now as an intern.

Where do you get your significance? Because of the task you've been given? Because of the title you have? Because of the responsibilities you've been given?

[31:07] Your position or your prominence or your labor or your fruitfulness? How good it's going? The size of your church?

The growth of your ministry sphere? Or, is it from the one who bought you? Who owns you? Who graciously called you? Despite your sin. And arrogance.

And ambition. And fear. And weakness. And emotional fragility. The last person on earth who should be proud.

The last person on earth who should be concerned about his reputation. Is a pastor. How counter-cultural though, isn't it?

[32:13] It's insanity though. To do so. To be proud because you're a pastor. It's to deny the very grace that saved you. And that called you.

And that gifted you. And that qualified you. The grace that is behind any fruit you have ever borne in any moment of ministry.

Any ability you have. Any ability you have. Any character you've attained. It's all of grace. As pastors. As pastors.

We should be. We should be. We should be the most. If we're thinking rightly. Because there's something very freeing about this.

We should be the most light-hearted. Self-aware. Unimpressed with ourself. Grateful. Grateful. Humble.

[33:13] Happy. Dependent. People on earth. We're meant to be. We're meant to be happy pastors.

Humble pastors. Amazed pastors. Grateful pastors. Not impressed pastors. Yes. Yes. Yes. We want to be faithful.

We want to be diligent. We want to get our hands dirty. We want to work hard in that field. But ultimately. Problems you encounter in ministry.

Problems you encounter in your church. It's not your field. It's not your farm. Any harvest that comes in.

It's not your doing. It's not your life. Pastoring that way. Will relieve a thousand burdens. And strivings.

[34:13] And fears. And pastoring that way. Will invite. The presence of God. Into your life. And his power.

Into your ministry. And it will ensure. That God alone. And not you. Receive the glory for your labors. Utterly dependent. Utterly dependent.

That's what we are. A third. Characteristic. Of the faithful pastor. Who's defined by the gospel. Number three. He is aware of his need. For others. He's aware of his need for others. Look at verses 8 and 9. 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. God's building. He who plants.

[35:10] He who waters. Are one. I can think of. Few texts. That apply. So specifically. To. To pastoral teams. So Paul acknowledges here.

A division of labor. In ministry. Some plant. Others water. So. You. Remember the background. He totally rearranges.

The comparisons. That the Corinthians. Are making. They think. Hierarchy. Hierarchy. This guy's the best. This guy's less. This guy's less. This guy's less.

They think hierarchy. Paul thinks. No. Division of labor. No. We just. We each have our own thing to do. No one's better. You see what he's doing? They compare.

Paul equates. And it's not just. It's not only a rebuke. He provides. Discernment. He gives us a glimpse. Into God's economy.

[36:08] The way God has. Arranged. Ministry. He helps. He helps them perceive. The particular contributions. Each one made. He's. He's helping them to think rightly. About himself. And what he did.

He's helping them to think rightly. About Apollos. And what he did. There's no competition here. We each made a contribution. Again.

All from God. All by grace. Now that's. Now that's. Critical. When it comes to a pastoral team. It's a critical value for a pastoral team.

Or any. Leadership team. That's developing. When I think about. Our own history. In sovereign grace. I've been around now.

I wasn't there. I haven't been. The whole time. But I've been around for 25 years now. And I think this is true. When I've. Look outside of our own. Family of churches.

[37:05] Into other networks. Other. Churches. It's rare. For a church. To just blow up. A church doesn't just spontaneously combust.

You know what blows up? Pastoral teams blow up. What fractures are elderships. Churches rarely divide.

When there is a united. United. Eldership. And so when. Pastors are united. And people will discern.

If they are. People pick up on little. Comments. Attitudes. Tones of voice. The way you refer to someone else on the team. Or the way you don't.

The way you just keep silent. The way you withhold. Encouragement. You encourage this guy. And this guy. And you don't say a word about this. People pick up on these things. But when pastors are united.

[38:12] There is a. Clarity. There is a clear. Clarion call. That fosters trust. In a church. That galvanizes.

A congregation. That reassures. A congregation. That gives security. To a congregation. When I know my pastors. They're godly. They're faithful. They love us.

And they love each other. They are united. They are united. What does that do in the church members heart? It just gives you security. Doesn't it? And I love.

I was just sitting in on the. On the meeting. Tuesday. And just watching Michael. Just. Encourage participation. Building into.

You. I'm just going to. I'm just going to pretend like Michael's not here. But he's building. Into. You. The value of encouragement. And I just love the encouragement that I heard.

[39:11] And then. Even the. The critique. Or list. How can we grow. It wasn't critical. But it was just. We're thinking. It was humbly given. I mean. That builds. Solidarity.

That builds. Unity. That builds. Trust. Trust. That's just beautiful. So.

If. If we want health. On. Our pastoral team. And some of you. You may plant a church. And one of the main. A key thing that you are going to do.

And I trust you're paying attention. Watching Michael. Here. But one of the things you're going to be doing. Is building a team. And. You're going to be preaching.

Yes. Nothing more important than. The preaching of God's word. You're going to be pastor. You're going to be counseling. But I tell you what. Nothing is going to be more vital. For the future health of that church. Than the team you build.

[40:09] So we have to take. Paul's. Point. Not. We. Not only. Thank you. We. We not only want to grasp. Paul's point. But we want to apply it.

And celebrate it. Here's. Here's the key. In verse 8. He who plants. And he who waters.

Are. What. What is the word. Do you remember your. Greek word for one. Haste.

Right. And. But you memorize three. Right. Haste. Me a hen. Haste. Masculine. Mia. Feminine. Hen. Neuter. You know what the word is here.

He who plants. And he who waters. Are. Hen. Not. Haste. If.

[41:05] If it was haste. He who plants. He who waters. Are. It would be just. An absolute equation. One in the same person. That's not what he says. He who plants. He who waters. Are. One. Meaning.

They. And this is. This is real important. They fit. In. A single. Category. They share.

The same. Status. Whatever the task. Whatever the. Sphere. Thank you. Are you following me here.

They. They. They. They are. One. They. They. They. They. They are in the same category. They.

They share the same status. So. Think about a pastoral team. Whatever. Whatever the task.

Whatever the sphere. Whatever the responsibility. From God's point of view. Every pastor is in the same category. The person is fundamentally.

[42:00] What do we say? A worker in the field. We tend. In our. Fleshly ways of thinking. We tend to invest. Different roles.

With different values. We honor some. More than others. Perhaps we crave. Some more than others. Perhaps we envy. Some more than others.

God sees all equally. I have conversations. I've had this conversation. A number of times. With guys. A guy will come up. He serves on a pastoral team.

And he. Really. He wants to. He wants to preach. He wants to plant a church. Church. And so he comes and asks. For my counsel.

My advice. And. And you know. As I have these conversations. I've actually said this. To a number of guys. In the past. I say. You know. Maybe. Maybe you're called to that. Perhaps.

[42:59] If so. That's. That's great. But. I want you to consider this. And I'm talking about particular people. Serving incredibly fruitfully. On a pastoral team.

I've often said. You know. Let me just. At least give you an alternative perspective. Um. If you went. And planted a church.

I think you could do it. Um. Um. And maybe. In. A few years. Let's say. You gather a church. Of.

A hundred. Uh. Seventy five. Hundred. Maybe. In America. Churches. Can sometimes grow faster. You know. Maybe one twenty five. I said. That would be great. I said.

But. Think about this. You're serving on this team here. And this is a thriving church. And. Its influence.

[43:57] Is. Broad. And it's. Fruitfulness. Is. Significant. And. You're playing a role. On that team.

That's helping. Make that happen. So here's the question. I would. I would just. I would encourage you. To take before the Lord. Can I bear more fruit. Staying on this team.

And playing my role. That I'm really gifted in. Or. Would I bear more fruit. Planting a church. Maybe I could do it. But. Maybe that's not the most.

Fruitful use of my gifts. We've got one church. In Sovereign Grace. It's a large church. It's our largest church. And. I don't know how big their pastoral team is.

Well you've met some of these guys. Andy has been here. Andy Farmer. Remember Andy. You haven't met Jim Donahue. But. Some of you have talked to Jim. So this is Covenant Fellowship.

[44:57] It's a big church. It's. It's. You know. It's. It's 30 years. Old. Been around a long time. But it's grown. God has blessed it. They've got a big pastoral team. I don't know. 15 guys. I.

Almost everyone. Has been to the pastor's college. So I know them. And I love them. There are guys on that team. Who could plant a church. No doubt. But. They've chosen to stay. And they are bearing massive fruit. And their church. And because of that. Their church is bearing massive fruit. I think of churches as. Almost. I sometimes think of churches as ships. Or boats. Some churches are. Are like. You know what a cigar boat is? A small. Really fast. Boat. Can only hold one or two. You know. Two people. But it's fast. And it can go anywhere. A cigar boat is fast. It can go. Into. Into little gullies. And harbors. And it's. It's very versatile. [45:53] And very nimble. And fast. And. There's some churches that are like that. That's great. Effective. Some churches are more like ocean liners. They move slow. But they carry. Tons of cargo. Across the ocean. And. So some churches are. Big deep water ships. What did deep water ships need? They need a crew. Right? And so. You know. If you. Maybe you could plant a church. And be a. Drive your own cigar boat. And that's wonderful. And God may want you to do that. Or. Maybe you stay on a team. And be a. Be on that crew. And you're part of a church. That. Supplies. Other churches. And. Brings. Resources. To other churches. And. Can go places. Where a cigar boat. Can't go. Into deep waters. And so forth. [46:51] You get the point. Of that. That metaphor. Behind. Behind. What I'm saying is. It's not more noble. It's not more important. To be a senior pastor. This is what Paul. Is teaching here. It's not. More important. When God sees. Every. Laborer. Every pastor. In the same. Category. When. There's going to be no. In America. Do you know what the Academy Awards are. For movies. They were just. I think they were last. Last week. You know. They have the awards. For. I don't know if you've ever seen it. But. At the beginning. They have awards for. Like. Film editing. And costume design. And. You know. All these little. Tasks. And. They don't let those people. Give speeches. They always interrupt their speeches. With the music. They get them off the stage. And then they save the big awards. [47:48] For last. The best actor. And the best actress. And then the best pictures. Like the last one. And that's. And they give long speeches. And so forth. There's going to be no. On. On. On the last day. It's not going to look like the Academy Awards. There's going to be no senior pastor category. At the end of the ceremony. Where. Now. We're all. Look. Yeah. You know. And then. An assistant guy. Well. He gets his reward. But we don't even. You know. Get him off the stage quick. Let's. Let's. Let's wait for the really big awards. It's not. You know. Staff guys. Administrators. Counselors. You know. Like best sound editing. Or something. It's. It's. It's not going to be that way. Every man is going to receive. His reward. And note. Note the phrase. In verse five. Very important phrase. What. What then is Apollos. What is Paul. Servants through whom you believed. Look at that last phrase. [48:42] As the Lord has assigned. To each. Now that's huge. God not only values each man. He not only values each role equally. He's the one who assigned. Them in the first place. So comparison then is absurd. Rivalry is absurd. Envy is evil. Competition is wicked. Because it's God who assigns. The roles. If you're a. If you're a. If you're a planter. God designed. You to be a planter. If you're a waterer. God designed you to be a waterer. Doesn't mean we don't. Maybe grow and mature. And. Do different things. In different seasons of our ministry. And you know. Maybe you're a. You do a lot of. You know. Maybe you do. I know a guy who's. Does administer. Thinking of one guy. Does administration. And some counseling on the side. And. Maybe he'll grow into. And. [49:39] Take on more responsibility. And get more experience teaching. And maybe. He'll preach more in the future. He's not becoming more

important. He's just growing in experience. But the point is. God has assigned him. Where he is right now.

Again. It's a wheat field. To use the. The analogy. It's a wheat field. Where we're all. Working together. It's not a battlefield. Where we fight.

And quarrel. We actually have one thing. In common. One thing we all have in common. You know what that is? Insignificance.

Ultimate insignificance. In ourselves. But I do want to pause for a moment. And consider this.

I'm just a worker in the field. You know what that means? You know what that means? It means.

[50:42] I'm in the field. What am I doing in this field? How did. How did I. I just marvel. How did I. With all my sin.

And my. Self-importance. And my self-referential. World revolve. Around me. Pride. How did I get in this field? I prayed this this morning. What am I doing.

Here. In honest. Teaching you men. How that. How in the world. Did I get to do this? There are pastors. Way more godly than me.

Everyone seems more gifted than me. It's just what. What in the world am I doing here? But I'm in the field. What a joy.

To be in the field. Every. Every. Every. Pastor. In every church. Should be consistently. Marveling. What am I doing. Here.

[51:36] I'm in the field. And if you're. Your sense. As you mature. And grow. If your sense of.

Marveling. About being in the field. At all. Is not increasing. Then I would recommend you. Revisit these verses. You need to recalibrate. Your identity.

With the gospel. It's a glorious thing. To be called to be a pastor. Does it make us more important? But it does.

It does make us. Privileged. And we should be humble. Humbled by it. Well.

The effect. Of this point. In our hearts. Should be. Clear. It should be. Humility. Regardless of our sphere. Regardless of our ministry attainment.

[52:33] Regardless of our responsibility. Regardless of our visibility. How often am I in front of people? Doesn't matter. And it also should produce.

You know what else it produces? Contentment. Contentment. Know this. Know this. It's only when a particular role.

Is invested with superior significance. That discontentment with one's own role. Will begin to fester. It's only when we see certain things as more significant.

More important. That comparisons begin to be made. That ambition begins to take root. something I share with younger guys all the time if you feel called to a role in the future with greater responsibility if you just feel no I feel like God in the future would have me do do this which is more responsibility than I have now maybe you feel called maybe you're doing counseling or serving in other ways but you feel called I feel called to preach maybe plant a church if you feel called to that I would say that it's fine that can be good it's fine to sense that it's good it's imperative to submit that to others to not depend on your own self assessment it's fine to explore that while you're being faithful and not distracted or not discontent in your current role that's fine but to be clear it may be a calling it may be something God assigns to you in the future maybe but it's not superior it's not superior and if you're called to it it's no reflection on you the Lord assigns to each the Lord assigns to each

God assigns the role and I'll just if I may I hope I don't overstep my bounds but if I may say this you guys as interns here just do the kingdom of God a favor and seek to make your senior he didn't ask me to say this seek to make your senior pastor's life a joy by being content by being faithful and by wondering that you're even on the team just wow can't believe I get to do this I say that all the time I can't believe I get to do this we all should say I can't believe I get to do this but lest we lose

motivation from this point and think well doesn't matter what I do we're all equal who cares no [55:55] Paul then brings in a staggering reality the reality of reward and he's clear about the basis for the reward verse 8 he who plants and he who waters are one and each will receive his wages according to his labor and that individual aspect there is stressed in the text it's

literally each will receive his own reward for his own labor the word own is repeated twice each will receive his own reward according to his own labor so what determines the reward it's not your role it's not your visibility it's not your status what determines what determines our reward the nature of our toil the nature of our toil in other words faithfulness that will determine our reward actually two things if you peek over at chapter 4 verse 5 you'll see another you'll see the other the other one as well therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time before the Lord comes who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart then each one will receive his commendation from God so the context there is reward commendation and what does he say is is the basis of that the purposes of the heart so those are the two bases for the reward each of us will receive from God faithfulness and motive have I been faithful and am I laboring for the glory of God and the good of others and not my own notoriety that's it now it is true that and this gets this enters in when you have a pastoral team for instance sometimes remuneration pay is based on responsibility you see that in scripture right 1 Timothy 5 17 let the elders who rule well be worthy of double honor and he's speaking there of financial reward or financial pay and then he says especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching so yes there are differences in responsibilities and if a staff is able to pay their pastors some amount sometimes yeah the person carrying the most weight will do that but that's not what

Paul's talking about here final reward lasting reward eternally resounding reward reward in the eyes of God that will never disappear it's not based on responsibility that is determined by God responsibility is determined by God and that final reward that lasting reward that eternally resounding reward is certainly not based on any culture standards of prominence or stature or reputation or influence it's labor and motive it's faithfulness and devotion to the master's pleasure so let us and do this for the rest of your life let us draw zero conclusions about significance based on our gifts or based on our responsibility or even based on the fruit of our labors God is not going to measure the abundance of your fruit he's going to measure the faithfulness of your labors and the purity of your heart that's the only thing he's going to measure and I can tell you from experience because I've been on pastoral teams for a long time when that posture pervades a pastoral team that none of us are more significant we each have a role it's all about faithfulness we want to be pursuing God we want to seek

God's pleasure in what we do when that pervades a pastoral team there will be on that team humility and encouragement and deference and joy the only competition will be a godly competition that we see in Romans what does Paul say outdo one another in showing others honor that's right that's like the only time Paul says compete with other people see how much you can honor the other guy I'm going to out encourage everyone I'm going to out serve everyone I'm going to I'm going to value others way more than I value myself Philippians 2 consider others more significant than yourself I apply that all the time to pastoral ministry this guy his role is more significant what he does is more significant how God uses more he's just more significant than me I want to help him I want to serve him I want to make him a success if I can serve him I want to do it if I can answer a question if I can do it if I can give him feedback I want to do it because he he's more significant than me that's gospel unity that's gospel unity