



BIBLE STUDY

March 17th 2024

Prayer Points

Pray for the funeral of Colin Clarke. Pray for Sarah and the family as they prepare to remember Colin's life.

Nepal's anti-conversion law restricts religious conversion and the free expression of faith in Nepal. Many believers have been arrested, some imprisoned. Against a backdrop of political, social and spiritual challenges, Pray for BMS World Mission workers and partners, who continue to point to the one who can bring about total transformation.

Sermon Notes

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001

Walking Together:

Good Foundations

1 Corinthians 3

The Bible underscores the importance of unity. Unity with others is "good" and "pleasant" (Psalm 133:1). Unity is absolutely essential because the church is the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27), and a body cannot be in disunity or disharmony with itself. If disunity occurs, it essentially ceases to be a body and becomes a disjointed group of individuals. Jesus' plan for His church is people unified in the faith.

The key to unity begins with how we view ourselves within the body and how we view others. Paul addresses this in Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." Paul goes on to explain further in the following verse: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." In unity the church thrives in Christ, the Spirit ignites and people are drawn to Jesus by our love for one another. Who doesn't want unity in the church?

Was Paul the "founder" of Christianity? The debate comes and goes. From time to time people try to establish that Jesus didn't really begin Christianity, and that what we know as Christianity and project back onto Jesus was in fact the invention of Paul. There is a sense in which Paul did found churches (as he did at Corinth), like somebody laying the foundation of a building. He was happy to describe his work in that way. But the foundation he put down was Jesus himself, the Messiah, the Lord. That is the only foundation there ever can be. Paul has no basic quarrel with Apollos, the gifted speaker who ministered in Corinth after Paul left there (Acts 18:24-28). He does have a problem with the idea that anyone might play him and Apollos against one another.

Read 1 Corinthians 3

1. How would you encourage someone who said to you: "I've given up telling people about Jesus. It just never seems to work. I'll never make anyone a Christian"?
2. What different roles for servants of Christ does Paul mention in verses 5-11?
3. Here Paul uses two metaphors for work in God's kingdom: a farm and a building. The images seem quite different from each other. What similarities do they share?

To use a different metaphor, Paul and Apollos are simply the people who serve the food, while God is responsible for choosing it and cooking it. You shouldn't make a fuss about which waiter brings the food to your table. What matters is that God is in charge in the kitchen.

4. What are some ways that people rank different kinds of Christian service as more or less important? Why do you think we look on them that way?

5. In 3:12-17 what makes the difference in the two outcomes of the test by fire?

The building materials Paul mentions in verse 12 were things you might use to adorn or build up one particular building: the temple in Jerusalem. Just as God's own presence dwelt in Solomon's temple, so God's Spirit dwells within the Christian community, making them the functional equivalent of the temple within the new dispensation, the "age to come" that has already arrived.

6. As you think about your own Christian community, what does it mean that "you are God's temple" (v. 16)? How does this view impact our times of gathered worship?
7. The main point of this passage is the seriousness with which Paul takes the various tasks and responsibilities of Christians, particularly leaders and teachers in the church. There are serious and lasting issues at stake. It is possible to build wisely and well and with the right materials, as well as the opposite.

Think about your leadership responsibilities, whether in the church, home, community, workplace or any other setting. What is at stake for the people you lead and for yourself? How do live well with this responsibility as Christians?
8. When the "fire" does its work, Paul says, builders who have used the wrong material will "suffer loss," but they themselves will still be saved. This seems to be Paul's way of preserving his view of Christian assurance while maintaining also a serious view of Christian responsibility for what one does with the new life which begins, as the Spirit's gift, with faith and baptism.

Consider Paul's statement in 3:18. When have you had to discard the wisdom of the world in order to be open to receive God's wisdom?