

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS 3

In this chapter the apostle returns to the charge of schisms and contentions upon the Corinthians, which were the occasion of the epistle; and reproves them for their divisions, which were about their ministers; and gives them their just and due character, and who, though they were useful and commendable in their places, were not to be gloried in; and especially it was a great piece of weakness and folly, to set up one against another, when they had an equal interest in them all. Having, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, made mention of the spiritual man, the apostle tells the Corinthians, to whom he writes, that he could not address them as spiritual, but as carnal; and not as perfect men, among whom he spake the wisdom of God, but as babes in Christ, ([1 Corinthians 3:1](#)) and this rudeness and ignorance of theirs account for his conduct towards them, in delivering the plain and easy, and not the sublime doctrines of the Gospel to them, because they were not able to bear them; nor were they yet able, notwithstanding the length of time, the proficiency they had made, and the many teachers they had had among them, ([1 Corinthians 3:2](#)) and to prove that they were carnal, and not spiritual, he instances in their envy, strife, and contentions, which were carnal works, or works of the flesh, ([1 Corinthians 3:3](#)) and gives some particulars of their contentions about their ministers, which put it out of all doubt that they were carnal, ([1 Corinthians 3:4](#)) and reproves them for such contentions, and argues the folly and sinfulness of them; partly from the character of their preachers, as servants and ministers, who were the instruments of their faith and conversion, through the grace of God, and therefore not to be set up at the head of them as their lords and masters, ([1 Corinthians 3:5](#)) and partly from the unprofitableness of their ministry, without a divine blessing, ([1 Corinthians 3:6,7](#)) and also from the unity and equality of the ministers among themselves, though their labours and reward were different, ([1 Corinthians 3:8](#)) and therefore parties and factions were not to be made on their account; and besides, as they were labourers with God, and the church were his husbandry and building, in which they were employed, ([1 Corinthians 3:9](#)), though they might differ in some

superstructure points, yet they agreed in the foundation; and the apostle instances in himself under the character of a wise master builder, laying the foundation, and others building on it, (~~41810~~1 Corinthians 3:10) and declares what this foundation was, which he and other Gospel ministers agreed in laying; nor was there any other that could be laid, to any good purpose besides, which is Jesus Christ, (~~41811~~1 Corinthians 3:11) and then distinguishes between the different sorts of builders, the one laying on the foundation things of the greatest worth and value, and others things very trifling and useless, (~~41812~~1 Corinthians 3:12) and intimates that there would be a time, when there would be a revelation and declaration of every man's work, of what sort it is, (~~41813~~1 Corinthians 3:13) so that, according to their different structures, there will be a different reward, as is suggested, (~~41818~~1 Corinthians 3:8) for though both sorts of preachers are upon the foundation, and so their persons will be safe, yet what they have built upon that foundation, according to the nature of it, shall either abide or be destroyed, (~~41814~~1 Corinthians 3:14,15) wherefore inasmuch then as the church of Christ is a temple, a building laid on such a foundation as Christ, it ought not to be defiled by factions and divisions, by errors and heresies; especially since it is holy, and the Spirit of God dwells in it; and whoever does defile it shall surely be destroyed; and therefore the apostle dissuades from it, both from the turpitude of the action, and the danger of it, (~~41816~~1 Corinthians 3:16,17) he cautions against the wisdom of this world, which was the cause of their divisions; as being self-deceiving, and contrary to true wisdom, (~~41818~~1 Corinthians 3:18) and as being foolishness in the account of God, which he proves by some passages of scripture, (~~41819~~1 Corinthians 3:19,23) and concludes, therefore, that no man ought to glory in men, in the best of men, not even in ministers, (~~41821~~1 Corinthians 3:21) so as to separate and divide them, one from another, and set up one above another, since they, and all things else, were theirs, (~~41822~~1 Corinthians 3:22) the ground and evidence of which their right and property in them are given, they being Christ's, and Christ's God's, (~~41823~~1 Corinthians 3:23).

Ver. 1. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you,* etc.] Though the apostle was a spiritual man himself, had spiritual gifts, even the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, could judge all things, had the mind of Christ, and was able to speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, yet could not speak it to them,

as unto spiritual; not but that they had the Spirit of God in them, and a work of grace upon them; for they were, as the apostle afterwards says, the

temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelt in them; they were washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; but had not that spiritual discerning, or judgment in spiritual things, which some believers had, at least when the apostle was first with them; and now they were under great spiritual declensions, and had not those spiritual frames, nor that spiritual experience and conversation, which some other Christians had:

but as unto carnal: not that they were in a carnal state, as unregenerate men are; but had carnal conceptions of things, were in carnal frames of soul, and walked in a carnal conversation with each other; though they were not in the flesh, in a state of nature, yet the flesh was in them, and not only lusted against the Spirit, but was very predominant in them, and carried them captive, so that they are denominated from it:

even as unto babes in Christ; they were in Christ, and so were new creatures; they were, as the Arabic version reads it, “in the faith of Christ”; though babes and weaklings in it, they were believers in Christ, converted persons, yet children in understanding, knowledge, and experience; had but little judgment in spiritual things, and were unskilful in the word of righteousness; at least this was the case of many of them, though others were enriched in all utterance and knowledge, and in no gift came behind members of other churches.

Ver. 2. *I have fed you with milk*, etc.] It is usual with the Jews to compare the law to milk, and they say ^{f27}, that

“as milk strengthens and nourishes an infant, so the law strengthens and nourishes the soul;”

but the apostle does not here mean *hrwt l ç bl j*, “the milk of the law”, as they ^{f28} call it, but the Gospel; comparable to milk, for its purity and wholesomeness, for the nourishing virtue there is in it, and because easy of digestion; for he designs by it, the more plain and easy doctrines of the Gospel, such as babes in Christ were capable of understanding and receiving; and not with meat; the more solid doctrines of the Gospel, and sublime mysteries of grace; the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom; such truths as were attended with difficulties, to which the carnal reason of men made many objections, and so were only fit to be brought before such who are of full age, young men, or rather fathers in Christ; who have had a large experience, and a long time of improvement in

spiritual knowledge, and have their senses exercised to distinguish between truth and error. The reason he gives for this his conduct is,

for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; they could not receive, relish, and digest it; it was too strong meat for them, they being weak in faith, and but babes in Christ; wherefore he prudently adapted things to their capacities, and that in perfect consistence with that faithfulness and integrity, for which he was so remarkable: for the Gospel he preached to them, which he calls “milk”, was not another Gospel, or contrary to that which goes by the name of “meat”: only the one consisted of truths more easily to be understood, and was delivered in a manner more suited to their capacities than the other: he adds,

neither yet now are ye able; which carries in it a charge of dulness and negligence, that they had been so long learning, and were improved no more in the knowledge of the truth; were as yet only in the alphabet of the Gospel, and needed to be afresh instructed in the first principles of the oracles of God; for anything beyond these was too high for them. The apostle seems to allude to the manner and custom of the Jews, in training up their children to learning; as to their age when they admit them scholars, their rule is this ^{f29},

“they introduce children (into the school) to be taught when six or seven years of age, *wpwg ^ynbw ^bh j k ypl*, “according to the child’s strength, and the make of his body, and less than six years of age they do not take any in.””

But sooner than this, a father is obliged to teach his child at home, concerning which they say ^{f30},

“from what time is his father obliged to teach him the law? as soon as he begins to speak, he teaches him the law Moses commanded us, and “hear O Israel”, and after that he instructs him, *μyqwsp μyqwsp f[m f[m*, “by little and little, here and there a verse”, till he is six or seven years of age, and, *wyrwb ypl I kh*, “all this according to the clearness of his understanding”;

i.e. as he is able to take things in; and even till twelve years he was to be used with a great deal of tenderness:

“says R. Isaac ^{f31}, at Usha they made an order, that a man should “use his son gently”, until he is twelve years of age; the gloss upon it is, if his son refuses to learn, he shall use him ܡܝܟܘܢ ܡܝܪܒܕܒܘ ܛܝܢܒ, “with mildness and tender language.””

Ver. 3. *For ye are yet carnal*, etc.] The Syriac reads it, ܘܬܢܐ ܪܫܒܒ, “ye are in the flesh”: a phrase the apostle elsewhere uses of men in an unregenerate state; but this is not his meaning here, as before explained, but that carnality still prevailed among them, of which he gives proof and evidence:

for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? They envied each other’s gifts and knowledge, strove about words to no profit, entered into warm debates and contentions about their ministers, and went into factions and parties, which were distinguished by the names they were most affected to; in all which they gave too clear evidence of their prevailing carnality, that they too much walked as other men, who make no profession of religion; that they were led by the judgment of men, and were carried away with human passions and inflections; and in their conduct could scarcely be distinguished from the rest of the world. The things that are here mentioned, and with which they are charged, are reckoned by the apostle among the works of the flesh, (~~459~~ Galatians 5:19,20) the phrase, “and divisions”, is omitted in the Alexandrian copy, and in some others, and in the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 4. *For while one saith, I am of Paul*, etc.] This shows what their envying and strife, and divisions were about, and from whence they sprung; and which serve, to strengthen the proof, and support the charge of carnality brought against them; for when one sort made a party for Paul, and set up him as their minister above all others; and said

another, I am of Apollos, preferring him for his eloquence above Paul, or any other preacher, as appears from (~~4012~~ 1 Corinthians 1:12) there was a third sort for Cephas, whom they cried up as superior to the other two, or any other man; and a fourth were for Christ, and despised all ministers whatever:

are ye not carnal? all this was a demonstration of it: they could never clear themselves from it, they must be convicted in their own consciences of it;

to which the apostle appeals: the Alexandrian copy and the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, “are ye not men?”

Ver. 5. *Who then is Paul? and who is Apollos?* etc.] The apostle’s name being used, and he a party concerned, could speak the more freely upon this head, and ask what they thought of himself, and other preachers, whether they were more than men? what authority and power they had, whether they looked upon them as the authors of a new religion, or the founders of a new sect, that were to go by their names? and directs them what light to consider them in, how that they were

but ministers by whom ye believed: they were servants to Christ and to his churches, and not lords; they did not assume any dominion over men, or pretend to lord it over God’s heritage; there is but one Lord and master, and that is Christ, whom they served, and taught others to obey; they were only instrumental in the hand of God, by whom souls were directed, encouraged, and brought to believe in Christ; as for faith itself, that is the gift of God, the operation of his power, and of which Christ is the author and finisher; they laid no claim to this as their work, or imagined they had any dominion over it; that they could either implant it, or increase it of themselves; but thought it honour enough done them, that it came by their ministry; and that that, and the joy of it, were helped and furthered by their means: the Vulgate Latin version reads, “his ministers whom ye believed”; that is, the ministers of Christ, whom they believed in; not in the ministers, but Christ; the Arabic version renders it, “but two ministers, by whom ye believed”; referring to Paul and Apollos, who are meant:

even as the Lord gave to every man; gifts to minister with, and success to his ministry; making him useful to this and the other man, to bring him to the faith of Christ; all which is owing to the free grace and sovereign good will and pleasure of God.

Ver. 6. *I have planted,* etc.] That is, ministerially; otherwise the planting of souls in Christ, and the implanting of grace in them, are things purely divine, and peculiar to God, and the power of his grace; but his meaning is, that he was at Corinth, as in other places, the first that preached the Gospel to them; and was an instrument of the conversion of many souls, and of laying the foundation, and of raising and forming a Gospel church state, and of planting them in it;

Apollos watered; he followed after, and his ministry was blessed for edification; he was a means of carrying on the superstructure, and of building up souls in faith and holiness, and of making them fruitful in every good word and work: each minister of the Gospel has his proper gifts, work, and usefulness; some are planters, others waterers; some are employed in hewing down the sturdy oaks, and others in squaring and fitting, and laying them in the building; some are “Boanergeses”, sons of thunder, and are mostly useful in conviction and conversion; and others are “Barnabases”, sons of consolation, who are chiefly made use of in comforting and edifying the saints: but God gave the increase: for as the gardener may put his plants into the earth, and water them when he has so done, but cannot cause them to grow, this is owing to a divine blessing; and as the husbandman tills his ground, casts the seed into it, and waits for the former and latter rain, but cannot cause it to spring up, or increase to perfection, this is done by a superior influence; so ministers of the Gospel plant and water, cast in the seed of the word, preach the Gospel, but all the success is from the Lord; God only causes it to spring up and grow; it is he that gives it its increasing, spreading, fructifying virtue and efficacy.

Ver. 7. *So then, neither is he that planteth anything*, etc.] Not that he is the happy instrument of beginning the good work:

neither he that watereth; who is the means of carrying of it on: not that they are simply and absolutely nothing, without any restriction and limitation; they are men, they are Christians, they are ministers, and useful ones, by whom others believe; they are labourers together with God, ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, and so to be accounted of; but they are nothing in themselves, nor in their own account, or with respect to God: they are nothing of themselves as ministers; they have nothing but what they have received; all their gifts are from God, nor can they exercise them aright without the grace of God, not being able to think a good thought as of themselves; nor are they anything in making their planting and watering effectual; and so no glory belongs to them; nothing is to be ascribed to them, they have no part or lot in these things:

but God that giveth the increase; he gives them their abilities, assists them in the exercise of their gifts, makes their ministrations useful, and he has, as he ought to have, all the glory.

Ver. 8. *Now he that planteth, and he that watereth are one*, etc.] Not in every respect so; they were different as men, they were not the same

individual persons, nor in the same office; Paul was an apostle, Apollos only a preacher of the Gospel; nor had they the same measure of gifts, nor did they labour alike, or were of the same usefulness; but they had one and the same commission to preach the Gospel; and the Gospel they preached was the same; and so were their views, aims, and ends, which were the glory of God, and the good of immortal souls; and they had the same love and affection for one another; they were one in their work, judgment, and affection; and which carries in it a strong reason and argument why the members of this church should not contend and divide about them:

and every man shall receive his own reward; either from men, that double honour he is worthy of, maintenance and respect; or rather from God, not a reward of debt, for his labours are by no means meritorious of anything at the hands of God, from whom he has all the grace, strength, and abilities he labours with; but of grace, even the reward of the inheritance, because he serves the Lord Christ; which is by bequest, through the death of the testator, and common to all the children of God, and heirs of glory:

according to his own labour; and not another's; and not according to the success of it, but according to that itself; not that that is the measure of the reward, for the reward infinitely exceeds it; but is that to which God has graciously annexed the promise of the reward, as an encouragement to it.

Ver. 9. *For we are labourers together with God*, etc.] The ministers of the Gospel are labourers in the Lord's vineyard, and not loiterers; their work is a laborious work, both to body and mind; which lies in close study and meditation, in diligent reading and constant prayer, in frequent ministration of the word, and administration of ordinances; besides reproofs, admonitions, and exhortations, counsels, and instructions, which are often necessary: it is a work, which no man is sufficient for of himself; what requires diligence, industry, and faithfulness; is honourable, and, when rightly performed, deserves respect: nor do they labour alone, but with God; not as co-ordinate, but as subordinate workers; for though they labour in planting and watering, yet they bear no part with him in giving the increase; he is the husbandman, the chief master builder, they are labourers under him; however, he works with them; hence their labours are not in vain, and they have great encouragement to go on in their work; and they are God's labourers with one another, which is a sense of the phrase not to be overlooked. The apostle often, in his epistles, speaks of his fellow

workmen, and fellow labourers, who wrought together with him under God:

ye are God's husbandry; or tillage; he is the proprietor of the field, the occupier of it, the husbandman who breaks up the fallow ground of the hearts of his people; he casts in the seed of grace, he makes the ground good, and causes it to bring forth fruit; the churches of Christ are his property, land of his fertilizing, and all the fruit belongs unto him; they are gardens of his planting, and vineyards of his watering, and which he keeps night and day, lest any hurt:

ye are God's building; as the former metaphor is taken from agriculture, this is from architecture: believers in a church state are God's house, in which he dwells, and which he himself has built; he has laid the foundation, which is Jesus Christ; he makes his people lively stones, and lays them on it; he raises up the superstructure, and will complete the building, and ought to bear all the glory, and in all which he makes use of his ministers as instruments.

Ver. 10. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me*, etc.] Lest the apostle should be thought to be too much elated with the characters he had given of himself, and other ministers, or to assume too much to himself, in what he was about to say of himself, he ascribes all the gifts he had, and the usefulness he was of, as a labourer and builder in the church of God, to rich grace; by which he was called unto, and qualified for such work: as a wise master builder. This same phrase, σοφος αρχιτεκτων, “a wise master builder”, is used by the Septuagint interpreters, in (217B) Isaiah 3:3 by which they render μυση μκϿ, “the cunning artificer”, or the wise man of the carpenters, or artificers. The architect of all is God the Father, Son, and Spirit; God the Father is the builder of all things; Christ builds his church on himself the rock; and the saints are built up an habitation for God, through the Spirit; ministers are builders under God, instruments he makes use of, and who would labour in vain, unless the Lord build the city: such an one was the apostle, though he calls himself a master builder with respect to inferior ministers; he being in the highest office in the church, as an apostle, and not a whit behind the chief of them; and was the chief apostle of the Gentiles, and was principally concerned in preaching the Gospel to them, and in raising churches among them. The allusion is to the Jews, who use to call the Rabbins and doctors, and the

disciples of the wise men, “builders”: they ask in a certain place ^{f32}, *yanb yam*,

“who are the builders? says R. Joehanna, these are the disciples of the wise men, who employ themselves in the building of the world all their days ^{f33}.”

That is, the law, as one ^{f34} of their writers explains this building; hence they are sometimes called builders of the law, and which was looked upon to be an high character: it is said ^{f35} of a certain person, that

“R. Zeira praised him, and called him, *atyrrwad hyynb*, “a builder of the law.””

But the apostle was a Gospel builder, a builder of Gospel churches in Gospel truths, and in faith and holiness; these were foolish builders, but he a wise one; and his wisdom lay in the knowledge of Christ, in preaching him, and in winning souls unto him; and particularly in that he took care in his ministry, to lay a good foundation:

I have laid the foundation; meaning not only that as at other places, so at Corinth, he first preached the Gospel to them, and was the first instrument of their conversion, and laying the foundation of a Gospel church state; but that in his preaching he laid Christ as the one and only foundation, for men to build their faith and hope upon, for everlasting life and happiness, mentioned in the following verse:

and another buildeth thereupon; which designs not a private Christian, who was directed in the apostle’s ministry to build his soul upon the rock of ages, Christ the sure foundation laid in Zion; though there is a truth in this, the apostle laid Christ as a foundation, and encouraged others to build their faith and hope upon him, as to eternal salvation; and many were enabled to do so, which was the happy fruit of his ministry, and what gave him pleasure; and in this sense he also himself built upon this foundation, for this cannot be said of another, to the exclusion of himself; he would never lay a foundation, and direct others to build on it, and not build upon it himself; but another minister of the Gospel is meant, as Apollos, or any other who might follow him, and be a means of carrying on the building upon the foundation he had laid; and of edifying and establishing souls upon it; and of rearing up superstructure truths, upon the foundation one:

but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon; that he builds by line, evenly, according to the analogy of faith; that he builds in proportion to the foundation; and lays such things upon it as are becoming it, and suitable to it.

Ver. 11. *For other foundation can no man lay*, etc.] Men may attempt to lay other foundations than Christ, and build upon them, but to no purpose; they will be of no avail; all besides him are sandy foundations; such as fleshly privileges, a carnal descent, a religious education, an external profession of religion, a man's own righteousness, and the absolute mercy of God; but men ought to lay no other, nor can they, that will be of any advantage to themselves or others:

than that which is laid; by Jehovah the Father, both in his eternal counsels and covenant, when he set forth and appointed Christ to be the Saviour and Redeemer of his people; and in the fulness of time, when he sent him forth under the same characters; and by the Spirit of God, when he reveals Christ to them, and forms him in them; and by the ministers of the Gospel, who jointly agree to lay him ministerially, as the foundation for souls to build their hope upon: hence he is called the "foundation of the apostles and prophets", as here,

which is Jesus Christ; he is the foundation personally considered, as God-man and Mediator, on which the church, and every believer is built; he is the foundation of the covenant of grace, and of eternal salvation; of the faith and hope, peace, joy, and comfort of all the saints; and of the building of God, that house not made with hands, that city which has foundations, eternal glory in the other world; and he is the foundation, doctrinally considered; or the doctrines of his proper, deity, of his divine and eternal sonship, of his incarnation, of his Messiahship, of his obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead, of justification by his righteousness, pardon by his blood, and atonement by his sacrifice, etc. are fundamental ones: the Jews were wont to call the principal articles of their religion, *ydwsy*, "foundations": Maimondes has entituled one of his tracts, *hrwth ydwsy* "the foundations of the law"; but the doctrines respecting the person, offices, and grace of Christ, are the only foundation of the Gospel.

Ver. 12. *Now if any man build upon this foundation*, etc.] The different materials laid by one and the same man, on this foundation, or the different doctrines advanced upon it, are some of them comparable to

gold, silver, precious stones; for their intrinsic worth and value; for the purity and sincerity of them; for their weight, importance, solidity, and substantiality; for their durability; for the great esteem they are had in by those, who know the worth of them; and for the great usefulness they are of unto them, being rich in themselves, and enriching to them; and these are the great, momentous, and valuable truths of the Gospel, which agree with and are suitable to the foundation they are built upon: so the Jews^{f36} compare their oral and written law, the former to gold, and the latter to precious stones, but the metaphors much better suit the doctrines of the Gospel: others are like to

wood, hay, stubble; by which are meant, not heretical doctrines, damnable heresies, such as are diametrically opposite to, and overturn the foundation; for one and the same man builds the former, as these, and is himself saved at last; neither of which is true, of such that deliver doctrines of devils: but empty, trifling, useless things are meant; such as fables, endless genealogies, human traditions, Jewish rites and ceremonies; which through the prejudice of education, and through ignorance and inadvertency, without any bad design, might by some be introduced into their ministry, who had been brought up in the Jewish religion; as also the wisdom of the world, the philosophy of the Gentiles, oppositions of science falsely so called, curious speculations, vain and idle notions, which such who had their education among the Greeks might still retain, and be fond of; and through an itch of vain glory, mix with their evangelic ministrations; and in a word, everything that may now be advanced in the Gospel ministry, not so honourable to the grace of God, or so becoming the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, nor so consistent with the Spirit's work of grace, may be meant hereby; the same minister at different times, and sometimes at one and the same time in his ministry, lays the foundation, Christ, and builds on it for a while excellent valuable truths, raises a superstructure of gold, silver, and precious stones, and then covers the edifice with trifling, impertinent, and inconsistent things, with wood, hay, and stubble; and so at last, of this promising fine stately building, makes a thatched house,

Ver. 13. *Every man's work shall be made manifest*, etc.] The doctrine he preaches shall be sooner or later made manifest to himself, and to his hearers; who shall see the inconsistency, irregularity, and deformity of such a building; at first so well laid, then piled up with such excellent materials, and at last covered in with such trifling or incoherent stuff:

for the day shall declare it; meaning not the day of judgment, though that is often called the day, or that day, and will be attended with fire, and in it all secrets shall be made manifest; but the apostle intends a discovery that will be made of doctrines in this world, before that time comes: wherefore this day rather designs a day of tribulation; as of persecution, which tries men's principles, whether they are solid or not; and of error and heresy, when men are put upon a re-examination of their doctrines, whereby persons and truths that are approved are made manifest; or of some great calamity, such as the destruction of Jerusalem, whereby many wrong notions the Jews yet retained were discovered: but it is best of all to understand this day of the Gospel day, and of the progress of Gospel light, especially in some particular periods of it; as in the primitive times, at the reformation from popery, and the more remarkable Gospel daylight, which will be in the latter times, when the impertinence and inconsistency of many things which now obtain in the ministry will be seen; (see ~~4:15~~ Ephesians 5:13).

Because it shall be revealed by fire: not that day, but the man's work, or doctrine:

and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is; by the fire is meant, not the general conflagration of the world, when that, and all that is therein, will be burnt up; much less the fire of purgatory, the "papists" dream of, for the punishment of evil actions; for the apostle is not speaking of the actions of men, good or bad, but of the doctrines of ministers; rather the fire of tribulation and affliction, which, as it is for the trial of the grace of faith, so of the doctrine of faith, whereby it becomes much more precious than of gold that perisheth; or of some fiery dispensation of God's vengeance, as on Jerusalem: though the word of God, which is as fire, seems to be intended; which in some certain times so blazes forth, and will more especially in the latter day, that by the light of it, both ministers and churches will be able to see clearly the bright shining lustre of the gold, silver, and precious stones; and with so much heat, as to burn up the wood, hay, and stubble; when the difference between these things will be most easily discerned.

Ver. 14. *If any man's work abide*, etc.] That is, if any minister's doctrine will bear the test of daylight, to be looked into, and abide the fire of the word; as gold, silver, and precious stones will, or such doctrines as are

comparable to them, which will shine the brighter for being tried by this fire:

which he hath built thereupon; upon the foundation Christ, in entire consistence with, and proportion to it, and highly becoming it:

he shall receive a reward; either from the churches of Christ here, who shall honour and respect him for his faithful labours in the ministry; or from Christ hereafter, who will say, well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Ver. 15. *If any man's work shall be burnt*, etc.] If any minister's doctrine he has preached shall be destroyed and disappear, shall be disapproved of, and rejected by the churches, not being able, to bear the light and heat of the fire of God's word:

he shall suffer loss; of all his labour and pains he has been at, in collecting together such trifling, useless, and inconsistent things; and of all that glory and popular applause he might expect from men, on account of them, and which was the snare that drew him into such a way of preaching:

but he himself shall be saved; with an everlasting salvation; not by his ministerial labours, much less by his wood, hay, and stubble, which will be all burnt up; but through his being, notwithstanding all the imperfections of his ministry, upon the foundation Christ:

yet so as by fire; with much difficulty, and will be scarcely saved; (see ^{<6047>}1 Peter 4:17,18 ^{<3830>}Zechariah 13:9) with great danger, loss, and shame; as a man that is burnt out of house and home, he escapes himself with his own life, but loses all about him: so the Syriac version reads it, *arwn ʾmd ʾEya*, "as out of the fire": (see ^{<3830>}Zechariah 3:2 ^{<6023>}Jude 1:23). Or the sense is, that he shall be tried by the fire of the word, and convinced by the light of it of the errors, irregularities, and inconsistencies of his ministry; either in his time of life and health, or on a death bed; and shall have all his wood, hay, and stubble burnt up, for nothing of this kind shall he carry with him in his judgment to heaven; only the gold, silver, and precious stones; and will find that the latter doctrines, and not the former, will only support him in the views of death and eternity.

Ver. 16. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God*, etc.] The apostle having spoken of the saints as God's building, of himself as a wise master builder, of Christ as the only foundation, and of various doctrines as the

materials laid thereon, proceeds to observe to this church, and the members of it, that they being incorporated together in a Gospel church state, were the temple of God; and which was what they could not, or at least ought not, to be ignorant of: and they are so called, in allusion to Solomon's temple; which as it was a type of the natural, so of the mystical body of Christ. There is an agreement between that and the church of Christ, in its maker, matter, situation, magnificence, and holiness; and the church is said to be the temple of God, because it is of his building, and in which he dwells: what the apostle here says of the saints at Corinth, the Jewish doctors say of the Israelites^{f37}, *μτα hwhy l kyh*, "the temple of the Lord are ye"; and which being usually said of them in the apostle's time, he may refer unto; and much better apply to the persons he does, of which the indwelling of the Spirit was the evidence:

and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you: in particular members, as a spirit of regeneration, sanctification, faith, and adoption, and as the earnest and pledge of their future glory; in their ministers to fit and qualify them for their work, and carry them through it; and in the whole church, to bless the word and ordinances, for their growth, comfort, and establishment. This furnishes out a considerable proof of the deity and distinct personality of the Spirit, since this is mentioned as an evidence of the saints being the temple of God, which would not be one, if the Spirit was not God, who dwells therein; and since a temple is sacred to deity, and therefore if he dwells here as in a temple, he must dwell here as God; and since he is mentioned as distinct from God, whose Spirit he is, and dwelling, a personal action is ascribed to him, he must be a distinct divine person.

Ver. 17. *If any man defile the temple of God,* etc.] By the wisdom of the world, through philosophy, and vain deceit; by bringing in false doctrines, errors, and heresies, and hereby corrupt their minds from the simplicity that is in Christ; and make rents, factions, and divisions among them:

him shall God destroy; body and soul in hell; for as their wicked principles and heretical notions are pernicious to others, they are damnable to themselves, and will bring upon them that judgment which lingereth not, and that damnation which slumbereth not. The false prophet, as well as the beast, and the devil, shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. God is not only an avenger of all immoralities committed against his righteous law, but of all false doctrine and false worship, and of everything that is

contrary to the Gospel, and to the order and ordinances of it. The reason of this is,

for the temple of God is holy; alluding to the holiness of Solomon's temple,

“into which a man might not go with his staff, nor with his shoes on, nor with his purse, nor with dust upon his feet, nor might he make it a thoroughfare, and much less spit in it ^{f38}.”

And yet, how was it polluted in our Lord's time by the Jews, who made it a den of thieves, instead of an house of prayer?

which temple ye are. This is added for further confirmation, and to assert their holiness in doctrine, worship, and conversation, and to deter the false teachers from making use of any means to corrupt them in either.

Ver. 18. *Let no man deceive himself*, etc.] With vain notions of serving God and religion, and of doing the churches good by his carnal and worldly wisdom, and with false hopes of escaping the vengeance of God for sowing the tares of error, heresy, and discord among his people.

If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world; either a member of them, or a preacher among them, who thought himself wise in worldly wisdom; or was desirous to be thought so by others; or would be a truly wise man in this world, whilst he lives in it, and before he goes out of it:

let him become a fool that he may be wise; not that, properly speaking, folly is the way to wisdom; but that that man that would be wise in a spiritual sense, must first learn to know himself; must be convinced of, and acknowledge his own folly, embrace the Gospel of Christ, which is esteemed foolishness by the world; submit to the ordinances of Christ, which are despised by men; and take up the cross of Christ, and follow him, bear reproach and persecution for his sake, than which nothing is more ridiculous with carnal men: he must deny his worldly wisdom, his carnal and righteous self, and wholly rest and rely on Christ, and his righteousness, for eternal life and happiness, and so will he become truly wise unto salvation. The Jews ^{f39} have a saying, “that everyone **wmx [l bnmh**, “that makes himself a fool”, for the words of the law, at the end, shall be exalted.”

Ver. 19. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,* etc.] The wisdom of the Jewish, or Gentile world. It is had in no account with him; it is despised and neglected by him; he makes it foolish, destroys it, and brings it to nothing; he lays it aside as useless, to make men wise unto salvation, and by the foolishness of preaching saves them that believe; he passes by the wise and prudent, and hides the things of the Gospel from them; so, that, with all their learning and wisdom, they can neither apprehend nor comprehend the mysteries of grace, whilst he reveals them unto babes, and chooses the foolish things of this world to spread the knowledge of himself, his Son, his Gospel, and the truths of it, and whom he makes successful, to the confusion of the wise and learned.

“For it is written”, **bytkdk**, an usual form of citing Scriptures with the Jews; it is in (^{<18613>}Job 5:13) he taketh the wise in their own craftiness, or by it. What Eliphaz says of the wise politicians of the world, who are often disappointed of their crafty devices, and cannot perform the enterprises they have took in hand, but their schemes are broken, and the snares they laid for others they are taken in themselves, is applied by the apostle to the Jewish doctors, or the Gentile philosophers, or rather to the false teachers among the Christians; whose schemes they have formed to corrupt the churches, and demolish the Gospel, prove their own destruction; nor will they, with all their cunning, be able to get out of the hand of God, and escape his awful vengeance. The allusion is either to the taking of wild beasts and birds in snares and nets, or to the taking of men in flight, laying hold of them with the hand, and grasping them hard, that they cannot get loose. The Targum interprets the words of the wise men of Pharaoh, and of the Egyptian astrologers, schemes they have formed to corrupt the churches, and demolish the Gospel, prove their own destruction; nor will they, with all their cunning, be able to get out of the hand of God, and escape his awful vengeance. The allusion is either to the taking of wild beasts and birds in snares and nets, or to the taking of men in flight, laying hold of them with the hand, and grasping them hard, that they cannot get loose. The Targum interprets the words of the wise men of Pharaoh, and of the Egyptian astrologers.

Ver. 20. *And again,* etc.] Not in the same place, nor in the same book, but in the Psalms, in (^{<19111>}Psalms 94:11). This form of citing Scriptures answers to **dw[w** and moreover, used by the Jewish doctors when the matter does not so clearly appear from the first proof, and therefore they produce

another^{f40}: and so here the apostle, for the further confirmation and illustration of this point, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, to the testimony of Eliphaz, adds this of David,

the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain; in the Psalms it is, “the Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vanity”; which the apostle not only cites, but explains and teaches; as that by men is meant men of wisdom and knowledge, of the greatest capacities, whose thoughts, reasonings, schemes, and devices, the omniscient God not only knows, but makes known, and discovers them, sooner or later, to be vain and fruitless, yea, vanity itself; and notwithstanding all their machinations and contrivances, his counsel shall stand, his Gospel shall be maintained, his truths shall prevail, and his ordinances shall be continued, and his work go on.

Ver. 21. *Therefore let no man glory in men*, etc.] The apostle means ministers, who are but men, even the best of them, and therefore not to be gloried in; and has chiefly respect to the false teachers, whose wisdom, learning, and eloquence, the Corinthians were greatly taken with, and boasted of; it was so ensnaring to them, that they even idolized them for it, called them their masters, pinned their faith on their sleeve, gave up themselves to them, and were greatly under their authority, influence, and direction, which is here condemned; and which was so far from being right, that they ought not to behave in such manner to the best of ministers, nor to glory in anyone above another; no, not in Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas;

for all things are yours; all the ministers, and all they are endowed with; these were all for their use and service, for their benefit and advantage; wherefore it was very wrong to set up one above, or against another, or for any party to engross anyone minister, when he belonged to them all; and great weakness to reject others, when they had a common right and property in them.

Ver. 22. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas*, etc.] These are particularly named, because their disputes were chiefly about them; but what is said of them is true of all other, and all the ministers of Christ, that they are the church’s. The gifts which Christ received for them, and has bestowed on them, are not their own, but the church’s, and are given to them, not so much for their own use, as for the good and benefit of others. They are made able ministers of the New Testament, not by themselves, nor by man, but by God; who disposes of them as blessings to his churches, and gives

them to be pastors and teachers of them, to feed them with knowledge, and with understanding; they are qualified by the Spirit of God for the service of the saints, and are separated by him to it, and are constituted overseers of the flock by his direction; they are placed as stewards of the mysteries and manifold grace of God, to dispense them with wisdom and faithfulness to all in his family, and are the servants of the churches for Jesus' sake, and therefore not to be gloried in; though to be respected in their place and station:

or the world: this, with what follows, is an amplification of the account, and is as if the apostle should say, you should be so far from glorying in man, in a few poor weak instruments, and especially in that in them, which with God is foolishness and vanity, that not only all the ministers of the word are yours, but even the whole world is yours; though called out of it, esteemed the filth of it, and have so little a share of it. The world was made for the sake of the saints, and is continued on their account; when they are called by grace, it will soon be at an end. It is their Lord's, and so theirs, both as Creator and Mediator: the good things of the world are enjoyed by the saints in a peculiar way, as covenant mercies and blessings, so as they are not by others, The evil things of it, as the sins and lusts of it, are escaped by them; and the afflictions they meet with in it are made to work for their good; and as they are heirs of the world, as Abraham was, so they shall inherit it in a much better form than it now is: the present heavens will pass away, the earth and all therein will be burnt up, and new heavens and a new earth arise, in which will dwell none but righteous persons: the world, in its present state, is an inn, suited to the condition of the saints, as pilgrims and strangers; but then it will be as a palace, fit for the spouse and bride of Christ.

Or life; in every view of it: the life of Christ, which he lived here on earth, in obedience to his Father's will, and which he now lives in heaven, where he ever lives to make intercession for his people, and for their good; that fulness of life that is in him, and that eternal life which is through him, are all theirs. The lives of the ministers of the Gospel are for their profit and advantage; and they are spared and continued on their account; their own lives are theirs, though not to live to themselves, nor to the lusts of men, but by faith on Christ, and to the glory of God, and which is what they desire.

Or death: the death of Christ was for them, in their room and stead, for their sins, to make satisfaction to divine justice for them; and the benefits of it are enjoyed by them. The death of good men, ministers, martyrs, and confessors, is theirs, serves to confirm their faith, animate their zeal, and encourage them to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering. Their own death is a blessing to them; the sting is taken away by Christ; the curse is removed; it is no penal evil to them; it is a deliverance of them from all the sorrows and troubles of this life, and is their passage into endless glory and happiness.

Or things present; whether prosperous or adverse; and these, whether they be their own or others, all work together for their good.

Or things to come; future troubles and exercises; or future good things, either in this world, or in the world to come; the invisible glories of a future state:

all are yours; which is repeated for confirmation sake, and to observe, that if there was anything that was omitted, or could not be thought to be included in any of the above expressions, that also was theirs.

Ver. 23. *And ye are Christ's,* etc.] This is the ground and foundation of all things being theirs, and shows in what way they come by them, and what gives them their claim and property: they are Christ's, he has an interest in them, and they in him; they are his, not only by creation, as all men are, but by the Father's special gift of them to him, as his spouse and bride, his children, his sheep, his portion, and his jewels; they are his through the purchase of his own blood, and by a voluntary surrender of themselves unto him, under the influence of his Spirit and grace; they are his by their profession of him; they avouch themselves to be the Lord's and call themselves by his name; and they are his by his possession of them, and dwelling in their hearts by faith; and all they have are his. Their worst things are his; their sins are accounted to him, and laid on him by imputation, and have been bore and done away by him: their griefs and sorrows are his, their reproaches his, and their afflictions and sufferings his. Their best things are his; their temporal mercies come from him, and through him; and all their spiritual blessings, they are blessed with in him; and all the good things done by them are done in his strength, by the assistance of his Spirit, and in virtue of his grace.

And Christ is God's; he is his Son, his own, his only begotten and well beloved Son, as he is a divine person; and as man he is his creature, made by him, and inferior to him; he is the head of him, as the man is of the woman; and as Mediator, he is his righteous servant, whom he has chosen, called, brought forth, upheld, and in whom he is glorified: so that, upon the whole, the saints should not glory in men, though ever so great and good, but in God, and in Christ, as of God, made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.