

September 19

Scriptures: Read 1 Corinthians 3

Key Verse: "... For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3)

Overview

That key verse begins (in NIV) with, "You are still worldly" (carnal). And, if it were up to some of us to complete the verse we might say, "For where there are the wrong kind of music, sexual misdemeanors, and substance abuse among you, are you not worldly and behaving like sinners?" And there would be a lot of justification for us to think in those terms; after all, sin is sin.

Paul, in fact, addresses these sins in other places. But for now, he's talking to a congregation—a group of people who are by definition supposed to be following Jesus' great command that they "have love one for another". Here he is talking about relationship sins: sins that a church commits.

It's too easy for you and me, when talking about the Church, to think in generic terms. The "church" becomes a general abstraction with which we specifically have little to do. We stand apart and judge.

But the church is you and me; and our relationship sins are sins we commit. We look at the other guy and covet; or fight; or separate.

It's amazing, really, especially in terms of the magnitude of life and the triviality of our conflicts. Here we are, fighting about whether or not to pave the church parking lot, and thousands are dying in Ethiopia. Or we're seeking to drive so-and-so off the church board, while hostages in Lebanon enter their fourth year in captivity.

Let's call it like it is. Envy, strife, and division are characteristics of political parties. Isn't the church above such stuff? Let me rephrase that. Aren't you and I above trivial conflict? Let's choose to dwarf our differences with a common commitment to the kingdom of heaven.

Prayer

Dear Father God, help us to build our lives daily on the foundation of Jesus Christ. May we learn the lessons of this chapter so we will build with gold, silver, and precious stones that our work will endure.