

Will You Ever Grow Up?

1 Cor. 3: 1-9

My brother Mark and I were playing in our granddads barn with two of our cousins. Four boys, no supervision – really, four bodies no brain. Attached to the main support beam of the barn about 40 feet above the floor was a hay rake suspended on a rope. It was used to move bales of hay around to keep it from spoiling or catching on fire! Yes – fire! Something about the first month or two in the drying process and chemical reactions as the hay dries. Well, back to the four boys...one of these rocket scientists suggested that we could have one guy on the rope, and the other three would stand under the hay rake and play “chicken”. I was one of the three Mensa candidates standing under the now swinging hay rake. I suspect it was our older cousin who was holding the rope as granddad entered the barn and assessed the situation. He did not say a word at first but went over to the cousin on the rope and took it from him. He tied it off, brought that cousin to the others and placed us a safe distance from ground zero. He then went back to the rope and released it. Looking up at that hay rake it did not look so big suspended in the rafters. But when it hit the ground with enormous force, it appeared to be the size of a bus. Now picture four boys – wide eyed – scared and all suddenly having lost control of their bladders. Granddad said only one thing that morning and it was almost a whisper – Will You Boys Ever Grow Up? What he was saying to us is think – reason – look at consequences before you jump in to a situation. My granddad died in 1973 at the age of 83. He spent his life working a farm and raising a family of 11 children. He knew kids. He loved kids – but he also loved them being safe. Though long dead my granddad is still in my ear from time to time telling me about life events and reasoning with me in his terse yet humble way. He never forced anything on me nor the others insofar as I know. My granddad’s manner reminds me so much of what Paul must have been like. Paul looked at those he converted as his children. In this passage the apostle Paul tells the Corinth Church of Christ, as well as us, collectively and individually to “Grow Up Spiritually!”

Most scholars attribute the start of the church at Corinth to Paul around 50 AD at the close of his second missionary journey. While this is quite possibly the case remember that Aquila and Priscilla were already there when Paul arrived, so some groundwork had already been laid for what was to come. Paul started in the synagogue but soon left that and began preaching exclusively to the Gentiles of that city. It needs to be noted that the church was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. This would have been a tense and abrasive situation given the disdain the Jews had toward Gentiles.

Brother Burton Coffman suggests some interesting things about this congregation. “The assembly in Corinth which consisted of Jews and Greeks was exposed to the influences of the surrounding world, in two ways: **the first way** was that most of the Christians originated from a heathen background (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and, **secondly**, they were continually exposed to their evil surrounding. We learn by the epistle that the sexual immorality of the city of Corinth had influenced some of the assembly (1 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 6:15-18). Some believers saw nothing evil in eating meat that had been offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8; 1 Corinthians 10:23-31). Others had no problem even to enter an idol temple (1 Corinthians 10:14-22). There were problems among the Christians, too: party-spirit leading to disputes (1 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Corinthians 3:4; 1 Corinthians 11:18); brother went to law with brother (1 Corinthians 6:1-8); disorder in the meetings (1 Corinthians 11:20-34; 1 Corinthians 14:33) and finally they even denied the fundamental Christian truth of resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12; 1 Corinthians 15:35). In addition to all this, some men stood up and tried to cast doubt on the Apostle Paul's apostolic authority (1 Corinthians 9).”

Vs. 1-2 ***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 are not yet ready,***

When Paul first met these Corinthians, they were babes in Christ. As such Paul only gave them milk...he taught them the less demanding truths. But, here they are sometime later, and they haven't grown or matured at all. By now they should have developed to the point where Paul could give them some of the deeper, richer truths of the gospel.

Vs. 3: *"...for you are still of the flesh."*

This is the reason that Paul gives for their immature state; the flesh was still in control. They were still walking, thinking, and talking like *"mere men"*; vs. 3.

Paul Offers Proof That They Had Not Grown:

Vs. 3-4: *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?*

Jealousy and strife: They were envious of each other, causing strife, quarreling, being divisive. Rather than sharing in the joy of the good news and all the conversions they were jealous about the gifts of the Holy Spirit that others had.

Then they were following men: *"I am of Paul." "I am of Apollos."* In preacher school we often talked about BNP's. We wanted to join what we thought was an "elite" group of gospel preachers and enjoy the accolades afforded them as well.

What About West Side As A Body and each of us Individually?

- Are you growing up spiritually or are you still an infant in Christ?
- When it comes to the word of God do you know more now than you did when you first became a Christian?
- In comparison to the number of years that you have been a Christian, how much have you grown?

- Have you let what you have learned change your life, your ideas, your values, your attitude, and your morals?
- Have you set your mind on *“the things above where Christ is...and are you seeking after those things?”*; Col. 3:1-2.
- Or are you prone to jealousy; jealous of some one’s position, recognition, possessions, gift, happiness, attention, knowledge, etc?
- Are you contentious...do you complain...do you stir things up?
- Are you a follower of men?
- When you could grow, and you don’t, do you think God is disappointed with that?

What They Were Doing:

Vs. 4 *For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?*

1. Paul and Apollos were preachers or ministers.
2. These people were being immature over their preachers.
3. Some liked Paul better; others liked Apollos.
4. The problem was they were pitting one preacher against another!
5. Before long, not only were they pitting one preacher against another, they were pitting themselves against one another and they had formed cliques and the body was divided.
6. Paul tells them to “grow up” in view of your preachers.

What Preachers Are:

Vs. 5: *What then is Apollos? And what is Paul?*

1. Paul doesn’t say “Who is Apollos?” or “Who is Paul?”
2. By saying “What” Paul stresses instrumentality and expresses the idea of the minister being simply a tool in God’s hand...that God is the one behind the minister and his work.
3. “Who” would have played up the minister’s personality as though it all depended on “Who” he is.

4. It was “What” they were that mattered, not “who” they were.

Vs. 5-6: *What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.*

- Ministers are servants...servants that God is working through!
- Ministers are not “lords”; they do not save anyone; they didn’t create the gospel message; the gift they have to proclaim the message comes from God!
- The Corinthians were exalting their favorite ministers and Paul says, “Grow Up!”

Vs. 7: *So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.*

- In comparison to God, ministers are nothing.
- God is who should be exalted; if everyone would exalt God there would be no division.
- Appreciate the minister but don’t idolize him; instead follow God!

Vs. 8: *Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*

- In God’s eyes ministers are equal and they are to be seen as equal in the eyes of the church.
- Ministers are not rivals, they are not in competition, and if a church pits them against one another they are going against God’s purpose.

Vs. 9: *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.*

Three times in this verse God’s name comes first and that may be Paul’s point to all of us.

Quit putting what we like first; quit putting our opinions and preferences first; and don't pit one preacher against another. Instead, "Grow up", put God first, and give Him the glory and honor that He deserves.

CONCLUSION:

These brethren needed to grow up spiritually!

Do we?

A good indication that we need to grow up is if we are prone to jealousy, if we are causing strife, and if we are following men (exalting and pitting preacher against preacher).