

God's Building

1 Corinthians 3:6-9



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FOCAL Read Responsively 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (7) **So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.** (8) Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. (9) **For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.**

It is easy for idolatry to creep in to even the holiest of hearts. God commanded the Israelites that, when they entered the Promised Land, they were to chase the Canaanites out before they ever settled down to plant their crops. This is good policy, though not very well understood in the world today. The Lord has often told us that we are to

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (15) And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (16) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The Church at Corinth had begun to forget that truth, "ye are the temple of the living God". Every Christian,

saved by faith in Jesus Christ, every disciple of Christ who has followed the Scripture and has **"confessed with their mouth the Lord Jesus, and has believed in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead, is saved (Romans 10:9)**. We were saved - not by believing on some great preacher such as Paul or Apollos, but we were saved the day that we *repented* of our sinful life and turned to Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior.

This is not possible while idolatry is in the heart.

No person can be saved by believing on an idol AND by believing on God's Only Begotten Son. The Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. ...

The idol must be cast down before salvation will come. The idolatry must be pushed out of the land before Canaan can be farmed.

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It is God's method to use man, to use woman, to use people to work the fields of the Lord. One person plants - he is God's laborer. Another person waters - this, too, is

God's laborer. There are no unneeded laborers in the fields of the Lord. People will point to a **Billy Graham** and hold him up as a great man of God. He is a great man of God - but he must not be idolized. I read a story some time ago of something that happened at a **Billy Graham Crusade**. Prior to Billy's preaching a local minister was allowed to stand on the stage and, with all sincerity, preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When he finished preaching the local pastor gave an invitation to salvation, and a few people began to move forward. One man asked his friend, "Are you going to go forward?", to which the other man replied, "No, not yet". "Why not" asked the first man. The second replied, "I'm going to wait until *the Big Man* gets up there, then I'll go". What this gentleman was engaged in was idolatry.

Whether God has called you to plant, or to water, we must always remember that *we all work for Him*. It is **God Who gives the increase**. There are three things we need to look at today:

1. We Are Laborers Together With God

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are laborers together¹ with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

There is a **we** that is always present for the *disciple of Christ*. There is the **we of God and I**, the **vertical**

¹ G4904, *συνεργός*, *sunergos*, *soon-er-gos*', From a presumed compound of G4862 and the base of G2041; a *co-laborer*, that is, *coadjutor*: - companion in labour, (fellow-) helper (-labourer, -worker), labourer together with, workfellow.

relationship each person has with God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord; and there is the **we of believers together**, the **horizontal relationship** that each believer has with one another *within the Church, the Body of Christ*. You cannot serve God if both of these relationships aren't in a healthy condition.

a. The Vertical Relationship: The Christian Way of Life is a *supernatural* way of life. This Way of Life begins on the day that you surrender your soul to Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior. Like **Nicodemus** you met Jesus and understood His words, "**You must be born again of the Spirit**" (John 3:7). The Bible teaches that all people are, quite naturally, "**dead in sins and in the uncircumcision of the flesh**" (Colossians 2:13). Before we accept Jesus Christ as Savior we need to be *made alive by God the Holy Spirit*.

What is the *vertical relationship* of the Christian, and why is this so important?

This is hard for many people to understand today, for few people regard themselves as *sinner*s. We no longer *commit sin*, but we *make mistakes*. We aren't *spiritually corrupt*, but we are *misguided in our approach*. The Bible makes it clear that God is holy, perfect, and without sin - and that God *cannot* allow unholy, imperfect and sinful creatures like us to enter into His Heaven. God despises sin. God does not like to look on sin, nor on the selfishness that feeds sin. We were all like that poem which says:²

² *Christ is All* by Monod

**Oh the bitter shame and sorrow,
That a time could ever be
When I let the Savior's pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered,
"All of self, and none of Thee."**

That was how we thought at one time, "All of self, and none of Thee". We wanted none of God prior to our salvation, but wanted to satisfy our lusts, our desires. Then, as the poem continues:

**Yet He found me, I beheld Him
Bleeding on the accursed tree.
Heard Him pray, "Forgive them, Father!"
And my wistful heart said faintly,
"Some of self, and some of Thee."**

We heard the preaching of the Gospel, and surrendered enough of ourselves to be saved. We believed that Jesus died for us, that He was ...

Hebrews 9:28 ... once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

We were saved by faith, trusting what Jesus did for us

1 Peter 2:24 ... Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

You heard that Jesus Christ died for your sins. You may not have understood it all, but you gave your lives to Him, trusting Him as both Savior and Lord. Yet after salvation you may have kept back part of your lives from the Savior - yet His love compelled you to grow closer and closer to Him. His love draws you still. His love reminds you that **we are laborers together with God**. If you are not saved by faith in Christ, then you *cannot* be a laborer with Him. Salvation must be first, must be foremost. You must have believed on the **Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29)**.

This brings you into a right relationship with God your Savior. But you must also *draw near to God* in all things if you are going to be empowered in your relationship. This is a **vertical relationship** that you have embarked on. The Christian belongs to God, and is called to grow in that relationship. Once saved, the Christian does not stand stagnant in his or her faith. We grow, grow in knowledge of God, grow through the provisions that God has given us in the Church. We can grow and should grow through our own personal Bible study. If we are truly

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 3:9 ... **are laborers together with God:**

Then we *must* develop a regime of studying His Holy Word *on our own*. The Scripture says:

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that

needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The Christian must *read, study, and pray over* the Word of God. Unless the Word of Truth, the Holy Scripture, is absorbed into the spiritual life, you will not grow in your faith.

What must I, as a Christian, do to grow in my *vertical relationship*?

b. The Horizontal Relationship:

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 3:9 For **we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry**, ye are God's building.

We are **laborers together** with God. Think for a moment of the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Did the Master minister and do all that He did *by Himself*, or did He *choose disciples to labor with Him*? Did the Master choose *only one* disciple to - like Elisha of old - carry on the teaching ministry following His ascension? No, absolutely not! The Lord Jesus chose out *twelve* initially to teach and guide, then chose out others to go forth in His behalf.

Did Jesus Christ *ever minister apart from other people*? What does this say to the “I can be a Christian without going to Church” crowd?

This is a sad day. While so many professors claim to know Christ as Savior and Lord, so few understand that the *Church* is God's method for accomplishing His work on this earth. The **horizontal relationship** we have with other Christians is so crucial if we expect to win this world for Christ. The Bible tells us:

Ephesians 4:11-15 And {God} gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: ... (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Each gift given to the Body of Christ - **Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastors, Teachers** - each of these gifts function to *proclaim the Word of God to the Flock of God*. In local churches today so many congregations focus on fellowship meals, sings, comedy nights, entertainment of every sort. Yet the communication gifts given to build up the Church always emphasize the Word of God. This is the *most important thing we do*, understand the Word of God!

The horizontal relationship is so important to the function of the Church. Each member must **speak the truth in love**, lifting one another up before the Throne of Grace. We are to constantly be "**endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**" (**Ephesians 4:3**). Once unity is disrupted in the Church by fights, fusses, feuds, or foolishness the Church begins to fragment horizontally. If it fragments horizontally, it *will* lose the power of God vertically.

Can God work in a Church that is fighting, feuding, fussing and fooling? Why or why not?

Our Lord Jesus emphasized that our horizontal relationships had to be right before we bring our worship to the Father. He said:

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; (24) Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Unless there is unity in the Body of Christ between brothers and sisters, unless the "**peace of God that passeth all understanding**" (**Philippians 4:7**) in the assembly of the Church; unless we remember the admonition:

Colossians 3:14-15 And above all these things [put on] charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Where **charity** or **love** is not, there is no **bond of perfectness**. Where the **peace of God** doesn't **rule in the hearts**, there is no **one Body**. Division and schism in the Church will keep the Church from fulfilling its calling and mission. If we fight, if we curse, if we brew in selfishness and maul the **horizontal relationship**, we will not be **laborers together with God**.

If I am at war with a brother or sister what am I *compelled to do* before I can serve the Lord? Why?

To show how important it is to maintain the **horizontal and vertical relationships** the Apostle uses two illustrations.

2. The Illustration Of The Garden

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are laborers together with God: **ye are God's husbandry**³, ye are God's building.

The Greek for the word **husbandry** is **γεώργιον**,

3 G1091, **γεώργιον**, *geōrgion*, *gheh-ore'-ghee-on*, Neuter of a (presumed) derivative of G1092; *cultivable*, that is, a *farm*: - husbandry.

geōrgion, (pronounced *gheh-ore'-ghee-on*), which means “**that which is cultivated, a farm, a garden**”. What the Apostle literally said was, “**You are God's Garden**”.

Think about this for a minute. Think about to whom God *first addressed* this statement. Yes, I know that the statement applies to every Christian Church that has ever been, but this statement was *first* addressed to the Corinthian Church. The **Corinthian Church was God's Garden**. That is an amazing statement when you consider the state of the Church at Corinth. The Corinthians neither studied God's Word nor applied its teachings to their lives. They divided up into religious sects that neither honored Christ nor His Word. As the Church divided it became ineffective in promoting spiritual growth in it's members (**1 Corinthians 3:1-4**). The Lord branded these believers as carnal, or babies in Christ. They were fleshly, soulish, without spirituality, acting as if they were unbelievers. The Corinthian Church had not influenced the world, but was instead influenced *by the world*. As worldliness flooded into the flock, and as they rejected the Word of God, they began to follow the same sin patterns of the world around them. They allowed illicit sexual activity within the membership of the Church (**1 Corinthians 5:1-11**). The Corinthian believers were not only aware that one of the congregation was having *incestuous* relationships with his stepmother, but were proud of that fact. Like some in our modern day Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and even Baptist denominations the Corinthian Church allowed all manner of sensuality to be engaged in (**1 Corinthians 3:16-17**), grieving the Holy Spirit of God who saved them. They had forgotten that the Church is

composed of the *members of Christ* – that the Church belongs to Jesus (**1 Corinthians 6:15-19**).

Jesus likened sin to *leaven* or *yeast*. Can we see this illustrated in the Church of Corinth? How?

The Church is **the Garden of God**.

The Corinthian Church, though fallen into sin, was *still* the **Garden of God**. How amazing is God's amazing Grace! Though weeds had come into God's Garden, Corinth was still **the Garden of God**. Though the Corinthians had so blended with the world that they shocked their unsaved neighbors, they were still **the Garden of God**. As it was with Corinth, so it is with each local Church. The Church is God's Garden.

a. This Garden Belongs To God: The Church belongs to God. It is *purchased* by the *Blood of Christ*. Each believer in this Church is a member of His Body, and each believer is a plant in God's Garden. You were planted in God's Garden on the day you accepted Christ as Savior. The Scripture says:

Ephesians 1:13-14 In {Jesus} ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in {Jesus} also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,

unto the praise of his glory.

The day you were saved, God planted you in His Garden. The Holy Spirit of God entered your life. He became the **earnest**, the **down payment** that God made, the **guarantee** that one day you will be with Jesus in eternity. You are part of this Garden, and you belong to God. Since you are part of this Garden, since you belong to God, the Lord *has an obligation* to not only guide your development, but He also has an obligation to *cultivate your life* so that He can bring forth the greatest amount of produce from you. You were purchased at a great price, redeemed by the Blood of Christ. He has not brought you this far to let you go away without producing for Him.

I am sure that Paul was reminded of the Lord's parable of the vineyard. Our Lord said:

John 15:1-2 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. (2) Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every [branch] that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Every trial that comes on a Christian does not come without God's consent. You are **God's Garden**. Look at the trial through the *Biblical lens*, not through *what you think*. You belong to God. You are a Branch off of the True Vine, Jesus Christ. If you are not *producing* for the Lord, if you are not *bearing the fruit* that He would have

you bear, then the Father may purge you or prune you. As humans, purging or pruning comes through trials and tribulations. Sometimes the trials come to tease the vine into production. At other times, the trials come to root up the plant, the Christian who *will not bear fruit*. You were saved to serve. If you are **God's Garden** then you need to understand that God expects your produce. No farmer maintains a tomato plant that is all vine and no fruit.

Why do you think trials come on Christians? What does the Scripture teach?

When the tomato ceases to bear, when it enjoys the good nourishment of good soil and puts all its energy into growing fatter without growing fruit, the Master Farmer will remove the plant from His Garden. The God Who is Love looks for His Garden to return to Him love. The God Who is Gracious expects His plants to be gracious, to be generous to both Him and to others around them. Watered with the drops of the Savior's bloody sweat, will we not bring forth a hundred-fold to his praise? Will the Lord not expect His Garden to bring forth a harvest of *obedience*, a harvest of *holiness*, a harvest of *usefulness*, a harvest of *praise*?

Illustrate I remember not too long ago a young girl coming to me for advice. She had been recently saved, and was *excited* about serving the Lord. She was witnessing to everyone she met, and joyous in her newfound faith. The problem was that several of her *saved friends* told her that she needed to stop being so exuberant, that she needed to stop witnessing like she

was, lest she scare people away from the Church. She asked me what I thought. I told her – HOGWASH – keep telling others about Jesus. It is common for unbelievers and wet blanket carnal believers to put out the flame of the Light of God. We are saved to serve, we are God's Garden – serve Him like you belong to Him. Remember, farmers do not plough their lands or sow their fields for amusement; they mean business, and plough and sow because they desire a harvest. Do you think that the Father desires less of a harvest from you?

b. God's Garden Should Bear Many Types Of Fruit: You are **God's Garden**, not **Satan's Weedpatch**. We are planted of God to bear *good fruit*. The Scripture says:

Titus 2:14 {Jesus} gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar⁴ people, zealous of good works.

How is the Christian *peculiar* to God?

As God's Garden you are no longer planted in the world – you are planted in the good soil of the Word of God. You are **peculiar people**. **You are special, reserved unto God, called out, unique, strange to the world but beautiful to God – peculiar**. You are *peculiar* in another sense:

4 G4041, περιούσιος, periousios, *per-ee-oo'-see-os*, From the present participle feminine of a compound of G4012 and G1510; *being beyond usual*, that is, *special (one's own)*: - peculiar.

1 Peter 2:9 But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar⁵ people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

You are a *unique acquisition* – that's the word that Peter uses in our above text. God's Garden should bear **good fruit** – but each believer is a *unique acquisition* and has a *unique function* within this Garden. Think about a regular garden for a minute. In that garden we may have tomato plants, purple hulled peas, collards, turnip, potatoes. Look at the tomato plant. It's produce is bright red, yellow, or green, and held high above the ground in the sun. Not too far away are the purple hulled peas, vines running in every direction though the produce hangs from its upper portion. These plants are obvious in their produce, flamboyant, up front,, easy to see. But look yonder and see the potato plant. You see nothing but leaves and vines. It seems to produce nothing – tear it up and throw it away! Yet the Master Gardener knows that deep beneath the soil the plant makes its produce. Like the turnip or the carrot the produce is hidden, yet just as nourishing when harvested.

One of the ways that Satan comes into God's Garden is through the tongues of those who would be God, who

5 G4047, περιποίησις, peripoiēsis, *per-ee-poy'-ay-sis*, From G4046; *acquisition* (the act or the thing); by extension *preservation*: - obtain (-ing), peculiar, purchased, possession, saving.

would be lifted up and judges of others. **You are God's Garden, not God Himself.** You see the Sunday School Teacher or the Preacher and think, “These work”, but look at the older lady who holds no office nor visible function. Do not judge the carrot by the produce of the tomato. It is **God's Garden**. You may not see that dear lady, precious to God, kneel at her bedside to pray for her pastor and her Sunday School teacher. Her produce is not seen, not trumpeted, but is just as needed. You may not see that dear older man mowing the grass around the Church property. He makes no big announcement, no loud trumpet when he bears his fruit – but God watches and God knows. The Apostle Paul said in another place:

1 Corinthians 4:3-4 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. (4) For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

This is **God's Garden** – let God be the judge of its produce. Certainly we will not tolerate sin in the camp – the Garden of God must have no weeds in it – but every member of His Garden will be judged by God. Vengeance and judgment are best left to the Lord.

Does God's Garden produce *many types of fruit*?
What does that mean to you?

c. God's Garden Does Not Do Well With Weeds: The

first Garden mentioned in the Holy Scripture is *the Garden of Eden*. This Garden was contaminated – not because Satan came into it – *but because Satan entered the Garden and man willingly followed him rather than God*. Man listened to Satan's statement:

Genesis 3:1 ... Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

God's Word said, "Eat of all, but *not* this one tree". Satan's word was "Has God *really* said that?" When the Church – God's Garden – allows humanism to creep in *over and above God's Word* then the Garden of God becomes once more contaminated. Satan set himself up to be like God (**Isaiah 14:12-15**), saying "**I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the most High**". You are God's Garden, you belong to Him, not to Satan. Heed His Word, else you will surely perish!

Do you see weeds in the Garden of your life, sin that has not been confessed? Confess it to God, and He will cleanse it.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Do you see a brother or a sister in clearly evident *sin*? Take the Gospel Hoe and go to work! Don't grumble or talk about the weeds – do something about it. If you see a brother or sister in sin, *lovingly* go to them and show

them *what saith the Lord*. Remember, you are not to be judge. But where God's Word is *clearly broken* stand on that Word, and loudly proclaim deliverance for the fallen – if they only heed that Word.

3. You Are God's Building

I have taken much time, so I will not take much more – but I must look at this last illustration:

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building⁶.

This Church – the people in this facility where we meet – **is God's building**. All **buildings** have a *foundation*, and *good connectivity*. The foundation must be sure, and the building materials must *be well connected one to another*.

How is the Church God's Building?

The foundation of a Church is Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20), and the Word that He gave us through the Apostles and Prophets:

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the

⁶ G3619, οἰκοδομῆ, oikodomē, *oy-kod-om-ay'*, Feminine (abstraction) of a compound of G3624 and the base of G1430; *architecture*, that is, (concretely) a *structure*; figuratively *confirmation*: - building, edify (-ication, -ing).

saints, and of the household of God; (20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

If the foundation is bad, the building will not stand. If the cohesion between the parts of the building is bad, the building will not stand. Listen Believer – we must cling to Christ our Savior and to one another with all our might. We are God's Building – He is the Chief Architect of this Church. Satan has no control over us unless we heed him. Reject Him, study the Word of God, make up your minds to love one another and the Father no matter what.

We will overcome, if Christ is the foundation we build on.

May God touch your hearts with these words.



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