



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

True Dignity

Tuesday, 28 January 2014

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CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

152nd General Assembly

- TUESDAY @ 7:30 AM in 122 CAP
- TUESDAY @ 12 NOON in 328 CLOB

Capitol Commission Bible Studies are held Tuesday mornings at 7:30am and again at 12 Noon. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2014 General Assembly is the book of First Corinthians.

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to be serving you. – Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission Bible Study
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Tuesday, 28 January 2014
First Corinthians 3 – “True Dignity”

Popularity does not make a good leader. One of the characteristics that distinguish good leaders from celebrities is that the latter often believe what the press asserts. Celebrities tend to think of themselves more than they ought. Good leaders, however, know their limitations and understand that they are not all that others think they are nor what they want them to be.

First Corinthians addresses a problem with celebrities. Christians divided themselves by pledging their loyalties to those who were popular. Each faction claimed to be better than others, and thus a divisive spirit developed among God’s people. One of the celebrities was the Apostle Paul, and some claimed to be his followers.

Paul was a good leader, and thus he was wise enough not to believe those who wanted to make him a celebrity. He insisted that God’s people should be followers of only one person: Jesus Christ. Those who commend individuals unrealistically, deprive them of their true dignity. The reason is that the most profound distinction is not to gain followers to oneself; rather, to gain disciples to the Lord Jesus.

TRUE DIGNITY IS NOT DEVISIVE

(1 Cor 3:1-3) First Corinthians 2:16 asserted, “we have the mind of Christ.” The statement at the end of chapter 2 might be misunderstood to mean that all decision making of a believer is

correct. Scripture does not allow us to have any such confusion. The truth is that one can have much wrong thinking that results in much wrong living, as 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 asserts.

The point made at the end of chapter 2 is that the Holy Spirit indwells believers, and the Spirit knows the mind of God. Consequently, those who trust in Jesus Christ have access to divine thinking that others do not. However, it is possible for those same people to act in an entirely contrary manner: “are you not walking like mere man?” (3:3). In other words, these Christians were “spiritual” (in the sense that they possessed the Holy Spirit), yet in their daily, ongoing behavior they were living like those who are not believers.

... THOSE WHO TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST HAVE ACCESS TO DIVINE THINKING THAT OTHERS DO NOT.

Based upon the words of 1 Corinthians 3:1, some believe all humanity can be categorized by one of three descriptions. According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, the first category is the “natural” man. The second category is the “carnal” man (cf. 1 Cor 3:1). The third category is the “spiritual” man (1 Cor 2:15). The reason for the three categories, is that some translate the Greek word *sarkinois* (σαρκίνοις) as “carnal” when the literal translation is “men of flesh.”

“Men of flesh” could be translated more precisely as “mere human” or “worldling,” which the Corinthians (in a sense) indeed were as a consequence of their humanity, but in another sense was due more to the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. “Men of flesh” indicates human limitations without the Holy Spirit. The point of the text is that to be a “mere human” or “worldling” is not exactly the same as being “carnal” because this latter form of the word implies sin due to the believer’s lack of spiritual growth.

Therefore, it may not be justifiable to state that Paul intended to regard all “infants in Christ” as worldly. They were weak like “worldlings,” but they were growing spiritually nevertheless. If “infants in Christ” are called “carnal,” the implication is that “carnality” or “worldliness” is a normal category for some Christians, and such language allows the possibility for creating a classification of Christians who are never expected to grow or demonstrate any evidence whatsoever of faith that comes from “new birth” (John 3:3).

Therefore, if one assumes that an individual can be a believer without any visible evidence, then one creates a subclass of Christian who makes a profession of faith without evidence of faith whatsoever. If someone has faith in Christ, there should be some demonstration of maturity that evidences such an individual is truly “born again.” A careless attitude toward Christianity is dangerous, and may encourage certain individuals to think they need not aspire to the rigors of

Capitol Commission Bible Studies

Tuesday (28 January) @ 7:30am - 8:00am, 122 CAP

Tuesday (28 January) @ 12 Noon - 12:45pm, 328 CLOB

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True Dignity

discipleship. When one fails to grow spiritually, it is indeed sin, but worldliness is a temporary condition into which one lapses. Worldliness is spiritual childness, that is, reverting to the natural person's behavior and thinking. The Holy Spirit will not allow such a condition to continue indefinitely (cf. Heb 12:4-13).

To be "fleshly" is a temporary lapse from godly obedience, of which true believers will repent (2 Cor 7:11). Scripture does not teach that one may be "carnal" indefinitely, or that it is a natural state for the new believer. Indeed, all believers — young and old in spiritual age — are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and demonstrate "spiritual" behavior (1 Cor 2:11-16); although, some may be inconsistent initially, as were the Corinthians. The "men of flesh" in 1 Corinthians were certainly in a sinful state; however, their sin prevented them from receiving "solid food" (1 Cor 3:2), not their being "mere infants in Christ."

To understand the reference to the Corinthians as those to whom Paul could not address as "spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ" would mean that being an infant is necessarily also to be worldly. Therefore, an infant is worldly but cannot be blamed since it is merely a necessary phase. Paul spoke to certain individuals as though they were infants and worldlings, but the reality is that they were simply worldly (unable to progress in receiving solid food), but for a reason different than their previous infancy.

TRUE DIGNITY DOES EDIFY OTHERS

(1 Cor 3:4-23) Scripture already stated that no one should "boast before God" (1 Cor 1:29; cf. Eph 2:8-9). First Corinthians 3:5 expresses concern with regard to an attitude that elevates some individuals to the exclusion of others. Jesus insisted that the greatest in the coming kingdom must be the least (Luke 22:26). Unlike worldly leaders who seek positions of power so they can be served, those who serve as Christian leaders are to be servants of all. God's servants accomplish their responsibilities "even as the Lord gave *opportunity*" (1 Cor 3:5).

JESUS INSISTED THAT THE GREATEST IN THE COMING KINGDOM MUST BE THE LEAST (LUKE 22:26).

The agricultural metaphor in 3:6-8 encourages each person to fulfill his/her calling as a worker in God's field — one planting, another watering — "but God was causing the growth" (3:6). Neither the sower nor the one watering is "anything" (3:7) because God uses them incidentally. The planter and the waterer have one purpose: be faithful to the Lord's calling and trust God to cause the growth (3:8). The emphasis in these verses is upon the Lord not the workers.

Luke 22:26 – "But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant."

Continuing the previous discussion, the use of the architectural illustration ("you are God's field, God's building," 3:9) provides an important warning: "But each man must be careful how he builds" (3:10). While it is true that Paul, Apollos, and Peter worked together, there is the possibility that others may be working in an opposing manner (a matter that 2 Corinthians addresses). When you witness the possibility that someone is susceptible to influences that are destructive to God's work, it is incumbent to identify the harmful scenarios in addition to the consequences (verses 10-17 of chapter 3 already complete this for you).

1 Corinthians 3:11 – For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Scripture develops the architectural metaphor more completely in 3:10-17. All those who build upon the foundation, "which is Jesus Christ," will see God reward the work they accomplish (3:12-14). The one who builds poorly will be like someone fleeing from a burning building, narrowly escaping with only his/her life (3:15). One must be careful to stimulate the sanctity of God's people (3:16-17).

ALL THOSE WHO BUILD UPON THE FOUNDATION, "WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST," WILL SEE GOD REWARD THE WORK THEY ACCOMPLISH....

Anyone who thinks he/she is "wise in this age" is self-deceived (3:18). The manner in which one becomes "wise" before God is to "become foolish" in the estimation of the world, which is accomplished by living (action) *and* speaking (thought) according to God's Word (3:18-23). The wisdom given to the believer in Christ Jesus includes "all things" (3:21). The believer has a vast resource in God's Word (3:21-22) for within that reserve is the Lord Jesus Christ!

First Corinthians 3 exhorts us to be loyal to Christ, not to human leaders. Furthermore, if we are "for Paul" and "against Apollos and Peter," our ability to learn from all God's resource-persons would be drastically reduced. What truly matters is being certain all are actions and thoughts prove loyalty to one Leader who alone is worthy: Christ.

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the honor to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact us by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for the entire Capitol community. State directors also meet personally with many government leaders to proclaim God's grace in salvation, to encourage our leaders, pray with them, and provide biblical counsel. The mission of Capitol Commission is to reach Capitol communities for Christ—one person at a time, to disciple them, and to prepare them for a lifetime of ministry, wherever God chooses to place them.

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