

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 219 – August 7th – 1 Corinthians 3:5-23

Works frequently referenced in these notes on 1 Corinthians

John Drane	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Leon Morris	<i>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</i> , Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2 nd Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
Anthony C Thistleton	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

Verse 5

τί οὐκ ἐστὶν Ἀπολλῶς; τί δὲ ἐστὶν Παῦλος;
διάκονοι δι' ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε, καὶ ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ
κύριος ἔδωκεν.

"Instead of τῖ the TR following p⁴⁶ C D F G and most minuscules, reads τῆς in both instances. The masculine, however, appears to be a secondary accommodation to suit the personal names; moreover, the implication of the neuter τῖ in v.7 is decisive for τῖ in v.5 (since the answer is 'Nothing' the question can scarcely have been 'Who?')." Metzger "Paul asks: Now what does all this Apollos-language and Paul language amount to? What is Apollos or Paul? What is their role?" Thistleton

διάκονος, οὐ m & f servant, minister
πιστεῦω believe (in), have faith (in)
ἐκάστος, ἡ, οὐν each, every

"Paul ... uses each (ἐκάστος) not to argue for an individualistic concept of ministry, but in fact the reverse. Apollos and Paul each perform assigned roles within a corporate ministry." Thistleton then cites Clark who writes, "The task oriented perception of leadership is clearly to be contrasted with the way in which the Corinthians had been viewing their leadership figures. The discussion in both 1 Cor 1:10-17 and 3:1-4 shows how the Corinthians were focusing their attention on the personalities of the apostles, and taking pride in them as men. Paul, rather, concentrates on the particular task each leader is accomplishing."

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s δίδωμι give

Rupert Davies says that chapters 3 & 4 "Save us from too high a doctrine of the Ministry – from supposing that the Minister is the person who makes the Church... They save us also from too low a doctrine of the Ministry. Ministers are not just full-time servants of the Church ... Ministers are God's agents."

Verse 6

ἐγὼ ἐφύτευσα, Ἀπολλῶς ἐπότισεν, ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς
ἠύξανεν·

"The image of the people of God as a field draws on a well-known tradition concerning Israel, perhaps deriving initially from Israel as God's vineyard (Isa 5:7; Ezek 36:9)." Thistleton

φυτεύω plant
ποτίζω give to drink, water
αὐξάνω and αὐξω intrans grow, spread,
increase, reach full growth; trans
make grow, increase

God is the creator of life, and the efficacy of any ministry is dependent on him. The imperfect, in contrast with the aorists which precede it, indicates a continuing work. The servants of the word come and go but the work of God through them and in those who hear them continues unbroken.

Verse 7

ὥστε οὔτε ὁ φυτεύων ἐστὶν τι οὔτε ὁ ποτίζων,
ἀλλ' ὁ αὐξάνων θεός.

ὥστε so that, with the result that
οὔτε not, nor (οὔτε ... οὔτε neither ... nor)

Verse 8

ὁ φυτεύων δὲ καὶ ὁ ποτίζων ἓν εἰσιν, ἕκαστος
δὲ τὸν ἴδιον μισθὸν λήμψεται κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον
κόπον,

Paul and Apollos were *one* in the sense that they were engaged in the one work of God – allies not rivals. "Whereas the Corinthian addressees place each minister in a different category and stand back to evaluate them, Paul places all those who share authentic ministry as God's channels in one category." Thistleton. However, each of them had their own God-given responsibility. Here is a model of shared ministry.

ἐκάστος, ἡ, οὐν each, every
ἴδιος, α, οὐν one's own
μισθός, οὐ m pay, wages, reward

"The most appropriate explanation [of μισθος] is to be found in 3:13-14, and more especially in 4:3-5. There Paul insists that assessments of one's own work are pointless and misleading before all the data are open to view and God has pronounced his definitive verdict at the last day. The reward for those who have then been raised into a mode of existence characterised by the Christ-like transformation brought about fully by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 15:44-49) will be to discover that work done in one's life has remained a condition of some established effect in the new world order of 'what abides' as the fruit of the Spirit or as the work of God's kingdom (1 Cor 13:8-13). This will be *κατα τον ιδιον κοπον*, in accordance with their own labour, i.e., bear some relation to its nature, authenticity, motivation, and quality."
Thistleton. Cf. 1 Cor 9:24,25; Phil 3:14.

λήμψεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s
λαμβάνω
κοπος, ου m work, labour trouble

Emphasises that each labours *for God* and is responsible *to God* – rather than simply to the community.

Verse 9

θεου γάρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί· θεου γεώργιον, θεου οικοδομή ἐστε.

συνεργος, ου m fellow-worker

Could mean fellow workers *with God*, or fellow workers *together* in service of God. Thistleton thinks the latter is intended here since Paul is "concerned about defending the relationship of apostles *to one another*."

γεωργιον, ου n field, (cultivated) land, act of cultivation

Thistleton breaks the verse here, treating 9c as the commencement of another section, "The Image of the Building and the Testing of the Builders' Work (3:9c-15)"

οικοδομη, ης f building, process of building, encouragement

"... Thus Paul may mean that the Corinthians are the field, the building, in which God is at work. Or he may mean that they are God's work in cultivation and building." Morris

Verse 10

Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὡς σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων θεμέλιον ἔθηκα, ἄλλος δὲ ἐποικοδομεῖ. ἕκαστος δὲ βλέπew πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ·

Paul and Apollos are now pictured as co-workers in a building enterprise.

χαρις, ιτος f grace, unmerited favour

'According to the gracious privilege which God gave to me.'

δοθεῖσάν Verb, aor pass ptc, f acc s δίδωμι
give

σοφος, η, ον wise, experienced

ἀρχιτεκτων, ονος m expert builder, master builder

Thistleton suggests that the picture is taken from that of a building contract in which, "because of his professional skill one person usually assumed a particular co-ordinating role, maintaining an overview of the work, but not as paymaster." So Paul is pictured as such a 'prime contractor' who used other members of his team to do various parts of the work.

θεμελιος, ου m (also θεμελιον, ου n)
foundation, foundation stone

"This foundational work of Paul is explicated in 1 Cor 2:2, where the content of foundational proclamation is the apostolic message of a Christ crucified, without the addition of various human opinions and evaluations. Its christological and Christocentric character is what makes it the solid foundation without which the building would not stand, and certainly would not stand as *that* building."
Thistleton

ἔθηκα Perf act indic, 1 s τιθημι place, set, appoint

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

ἐποικοδομεω build on, build up

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every

βλεπω see, look, be able to see, beware of
πως interrog. particle how? in what way?

Verse 11

θεμέλιον γὰρ ἄλλον οὐδεὶς δύναται θεῖναι παρὰ τὸν κείμενον, ὃς ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός·

οὐδεὶς, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν no one, nothing;
οὐδεν not at all

παρα preposition with acc beside, by, rather than, contrary to

κειμαι lie, be laid, store up, be stored up

"Any other foundation would not merely make the building precarious; it would cease to exist *as that building*." Thistleton

Verse 12

εἰ δὲ τις ἐποικοδομεῖ ἐπὶ τὸν θεμέλιον χρυσόν, ἄργυρον, λίθους τιμίους, ξύλα, χόρτον, καλάμην,

The addition of *τουτου* after *θεμελιον* in many MSS would appear to be a clarifying insertion.

χρυσος, ου m gold, gold coin, gold image

ἄργυρος, ου m silver, silver coin, money

λιθος, ου m stone

τιμιος, α, ον precious, valuable, held in honour

These "may be precious stones in our sense of the term, used for ornamentation, or they may be costly building materials, like marble." Morris.

There may be an allusion here to Solomon's temple – anticipating the analogy of vv 16,17. However, the addition of hay and straw (thatch) suggests a more general building analogy.

ξύλον, ου n wood, tree, cross, stocks
χορτος, ου m grass, vegetation, shoot
καλαμη, ης f straw, stubble

Verse 13

ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον φανερόν γενήσεται, ἢ γὰρ ἡμέρα δηλώσει· ὅτι ἐν πυρὶ ἀποκαλύπτεται, καὶ ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον ὁποῖόν ἐστιν τὸ πῦρ αὐτὸ δοκιμάσει.

ἐκαστος see v.10

φανερως, α, ον known, evident, plain, visible

δηλωω make clear, indicate, inform

"Paul expresses his concern as missionary-pastor that all ministerial or church work should be founded on the reality of a Christ crucified and should endure. The 'testing by fire' connected with the last judgment simply underlines the subsidiary but important point which Paul elaborates in 4:4 and 5, that such is the opaqueness and duplicity of the human heart that even the builders of authentic work will not know definitively 'how they build' until God's own definitive verdict declares this and it becomes publicly visible at the last judgment. Still more to the point, one cannot judge the quality of the work of another builder: others are 'either doing that which will last or that which will perish,' and only time and the day of judgment will determine this. It is telling that even work which someone genuinely builds on the foundation may still turn out to be of no permanent value. Cox surmises that elements of self-interest or building for applause or self-gain can turn even the Christian's building 'upon Christ' into hay or straw. Such building would not be Christ-like." Thistleton

πυρ, ος n fire

ἀποκαλύπτω reveal, disclose

ὁποιος, α, ον correlative pronoun of what sort, such as

δοκιμαζω test, examine, approve, prove, discern

Verse 14

εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον μενεῖ ὁ ἐποικοδόμησεν, μισθὸν λήμψεται·

μενεῖ Verb, pres & fut act indic, 3 s μενω

remain, stay, abide

ἐποικοδόμησεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s

ἐποικοδομεω

On μισθος see v.8.

λήμψεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s

λαμβάνω

Verse 15

εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται, ζημιωθήσεται, αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται, οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός.

κατακαήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s

κατακαίω burn, burn up, consume

ζημιωω pass only lose, suffer loss

σωζω save, rescue, heal

"The distinction is not between the lost and the saved, but among the saved between those who have built well and those who have built poorly. *He shall suffer loss* means that he will lose his *reward*, like a workman fined of his wages for poor workmanship." Morris Compare 1 Thess. 2:19,20 and Phil4:1. Is the reward of the careful workman the enduring fruit of his labour? (Cf. comments on μισθος in v.8.)

For οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός cf. Amos 4:11, 'a brand plucked from the burning.'

Verse 16

Οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν;

οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present meaning) know, understand

οὐκ οἴδατε suggests Paul's amazed and troubled response to the reports he has received.

ναος, ου m temple, sanctuary, inner part of Jewish Temple

οικεω intrans live, dwell; trans live in

The verb and pronoun are plural while ναος is singular. It is the church, the company of God's people, who are here spoken of as the dwelling place of God by his Spirit (though cf. 6:19 for the same picture applied to the individual). Appreciation of this is vital to a right understanding of the following verse.

Verse 17

εἴ τις τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φθειρεῖ, φθερεῖ τοῦτον ὁ θεός· ὁ γὰρ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν, οἳτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς.

φθειρω corrupt, ruin, destroy

φθερεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s φθειρω
corrupt, ruin, destroy

ὅστις, ἥτις, ὅτι who, whoever, anyone,

"To engage in divisions is to 'destroy' the divine society, and consequently to invite God to 'destroy' the sinner." Morris

3:18-4:5

Thistleton, following Carson (*The Cross and the Christian Ministry*) says that this section is addressing false conceptions of ministry. "Self deception about the status of the self as already mature or fully spiritual may lead to further deception about a lack of need for ministry. Hence it is possible to cheat oneself out of the full range of ministerial resources and support which God has provided."

Verse 18

Μηδεις ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατάω· εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός,

μηδεις, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing
ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun,
himself, herself, itself

ἐξαπαταω deceive, lead astray

δοκεω think, suppose

σοφος see v.10

εἶναι Verb, pres infin ειμι

αιων, αιωνος m age, world order, eternity

μωρος, α, ον foolish; το μ. foolishness

γενέσθω Verb, aor imperat, 3 s γινομαι

γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι

"If anyone is to have real spiritual insight he must become what the world calls 'a fool'. The true wisdom is found in renouncing 'the wisdom of this world' ... The worldly wise, whom the Corinthians held in such high esteem, are totally unable to penetrate the divine mysteries. These are open to the humblest man of faith but are for ever hid from the wise of this world." Morris

Verse 19

ἢ γὰρ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν· γέγραπται γάρ· Ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν·

σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence

μωρια, ας f foolishness

Compare 1:20

παρα preposition with dat with, in the presence of

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

Cf. Job 5:13. This appears to be the only citation of Job in the NT. The wording here differs from the LXX, suggesting that Paul is familiar with and producing his own translation from the Hebrew.

δρασσομαι catch, trap

πανουργια, ας f craftiness, cunning

Verse 20

καὶ πάλιν· Κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σοφῶν ὅτι εἰσὶν μάταιοι.

Cf. Ps 94:11 (LXX 93:11). In citing Scripture Paul demonstrates that what he is saying is not merely personal opinion.

παλιν again, once more

διαλογισμος, ου m thought, opinion,
reasoning, dispute

ματαιος, α, ον worthless, futile, useless

Verse 21

ὥστε μηδεις καυχᾶσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις· πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστίν,

ὥστε so that, with the result that

Here in the sense of 'so then'.

μηδεις see v.18

καυχαομαι boast, boast about

Cf. the positive corollary in 1:31. "Paul says that if Christians are to take pride in anything, in the sense of glorying in it, this is not to be in any feature of the church or its leaders, but in God as revealed in Christ, and in God alone. Paul's most personal, self-involving declaration rings out in Gal 6:14: ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ" Thistleton

Verse 22

εἴτε Παῦλος εἴτε Ἀπολλῶς εἴτε Κηφᾶς εἴτε κόσμος εἴτε ζωὴ εἴτε θάνατος εἴτε ἐνεστῶτα εἴτε μέλλοντα, πάντα ὑμῶν,

"Paul turns the thoughts of the Corinthians away from the wisdom of men which had meant so much to them, to the far greater treasures that they really possessed in Christ." Morris

εἴτε if, whether

Κηφας, α m Cephas (Aramaic equivalent of Πέτρος, rock).

It may be that some at Corinth were claiming a particular teacher as their own – 'he is our man'. Paul turns their catchphrase around and declares that all Christian ministry is Christian ministry *for them*. "Each minister is perceived as part of a comprehensive range of gifts and resources, all lavished upon them as a corporeity or plurality to be used without picking and choosing the gifts." Thistleton

θανατος, ου m death

"Paul's saying 'to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain' (Phil 1:21) gives us the clue to his reference to *life* and *death*. Life in Christ is the only life, and the Christian possesses this. To the unbeliever, *death* is the end of all things. But Christ has overcome death and for the Christian it is not disaster, but 'gain'." Morris

ἐνεστῶτα Verb, perf act ptc, n nom/acc pl

ἐνιστημι be present

None of these things is a 'threat' to Christians, cf. Rom 8:38,39. The Christian need not fear any of these 'powers'.

Verse 23

ὕμεῖς δὲ Χριστοῦ, Χριστὸς δὲ θεοῦ.

"The ending of God underlines the ultimacy of the divine verdict for all and on all, while Paul, Apollos, Cephas, death, the world ... remain instruments for the fulfilment of the purposes of God, of which Christians are sharers and inheritors with Christ." Thistleton