AUDIT!
I Corinthians 3

No chapter of Scripture challenges me, motivates me, concerns me, as much as the one we study together tonight. To this most Pentecostal church in all of ancient Europe, the Apostle Paul spotlights an issue that is life-changing. It is my prayer as we study together this evening that your mind and heart will be riveted to this passage. It certainly changed my life; I believe it will affect yours as well.

There are three main questions any follower of Jesus must answer:
- WHAT in the world am I trying to do for Christ in my own personal life?
- HOW in the world do I expect to succeed?
- WHY in the world do I bother? What motivates me day-in and day-out?

The Apostle Paul wrote the chapter we study today - I Corinthians 3. He certainly knew something about hardship and suffering. From his own testimony:

2 Cor. 4:8-10
We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; [10] Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

2 Cor. 11:24-28
Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. [25] Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; [26] In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; [27] In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. [28] Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

What in the world would cause Paul to “keep going?” What drove this man to walk
some 7,000 miles or more during his missionary journeys and (as he put it) “keep the faith, finish the course and fight a good fight?” (2 Tim. 4)

The answer to that is found in his stunning revelation in chapter 3 of I Corinthians:

1 Cor. 3:1-15

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. [2] I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

[3] For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? [4] For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? [5] Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? [6] 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 labour. [9] For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. [10] According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. [11] For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. [14] If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

First of all, Paul soundly rebukes followers of Jesus who remain spiritual infants (verses 1 and 2). We must all ask ourselves, “Are we growing in Christ or are we still just infants in understanding and knowledge?”

Second, Paul rebuked the believers in Corinth for their disunity. And he reminded them that they were God’s creation and He expected them to be united in their faith and obedience to the Word.

Third, Paul warned them that AN ETERNAL AUDIT WAS COMING and the rewards they received were totally dependent upon their spiritual production and faithfulness.

What?!? Aren’t REWARDS automatic with salvation? No, they certainly are not.
Note carefully verses 15 and 16: IF any person's work ABIDE and comes through the test of fire, he or she would receive a reward. That which is automatic with salvation is forgiveness of sin and eternal life - NOT rewards.

An old hymn asks this poignant question:

"Will there be any stars....any stars in my drown? When at evening the sun goeth down?"

That depends.... Upon what? The Judgment Seat of Christ - that time when all BELIEVERS will appear before God to give an account of their discipleship AFTER they were born again. This has nothing to do with salvation itself - it has to do with earned rewards. Salvation is a gift of God and cannot be earned; however, REWARDS must be earned.

THE BELIEVERS IN CORINTH

Though Pentecostal in doctrine, these believers were far removed from what they should have been. In the first four verses he decries their spiritual immaturity. You are "babes in Christ," he declared.

A tiny baby is cute and delightful. But a man in his thirties, still wearing pampers, sucking on a pacifier and wearing baby booties is not cure nor delightful. But this is how Paul describes the Corinthian believers.

Not only were they immature, they were carnal - that means living lives that were far from the purity God expected. AND YET THEY WERE ANTICIPATING REWARDS WHEN THEY GOT TO HEAVEN. So the first lesson Paul taught them was this:

1. REWARDS ARE NOT AUTOMATIC WITH SALVATION!

While salvation is predicated solely on faith in Jesus and His death on the cross, and while salvation is a divine gift of God, rewards are NOT by faith; they are achieved by WORKS.

Note carefully verse 14: 1 Cor. 3:14

\[\text{IF any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.}\]

Our rewards will be taken with us into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb where we will
lay them down at Jesus’ feet.

2. THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

As we studied in a previous series, the church is the Bride of Christ; He is the Groom. Unlike weddings in our time and culture, weddings in Jesus’ day were for the groom. Nothing was allowed into the wedding that distracted anyone’s attention from the groom.

So...as the Bride of Christ prepares for the glorious unification with Christ our Savior, our “hope chest, will be carefully examined by the fire of the Holy Spirit - to insure that nothing we bring into the Marriage will take anyone’s attention away from Christ. Our works will be tried as by fire (verse 13).

Now all of our works on Earth can be classified in six ways:

- Gold
- Silver
- Precious Stones
- Hay
- Wood
- Stubble

What’s the difference in these materials? The gold, silver and precious stones will be those works we have done in this life FOR CHRIST, not for ourselves. So when our works are “tried by fire”, only those activities we have done, motivated solely by our love for Jesus, will make it through the heat. In other words, we are not going to be allowed to drag anything into the Marriage Supper that calls attention to ourselves.

Gold, silver and precious stones are hard to find, usually underground. They do not call attention to themselves - you have to dig for them. On the other hand, you can probably find hay, wood and stubble in your yard or even in the church parking lot as you leave here today.

I remember the first Sunday I was here as your pastor, I was approached by a lady who informed me that “she was the church soloist.” She let me know in no uncertain terms that all the solo singing done in this church would be done by her. When she learned that those terms were unacceptable, and that there would be many people giving their talents to the Lord, she left the church. Simply put, she was not singing for the Lord; no, she was singing for herself. How long do you think that hay, wood and stubble will last at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Not long, I can assure you. No rewards to lay at Jesus’ feet.
Verse 9 of I Corinthians states it clearly: **For we are labourers together with God:** ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

There is no room for prima donnas in the work of God. All of us, including those of us who pastor, need to take stock of our motives. Why do we do the things we do? What drives us? Is it love of God – or love of preaching (which I do enjoy, to be sure – but is that WHY I do it?)

The footnotes on this chapter as found in the *Life In The Spirit Study Bible* (King James), which I heartily endorse to you, give us this further insight:

*The Bible asserts that all the redeemed are free from God’s judgment of condemnation.*

John 5:24

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Romans 8:1

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Hebrews 10:14-17

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. [15] Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, [16] This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; [17] And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

However, there is a future judgment for believers *(I John 4:17) Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. This judgment will determine the degree of our faithfulness to God and the grace given to us during our life on earth. IN THAT JUDGMENT THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT A BELIEVER, ALTHOUGH RECEIVING SALVATION, MAY EXPERIENCE GREAT LOSS.*

The careless believer is in danger of suffering loss or damage in the following ways:

1) A feeling of shame at Christ’s coming  2 Tim. 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2) The loss of his or her life’s work for God

3) The loss of glory and honor before God  Romans 2:7

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

4) Loss of opportunity for service and authority in heaven
Matthew 25:14-30

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. [15] And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. [16] Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. [17] And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. [18] But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. [19] After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. [20] And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. [21] His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. [22] He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. [23] His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. [24] Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: [25] And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. [26] His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: [27] Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. [28] Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. [29] For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. [30] And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

5) A low position in heaven Matthew 5:19

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

6) Loss of rewards (see 1 Cor 3 already written in these notes)

7) Repayment for the wrong done to others Col. 3:24-25

Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. [25] But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

These passages should impress upon us the necessity of complete dedication, including faithful, self-sacrificing service to our God.
YOU AND I ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD

1 Cor. 3:16-23

You realize, don't you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you? [17] No one will get by with vandalizing God's temple, you can be sure of that. God's temple is sacred—and you, remember, are the temple.

[18] Don't fool yourself. Don't think that you can be wise merely by being up-to-date with the times. [19] Be God's fool—that's the path to true wisdom. What the world calls smart, God calls stupid. It's written in Scripture,

"He exposes the chicanery of the chic.

[20] The Master sees through the smoke screens of the know-it-alls."

[21] I don't want to hear any of you bragging about yourself or anyone else. Everything is already yours as a gift— [22] Paul, Apollos, Peter, the world, life, death, the present, the future—all of it is yours, [23] and you are privileged to be in union with Christ, who is in union with God.

If you body were merely the epoch-producing progeny of amoeba, frogs and monkeys, God would not be so particular about how you care for it.. However, since God Himself designed your body, He expects you to take reasonable and proper care of it.

WARNING!

1 Cor. 3:17

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

In the first church I pastored, the district “gave” me a board of its choosing - three men who knew absolutely nothing about churches, their growth patterns and proper ministry. They gave me fits at every turn of the road. I wanted to rise up against them, but verse 17 stopped me: “....him shall God destroy....”

This verse is not a carte blanche for church leaders, including pastors, to do anything they wanted to do; however, it is a warning to anyone who for personal reasons would stand against the church and its growth. It is a frightening verse. Yes, even for pastors; for if they harm the church for their own benefit, they will answer to God. And that day will not be a pleasant one for them.

WATCH OUT FOR WHOM YOU CHEER!
1 Cor. 3:21-23

Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; [22] Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; [23] And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

We are not to get caught up in any idolizing of people. We can love them, respect them, look up to them - but always understand they are just human beings. You are Christs - and to Hm goes all the glory.

Next week - Chapter Four