

**I Corinthians Lesson # 8**  
**The Church Must be Pure**  
**Pentwater Bible Church**  
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*I Corinthians 3:16-17 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile (correct: destroy) the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*

Many commentators narrowly define this section of Scripture to refer to taking care of one's personal body. That actually is perhaps a secondary application of these verses for the Holy Spirit does dwell in us. Following the logic train of the last verses in this chapter the Church (body of believers) is in view here.

Now, a local church (*you here is second person plural*) might come to the point where its structure is so weak that it collapses entirely or exists in name only, that is, it is destroyed. The reasoning is if false teachers are allowed to destroy the fundamentals of the faith by spewing out false doctrines they become enemies of the cross and will themselves be destroyed. Paul did not want this to happen in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:3, 13). If it did, God Himself would pay the false minister back in kind. (this is an application of the Old Testament concept of *Lex Talionis*, the law of retaliation). So while we would throw the false teacher out of our midst, God Himself would provide a very stern *in kind* punishment for him.

*Lex Talionis* was used in those situations, which were infractions of the Law but did not result in death. For example in the case of a woman who suffered a miscarriage through injury as a result of a brawl between two men, the *Lex Talionis* furnished the principal of compensation. (Exodus 21:18-32; Matt 5:38) This law of retaliation has often been *misinterpreted* as encouraging revenge. Instead it envisions the execution of justice through magistrates (Ex 21: 22). The law of retaliation was in accord with widespread ancient usages, but God modified it somewhat for the Israelites. (Exodus 21: 24-26; Lev 24:19-20)

So in this case Paul is saying the Church is the habitation of the Holy Spirit in which every member also dwells. The temple of God is holy and so are we. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and collectively in the Church. Therefore the destroyer would be destroyed (Matt. 13:41-42). The words "Know ye not" (1 Cor. 3:16) are the first of 10 occurrences of the clause in this letter (cf. 5:6; 6:2-3, 9, 15-16, 19; 9:13, 24; each time it introduces an indisputable statement).

Back then and even today many have crept into the genuine Churches giving the congregations impure and evil doctrines. They will be given their just recompense. The Corinthians were allowing the seducing spirits of this world to sway them and this is foolishness with God. They allowed these evil worldly doctrines to mar the temple of God by carnality whereby they put a trust in men instead of God.

*I Corinthians 3: 18-23 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*

*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

Since this is what was taking place, Paul gave a pointed warning to ministers and to the congregation in Corinth. Ministers could avoid self-deception by evaluating their ministries and realizing that the wisdom of this world reflects the mind of Satan (Eph. 2:2) and is foolishness in God's sight (1 Cor. 3:19). Paul supported this fact by quoting from Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11. The members needed to see that the practice of boasting (1 Cor. 3:21) about ministers was similarly a self-centered spirit. Instead, they should boast in God (cf. 1:31) to whom they belonged (3:23; cf. 1:2, 15:28) and who was the source of their every blessing (cf. 1:30).

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