What Will Make the Church Grow? (1 Corinthians 3) www.aubeacon.com

Introduction: God has a plan that will produce His results in church growth.

- A. Too much of the emphasis we see on church growth comes from a carnal emphasis. "We are faithful because we grow"
 - 1. Some view the church like a potential stock. "What is the growth rate?"
 - 2. The one factor missing in this analysis is: "What does God say about growth?" What is **true growth**? How do we achieve this kind of growth?
- B. God's approach will produce God's results.
 - 1. The pagans at Corinth could testify to this point. (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 6:9-11)
 - 2. What could change a pagan?
 - 3. We do not always see results as God wills. (2 Cor 2:14-17)
- C. This chapter will give us insight into how God works with men.

I. Things that Hinder the Gospel (3:1-4)

A. Dull hearers.

- 1. Any good teacher will analyze his audience. Where are they?
- 2. Have you ever felt the frustration Paul experienced here? He wanted to give them more, but he could not. Why? (**Heb 5:11-14**)
- 3. How you hear is a product of what is really important to you.
 - a. **Example:** Someone talking to me during a football game.
 - b. Good hearing is like an athletic event, it takes exercise to build up an ability.
- 4. The key is what we have done in time: (v. 2) "not yet able...not even now."
- 5. Why do people remain "dull hearers"?

B. Worldly Thinking.

- 1. The root of worldliness is the flesh. (1 John 2:15-17)
- 2. How do worldly people view the things of God? (1 Cor 2:14; Rom 8:5-8)
 - a. The worldly think in terms of what men see.
 - b. Worldly people are shallow they will not pay the price of study and meditation.

C. The expressions of worldly thinking.

- 1. **Envy** The first step of the proud person.
 - a. Does the honor of someone become a dishonor to you?
 - b. Sometimes as at Corinth a faction is produced by those of like minds joining together. It is not uncommon for the weak to be pulled in.
 - c. Sometimes are described as: "The fellowship of the miserable." Sadly there is an appeal to those who seek to try to bring out how one has been wronged.
 - d. Examples: "why are not others in the church working as hard as me..."
- 2. Strife This is what a worldly person feels justified in doing because of envy.
 - a. Normally this involves the tongue. (Jas 3:1; 3:13-16)
 - b. It takes two carnal men to fight. How will you react when wronged?
- 3. **Divisions** This is the end result of a carnal process.
 - a. A church can be divided without splitting. What is a clique?

- b. Are you only associating with a certain few in the church?
- c. Do you spend time with others in tearing down and magnifying the sins of others without trying to help the one in sin? This is a cowardly act.
- d. Carnal groups in a church can destroy an eldership.
- 4. The respect of men. (v.4)
 - a. How do you know when one has placed a man above God?
 - b. When they cannot accept doctrines that are in opposition to a respected man. (1 Tim 6:3-4)
 - c. When they are afraid to go against these men. (John 12:42-43)

II. The kind of Preachers that God wants. (v. 5-11)

- A. Men who know who they are. They are a product of God's grace. (v. 5)
 - 1. Without God we are nothing.
 - 2. Pride is a constant danger for all who will do this work.
 - 3. Who do we wish to have the glory? (1 Tim 1:12-17)
 - 4. Men who build upon their own personality will be in for a big disappointment.
- B. Men who will submit to the work that God gives. (v. 5 7)
 - 1. What is planted? What is watered? (Acts 20:27,32)
 - 2. Who receives the glory in this work? God! (v. 7)
 - 3. What is the end product of this approach? (1 Cor 2:4-5; 2 Cor 4:5)
- C. Men who want the fellowship of God above all else. (v. 8-9)
 - 1. What is the preacher's reward? Not yet fully received. (Matt 28:20)
 - 2. The preacher is moved by the fact of the judgment. (2 Cor 5:14-15, 11)
 - 3. Some people fear this kind of preacher? Why?
- D. Men who know how to build. (v. 10)
 - 1. What does it mean to build upon Christ? (John 12:48)
 - 2. We want to build a faith that will reach our hearts.
 - 3. This involves what we do at all times. (**John 14:7-9**)

III. The kind of men good preaching builds. (v 12-17)

- A. There are two possible results. Which are you? (2 Cor 13:5)
 - 1. Gold ,silver, stones?
 - 2. Wood, hay, stubble?
- B. The day of judgment will reveal what we are. (1 Peter 1:6-7)
 - 1. Would it not be better to know now and change? (2 Tim 2:19-22)
 - 2. There is a kind of preaching that will help people see, another will only keep them in the dark. (2 Tim 4:3-4)
- C. Who receives the reward or the loss? (v. 14-15)
- D. Watch what you teach! (v. 16-17)

Conclusion: Let us not think that we are wiser than God. (2 Thess 2:10-11)