

# The Delusion of Spiritual Pride

*1 Corinthians*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 3:1-3  
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Good morning, Providence Church. Please go ahead and open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 3 and doesn't it feel a little sleepy in here this morning? I feel like, I feel sleepy. Maybe it's just me. I don't know if y'all are depressed because the warm weather went away or what, but as we turn to the word of God this morning, let's commit ourselves to an energetic focus to what it's saying because it is so important what we're doing here today. So let's pray and ask for his assistance, for the Lord's assistance this morning no matter how tired we are or how discouraged we are; whatever's going on, this demands our attention and our focus. So let's go ahead and pray and then we'll get into it, okay?

*Father, we come to You as the God above all gods. You are the holy One. You are high and exalted and lifted up. You are full of glory. You are powerful. You are majestic and You are worthy of our praise and, Lord, You have spoken in Your word and so, Lord, this morning I pray that we would give our full attention to what You have said and what You are calling us to, and help us to see our own hearts accurately, Father, that You would be glorified in us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Okay, please follow along with me as I read 1 Corinthians 3:1 through 3. It says,

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

It sounds like a pretty heavy passage to consider this morning. You know, I really want to consider this right now because as we embark on building programs and as we're really growing and new leaders are being raised up, people are really serving faithfully in many ways, as we do that, we will be tempted by pride and especially an insidious form of pride, spiritual pride, and if we are infected with this pride, it will actually destroy the building that we're trying to make. We will destroy, we will demolish the temple of God for the sake of a building project but we don't want to do that. We in pursuing serving the Lord with our lives and in our church and with each other, we want to be building up

God's body and his temple. So today I want to discuss with you, this is the title of the message, "The Delusion of Spiritual Pride." The delusion of spiritual pride.

Let me ask you a question: are you a spiritual person? Are you a spiritual person? Paul writes here, "I could not speak to you as to spiritual men." What would Paul write to you if he was writing you a letter today? Would he say something like this, "I'm so thankful for your example as spiritual people"? "Your maturity is such an encouragement to me," is that what he would write to you? What would it be? Do you consider yourself to be wise and discerning? Do you consider yourself to be mature? Are you a leader? Do you believe that you should be an elder or a deacon, that you should be a teacher? Have you been unfairly overlooked? You know, when you read the Scriptures about the weaker and stronger brothers, which category do you consider yourself to be in? Are you the stronger brother? Are you the weaker brother? Are you gifted? Do you believe that you have insight that the church should take heed to? Are you a spiritual person? Some of you are mature spiritual people. Some of you only believe that you are spiritual people, and not everyone who thinks that they are spiritual really is. The Corinthians clearly believed that they were spiritual people and yet Paul says that he couldn't even speak to them as to spiritual people. He had to speak to them as to unspiritual people, people who don't have the Spirit of God, as people who are infantile and childish in the faith. If Paul were writing today to you, would this be his assessment? Could it be that you are not as mature as you think you are or as you proclaim to be? Could it be that you are blind to reality? Could it be that you are deluded and instead of being mature, you are actually an infant? Instead of being strong, you are the weak one? Instead of being able to handle a heavy diet of spiritual food, you are only able to handle small sips of warm milk like a baby that has to be fed to you? Could it be? Let me urge you this morning to drop your defenses and to truly consider the real state of your heart.

Let's take a closer look at this passage. Paul says in verse 1, "I could not speak to you as to spiritual men." Literally it means that he was not able. He did not have the power to speak to them as to spiritual men. Truly spiritual words would have been useless to them because they were not spiritual people. This term "spiritual, pneumatikos," is used 26 times in the New Testament, 15 of those times it is found in 1 Corinthians and it means "that which pertains to or is in accordance with the Spirit," and in this case, the Holy Spirit. To be a spiritual person is someone who walks in a way that is consistent with the Holy Spirit's values, with the Holy Spirit's work, the Holy Spirit's goals, his character.

Paul just got done talking about this in chapter 2. Listen to chapter 2, verse 6. Paul says this, "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.' For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the

thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God." Do you see that? If you are to receive the things from God, if you are to believe, if you are to understand God's wisdom, it has to come from his Spirit and you have to be a spiritual person to receive it. It has to find a connecting point.

Have you ever seen lightning in slow-motion videos of lightning, how it slowly comes out of the clouds, right? This little charge comes out and little arms from the cloud, and then a small charge just yea high comes up from the ground and whichever branch makes the connecting point, that becomes the bolt of lightning. If those little arms coming out of the clouds don't find that charge, there's no lightning, there's no lights, there's no flash. The Spirit of God and spiritual words are useless unless they find a connecting point in a spiritual person and that has to be wrought, it has to be borne out, that has to be created by God himself. So unless you are a spiritual person, God's wisdom will seem foolish to you. Unless you are a spiritual person, you will be unwilling to do what God has called you to do. God's value system is completely antithetical to the world, completely antithetical to your natural way of thinking. It takes the Spirit of God working in your heart to actually connect to his truth and then when there is, then the lights go on; there's a flash and there's fruit. We have received God's Spirit so that we can receive his truth and actually listen to it. Not just understand it. This isn't talking about logical understanding, this is talking about it actually making sense for how you live, you actually valuing it, loving it and falling in line with it, and without that, his truth will not make its connection and he will not produce the fruit.

Look at what he says in verse 14, actually verse 13, these "things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." The word in the Greek there, "thoughts and words," that's not actually in the original. It literally means combining spiritual with spiritual. Spiritual words from God connecting to a spiritual individual.

Verse 14, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." When you appraise something, you determine its value. You determine how worth it is to you, okay? Unless you have the Spirit of God, the things that God says will not be valuable to you.

Verse 16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that He will instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." The true knowledge of God is imparted by the Holy Spirit and only spiritual people who have been saved by the Holy Spirit, born again and made spiritually alive, only those spiritual people are able to accept the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit. Natural men, people without the Spirit, are able to grasp it intellectually but it does not impact their value system. They do not accept God's wisdom as wise. They might understand it conceptually but they will not see it as wise, a wise path, a wise course of action, a desirable path. Instead it appears foolish to them because to rightly appraise spiritual wisdom, you need spiritual eyes.

Now we are not surprised if the unregenerate reject God's wisdom. We're not surprised when unbelievers reject it. I mean, that's what it means to be an unbeliever. But here Paul is astonished to see that the Christians at Corinth were acting like unregenerate, unsaved, unspiritual people, the same ones that he just mentioned for. They were acting like men of flesh, as he says in chapter 3, verse 1.

This is kind of an interesting term, "the flesh," right? You're acting like men of flesh. Well, we all are of flesh, aren't we? We're all made of flesh. This Greek word "sarkinos," it's not very common in the New Testament and depending on the context it can refer to what is physical, human or material. In 2 Corinthians 3:3 it's used to refer to human hearts. It's not inherently a bad thing but the real significance is derived from the context and in this particular context because of the contrast with what is spiritual, it describes a person who is motivated by natural drives, the natural drives of fallen human nature. You are of the flesh, only of the flesh.

Every single human is made of flesh but someone who doesn't have the Spirit is only of the flesh. They are only motivated and driven by fleshly desires. This person is centered on self. It refers to an individual's values, attitudes and judgments which manifest themselves in self-centeredness, self-indulgence, and arrogant self-sufficiency, and let me tell you, God did not come to fulfill your self-centeredness. The Gospel did not arrive, Jesus did not die to fulfill your self-indulgence, to puff up your arrogance. Those are characteristics of someone driven entirely by the flesh.

Essentially this is a person who is not being controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is a person who is acting as if they do not know God. Now Paul doesn't say here that they aren't saved. He calls them brothers in this context. That's what Christians call each other, brothers, sisters. But their conduct was very concerning and it was also true that some of them were not true brothers. Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 15, later on in 1 Corinthians, he says, "Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." Some of them were just immature infants in Christ who were acting as though they didn't have the Spirit of God; at least at that moment in time, they were following the desires of the flesh. But some of them did it because they were not actually born again. Some of them pursued the flesh because they didn't actually have the Spirit of God. Some of these people just flat did not know God though they claimed to.

Listen to Proverbs 30:12 through 14, "There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, Yet is not washed from his filthiness. There is a kind--oh how lofty are his eyes! And his eyelids are raised in arrogance. There is a kind of man whose teeth are like swords And his jaw teeth like knives, To devour the afflicted from the earth And the needy from among men." There are some who believe that they are spiritual. There are some that think very highly of themselves and yet they are not washed of their filthiness. They are the exact opposite.

Before we go on, we have to say this, that some of you do not know God. Some of you do not know God though you claim to. You show up here with dirty hands and an

unclean heart. You say you love God but you don't. You love the world and you love the things of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. Your godliness is a show. Sunday is your stage and you are the actor. You want the praise of men but once you leave, all you care about is money, pride and pleasure. You are indulging in drunkenness, sexual immorality, outbursts of anger. Some of you do not know God and listen to what 1 Corinthians, the same book says to you, 1 Corinthians 6:9 through 10, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived." Let me say that again, "Don't be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." Such are some of you right now and such were some of you. If you are living in this way, I just need to say this plainly, if you are living this way, you are on your way to hell no matter what card you signed in fifth grade, no matter what stick you put in a fire, no matter when you were baptized. If this is you, you do not know God, you do not belong to God, you do not have his Spirit, and you are under the wrath and judgment of God. Is that you? Is that you today? If so, call on the Lord while he may be found. Turn to him in repentance. Recognize sincerely that you deserve his wrath and it's coming unless the Lord saves you, unless the Spirit teaches you in your heart and allows you to accept the things that God has given to you, the things that God is saying to you. Flee to him. There is mercy and grace to be found but the time is short. Find forgiveness and freedom in Christ today and don't delay it.

On the other hand, some of you might know the Lord but for the moment you have been acting like someone who doesn't have the Spirit of God, like someone who is driven by the flesh. If you are saved and you're behaving like this, you are behaving like an infant in the faith. I don't mean pursuing immorality and drunkenness and all that, if that is your life, you don't know God, but in this context Paul is calling out the Corinthians for behaving like infants, for behaving like children in the faith. This word for "infant," it's the same word used in Ephesians 4:14 where he says that we are no longer to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but we are to grow up into the mature manhood to be more like Christ. We do that by speaking the truth in love and imitating him in his character. What is it that you feed an infant? Well, infants can't feed themselves. They have to be fed milk, something easy, something they won't choke on, something they can process, and Paul says in chapter 3, verse 2, that he had to feed them milk in the past. Look what he says, "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able." So in the past he had given them milk to drink. When did he do this? Look back at chapter 2, verse 1, back when he brought the Gospel to them. He said this, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." That was the milk that he fed them, the basic Gospel. This is it, you will find eternal life by believing in a first century Jew who was crucified in your place because no other man could save you, only God can, and those who humble themselves by believing

this message will be saved. There is nothing in human effort, wisdom, strength that can save you, only this man, Jesus Christ crucified on your behalf by God's power can save you. That is the milk. That is the most basic message of the Gospel.

It's not a beautiful message as much as we want to dress it up, as long as we like to find nice theological words and phrases. It's not beautiful. It's beautiful to us because we know its truth and power but it's not beautiful, it's actually an ugly stupid message to the world, to natural men. Listen to this, I mean, think about this, we don't need to make it pretty, God made it ugly and foolish on purpose. Here's another way to explain the Gospel in the most basic way possible: God rather than wiping out a depraved and corrupt humanity, chose to save some of them by becoming a poor Jew who wandered through dusty Palestine for some 30 years mingling with the lowliest of sinners and invalids, teaching them and healing them until the leaders of the nation finally seized him, beat him until he was unrecognizable and crucified him naked until he died. This man was raised from the dead three days later and has ascended into heaven and if you put all your trust in this man, you will be saved from the wrath to come. That is not pretty. That is a humbling message. That is the one that we proclaim. That is the message that, I mean think about that, in order to save you, that's what had to happen. That's the message that we have to accept to be a follower of Christ. We don't accept it because it's pretty, we don't accept it because of its philosophical intricacy, we don't accept it because it's really interesting and it just makes coherent sense. That's not why. We accept it because the Spirit of God has opened our eyes to its truth and you have become a believer by God's power, not because someone was really persuasive and used pretty words. That's the message and that is the milk that he fed them, an inherently humbling message. It was meant to emphasize God's power, not the power of eloquent oratory nor the strength of man.

So back then they were not able to receive any more than that. They needed the basic Gospel, the milk, the entry point into the kingdom of God, and then he goes on and says, "Indeed, even now you are not yet able to receive it." They weren't ready back then and now they aren't ready today. What was it that indicated to Paul that this was so? What was it that proved to him that they were unspiritual, that they were not ready for more than just this basic Gospel? What demonstrated their immaturity? Look at verse 3, chapter 3, verse 3, he says, "for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" Jealousy and strife, this is what gave Paul the indication no matter how gifted they were, no matter how much they had been taught, no matter what great books they were reading, that they were not ready for anything but the most basic Gospel message.

These terms "jealousy" and "strife," they're often found together and they are the fruit, they are the works of the flesh. In Galatians 5:20, they are included with things like idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions and factions. Romans 13:12, "The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." So jealousy and strife are characteristic of ungodly human

society. Unspiritual people operate this way. This is their natural state. This is our natural state apart from Christ. Just look at the White House. Just look at the media. Just look at Hollywood. Just look at Starbucks. Just look at your local coffee house. Strife. Jealousy. Just look at your local church.

This word for "jealousy," it's the same word for "zeal." It's been translated "ardor; zeal; jealousy," and the idea is one of intensity, intense feelings like when Jesus cleared out the temple with a whip and said that, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." Leaders are to lead with zeal. So again, the context drives whether it's a good intensity or a bad one. It can mean an intense positive interest in something. Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 11, "I jealous for you with a godly jealousy for I betrothed you to one husband so that to Christ I might present you." Paul is jealous for Christ's glory and the good of the believers. He was jealous that people would be devoted to Christ and that was good, but it can also mean an intense negative feeling over another's achievements or success. Ancient Greeks used this word often for a competitiveness, competitive intensity, jealousy and envy. When it's combined with strife, again, the idea is one of competing with others for glory. Strife means "quarreling or contention; engagement in rivalry with reference to positions taken up in a matter of strife or discord."

These Corinthians were competitive. They were competitive and it showed up in many different ways but in this particular passage, he goes on to explain this, look at verse 4. How did this jealousy and strife show up? "For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men?" Are you not acting like people without the Spirit? Men who don't have spiritual eyes? What's going on here? What you mean, I of Paul or I am of Apollos? Well, this context goes all the way back to chapter 1, verse 10. Listen to this, this is what got Paul writing to them. Someone came to him and reported that there were divisions so here's what he said, "I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos,' and 'I am of Cephas,' and 'I am of Christ.'" Now what's going on here? They didn't have SermonAudio back then. People didn't go on the internet and watch their favorite preachers. You couldn't just go hop on a ship and go travel over to Jerusalem and hear Peter preach or, you know, "I heard Paul's in Ephesus, let's get over there and hear him preach. It'll only take a few months." Okay? It wasn't like a party. It wasn't like a group, you know, a political party or anything like that. The most likely scenario is this, that these were different preachers under whom people in the Corinthian church had gotten saved so some were saved under the ministry of Paul and so they said, "I am of Paul." Another is under the ministry of Apollos so, "I am of Apollos." Or Peter. And some even sat directly under Christ. This book was written in probably the early 50s AD, 20 years after Christ was ascended. It's a very likely scenario that there were people saved in that church who had seen Christ himself and so they said, "I am of Christ."

So what was the problem with this? What was the problem with this? The problem wasn't that they were saying, not just that they made the claim or even pointed to the fact, "Oh, I

got saved under Paul's ministry. What a blessing." No, to them they were looking for status within the church and they felt that the fact that they were saved under a particular person's ministry made them better, made them more deserving of honor, made them more deserving of glory, made them more deserving of power, should give them more influence within the church. Their connection to a prominent person should give them more honor and recognition, the better seat at the meal, their opinion should matter more because of this. "I am of Paul. I am of Apollos. I am of Cephas. I am of Christ." What's the problem with the guy saying, "I'm of Christ"? What's the problem with that? Aren't we all of Christ? Yes, that's the problem. Instead of saying, "I am of Christ. I am of Christ. I was saved under Christ's ministry." He should have said, "Brothers, we are all of Christ and the fact that I was saved sitting directly under Jesus' ministry does not mean that I am more spiritual or deserving of more honor and more glory and more influence than another believer." Isn't that incredible? Where Peter even refers to himself in his epistles as a fellow servant. Even if you sat directly under Jesus' teaching, that does not grant you special status within the church and yet these people wanted to be praised, they wanted to be recognized, they wanted, they looked down on others and they were competitive and they used these spiritual connections to elevate themselves.

What would motivate these kinds of divisions as we said? Like James 4, we are well familiar with, it says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war against your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask." So we know that quarrels exist because of unmet desires, you want something that you're not getting. These people wanted status and so they felt that their teacher should give it to them.

Listen to this, the way that secular concepts of leadership were imported into the church. One commentator says this, he points out that personality-centered politics within the church were characteristic of the surrounding Greco-Roman society. A secular understanding of the underlying distinctions in rank and status between those in the church and the apostolic figures of Paul, Cephas, Apollos, demanded that it be politically advantageous to be associated with one or the other of these figures. He says this, Plutarch who was an early historian, not a believer, he observed that just as young ivy twines itself around a strong tree to gain height, so an obscure person will seek a connection with a person of reputation to be under the shelter of his power and grow great with him in the affairs of the state. That's human nature and the more that I puff up and pump up my guy, the higher that elevates me because I am connected to him; using your connections with people to elevate yourself and to seek status and glory and influence.

It was wrong. They were proud. That was the problem. They were spiritually proud. They were arrogant. So how does Paul go about addressing this? How does he deal with their pride here? Why should they not be proud? Why should you not be proud? He goes on through the rest of this book to expose them to the truth because the truth is humbling. You are proud because you are deluded. You are proud and jealous and envious and you quarrel because you live in a delusion of your own glory and strength and might. You



don't get it. Any ounce of pride in you is a delusion. So you see the opposite of pride is not just humility, the opposite of pride is truth motivated by love. If you knew the truth and you believed the truth and yet a heart that loved the truth, then you will be humble and sometimes you just need to be reminded of the truth.

So how does he go about addressing this? Well, let's follow along in chapter 1. I want you to see this. This is very very beneficial to see how Paul addresses this spiritual pride. So he said, verse 12, "each of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos,' and 'I am of Cephas,' and 'I am of Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize," he means to baptize in his name, "but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." So Paul, he's not saying that, you know, the Great Commission is wrong, you know, we are to go and baptize and preach the Gospel and baptize, but he preached the Gospel, someone else baptized, that's how it worked, okay?

So Paul, he says here did not go about in "cleverness of speech so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." Verse 18, "For the word of the cross is foolishness," okay, this is the first heading, how does he go about this? Through a humbling message. The humbling message. "The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." So that's the foolish message. It's a humbling message. The message of the Gospel is a humbling one. If you want to come to it, you're going to receive ridicule, you're not going to look smart in the eyes of the world if that's your desire. If you want to be glorified and lifted up and seen as wise and elevated in front of people, this is not the message for you. This is not the group for you.

Sorry, I almost spilled my water.

These aren't your people, okay? This is not your message. If you want glory for yourself, you're barking up the wrong tree. It's a foolish and humbling message. The next thing is God chose humble people to save. Look at what he says here in verse, where did I go? Verse 26, "consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has

chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God." You know, people ask, "Oh, why did God choose me?" Well, there's your reason. There's your reason, he chose you because it would be an embarrassment to the arrogant people of the world that you got chosen instead of them. They're going to stand there at the gates of heaven while you walk past them through the gates and they're going to be like, "You chose him?" That's why God chose you, to shame the arrogant. God chose you not because you were so beautiful and you were so lovely and you were so worth it, it was the exact opposite. Why? So that no one may boast in the presence of God. That's why he chose you. That's why he chose me. He chose the lowly and the humble and here we are trying to elevate ourselves through status, thinking that if I connect myself to Paul or Apollos that that somehow means I should receive glory and status and exaltation, and you all should just praise me and think I'm amazing? That's the exact opposite reason why God chose you. It's a delusion to be a proud Christian. It's an oxymoron.

Verse 30, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" That's why God chose you, so that you would only be able to boast in the Lord, boast about the Lord. Your knowledge does not qualify you. Your righteousness does not qualify you. Your nobility, your status in society, your money does not qualify you. Your education does not qualify you. Your connections do not qualify you. Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. This shows you that when you are trying to compete with one another for glory, you're not competing with one another, you are competing with God for his glory. You want to boast in yourself when that belongs to God. Oh, the arrogance of that. Oh, the foolishness of that. Oh, the delusion that that is.

So it's a foolish message, it's a humbling message and God chose humble people and they were saved through a humble or humbling messenger, like we just read earlier, Paul, "When I came to you, I did not come in superiority of speech or of wisdom proclaiming to you the testimony of God, for I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." And this is why Paul chose to go about it that way, verse 5, "So that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God." Your trust would not be on man's wisdom in eloquence, your trust would not be on your pastor, would not be on some radio preacher, would not be on some prominent figure, would not be on your own wisdom, it would be completely and utterly on the power of God because that Gospel that I shared with you earlier, that ugly message, is the one that saves and transforms you. That's amazing. That is the power of God, that you would accept it and that it would change you. So we were saved through a humble messenger so that you would trust in God.

The next thing that you have to understand as we talked about the Spirit earlier, is we have a humble relationship with the Holy Spirit of God because we are dependent on him. The real teacher, the real teacher is Holy Spirit. The one that really teaches you in your heart and your soul is the Holy Spirit, it's not any man. God uses men, God uses

their message, God uses them proclaiming his word but ultimately for you to receive it, it's the Spirit of God. So he says in verse 1, "I, brethren," of chapter 3, "I could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?"

Your pride is a delusion and look at what he says here about these teachers. What is the right view of these teachers in verse 5? "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one." Verse 6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." So when you grow, do you attribute that growth to a pastor? To a teacher? To some guru? Who does the credit belong to? Don't, don't, don't lift men up beyond reason. Don't elevate them beyond reason. These are men who come and look at what he says. I don't have a neat outline for you, just really important concepts here, okay? Look at what he says in verse 9, "we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work." What's he talking about? The day, that's the final day when Jesus Christ comes. On that day, the true quality of any preacher, any minister, my work, your work, the true quality of it will be revealed because it will be tested by fire. "If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

So what will this determination be made up, what will be the basis of this judgment? We'll come back to this passage real quick but if you look down at chapter 4, he says this, verse 5, he says, "Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God." We have a humbling appointment coming. Each person will stand before the Lord, his heart will be completely exposed and the purposes that are there will be in full display. So don't go on judging before the time, you are not the judge. You can't put a stamp on a guy and say, "Yes, he is approved and he is faithful." And you put a stamp on another guy and say, "Oh, I think his motives are wrong," right? You might see some of that, everyone's got mixed motives, but you don't need to be judging one another in order to tear down faithful ministers of the Gospel and puffing up your favorite guy in order to be arrogant in favor of one against the other because God will reveal it on the last day.

John MacArthur's heart, I have no idea what's in there. That will be revealed on the last day. I don't need to know. I need to evaluate what comes from his mouth and whether or not it is in line with the Scripture, and I need to allow what he speaks that is truly the

word of God to influence me regardless of what's going on in his heart. I don't know what's there. God will reveal it. I'm not going to boast about being connected to John MacArthur because that doesn't make me more godly, more spiritual, more worthy of status than anyone else. I'm really close to John Street. I have no idea what's in his heart. I am not going to boast in that connection because that doesn't mean anything about me. I will stand before the Lord myself and he won't ask me, "All right, who are, what are your connections, son? Oh, John Street, well, we'll get you a penthouse suite in the kingdom of God," right? That's not what's going to happen.

He says that, Paul says, "I have spoken about this," in verse 6, "so that you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other." Verse 7, "who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor." Do you see the delusion that spiritual pride is? If Jesus Christ was crucified, if every apostle was sent to his death and tortured and wandering about from town to town, those are our heroes but we want honor and glory and ease and pleasure for ourselves. Your pride is a delusion and it's a destructive delusion.

Look at, I told you we'd go back to this, chapter 4, verse 16, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God," when he says "you," he means "you all together." "You are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness'; and, 'The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.' So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God."

The antidote to the delusion of spiritual pride is the truth of God, that you, that all things that God has made has been made for your edification and that we will all stand before him one day and give an account of ourselves. So let us be humble people. Let us not destroy God's temple for the sake of a building or the sake of a ministry or the sake of your own personal desires, and let's walk in love because love is not arrogant, it's not rude, it does not boast, it does not insist on its own way. And I need to land the plane so I will just pray and let that rest there, okay?

Let's pray.

*Father, we come to You as people who You know our hearts and You know the temptations toward pride and arrogance that exist there and I just pray, Father, that we would have an accurate view of ourselves, that You would take away the delusion of our own pride that we would believe what is true and live in light of that so that no one would boast before You, and that no one would boast in men; that rather, instead of boasting and being competitive, that each member as 1 Corinthians 12 says, would have the same care for one another and that when one is honored, the others rejoice rather than envy; that we would use what we have to build up, not to build up ourselves but to build up Your body. Forgive us, Lord, of our pride. Save those of us who don't know you and, Lord, I pray that there would be great joy among a humble group of people here at Providence Church. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.*