

1 Corinthians Series #10
"The Temple of God" 1 Cor. 3:16-17

I. INTRODUCTION
A. Read Text

16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

B. What Is The Popular Image Of The Church?

CONSIDER -

1. **Case 1:** Over two weeks ago
 - a. Agents from the bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms attempted to enter the compound of a religious group called the Branch Davidians near Waco, TX.
 - b. a gun battle ensued
 - 1) 4 federal agents were killed, along with 1 of the cult members
 - 2) 16 people were wounded
 - c. the leader, David Koresh, claims to be Jesus Christ
 - d. an apocalyptic leader who seems willing to equate an all out gun battle with Federal agents to the Biblical Battle of Armageddon and the end of the world - which of course, for him it will be.
2. **Case 2:** A week ago, "Inside Edition: did an expose on Benny Hinn, currently the most popular TV Evangelist
 - a. they disclosed some very disturbing things about his finances
 - b. and about the fraud of his religious showmanship and healing power
3. **Case 3:** A year ago "Primetime Live" ran an expose of 3 well known TV evangelists
 - a. again, uncovered the fraud perpetrated on people to bilk them out of millions of dollars
4. With these kinds of stories being splashed over the national media - what kind of image does the Church present to the public?
5. This week, at the barber shop, two guys talking about Waco, TX.: "With all this kind of thing, it makes me less and less interested in religion all the time."

6. In a recent poll -
 - a. most people's view of the Christian church was not favorable
 - b. most believe the Church's message is irrelevant to today
 - c. only 16% said they thought the church cared about non-christians
7. In general, for our society, the church seems to be a relic of a bygone age
8. Don't get me wrong, most people still see themselves as religious - it's just that they have no use for the church
 - a. 64% describe themselves as religious
 - 1) were 6 out of 10 of your neighbors going to church today?
 - 2) where you work? go to school?
 - b. 34% call themselves born again!
 - 1) & 2) Again?
9. The popular image of the church seems to be that it is unimportant - irrelevant
10. Set this over against what we read here

C. Today

1. Short / Simple
2. My hope: Paul's simple words here would ring in our ears, hearts, minds
3. Fill our thoughts and challenge our view of the Church

II. TEXT

A. V. 16

16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1. Context!
 - a. rebuking them for their disunity
 - b. arguing over who was the best pastor, Paul, Apollos, Peter, and others
 - c. Paul reminds them
 - 1) the church is one
 - 2) built on one foundation - Jesus Christ
 - 3) each of us is building on that foundation
 - 4) we must be careful how we build
 - d. these words are his conclusion
2. **"Do you not know that you are the temple of God?"**
 - a. a question
 - b. he had already taught them this
 - c. they had forgotten

3. It seems a lot of the ministry of the teachers is spent in simply reminding people of things they have already learned but forgotten.
4. The Corinthians were well acquainted with temples
 - a. many scattered throughout the city
 - b. 3 large and well known temples there: 1) Jupiter, 2) Apollo, 3) Aphrodite, with her 1000 ritual prostitutes
5. But Paul would not be thinking of these; he would be thinking of the Temple in Jerusalem: The Temple of the Real God
6. Two words for temple
 - a. hieron - whole temple complex
 - b. nahos - inner sanctuary, the holy place where only the priests were allowed to go
 - 1) in the temple in Jerusalem, it meant the holy place and the holy of holies
 - 2) where the ark of the covenant was kept
 - 3) meant the place where the presence of God was revealed in a glorious glowing cloud called the Shekinah
 - 4) this was the place where God revealed Himself
 - 5) was also the center of Divine activity
7. That is the word Paul uses here; the nahos
8. **"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"**
 - a. he is referring to the whole church in Corinth
 - b. together they comprise the temple of God
 - c. **1 Peter 2:5 "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."**
9. There is not temple in Jerusalem today
 - a. it was destroyed by the armies of Rome in 70 AD
 - b. there is a renewed attempt to rebuild it
 - c. but really, it is not necessary
 - d. because the real temple of God is not to be found just on the Mount in Jerusalem
 - e. the church is the temple of God
 - f. it is the place God now manifests Himself to the world
 - g. that is why Paul says in v. 16 **"the Spirit of God dwells in you."**
10. The Church is place of divine activity; where God works His purposes and plans
11. In all the world, the church is where the real action is!

B. V. 17

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

1. This is unnerving!
2. God will destroy those who defile His temple!
3. What does this mean?
4. Keep the context in mind
 - a. Paul calls the church the temple of God
 - b. the foundation is Christ
 - c. we, as living stones comprise the whole building
 - c. we build the temple as we live our lives
5. Last week, as Christians we can build with two things
 - a. the eternal things of God's word
 - b. the worthless things of this world
 - c. one day, our works will be judged by Christ in a judgment of rewards
 - 1) if we have built with the gold, silver, and precious stones of God's word = Reward
 - 2) if we have built with the wood, hay, straw of the things of this world = loss / but saved
6. Now in v. 17, he speaks of a third way
 - a. this person does not build at all
 - b. rather, he defiles the temple of God;
 - 1) tries to tear it down
 - 2) injures, mars, harms, spoils it
 - c. the one who does this, God will destroy!
7. Paul is speaking of those who would harm the people of God
8. The Church is the apple of God's eye.
9. To injure it is to cast oneself as the enemy of God

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Short / Simple
 1. I said my message today would be short and simple
 2. So let me wrap it up with this . . .
- B. We Are The Temple of God!
 1. We are the dwelling place of God on Earth!
 2. The church is the means by which God reveals Himself to the world today
 - a. in us they must see His love
 - b. in us they must see His holiness
 3. When the world holds the church in such low esteem as it does today, whose fault is that?
 4. When the world thinks the message of the church is

irrelevant, who is responsible?

5. I'll tell you why these things are . . .
 - a. because Christians have held the church in such low regard
 - b. because believers have not been drawing on the relevance of the gospel

C. Problems

1. Certainly there are problems in the Church
2. Because it is comprised of imperfect people, it is going to be imperfect
3. But it is still God's design to dwell within the Church by His Spirit
4. The Church is the place of His revelation and activity
5. And as such, we are called to a profound loyalty to the Church
6. We must honor it and guard its honor