

## **DESTROY THE CHURCH – GOD WILL DESTROY YOU**

### **1 Corinthians 3:17 (NKJV)**

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

The surrounding context of 1 Corinthians 3:17 addresses primarily the leaders and teachers in the church in terms of how they build the church. But this verse makes it clear that what is being said has application for everyone. Before God, it is most serious what takes place in relation to the LOCAL CHURCH. It is of utmost importance to Him that the local church not be defiled!

The word “defiles” means to mar, corrupt, or damage.

Often, people want to apply this to the individual believer’s body, saying we should not smoke, abuse alcohol and drugs, or do anything that would be destructive to our body, which is God’s temple. I certainly agree with that sentiment (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19-20), but the context here in 1 Corinthians 3 is addressing the local church collectively, and not the physical body of individual believers. The concern in context is the building up or the tearing down of the local church.

And what is the issue of concern in the immediate context? It is the defiling of the local church through the use of human wisdom. The way one defiles God’s temple of the local church is through worldly wisdom and philosophy that compromises the Word of God. Note in context what Paul goes on to say...

### **1 Corinthians 3:18–20 (NKJV)**

18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”;

20 and again, “The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

Human wisdom or worldly wisdom does not have its source in God. It comes from man (or demons). It starts with man (or demons) and it ends with man. It is human ideas. This is what Paul says he refused to tie with the gospel message in 1 Cor. 1:17. God isn’t interested in our ideas, our philosophy, our psychology, or our agenda. He is interested in HIS MESSAGE, HIS WORD being given out. And to corrupt the church through

the integration of human wisdom is most serious. This is how the church is defiled!

Here Paul is pronouncing one of the most severe warnings found in the New Testament. What is taught in the local church is critical. The health of the church depends upon it.

There is a play on words in 1 Corinthians 3:17. The same basic word that is used for “defiles” is also used for “destroy”. So the idea then is literally, **“If anyone destroys the local church, God will destroy him.”** He who destroys the church will be destroyed by God. He will reap in kind as he has sown in the church. Paul doesn’t give us specifics here. He simply makes a general statement and applies it to “anyone” who does this.

Whoever does this is in BIG trouble with God. In one way or another, God is going to destroy him, in keeping with his sin. To bring in teaching that mixes human ideas with God’s message, and thus defiles the church, is a most serious matter before God.

God isn’t interested in our “brilliant ideas”. He is interested in the communication of His Word without compromise.

Paul in his last message (that we have preserved in the Scripture) said in the last chapter of his last book, “Preach the word!”

## **2 Timothy 4:2 (NKJV)**

**2** Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.