

Carnal Religion

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1 Corinthians 3:1-3 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

- I. I have heard through the years many talk about the difference between true salvation and just having some kind of religion.
 - A. But I have come to believe that most people just practice some kind of religion – including those who claim to have true salvation.
 - B. Most people are not truly spiritual at all, but are carnal.
 - 1. They follow men and not Christ.
 - 2. They live according to their own desires and make up their minds about everything according to their own knowledge, which they have gotten from someone else, who is also carnal.
 - 3. And most do all this in the pride of their heart with their nose in the air.
 - 4. This is why Paul could not give them meat, but had to continue with the milk. (They kept flunking kindergarten)
 - C. Jesus and the written Word of God are only an option added to their life for embellishment, and for emergencies.
 - D. They look elsewhere for understanding and guidance in their earthly life.
 - E. They are natural men and natural men are carnal.
 - F. They seek after the wisdom of men and they would rather hear it from a carnal man than from the Word of God by the Spirit of God with power.
 - G. Spiritual power frightens them unless it is under their control. (this is what superstition is about.)

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

- II. What does it mean to be “carnal” and what does it mean to be “spiritual?”

CARNAL, a.

- 1. *Pertaining to flesh; fleshly; sensual; opposed to spiritual; as carnal pleasure.*
- 2. *Being in the natural state; unregenerate.*

The carnal mind is enmity against God. Rom. 8.

- A. The two words are opposites and cannot be brought together in some kind of hybrid form where they both describe a person.
- B. Most people tend to think of carnal as immoral or overindulgent in fleshly appetites and habits.
 - 1. But to be carnal has a much deeper meaning than that alone.
 - 2. To be carnally minded is to look to others and to self for wisdom, understanding, guidance, and help.
- C. To be spiritually minded is the opposite of that – it is to truly look to God for all these things.

1. It is to realize that to hope in man or self is vain and that the only way, truth, and life is in Christ.
- D. These two states of a soul are not passive toward one another.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

- E. There can be no such thing as a “carnal Christian” or a “spiritual carnal person.”
1. We are either carnal or spiritual, and most people are carnal, in spite of their profession of being spiritual, because their life, their behavior, and what comes out of their mouths reveals it.
- F. Paul describes these people as carnal in their attitudes, actions, and beliefs.

1 Corinthians 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

1. So if there is envying, strife, and divisions someone is carnal.
2. There will not be envying, strife, and divisions among truly spiritual people.
3. If there is any disagreement it will be handled with love, forbearance, patience, and kindness.
4. If there is malice, envying, strife, these are clearly shown to be works of the flesh, or the result of carnality.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

- G. To be spiritual is the opposite of all this.

SPIRITUAL, a.

1. Consisting of spirit; not material; incorporeal (not consisting of matter); as a spiritual substance or being. The soul of man is spiritual.

1. It is to be aware of a realm in which we can live, which is not of this world and is not controlled by what happens in this world.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

- H. Most of us immediately think of heaven and eternal things in the future, but the context does not refer to that, but to the here and now.

1 Corinthians 2:11-12 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

1. This can only happen through the new birth.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

2. The spiritual mind recognizes what is carnal and refuses to be controlled by it, because the spiritual man is led by the Spirit of God and automatically knows these things are contrary to God and his ways.
3. Preaching falls on deaf ears so much of the time because they are carnal ears and there is no spiritual understanding.

- III. Most people who make professions of faith receive some of the principles of Christ and make a start, but revert back to carnal thinking and living.
- A. They do this mostly because of the lack of examples of spiritual people in the churches.
 - B. The prevailing way of doing things, learning things, and understanding things, is carnal – not spiritual.
 - C. So its very sad to realize that in the churches most people who make a start toward Christ and living for God are taught to be carnal instead.
 - D. Just about all Christian “how to” books are written with a carnal view of things, drawing from the knowledge they have gathered from observing people instead of looking to God and his Word and following the Spirit’s help and guidance.
 - E. Or we look to “success” stories of others and try to copy their methods and make or build something for God.
 - F. Being carnally minded is to go first to the wise men of the world seeking knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and help.
 - G. Humanism is carnal-mindedness and it is certainly enmity with God.
 - H. But people who claim to be living for God by and large do the same thing humanists do, and think just like them.
 1. We first seek to learn, to understand, to deal with problems, by our own hand or with the help of others.
 2. Few are the people who go to God FIRST.
 - I. Being carnally-minded is to view the world, life, all that happens here as based in the physical.
 1. There is always some intellectual explanation based upon physical substances or actions and reactions.
 2. Everything is looked at as if it is a machine that we can control if we only KNOW some things.
 3. This is all without regard to the spiritual, which is really the cause and effects behind all that goes on in the physical realm.
 4. So the carnal mind is blind and walking in darkness, and leads to eternal death and separation from God and righteousness forever.
 - J. Being carnally minded is to live after the flesh – not just our own lusts, but after the distorted reasoning of the blinded minds of this world who walk after their own lusts and lies.

K. Here is an Old Testament example of what it means to be carnal instead of spiritual.

2 Chronicles 14:2-5 And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God: For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. (for 10 years)

2 Chronicles 14:9-12 And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. (in the 11th year of his reign)

2 Chronicles 15:1-2 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. (15th year of his reign they had a big celebration and vowed to serve and depend upon God – peace until the 35th year of his reign)

2 Chronicles 16:1-3 In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. (21 years – just about how long it takes to raise a family of children.)

2 Chronicles 16:7-9 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

2 Chronicles 16:10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.

2 Chronicles 16:12-13 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

1 Corinthians 3:18-21 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;