

I Corinthians; Lesson #6
Carnality Prevents Spiritual Growth
Pentwater Bible Church
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I CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

I Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

Let's quickly review the examples of living in the flesh. Remember this is a Biblical technical term for a host of emotional outpourings that strive against the Spirit. It is *not* a discussion of the natural uses of our bodies such as eating, sex, keeping warm or general care for our flesh. It is something deeply sinister that the apostle is warning us of here. I return to Paul's explanation from Galatians Chapter Five to emphasize the importance of realizing these concepts and our responsibility to avoid them.

Galatians 5: 18-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (strife), emulations (jealousy), wrath, strife (factions which are small organized dissenting groups within the Church of Christ), 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.

The believers at Corinth were living lives that matched those of the culture around them. They were not letting the Spirit lead them in appropriate thought and behavior. New believers behave this way. They still cling to the ways of this world thinking they can compartmentalize their Christianity and not open it up for the world at large to witness. They need to be disciplined in Christ. They must be *fed* to grow. After regular feeding on God's Word a new believer becomes less concerned with "what the world thinks" and only concerned with what Jesus thinks and wants. We become unashamed of the gospel (Rom 1:16). If you are still reluctant to speak of Christ as fact to others and have been a believer for a long time then you might still be in the early stages of Spiritual development. You might want to ask yourself why are you stuck here? For the Corinthians it was carnality. What is it for you? Typical situations are:

1. Sin
2. Desire to follow the world's ways and not place your full trust in Christ.
3. Placing God's Gospel as equal in the smorgasbord of beliefs in this world.

4. Unsure of whether God's Word is completely true.
5. Following denominational teachings and not God's Word.

As The Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 5: 15-16 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.

Paul wanted to speak to them of the deep nature of Spiritual matters. Since their sanctification was truncated because of their sin they had not grown in Christ likeness at all. He had to continue to speak to them as "babes in Christ" and not the mature believers they should have been at this time in their walk with Christ. They continued to follow the ways of the flesh and not the Spirit. Sin in our lives causes our Spiritual growth to stem until we remove the sin. During our Spiritual lives as we grow from the day of our salvation we become *mature* in our belief. Look how Paul describes the milk and meat of Spiritual truths.

I Corinthians 3: 2-3 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?

It is an interesting example Paul uses of milk and meat. Meat is the old KJV term for solid food that he uses to describe their situation. A baby can only consume milk until it is more mature then solid food can be introduced into their diet. Paul longed to teach them the deeper Spiritual truths but they could not understand it or handle it because their growth had been stemmed. When he left them on his second missionary journey they were babes in Christ and he sees them the same way now. They have not grown. We can gauge our own growth by the measure of *fleshly* emotions we embrace. Do we envy, have deep continual hatred, desire adultery or seek to divide the body of Christ by engaging in sowing discord among other believers? Outside of Galatians Five, Christ gives us examples of what He hates in Proverbs Six.

Proverbs 6: 16-19 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Paul simply tells the Corinthians that it is clear to him that they have not grown at all Spiritually because they are envying, engaging in strife among the other believers and are divided instead of being unified. We must be unified but not at the cost of truth. If there is heresy or outward visible sin among us it must be dealt with. Failure to deal with

it will lead to disunity. Unification of believers is not the goal. Living for Christ is the goal. Disunity is simple the outward manifestation of their Spiritual condition. Paul knew the cost to the Church if he failed to confront these issues. He told them that they lived in this world as unsaved people and not the children of the most-high God who bought them with a very high price.

I Corinthians 3: 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

Paul now gives them examples of their carnality. They were divided over ministers of the gospel. This is not an example of declaring that some ministers are not giving the gospel and others are. It is dividing over silly matters demonstrating Spiritual immaturity. The loyalty they had to different teachers was so strong that they were plunging into worldyness and dividing the congregation.

I Cor 3: 5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

Apollos and Paul were the minister servants of Christ. They were not the source of the message. Christ is the source. The Corinthians were focusing on men not Christ. Paul wanted to divert their attention away from the teacher and onto Christ. God alone is the source of blessing and ministers are only the servants accountable to Him. Ministers must be aware of cultivating the praise of people. Certain men of the Church at Corinth were doing that (I Cor 3: 18-23) and Paul wanted to put an end to it. Paul knew that they needed to seek, by faithful service to the body, the praise of Christ. For it is to Him that we are all answerable. Who among us does not want to hear at the Bema Seat Judgment?

*Matthew 25:1 His lord said unto him, **Well done, [thou] good and faithful servant:** thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

Apollos and Paul were not the *cause* by which the believers came to a saving grace belief in Christ. They were the *means*.

I Corinthians 3: 6-7 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Paul in his masterful agricultural illustration discusses the natural growth process all around us of plant live. In comparing that to our Spiritual growth he makes the point that neither the sower nor cultivator are most important in the process. It is God that makes the entire process occur and deserves all the focus of our attention. He produces the results in Spiritual development unless we truncate it by sin or engagement in fleshly behavior.

I Corinthians 3: 8-10 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Paul begins a section, which we will develop in our next session. That is the *building*, which is the body of believers and our role in it. He is introducing the use of our Spiritual Gifts, which are received by all believers at the moment of true regeneration. In repeating one person who plants the seed of the Gospel and another who discipled (watering) he demonstrates the use of two Spiritual Gifts, evangelism and teaching. He is giving these examples to show that we will receive rewards at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ for the quality of the manner in which we exercise our Spiritual gifts. Christ's Judgment's scale of evaluation will not be a matter of quantity but quality. We who exercise our gifts are coworkers with God to develop His Church. This is the Body of Christ. Paul knew that he was a wise master builder. He was not expressing personal pride. It was simply his awareness of his role in the development of the Body of Christ. He received it from Christ. He began to lay the foundation, which is the Lord Jesus. Someone else built upon that foundation.

He then concludes this section of Scripture with a warning to all of us that claim the name of Jesus Christ. We must recognize our responsibility to add to the Church of Jesus Christ by the use of the gifts He has given to us. Next session we will speak to the Bema Seat Judgment of The Lord Jesus Christ.

Next Session: **November 8, 2009 I Corinthians Chapter Three Continued-
The Judgment at the Bema Seat of Christ.**

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