

THE GOOD, THE BAD,
AND THE UGLY: People
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:12-3:4

INTRO: Many years ago, after I was on my own, though I had been taught not to watch movies, I did watch one. It was a western called, "The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly". Some years after that I became a Christian. After I became a Christian I began to study the Bible. And one day I was studying in 1 Corinthians and I found three different kinds of people mentioned there. And as I studied them I said to myself, "Here they are; the good, the bad and the ugly." Sixteen years ago I preached a message on these three people. Then some years later I did another message called, "Words: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly." I would like to have these messages available on cd or dvd but I want to save our sound techs from having to convert those from cassette. So, I have decided to redo two messages somewhere through this summer. And then I want to add one new one.

So, with regard to our subject, one may categorize man from different perspectives, but when you look at man from the perspective as to what controls him, now we find three classes of people. We are not considering in this message WHO controls him but through WHAT part of his being he is controlled. When we analyze man in this way we find he falls into three camps. These I have called "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly."

We have just had the passage, 1 Corinthians 2:12-3:4 read for us. So, let me briefly show you these three kinds of people and then we'll look at them in greater detail. We begin with 2:14 (read). It speaks of the natural man. Here is the kind of person I have classed as 'the bad'. Now go to verse 15 (read). Here we have the man called the spiritual man. This is 'the good'. Then in 3:1 we have our third class of people (read). This person is called carnal. Here we have, 'the ugly'.

We begin our subject then, by looking at 'the good'.

I. THE GOOD (1Cor.2:15)

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD

There is a word to describe these people and it is not the word "Christian." They are described as "the spiritual man." This man is not spiritual because he is a Christian. He is spiritual because he has submitted him or herself to the control of the Holy Spirit. Man is made up of three parts; body, soul and spirit. As I see this man, the Holy Spirit controls him through his or her own spirit. That is why this person is called spiritual. Here is a man in whom

the things of this world have grown dim. He has prayed as the German songwriter puts it, "fon der Erde ries mich lous." Or as Amy Carmicle would say, "*Dead to the world and its applause; all its customs fashions and laws.*"

This man is called "spiritual" because he walks in the Spirit; lives in the Spirit. He studies the Book written through the Spirit ; he prays in the Spirit and through the Spirit he puts off the sinful habits and desires of the flesh. In this person are produced the fruits of the Spirit. He is accurately describable by only one word and that is "spiritual."

Like Noah, he may well be scorned and scoffed at by the world and even by certain Christians. Like Moses, he may well find the spiritual life a lonely life. Few are the people who look up to this man. Fewer still are the places where he is considered to be of value. Some say he is so heavenly minded he is no earthly good. He doesn't laugh at off-colored jokes; he is not impressed with high positions or temporal riches. He is truly a stranger and a pilgrim in this world for he is waiting for a city which has foundations and whose builder and maker is God. He has chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, having firmly fixed in his mind that the reproach of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he looks to a reward that is eternal. He does not live here, he is only camping here temporarily, for with gaze firmly fixed on the celestial city he passes through this world.

He may be troubled on every side, but he is not distressed. He may be perplexed, but he is not in despair. He may be persecuted, but he is not forsaken. He may be cast down, but he is not destroyed. He always bears about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus. He is delivered to death for Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made known to others in his mortal body. He or she is a spiritual person.

Now, don't get me wrong. He is not a perfect man. It is not that he is not tempted. It is not that he never fails. Nor is he so heavenly minded that he never gets discouraged. But in all these things he sees through the temporal to the eternal. Sometimes he even begins to question as to whether he is even on the right track and sometimes he wonders if the fight is really worth it. But in the midst of it all, with the Bible as his roadmap, he moves on for God. He has put his hand to the plow, and he will not look back. That is a brief description of the person who is spiritual.

B. DESTINATION OF THE GOOD

Now let me tell you briefly about his destiny. He is going to heaven! He is going to spend eternity with his beloved master. He will sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and enjoy the same blessings they enjoy. His eternal destiny will superabundantly repay life's miseries. It will be eternal glory. But not only is his destiny wonderful. His reward will be wonderful as well. Jesus had instructed him not to lay up treasures on earth, but to lay them up in heaven and he has done so. And when he or she gets to glory, it will be glory on top of glory!

II. THE BAD (1Cor.3:14)

A. DESCRIPTION

So, we have looked at the person we have called the good, and now we want to look at the bad. We find him in 2:14 (read). He is here called the natural man. The NIV calls him the man without the Holy Spirit. Kenneth Weust calls him the unregenerate man. All these words are descriptive of this person, but they are not accurate translations.

According to the Bible, man is a three part being. I cannot take time in this message to prove but let me give you one strong verse (1 Thessalonians 5:23), which says, "Now may the God of peace sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now from these three nouns; spirit, soul and body three adjectives have been derived and they describe the three people we are looking at this morning. Two of those adjectives we can translated into English but one of them we have no adjective for. From the word 'spirit' we get the adjective 'spiritual'. From the word body we get the adjective 'fleshly' or 'carnal'. But we have no adjective from the word soul, though the original language does. I was going to give you some explanation for that but my message got too long so we'll leave it for this time.

This word for which we have no adjective is the word translated 'natural' man. In the original it is psukikos and it comes from the word 'psuchee' or psyche as we say it. It is the Greek word for 'soul'. So, all we have to do is turn the English noun 'soul' into an adjective and there we have it. So, what should we call him? Souly; soulish? or would you like 'soulical'. I have opted for 'soulish'.

So, now we have coined a new adjective to describe this

man. We will call him the "soulish" man. He is controlled through the soul. Now that will not ring true to you because we are not used to such terminology. We ascribe the gratification of the senses to the body, but the Bible knows of no such thing. In the OT we read over and over again of souls lusting after foods. It is the soul that hungers and thirsts. The body is the instrument by which the soul satisfies those desires. The five senses belong to the soul, not the body. The soul uses the body while we are alive physically to operate the senses. When we die the soul continues to experience all the senses (See Luke 16:22-25).

Now, the soulish man is basically a selfish man. He may be cultured and refined and look oh so dignified, but he is a selfish man. This "self" he seeks to preserve in every way. In Matthew 16:24-25 Jesus said, *"If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life [soul] shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life [soul] for my sake shall find it."*

So, let us go to Luke 12 to get a good look at the soulish man (read 16-21). There you have a good look at this man called the natural man in our text. The description then of this man is that he is a soulish man. He wants to gratify and satisfy the senses. He wants to keep soul and body together for his own enjoyment. Therefore Jesus said, If any man wants to come after me let him deny himself and take up that instrument of death, the cross, and follow me. Anyone who took up the cross in that day was not coming back alive. But, those who give away their life in this manner have found that life which cannot be taken away.

B. DESTINY

So, what is the destiny of this man. Scripture leaves no doubt as to the destiny of the soulish man and you've heard it often. This man is going to hell for all eternity. But the good news is that every moment he is alive, salvation, full and free is available to this person every moment.

III. THE UGLY (3:1-5)

A. DESCRIPTION

We have come now to our third person, the ugly. But before we begin a description of the ugly, let me say that there is a manuscript difference in words used in 3:1. Some manuscripts have 'sarkinos' and others 'sarkikos'. I have

mentioned to you recently that I hold to a majority text position and thus use the 'sarkikos' thought in this passage. It would take quite a while to explain this and I will leave that out for the sake of time.

So, we have come to the last man, whom I have called 'the ugly'. This man is a very sad sight, and repulsive when seen from God's point of view. So I have called him the ugly. Translators call him by various other names. The KJV and NKJV call him *carnal*. The NIV calls him *worldly*. Wuest's Expanded Translation calls such people, '*those dominated by the evil nature,*' and '*the man who orders his life as the unsaved do.*' Luther calls him 'fleishlich'.

Well, we do not need to coin a new word for this man. We only need to call him exactly what the original text calls him. The Greek word is *sarkikos*. We have two English words for that: *carnal* and, *fleshly*. The word *carnal* comes from the Latin word *carnis*, which simply means *fleshly*. Now the adjective *fleshly* can have a good sense or an evil sense. In a good sense, we need to look after the flesh. We need to provide things like food and care for our bodies. That is being *fleshly* in a good sense. But, the word *fleshly* can be used to describe that part in us we sometimes call the sin nature. That is what we are talking about this morning. The *fleshly man*, in this sense, though a Christian, is controlled by the sin nature. It is in this sense we are talking about him as 'the ugly'. The *carnal man* is a miss-fit in the world and a miss-fit in the church. He is a contradiction of the worst kind. He is born of the Spirit and walking after the flesh. This man is controlled by the flesh. This is a Christian controlled by *fleshly* thinking.

And now we have the task on our hands of identifying how a *carnal* or *fleshly* Christian operates. So, let me say this first. Some have argued that there is no such a thing as a *carnal* or *fleshly* Christian. So, let us settle that first. Look at 3:1. It says, "And I, brethren..." He is speaking to brethren. In 1:2, he calls them *sanctified* and *saints*. He is talking to Christians. Then he says, "And I, brethren, could not speak to YOU, as to spiritual people..." He is speaking to Christians, but he cannot address them as spiritual Christians. Nor can he address them as 'psykikos' people because they are saved. And then Paul says it clearly, that he had to speak to them as to *fleshly* people, or *fleshly* Christians. No doubt, there is such a thing as a *fleshly* Christian. There can be no question about that.

What there can be more question about is how to identify these *fleshly* Christians. Who are these *fleshly* Christians?

Why are they called fleshly? I have pondered this question. Here is the question: Are these Christians who do not care much about spiritual things? They want the world in one hand and the Church in the other? They want to be identified in friendly terms in the world and also in the Church? Or, are these Christians who dabble in the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes or the pride of life? Are they Christians such as F.B. Meyer wrote about like this: "They are like a water logged vessel. They cannot sink, but they are so saturated with inconsistencies, and worldliness, and permitted evil that they can only be towed with great difficulty into the celestial port?" Is that what is in view here?

Well, it may be possible to identify such Christians as fleshly, that is not what Paul has in mind in our text. As I was preparing this message, once more I pondered this matter. And I thought, "Well, it is Paul that uses this term in our passage. Does he also indicate in the text what he meant by it?" And I think Paul sets out for us here what he meant by 'fleshly' or 'carnal' Christians.

First, he qualifies what carnal Christians are like in 3:1 when he says, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, AS TO BABES!" Carnal Christians are babies in their spiritual life. Now, is there anything wrong with being a babe in Christ? No. There is no more wrong with that than being a baby physically. But when a child is 4 or 5 years old and still a baby, and is still only on milk and is still in diapers, now there is something wrong. Just so it is with Christians. A Christian who has been a Christian for some time and is still a baby in knowledge, that is a problem, and that is carnality according to this text.

Now I want to show you from the text what happens to Christians who do not grow normally as Christians should. We find it in verses 2-4 (read). Paul says he has fed them with milk and he is still giving them milk because if he gives them anything solid, they can't handle it. You know what happens when you give babies meat to eat. You switch back to milk soon, otherwise you have this stuff all over you in worse form. You see, these are the ugly. And why can these Corinthians not bear spiritual meat? Verse 3, for they are still carnal. When you study the Corinthian Christians through the two letters Paul wrote to them, they do not think they are babies. They think they are spiritual giants. As a matter of fact, some of them have even questioned Paul's apostleship! Some of them thought they had advanced past Paul! So, let me tell you something about

carnal Christians. They do not know they are carnal. Usually they think they are very spiritual and others are not nearly caught up with them.

So, what signs were there in Corinth to indicate that they were fleshly? Well, in verse 3 Paul goes on like this, "For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" Here are the tell-tale signs of carnality. Number one, envy is a sign of carnality. Now, what were they envious about? Were they envious about how big the next persons farm or shop was? Were they envious about how much their neighbor was prospering financially? No! That is not what Paul has in mind. Look at verse 4 (read). They were envious of others with regard to their spiritual status among Christians. They considered how great their spirituality was by whether they were 'of Paul' or 'of Apollos'. They wanted to be looked up to by other Christians as being very spiritual because they favored the right apostle or the right preacher or the right evangelist. They just had to have the right opinion! We are not talking here about sinning in the sense of moral failure. Here are people who wanted to be viewed as a 'somebody' spiritually. They had spiritual zeal. They said things like, "Paul led me to the Lord." Or "Appolos led me to Christ." Maybe they said things like, "Paul may be a little man, but his speech packs a punch!" Or, "You should hear Apollos. It makes Paul sound dim."

From my own Christian experience and from watching many others, I have concluded that you can do all kinds of spiritual service, not for the Lord, but for personal recognition. That is carnality. That is following the flesh. You see, in such cases, one is living his or her Christian life for the very same purpose most of mankind live their lives; self advancement or self glory. Paul calls this at the end of verse 3, 'behaving like mere men'. The word 'mere' is not in the original. It is behaving like men. That is man in general, unsaved man, behaves like this. In our text, the Christian, like the unsaved man, is controlled by the sin nature.

Then there is another mark of fleshliness. It is indicated by the word 'strife'. Vine says of this word that it means, "strife, quarrel, especially rivalry, contention, wrangling." Barnes comments like this: "The envy here referred to, was that which arose from the superior advantages and endowments which some claimed or possessed over others. Envy everywhere is a fruitful cause of strife. Most contentions in the church are somehow usually connected with envy."

The third mark of carnality here is called 'divisions'. What we have here is a progression of evil. First envy. That is a matter that takes place in the heart. This brings forth strife which now affects others in quarrel or rivalry or contention. Now the word translated 'division' I think would be better translated 'factions'. The original word here is 'dikostasia'. It comes from two words. The first is 'twice' and the second, 'stasis'; a division by sedition. This second word has been translated as a division, a sedition, a dissension, insurrection or uproar. What happens is that a group is divided within by a faction which operates against the main group. Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary defines a faction as, "1. A group of people operating within, and often in opposition to a larger group, to gain its own ends. 2. Party strife; internal dissension." When factions develop in a church, it wants to happen through carnal opinions.

Divisions are not always bad and sometimes they are even necessary. Our early forefathers broke away from the Catholic Church. It was a very necessary division. It is not bad to leave a church because you disagree with certain things. But when you try to gain people to your view in order to gain a following, by a party spirit, and thus seek to go against the rest of the group, that is bad. You see, when Christians divide against Christians to bring down the other side, this is always bad. That is the word here. And what are the roots of such things? Envy and strife which cause factions. You see, here are the ugly. These people are not arguing over secular matters. They are arguing over spiritual matters and they are trying to make themselves look better. This is carnality.

Now you could be in a church and you want a certain spiritual position. This is not bad. It may even be good. For example, 1 Timothy 3:1 says, "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work." But, if we desire something like this for our own glory, this is always bad. Then when someone else is chosen for that position, envy sets in. Vine says of this word envy, that it, and I quote, "...is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word." So, when envy sets in, strife follows; and from there such a person seeks to gain a following for his or her own end. This is that division that is very troublesome in churches.

When this passage speaks of a carnal or fleshly Christian,

it does not speak of one who lives for the enjoyments or pleasures of the world. It speaks of one who does spiritual work for self glory. This kind of carnality is doing spiritual things for self glorification. This kind of carnality can be very hard to recognize. L E. Maxwell says in the book "Crowded to Christ", *"But who can doubt the nearly almighty power of the flesh in its dominating thralldom over God's people?"* And again he says, *"In this day of cultured, and refined, and educated flesh, there is nothing quite so subtle as the thinking and willing and planning of fleshly Christians."* And yet again, *"The flesh has infinite forms. It may not always appear devilish, deceitful, and hateful; on the contrary, it may be cultured, educated, refined, and religious. In fact it may so play possum as to lead you to think that it is dead. It thrives in any soil, and under the shades of earthly sorrow as well as in the sunshine of prosperity. Whatever its behaviour, however, it is still changeless flesh, 'unimprovable, incorigible, incurable...There remains, then, no remedy but that which God has provided—condemnation, crucifixion, death with Christ' (Mantle). The only trade-mark becoming the flesh is the death-mark of the Cross."*

Why do we envy others in spiritual matters? It may happen because we desire a certain position or recognition and someone else gets it. When we do not desire that position or recognition, we will not likely be envious. But we may desire a different position and when someone else gets that position or recognition that I want, then I may become envious. What kind of man or woman does not struggle with envy or jealousy? The man or woman who has mastered wanting self glory and has become meek or humble. Such a person does not become proud when they achieve a position or recognition. It takes a great deal of sanctification to overcome fleshliness or carnality.

Moses was the meekest man on earth (Num. 12:3). That is why God could use him so mightily. And he became a very great prophet. And one day the Spirit of God came upon two other men, Eldad and Medad. And they, like Moses, prophesied. And Joshua was envious or jealous for Moses' sake. And he said, "Moses, my lord, forbid them!" And Moses said, "Are you zealous (or jealous or envious) for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD'S people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:27-29).

B. DESTINY

So, what is the destiny of such a person? For the man who accepts the Bible as the Word of God there is no argument as to where the "Bad" go and where the "Good" go after death. The Scripture is clear. But when we come to this last person, the fleshly Christian, then we run into problems. He is a problem to the Calvinist and to the Arminian. But I want you to see what Paul says. You see, at judgment day, this person's works will be burned up. All the works done in the energy of the flesh for the glory of self, even though they were ever so good, they are burned up. But notice now what 1 Corinthians 3:15 says (read).

But, I would give this warning. Carnality, whatever form it may take, puts that believer in the danger of going off the Christian path entirely. When that happens, heaven is no longer their destiny. Listen to Romans 8:12-13, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." You see, the place to the flesh needs to go is the cross. It must be crossed out. It is an ever present danger to the Christian.

Just this week I read in the book we are going through in prayer meeting of a man who led thousands and thousands of people to the Lord. Wesley Deuel, in his book, "Mighty Prevailing Prayer" writes of this man like this: "His face was aglow with the presence of God, and his heart constantly cried for souls. He won thousands to Christ in just a few years and began to be known as the D.L. Moody of Korea. Sadly, we later lost him to our OMS ministry, and God lost him to His service. Secular things robbed him of his hunger and his lips turned to lips of clay... He died in a foreign city practically unknown" (pg. 72).

CONCLUSION: And, so, in conclusion, with regard to the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, which camp are you in this morning? If you have not yet been saved then the Scriptures exhort you that today is the day of salvation. Neither this world nor the Bible gives us assurance that we will live tomorrow. From life in general and the Scriptures we learn that today is the time to be saved. No one has a guarantee of tomorrow. Tomorrow may well be too late. What must you do? First, and foremost, you must realize that you are very sinful. You have offended Almighty God over and over again. If you think that is not true, you cannot be saved. But if you realize that, then you need to also know that God loved you and sent Jesus to die the death you should have died. And if you will repent of your sins and receive Him as your Savior, you will be saved.

Did the fleshly or carnal Christian speak to your heart this morning? There is a solution. Repent for any wrongdoing and then seek the face of the Lord. Then seek to grow spiritually and ask Him what He wants you to do for Him, not what you want to do for your own glory. And all of this must be done for the glory of God, not self glory! Then follow Him faithfully until you come to clear direction and God grants you a place of service. The more gifted by God a Christian is, the more the devil will exert the flesh against this gift. I have read of a gifted singer who refused to sing, because he could not do it for the glory of God. When he sang, it was so good, and pride set in. And when such a person cannot overcome selfish desires, the devil has defeated him and the gift of God lies dormant.

Could it be that such things as being lukewarm or being worldly or caught up with the things of the world or apathy towards spiritual things are also carnality? Certainly they are very alluring to the flesh and they are also very dangerous things Christians often get snared into. Maybe you find yourself there this morning. Maybe once the Bible was your guide and you stood with firm convictions but today, one by one you are laying those things aside. You are laying them aside, not because you have found it so in Scripture but because you are finding it increasingly difficult to stand for those things. Maybe you are finding TV or videos more and more alluring and the Bible less and less appealing. Maybe your job so occupies your mind that spiritual things are slipping away. Summer is upon us. There are so many things to do. Stay alert. Stay awake. May you be challenged today to consider your ways and to say, Yes I've been slacking off, and by the grace of God I'm going to turn this around. I am in danger of going off the path altogether.