

1 Corinthians 3:3 Amplified Bible (AMP)

- ▶ ³You are still worldly [controlled by ordinary impulses, the sinful capacity]. For as long as there is jealousy and strife *and* discord among you, are you not unspiritual, and are you not walking like ordinary men [unchanged by faith]?

“You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?” (KJV)

Introduction

What is a carnal Christian?

The word “carnal” is translated from the Greek word *sarkikos*, which means fleshly.” Here in the text, Paul is addressing the Corinthian church and he describes them as being carnal minded or having fleshly yearnings. The truth is, a Christian can be carnal but he or she should not live their entire life in carnality. Of all the churches founded by the Apostle Paul, the church at Corinth just had to be the absolute worst. First of all, they were new believers; imagine an entire church filled with totally new believers? Imagine a church with no seasoned saint among them to guide them with their valuable life experiences?

And then imagine a church in which almost everyone had his or her own idea about how the church should operate. This is the very reason that a church seeking a pastor should not wait too long to find one because sooner or later someone within the body will try and take control. And when this happens you can't easily take over the leadership of the church as a new pastor, the leadership in the church will have to be rescued.

The Corinthian church made many mistakes, even though they were enthused about serving the Lord, and Paul found it necessary to temper down their wild enthusiasm with godly instruction. They were “babes in Christ” not yet spiritually matured; they had not grown fully in Christ. The carnal man or woman does not know Christ or the things of God the way they should, they have to be taught.

Therefore Paul found it necessary to write two letters to this church. Note: It is said that Paul actually wrote four letters, two of which were canonicalized (1st and 2nd Corinthians), one that was non-canonical and the other written to him. Be that as it may, Paul because of his love for the church at Corinth found it necessary to explain to them the difference in being spiritual as oppose to being carnal in nature.

1. Paul Organizes the Corinthian Church

Paul like the other churches founded by him had a deep love for the church at Corinth. In Acts 18, there is an account of how this love affair developed. On his second mission Paul left Athens and traveled to Corinth, while there in Corinth he found and grew people.

Paul organized the church of Corinth, even though he experienced strain and rejection he pressed on with the Word of God. He made his testimony that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. There in Corinth, he gave himself entirely to the preaching and teaching of the Word. He proclaimed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, but sadly what he preached and taught was rejected. The people opposed and blasphemed the very name of Jesus Christ. –Acts 18: 5-6

However, this did not stop Paul from witnessing about salvation through Jesus Christ although he was no longer accepted in the Synagogue. This action caused Paul to turn from the Jews to the Gentiles. There were some saved Jews but the majority reached by Paul ended up being Gentiles. When a Christian witnesses to those who totally reject the Gospel, he or she is to turn away from them but continue on with the work given to them in God's vineyard.

As a result of Paul's continuation Acts 18: 7 - 8 declares, "Paul left the synagogue and moved into the home of Titius Justus, a man who was a worshiper of the true God. His house was next to the synagogue. Crispus was the leader of that synagogue. He and all the people living in his house believed in the Lord Jesus. Many other people in Corinth also listened to Paul. They, too, believed and were baptized." Many came from sinful backgrounds, Corinth was a cesspool of immorality and the nightlife but yet they came. Here in our text however, we find Paul saying to the Corinthian church with great disappointment I might add, "You are still worldly (or carnal)." You are still enjoying the sinful life. Doesn't this remind you of America today?

A nation founded upon godly principals, even our dollar bills contain the words, "In God we trust," did you know that there is now an effort as quiet as it's kept to have those words yanked off of the dollar bill? Did you know that the devil is in the details when it comes to destroying the old time religion and replacing it with the "New World Order?" Carnality has all but taken over our country—we have changed from a Christian nation to a nation with Christians in it, and it seems as if it were done overnight. And just like Paul, we who are true Christians should say to the church in America today, "You are still carnal!"

2. The Diagnoses of the Disease

Paul often used the analogy of the human body when dealing with the body of Christ, which is the church. Here in the text he seems to view the carnality within the Corinthian church as a disease of the body. With almost every disease there are symptoms or characteristics that can be used to diagnose the problem. Any church both then and now that has complaining, faultfinding, murmurs, anger, hostility, impatience, snobbery, gossip, dishonesty, narcissistic and egotistical pastors, members who create uproars within the body, members who succumb to various temptations, talks about the preacher or pastor, judges, sees weakness in others and not themselves, prone to use excuse after excuse, easily discouraged, easily offended.

Harsh, has no compassion, loves to argue, never satisfied, disobedient, resentful, deceitful, arrogant, gets upset over almost anything, wickedness, knows it all, must dominate, frivolous, suspicious, unpredictable, wants everything, wants others to cater to him or her, and not to leave this fact out, but it was carnality that placed Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. Carnality is a great hindrance to prayer and for the church to be the church God intended her to be prayer is utterly essential. This is why Paul found it of great necessity to address this issue with the church of Corinth. He says you have disease church! Because, "You are still carnal!" That's the diagnosis of the disease—carnality is spreading like cancer within the body. First, there is diagnosis of the problem and a diagnosis is defined as the identification of illness: the identifying of an illness or disorder in a patient through physical examination, medical tests, or other procedures.

And then there is the prognosis, which is a medical term for predicting the likely outcome of one's current standing. Paul gave both the diagnosis and the prognosis of the Corinthian church; his prognosis was given in the form of a question, "Are you not acting like mere humans?"

3. The Prognosis of the Disease

Look what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5: 9 – 11, "9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. 10 In no way did I mean the immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers and idolaters, since you would then have to go out of the world. 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a Christian who is sexually immoral (fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, etc.), or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person (emphasis mine).

Paul's prognosis was that there was shameful sin in the Corinthian church. It is way too often; a church overlooks the sin and sinful lifestyle of a man because he is a leader in the community, government, or business. In fact, some churches today glory over the idea that he is actually member of the church body. Not only does he give the church bragging privileges that there is a "big shot" in their midst, he also gives huge financial contributions. Totally ignoring that Scripture says, "Brothers, these things ought not be." What Paul is saying to the Corinthian church and (a few of us today) is we must wake up and

learn something. Stop judging by the outward appearances, because outward appearances are often misleading. They can look healthy on the outside but there may something dangerously wrong going inside. Doctors use highly technical equipment to look on the inside our bodies because it impossible for him or her see anything from the outside if the disease had not reached the surface of our flesh.

Just like the human body, churches become diseased as well and it may not be very noticeable from the outside. And as a result the church must undergo some surgery or some special attention to relieve itself of this disease. For example, the church needs to be vaccinated with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. First thing each and every Christian must fully realize is that the Holy Bible is truly the inspired and infallible Word of God. I've noticed more and more today that Christians are starting to question the validity and authenticity of the Bible. I've noticed today here in America, Christians appear to act more and more like the ancient church of Corinth.

And just like Paul rebuked the Corinthians because there was divisions and quarrels in the church. Which was a direct result of a religious snobbery associated by cliques that produced pride and conflict. This same type of reprimand is needed today in our churches all across America. We need a vaccination today by the Word of God and by the Holy Spirit. It has indeed gotten so bad until we also need amputation because the hindrances have become gangrene and infected. I am cognizant of all the Christians who feel that they are battling with some hindrance in their daily lives and their walks with Christ Jesus. I confess that I battle with them too, which means that there is a great need for us to identify and overcome those impediments and then with the help of God amputate them (remove them) in order fully walk down the path that the Lord has provided.

We do not run the risk of being terminated entirely, "Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" —Revelation 2: 5, when go astray—and you can go astray even while actively attending church due to living in carnality, the Lord says return unto Him, examine yourself and consider how you have fallen away, think about your first love—the love that you have left and come back (emphasis mine). However, if not, there will ultimately be a termination. What does "...remove your lampstand..." mean? It means that Christ will remove the church from being a true church.

The church will be removed from being a true representative of Christ upon earth. The church will be removed from being a church of God's true kingdom, and from being in touch and in union with God. It means that the church will not be a true church but rather a false church, no longer a part of God's glorious kingdom. When a church has become lifeless, dull, mechanical, and has a form of godliness but denies the power thereof, it is headed for termination because of this horrid disease of carnality.

Conclusion

Carnality is the church's worst disease; a church controlled by animal appetites and governed by human nature as opposed to the Holy Spirit is for sure an oxymoron. Carnality is the "cancer" of today's church, and it must be cured or it will indeed kill you. Romans 8: 5 – 8 says, "Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God." This is one of the most important Scriptures in the entire Word of God, because it discusses the human mind: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he"—Proverbs 23: 7. Where we keep our mind determines who we are and what we do.

If our mind is on worldly things, we ourselves will be worldly and act worldly even when we enter the house of God. Which means we enter His sanctuary with a lie, we enter His sanctuary with our minds in the gutter. We worry about the small things, like what kind of clothes he or she has on this morning. To be carnally minded in the church of all places means that our focus is entirely off—we are focused more on personal achievements and success. We become perfectionist; we want everything to go well because of appearance—which means we are more concerned about what the people around us think rather than what God thinks.

Contrary to popular belief, the carnal minded Christian can be very, very religious. He can fool many people with his piety; others see him or her as a true man or woman of God. However, you can be a strict religionist and still live separate from God. There are many today in our churches across America who function and carry on very well within the walls of the organized and institutional church instead of carrying out the true mission given to them by Jesus Church.

Carnality is a true disease within the church body; it will metastasize, spreading its influences to other parts of the body. Carnality will silently and violently penetrates vital organs within the church body and sabotage their effectiveness. If left undetected, this army of rebels will bring death and destruction to the entire body. We must all answer the question asked by Paul, "are you not worldly or (carnal)? We must answer truthfully, you need to answer this question and I need to answer this question as well, because "...the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." – Hebrews 4: 12, after the diagnoses and the prognosis of this dreadful disease many of us just may have to go under the knife in order to get well. Amen.