

1 Corinthians Chapter 3

- Paul spends the last part of chapter two drawing some of the distinctions between the Spiritual man, the one who is born again, who is governed by the Spirit and the one who is not.
 - Speaking of the “natural man” who is governed by the sin nature and unable to receive the things of the Spirit because he is spiritually discerned.
 - So having introduced the natural man contrasted with the man who has been born again, the spiritual man, he now talks about the “carnal man.”
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V: 1 This letter to the Corinthian church is corrective in nature and here we have part of it.

- Paul already explained that there are two kinds of people in the world—natural (unsaved) and spiritual (saved).
- Now he explains that there are two kinds of saved people: mature and immature (carnal).
- A Christian matures by allowing the Spirit to teach him and direct him by feeding on the Word. The immature Christian lives for the things of the flesh and has little interest in the things of the Spirit.
- Some believers are immature because they have been saved only a short time, but that is not what Paul is discussing here.

Babes:

1. Little baby 1 year old in diapers, making baby noises - cute, lovable, adorable.
2. 25-30 year old man in diapers, making baby noises - not so cute or adorable.

- This answers the question in my mind as to is there such a thing as a “carnal Christian?”
- Are they worldly Christians, or are they truly not Christian to begin with? They are “Christians”, just immature, babes “*in Christ*” bearing in mind that he also refers to them as “*brethren*.”
- The carnal Christian, the man who has received Jesus Christ, who has believed in the Lord for salvation, but he is still controlled by his flesh.
- This would temper me in how I deal with some people, hopefully helping me to be more gracious and understanding while God works in their hearts.

Romans 15:1 “We then who are strong out to bear with the scruples / infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

1 Peter 4:10 “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

V: 2 Paul bemoans the fact that he couldn't talk to them about some of the more mature issues of the faith because of their immaturity, he needed to feed them milk because they couldn't handle the meat.

- The carnal man can only receive milk. Like a baby, someone has to pamper him and burp him, counsel him and constantly explain things to him. The carnal man does not know what it means abide in the Word, to truly seek the Lord, and walk day by day with Him.
- Describing those who haven't grown, who haven't matured:

Hebrews 6:1-2 “¹Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

- Part of the responsibility for this could easily lie with the pastor; it could be the result of not properly feeding the sheep, not giving them the food they need by which they would grow and mature.
- Another possibility could be that the pastor is beating the sheep instead of feeding them. In trying to exhort the sheep unto good works and to faithfulness and all that, instead of actually teaching them. Hammering away at their failure to be a witness for Christ and to do the things that the Lord would have them to do as born again believers. Exhorting the sheep in a condemning way.
- A third possibility is that the carnal Christian, the immature believer isn't willing to receive good food, they spit it out, they barf it up, they just don't, won't receive it - they're un-teachable until such a time as God does that work in their hearts - which He is faithful to do.
- *The only way a believer is going to grow and mature is to take in a steady diet of God's Word, taking in the whole counsel of God's word.*

Speaking to the elders in Ephesus, Paul declared:

Acts 20:26-28 “²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd / feed the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

V: 3 Paul notes that besides not having an appetite for the meat of God's word, some of the other signs of their carnality are, envy, jealousy, strife and division - that were among them - behaving like mere men, carnal men, as opposed to spiritual men.

Ephesians 5:17-18 ¹⁷"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;"

- A mature Christian uses their gifts as tools to build with, while an immature believer uses their gifts as toys to play with or trophies to boast about.

V: 4-6 This almost looks like the beginning of denominationalism as they began to divide into the separate separate groups, followers of Peter, Paul, or Apollos.

- There isn't to be any competition within the body of Christ, we're all on the same team.

1 Corinthians 1:13 "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

- We need to keep our eyes on Jesus, keep the main thing, the main thing!
- Peter, Paul, Apollos, all men, just tools in God's tool box. Not to be focused on.

V: 7 Emphasizing a right focus and understanding who's really doing the work.

1 Corinthians 12:3 "... no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

Jesus said:

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..."

V: 8-9 He who plants and he who waters are one - meaning there is unity between the mature believers.

- Paul is saying there is no division between Peter, Paul, or Apollos.
- Paul planted the church in Corinth, then he left there and went to Ephesus. About the same time Apollos went from Ephesus to Corinth. Paul established the church in Corinth, then later Apollos came and watered what Paul had planted and the church began to grow.
- The same events were replicated in Ephesus where Apollos planted, and Paul watered.

- It might be the same for us, we witness to people, they see our lives, seeds are planted. Someone else comes along and waters those seeds and they begin to grow - any number of people may be involved, each an instrument of God - but God is the One who brings forth the increase.
- Paul & Apollos, and all of us we're just workers in God's field, or garden.
- And all together we are God's building:

1 Peter 2:5 "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood..."

V: 10-11 Paul says pretty much the same thing a different way: as a builder (architect), he's laid the foundation, then another in this case Apollos, has come along and built on that foundation.

- That foundation is Jesus Christ! He is the Rock upon which our faith is based.
- The Catholics have made a serious error when they say the the church is built upon Peter, it's not built on Peter, it's built on the confession that Peter made, the same confession that we make - that Jesus is Lord!

Matthew 16:15-18 (Turn to)

- Jesus was simply re-naming Peter (Petros), he went from Simon to Peter, because of that confession he was a new creature with a new name.
- Petros / little pebble vs: petra - large stone, massive, Gibraltar, El Capitan, gigantic.
- The "petra" was the confession: That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

V: 12 The foundation is Christ; now what kind of materials are we going to use to build on that foundation? Gold, silver, precious stones are permanent type building materials, whereas wood, hay, and stubble - are not only temporary, but they're combustible.

- The building inspector is going to come through with eyes of fire.

Revelation 19:11-12 "11Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12His eyes were like a flame of fire,.."

V: 13-15 These verses describe what is known as the "Bema seat judgment" where believers "works" are judged of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment (bema) seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

- This is different than the “Great White Throne” judgement of **Revelation Ch. 20**.

Peter describes it:

1 Peter 1:6-7 “⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

- One day our works will be judged by Jesus as to what sort they were, what motivated them. Service, giving, trying to earn our salvation which Christ already gave us as a gift (religion), glory...

Galatians 1:10 “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? for if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”

V: 16 As a “born again” believer, one who had been indwelt by the Holy Spirit - we become the Temple of God, the Tabernacle of God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 “... For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 (**Turn to**)

V: 17 The warning against defiling the Temple of God:

1 Peter 1:15-16 “¹⁵But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written. Be holy, for I am holy.”

- Does this verse indicate that you can lose your salvation? What constitutes “defilement?”
- Some use this verse as a textual proof that if you commit suicide you lose your salvation, committing an unpardonable sin.
- First off - suicide is not an unpardonable sin, as Jesus describes it, the only unpardonable sin is that of rejecting Him, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.
- Some try to use this verse about smoking - the defilements spoke of or described by Paul were all moral, or spiritual - fornication, sexual impurity.
- Destroy - to diminish, to bring to a worse state. That person diminishes in their ability to hear God, to commune with God.

- Taking this verse, this warning in context of the entire chapter - the defiling Paul is warning against is the divisions between the various factions - dividing the church that God wants to be united.
- Jesus is the foundation, He is united, we are to be united.
- Backing up to the previous verses - those who have worked towards unity or worked towards disunity will be rewarded accordingly - all will make it to heaven, but some might have scorch marks.
- The word translated “defiles” and “destroy” are the same word (G-5351) Phtheiro which means to destroy or punish with destruction, or to diminish.
- Those who cause these divisions / defilements will be destroyed, diminished.
- This verse could read: “If anyone destroys the Temple of God, God will destroy him.”
- This could mean that they / their rewards could be destroyed, or themselves diminished - the only mitigating factor being V: 15 - again they get to heaven, but through fire, all their “works” having been judged or destroyed.

Proverbs 6:16-19 “¹⁶These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

V: 18 Good warning - let us not deceive ourselves.

- In the previous chapter Paul talked about how that the world by wisdom didn't know God.

The Psalmist declared:

Psalm 14:1 “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God...”

Romans 1:22 “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”

- It's amazing the foolish things that smart men, wise men in the world's eyes will do once they reject the truth of God.

Proverbs 3:7 “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.”

V: 19-20 Paul is actually quoting from Job, chapter 5 - Eliphaz's response. It is cool how the OT scriptures really form the foundation for so many NT teachings

- The OT is the NT concealed, the NT is the OT revealed.
- So often smart people simply outsmart themselves.

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

Psalm 94:11 “The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.”

V: 21-23 Because of all of this, no one should boast in men - including Paul or Apollos.

Galatians 6:14 “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

- All glory, all honor, all praise belongs to Him, not to men!
- Liberty leads to responsibility.
- We belong to Christ! That is what matters!