

Call to Obedience #252
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Carnal Christians are the greatest burdens of the church.

The Three Types of Men By Reimar Schultze

“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” (1 Cor. 2:14).

“But he that is **spiritual** judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man” (1 Cor. 2:15).

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**, even as unto babes in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1).

In this special passage, Paul puts all humankind into three categories. It is by virtue of these categories that every man stands naked before God. It is by virtue of these categories that all men will be judged, whether they be Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, etc. The final judgement that will determine our eternal destiny will not depend on any particular religious organization we have served or on what particular doctrine we have held. No, the final judgement before the great white throne will be based on which of the three categories we are in.

Now, let us look at each of these in sequence: the natural man, the carnal man, and the spiritual man.

The Natural Man

“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.”

The natural man is a man who lives according to nature. He is governed by his intellect and by his natural affections. The natural man has never experienced the rebirth – he is unconverted. The natural man is asleep to spiritual things. He cannot understand spiritual things, and spiritual things are foolishness unto him because he cannot process them in a rational manner. So, the Word of God, the promises of God, the grace of God, and faith in God in its various, marvelous ways can find no existence in his mind. The natural man is one whose perceptions do not extend beyond his reason, experiences, and feelings. Therefore, the natural man lives in a small world. He lives in a world limited by his finite mind and his five senses. The natural man cannot enter the kingdom of God, for flesh and blood does not inherit the kingdom of God. Therefore, Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see (nor enter) the kingdom of God.” Man must be born again (John 3:3, 5, 7).

The Carnal Man

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.”

We notice immediately that there are two distinct kinds of Christians: the carnal Christian and the spiritual Christian. This is taught throughout the New Testament – in the Gospels, such as the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1–13) – and in many passages of the Epistles. Both the carnal Christian and the spiritual Christian have been born of the Spirit, yet they are worlds apart. The expression, “carnal Christian,” may justly be coined out of 1 Corinthians 3:1 because here Paul addresses the Corinthian Christians as “carnal.” He speaks to these Christians, say

ing, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.”

So, the first thing we learn here is that a carnal Christian is as a babe in Christ. Hence, a carnal Christian is one who has been born of God, but he lives outside the kingdom of God which is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17). He is one who does not grow, mature, or develop. He is as a babe. He has no accomplishments but that he is born. He cannot walk, he cannot talk, he cannot understand nor follow instructions, he cannot help, he cannot serve, he cannot sacrifice for others, he cannot lift the burdens of others, he cannot fight battles, he cannot clean himself nor feed himself nor pull himself up. A carnal Christian is as a babe – a babe in Christ, however, who is not a fresh babe that brings joy, but a babe that has been a babe too long. And so, a state of babe-hood has turned into a tragedy, into disgrace, into a burden of the church. When you see a baby in diapers and still slobbering at age five, ten or twenty, there is nothing cute about that. We don’t mind if newborn babes are selfish because we know they will grow up to become productive people. But when babes don’t grow up, and continue to be selfish, to continue to act as babes, then there is great concern.

All of us are born again in carnality with selfishness in our spiritual blood. This is why Paul says to the Corinthians, “ye are **yet** carnal” (3:3). They were born in carnality from their physical mothers (Ps. 51:5). Then, when they were born again, the carnal nature remained within them. Again, this is why Paul said to these Christians, “ye are yet carnal,” indicating that carnality is not removed at conversion. It did not bother Paul that they were carnal at the spiritual birth, but it bothered him that they were yet carnal one or two or three years later. And as a proof that they were yet carnal, he shows them the fruits of their carnality by saying, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” There is yet a longer list of the fruits of carnality in Galatians 5:19–21: “Now the doings (practices) of the flesh are clear (obvious): they are immorality, impurity, indecency, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger (ill temper), selfishness, divisions (dissensions), party spirit (factions, sects with peculiar opinions, heresies), envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you beforehand, just as I did previously, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (AMPLIFIED).

Let me ask you now: what is the destiny of carnal Christians? What does it mean when Paul says that “those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”? Did Paul warn the carnal Christians about this once or more than once? Did he say that he warned these carnal Christians previously or didn’t he? And dear friend, if this is not enough, read Romans 8:6–7: “For to be carnally minded is death...Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

Newborn babes, born of God, can please God. There is great joy in heaven over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:7, 10). But there is no way an old babe of God can please God. There is no way! An old babe born of God is at enmity with God. If this is not what it says in Romans 8:7, then what about verse 8: “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”? Why did Paul have to deal with carnality in Christians? Again, because carnality is not removed at conversion, it must be removed subsequent to conversion in the work of sanctification. Hence, Paul prayed, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3).

The Corinthian Christians’ lives consisted of spiritual experiences, of the conversion experience and of experiences in the spiritual gifts. The Corinthians were rich in spiritual gifts. Gifts were their life, but they had little else. They were still carnal. They were carnal too long. They did not walk with God. They had plenty of spiritual experiences, but because they lacked the fruits of the Spirit, their gifts brought confusion, division, and strife to the body of Christ. At the root of all division and strife is criticism, fault-finding, analyzation, and complaints. We must be delivered from carnality. Only then will the gifts shine for the glory of God. Carnality fills our prisons, our divorce courts, and it splits our churches.

And how are we delivered from carnality? It is by the cross. Jesus died on his cross to cleanse us from our sins, the sins we have committed. But we have to die on **our** cross to be saved from the sin nature, from carnality, from the sin principle. This is why our Lord said to his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily..." (Luke 9:23). Salvation is a crisis experience – we are born again in a moment. But sanctification, the deliverance from the carnal nature, is a process. It is a daily process. It is an hourly process. It is a second-by-second process. It is continuous. It is only as we continually die to the desires of the Self-life – of what the Self wants – can we be followers of Jesus. And if we are not followers of Jesus, we are none of his.

So, there is a natural man, a carnal man, and a spiritual man.

The Spiritual Man

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:15–16).

The spiritual man has and is continuing to crucify the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life – the Self-life. Self (carnality) will never take one step after Jesus. But when Self is denied, if we take up the cross, the old, sinful, Adamic nature will be slain out of us by the Word, by the Spirit, by the blood of Jesus, and we shall come to the mind of Christ. Again, this is a process. And then Paul says, referring to the inner circle, "But we have the mind of Christ."

Now, the three most dominant characteristics of the spiritual man are: 1) he has the mind of Christ, 2) he has the fruits of the Spirit, and 3) he is led by the Spirit.

The Mind of Christ. Although the carnal Christian is very much focused on his conversion or experiences in the gift area, the spiritual Christian is focused on Christ himself, on the greatness of Christ, the beauty of Christ, the work of Christ, the mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory. The spiritual man has been transformed by the renewing of his mind, and he thinks as Christ thinks. He acts and reacts as Christ acts and reacts. He loves and overcomes as Christ loves and overcomes. He will never go anywhere unless he knows Christ goes with him. He will not watch anything unless Christ is with him in the watching. He is abiding in Christ, and Christ is abiding in him. His destiny is with Christ. As Christ overcame, so he overcomes, for only he that overcometh shall receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

The Fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22 NIV). Again, anyone filled with the Spirit has the fruit of the Spirit. You cannot have the fruit of the Spirit without having been filled with the Spirit. But as we learned earlier, you can have the gifts of the Spirit without being filled with the Spirit. Jesus did not say by their gifts but by their fruits you shall know them (Matt. 7:16). This is not to degrade the gifts. He who degrades the gifts, degrades the Giver of the gifts. The gifts are given for the edifying and ministry of the church. They are very precious, but we must not confuse the gifts of the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit.

Led by the Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). The spiritual man is led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will tell him where to go, when to go, what to say, what not to say, and what to do. The Holy Spirit will check him if he is headed in the wrong direction or for the wrong words. Learning to walk by the Spirit, of course, also takes time. We will be learning as we are following Jesus in obedience. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice...and they follow me" (John 10:27). We cannot follow unless we hear, and we cannot hear unless the Self-life with all its criticism, complaints, and selfish ideas is crucified out of us.

So, my friend, there are three types of men: the natural, the carnal, and the spiritual. Which of these are you, and how will you stand before the Great White Throne?