

THE PROBLEM WITH CARNALITY AND THE CURE

TEXT: I COR. 3:1-23

INTRODUCTION:

1. I am going to speak this morning on a very important subject -- the problem with carnality. And the cure for carnality.
2. The word "carnal" means "fleshly." This does not refer to our human flesh, but rather to our fallen sinful nature, which we inherited from Adam.
3. The flesh is always opposed to God. A carnal man is a man who is controlled by the flesh, and is not controlled by the Holy Spirit.
4. Galatians 6:8 says, "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." There is a choice.
5. In Scripture, there is a great contrast between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit.
6. Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
7. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
8. Romans 13:14 says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."
9. Our Lord said in John 3:6 and 7, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."
10. Some preachers teach that carnal people are not born again, but the apostle Paul refers to them as "brethren" in I Corinthians 3:1. The "natural man" is the unsaved man (cf. I Cor. 2:14).
11. Admittedly, some times it is difficult to tell a carnal Christian from an unsaved person. Our Lord warned us that there will be tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-42).
12. The *Scofield Bible* says, "A carnal state prevents spiritual growth."
13. This is why the apostle Paul said the carnal believers in the church at Corinth were like babies who were unable to eat meat (3:1, 2).
14. "Babes in Christ" (3:1) are a great blessing, but it is not good when they remain in that condition for an extended period of time. Just as we expect babies to develop and grow, the same is true in the spiritual realm.

15. J. Allen Blair has a good acrostic for "grow." He says, "G stands for 'go to God in prayer every day'; R -- 'read God's Word every day'; O -- 'obey God every day'; and W -- 'witness for God every day.'"
16. Paul says their carnality expressed itself in envying, and strife, and divisions in the church (3:3, 4; cf. 1:11, 12).
17. Every church has carnal members. Unfortunately in some churches they are in positions of leadership. This is a serious problem but the Bible has the solution. We will look at the problem and the cure.

I. WE ARE SAVED TO SERVE (3:6-8).

1. President Harry Truman said, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."
2. This certainly applies to the local church (3:6-8).
3. One man plants, another man waters, and God gives the increase (3:6). Over the years I have noticed that many of the people that I led to the Lord had heard the Gospel before. Some one had already "planted" the Word of God.
4. Sadly, some Christians do not share God's Word with others because they know very little of it themselves. They cannot digest the strong meat of God's Word because they are too worldly-minded.
5. They have little interest in spiritual things. They only have an appetite for the things which satisfy the flesh or the self life.
6. Millions are excited over sports and politics and movies and music, but the Word of God does not interest them! This is carnality.
7. The Bible teaches that God has a particular type of ministry He wants each of us to perform. God calls some men to be pastors. He calls some Christians to be teachers or missionaries or church musicians or ushers or nursery workers, etc.
8. The point is we are all saved to serve.
9. Find your place of service and get busy! But make sure the Lord is directing you and you are doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit and not in the energy of the flesh.
10. God's program for this dispensation is the local church.
11. Our Lord said in Matthew 9:37 and 38, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."
12. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." "For we are labourers together with God" (I Cor. 3:9).
13. This is God's work. This is God's church. This is God's house, etc.

14. Why are so many churches filled with spectators with very few laborers? Because of carnality. The best way to grow is to serve.
15. The moment Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, he asked the Lord, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).
16. And the Lord told him what to do. And He will tell you and me what to do as well.
17. You may be thinking, "Well, I am no apostle Paul." Maybe so, but you could be a Barnabas or a Timothy!
18. First Corinthians 3:9 says, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."
19. The word translated "husbandry" means, "cultivated field."

*In the harvest field now ripened
There's a work for all to do;
Hark! the voice of God is calling
To the harvest calling you.*

*Little is much when God is in it!
Labor not for wealth or fame.
There's a crown—and you can win it,
If you go in Jesus' Name. -- Kittie L. Suffield*

20. We are saved to serve. Alan Redpath said, "It is possible to have a saved soul and a lost life. In other words, it is possible to be saved and forgiven of one's sin but to waste one's life by not serving the Lord."
21. Beloved, don't waste your life serving your flesh!

II. WE WAIT FOR OUR REWARD IN HEAVEN (3:8-15).

1. Carnal Christians are preoccupied with themselves, and with the things of this world. But the Bible teaches we should keep our eyes on the Lord. Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."
2. First Corinthians 3:8 says, "and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."
3. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:12, "great is your reward in heaven."
4. Not necessarily here on earth, but in heaven.
5. Our Lord said in Revelation 22:12, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."
6. We are asking our members to prepare for our upcoming missions conference. You can prepare by praying. You can prepare by

- clearing your schedule so you can attend the entire conference (not just Sunday morning!).
7. And you can prepare by being hospitable to our guest missionaries. The Bible teaches that if you do that you will get the same reward they get (cf. Matthew 10:41, 42). Think about that!
 8. Not all Christians are called to be missionaries, but all Christians are called to serve, and God's servants will be rewarded on the basis of their faithfulness in doing what God has called them to do.
 9. First Corinthians 4:2 says, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
 10. If we are faithfully serving the Lord, we shall surely get our reward in heaven. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (3:8; cf. 3:14).
 11. Some people do not understand the Biblical teaching on rewards. Some confuse salvation with rewards. Salvation is not a reward, it is a gift. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).
 12. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ. And we will be rewarded on the basis of our works.

The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "God, in the N.T. Scriptures, offers to the lost, salvation, and, for the faithful service of the saved, rewards. The passages are easily distinguished by remembering that salvation is invariably spoken of as a free gift, while rewards are earned by works. A further distinction is that salvation is a present possession, while rewards are a future attainment, to be given at the coming of the Lord."

13. God's work must be done God's way. First Corinthians 3:10 says, "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."
14. Every worker understands he must build on the right foundation (3:11-15).
15. "Every man's work shall be made manifest..." (I Cor. 3:13). It will all come out at the judgment seat of Christ. Verse 15 is important: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."
16. The carnal Christian is saved -- "he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved."
17. He "shall suffer loss" (3:15). He will have no reward in heaven because here on earth he lived for the flesh and for self and for the things of this world.
18. He had little concern for the things of God, so "he shall suffer loss."

19. First John 2:28 says, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."
20. Carnal Christians will be ashamed when the Lord returns.
21. Second John 8 says, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."
22. All Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The apostle Paul said in Romans 14:10, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." But some will not "receive a full reward."
23. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."
24. Lost sinners will not be at the judgment seat of Christ. Lost sinners will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

III. WE ARE TO SERVE IN THE POWER OF THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT (3:16, 17).

1. I mentioned earlier that carnal Christians are saved but walk in the flesh. They have not fully surrendered themselves to the Lord.
2. They are not walking in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
3. I read something interesting the other day. A young man was being disciplined by his pastor, and he said to him, "Pastor, I am all right when I am with you, but when I get away from you I do not seem to have the strength to resist temptation."
4. The pastor then said to the young man, "Suppose it were possible for me to get inside of you and live my life in you and through you. Do you think that would solve your problem?"
5. The young man said, "Definitely!"
6. The pastor then said, "Well, you have some one much greater living in you! The Bible teaches that the moment you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, the Holy Spirit came to abide in you. It is your privilege and your duty to let Him live His life in you and through you" (cf. I Cor. 3:16; 6:19).
7. This is the key to victory over carnality, and lukewarmness, and backsliding.
8. This is the key to victory over sin.
9. This is the key to a life of holiness and obedience.

CONCLUSION:

1. I will conclude with a quote from Andrew Murray: "The Holy Spirit...is given to enable believers to live wholly as God would have them live, in the full experience and witness of Him Who saves completely. Pray God that every one of His people may know the Holy Spirit!...That they cannot expect to live as their Father would have, without having Him in His fullness, without being filled with Him! (Ephesians 5:18)" (*The Ministry of Intercession*).
2. This is the cure for carnality!