



### 1 Cor. 3:1-4

#### *The Sad Case of the Giant Babies*

NKJ 1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

A while back when I was in the hospital just after the birth of our son Victor, I remember I was standing in the hall outside a nurse's station waiting for her to come back with some Cranberry juice for Joy, and I happened to overhear just a snippet of a conversation that was going on between a nurse and a very young couple, and I mean *very* young, who were leaving the hospital with their newborn.

The nurse was trying to explain basic infantcare to this young guy, and she said that while mother's milk would be best for the baby for the first few weeks, that it would be ok to supplement that feeding with a bottle every once in a while if he was hungry or mom needed a break. And so this fellow just piped up, "ok so we can give him Orange Juice and stuff?" And the nurse reacted horrified, "**no, no, you can't give him orange juice, just give him formula.**"

Now of course you can't feed a new born orange juice, because it is too much for his stomach, his digestive system isn't ready for it yet, so it would make him sick and he would spit it back up. It's not that there's anything wrong with orange juice, but that child hasn't grown enough to be able to take it in.

Eventually, after many months of milk, that baby will grow and be ready to gradually move on to more complex foods, first cereal, and then baby food, and then eventually solid food. Babies though, do not start out on surf and turf, we don't expect them to.

On the other hand, If you met someone at work and they invited you to have dinner with their family, and you got there and after some polite small talk you all sat down at the table, and suddenly they all pulled out bottles and began sucking down formula, you would be horrified. It is unhealthy and unnatural for people to stay on a exclusive milk diet into adulthood. In fact, if a baby doesn't make that natural progress from milk to meat, then we know something is wrong, and we should be concerned because it means something is going wrong with his development.

So too, the Word of God teaches us that in terms of our spiritual development, there should be a natural progress in the complexity of the food we can digest, that is the level of teaching that we can understand and absorb.

When we first become Christians, we may be advanced in years, but we are still babes in Christ, and the kind of teaching that we receive needs to be fairly simple. Now please note, that the doctrines and the faith that is taught are not different. The difference is in the *complexity of the* teaching and how much we give. But it is still essentially the same food, the same gospel.

Baby food comes in portions that wouldn't satisfy an adult, it's all pureed because babies don't yet have teeth to chew, and it's far too bland and simple for most adult palates, but it is still essentially the same food that adults eat. We don't go from eating non-food to food, we go from simple food to complex.

Let me give you an example of this, Calvin when asked if Paul meant by feeding milk to his hearers that he had to teach a different doctrine to suit his hearers said this:

*“I answer, that this refers to the manner and form of his instructions, rather than to the substance of the doctrine. For Christ is at once milk to babes, and strong meat to those that are of full age, the same truth of the gospel is administered to both, but so as to suit their capacity. Hence it is the part of a wise teacher to accommodate himself to the capacity of those whom he has undertaken to instruct, so that in dealing with the weak and ignorant, he begins with first principles, and does not go higher than they are able to follow, and so that, in short, he drops in his instructions by little and little, lest it should run over, if poured in more abundantly.”*

That is how Paul knows that something is seriously amiss in the Corinthian church. These people have been Christians for quite some time, and yet they are not able to accept anything except milk.

It's actually ironic, because they've been complaining that Paul's preaching was “too plain and simple” and Paul has to tell them, look the reason I've been giving you plain and simple “milk” teaching is that that was all that you could digest. You are puffed-up so you *think* of yourselves as highly advanced in the faith but the evidence says otherwise.

Paul tells them that if they really had been making the spiritual progress they claimed to have made, there would not be **“envy, strife, and divisions” in the church.**

Those things are marks of the kind of dissension and selfishness that prevails in the world amongst the unregenerate, and Paul knows that the process of sanctification leads to Christians dying to themselves, denying themselves, and become more and more like Christ and less and less like they once were.

The bible tells us that the natural man, that it is unregenerate people, behave badly because they are still spiritually dead, they have not yet been brought to spiritual life, no matter how “spiritual” they think they are. It requires the transforming work of the Holy Spirit to inwardly change you, and your fundamental desires, this happens when you are regenerated or “born again”:

*Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.*

*4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,*

*5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,*

*6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,*

***7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.***

So those who have been regenerated, and who are growing spiritually will manifest fundamentally different behavior from people who haven't been regenerated and come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The two different groups, of believers and unbelievers manifest different "fruit". The believer follows the leading of the spirit, and the unbeliever follows the leading of his carnal nature, he listens to and is lead by those fallen passions of the flesh:

***Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,***

***20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,***

***21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.***

***22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,***

***23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.***

***24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***

***25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.***

***26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.***

So these Corinthians are not showing the progress that they should be, they divide, they envy, and they strive, and they do the devil's bidding by forming warring parties and factions around the servants of the Lord instead of realizing that they are one body in Christ. This is not Christian behavior and if they call themselves Christian and act in that way it dishonors the name of Christ before the world. :

***"Oh what Antipodes (A direct or diametrical opposite) are such men to scripture! Either lay down the name of a Christian, or else live above what men of the world do. As Alexander the Great, said to a soldier named Alexander, Either lay aside your name, or else do valiant acts" – Anthony Burgess***

So let me give you 3 applications:

***1) If you are new to the Christian faith, do not worry that you aren't yet eating steak and potatoes,*** in fact. I have seen too many new Christians become discouraged that they are not yet theologians after a few months in the body. As a result, many bite off more than they can chew, and end up actually doing themselves harm. They get in too deep and because they have not learned discrimination they are carried off into false doctrines and then they are too prideful to return to first principles and keep getting further down the false path.. Or they keep racing ahead and then find they cannot keep up the pace and become discouraged. I call it the 0-60, 60-0 phenomena.

There is a natural progress that needs to occur and this race is a marathon, not a 100 meter dash.

***2) If you have been a Christian for some time, Search your own heart and ask yourself, am I growing in grace and the knowledge of the Lord,*** am I making that progress from milk to meat.

Dutch Reformed in the Midwest

If not, then it is time to give yourself to prayer and the ordinary means of grace. No more minimalist diets.

*Heb. 5:11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*

*12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*

*13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*

*14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

3) **Remember, you are part of one body. The body of Christ.** Therefore are you striving to put aside envy, strife, and dissensions? Avoid gossip at all costs, strive for close fellowship and TRANSPARENCY and accountability. Die to self, live for Christ, put your brothers and sisters ahead.

Babes in the church strive for anonymity, attend as little as they can, and form cliques. Remember you are part of the body of Christ, and that we are walking towards the goal of being one holy temple, living stones, joined together forever in worship. The more separate you seek to be, the less you are growing towards that goal.