

3/4/12

Are You A Carnal Christian?

1Cor. 3:1-4

Jeremiah told the people of his day, “And if you say in your heart, “Why have these things come upon me?” For the greatness of your iniquity Your skirts have been uncovered, Your heels made bare. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.” Jer. 13:22-23

Paul addressed the Corinthians in a similar manner as he came to the third chapter of his letter, telling them they were in a carnal state, evident by: 1Cor. 3:1-4

- I. The declaration of their carnal state. vs. 1
- II. The confrontation of their carnal state. vs. 2-3a
- III. The condemnation of their carnal state. vs. 3b-4

I. The declaration of their carnal state. vs. 1

A. The apostle Paul conferred to them the identity of the family of God. vs. 1a-b

* “And I, brethren.”

1. Paul returns to the first person “And I”.

- a. Paul placed the pronoun “I” to be emphatic, he was the one who had come alone to Corinth.
 - b. Paul alone preached the gospel to them at the beginning.
 - c. Paul was joined by Silas and Timothy, at Corinth, after they left Berea.
2. Paul received them as believers in Christ.
- a. He once again called them brethren “adelphos”, born of the same womb.
 - 1) This is the 6th time in the letter.
 - 2) There will be 7 in total.
 - b. He excepted them as children of God.
 - 1) Called them the church of God. 1Cor. 1:2a
 - 2) Called them sanctified in Christ Jesus. 1Cor. 1:2b
 - 3) Called saints. 1Cor. 1:2d

B. The apostle Paul confronted their tragic spiritual condition. vs. 1c

* “could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.”

1. Paul stated he was unable at the present time to speak to them as mature believers.
 - a. The word spiritual “pneumatikos”, means simply to be in tune with the things and word of God with understanding, **they were not!**

- 1) The word of God.
 - 2) The ways of God.
 - 3) The wisdom of God.
- b.** The quality of being spiritual
 “pneumatikos” is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit and spiritual things.
- 1) Age is not the emphasis, but rather one’s proportionate conduct to one’s age.
 - 2) If a Christian is three years old in their growth, development and maturity, in proportion the time, then they a spiritual.
 - 3) If they are three years old, but not in their growth, development and maturity, then they are not spiritual.
- c.** The word is used 26 times in the New Testament.
- 1) He used it for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, comparing “spiritual” things with spiritual. 1Cor. 2:13
 - 2) He will used it for the gospel imparted to the Corinthians, “If we have sown to you spiritual things.” 1Cor. 9:11
 - 3) He will used it for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, “desire spiritual *gifts*”. 1Cor. 14:1

- 4) He used the word 15 times in the letter, everyone for things in the realm of the new life in Christ.
- 2.** Paul stated he was only able at the present time to speak to them as to carnal.
- a.** The word carnal “sarkikos”, means simply to be fleshly, in tune with the things of fallen depraved nature.
 - 1) The worldly views.
 - 2) The worldly perspectives.
 - 3) The worldly ways.
 - 4) The contrast is marked by the word “but”, between spiritual and carnal.
 - b.** The quality of being carnal “sarkikos” is to be controlled by the fleshly human nature.
 - 1) Four times Paul used the word in these four verses.
 - 2) One time in verse one.
 - 3) Two times in verse three.
 - 4) One last time in verse four.
 - 5) Paul used it only one other time in the letter for money, “material things”. 1Cor. 9:11b
- C.** The apostle Paul compared them to new born believers. vs. 1d
- 1.** Paul considered the Corinthians as babes in Christ.

- a. The word babes “nepios”, means infants, little children.
 - 1) Paul used the word five more times. 1Cor. 13:11
 - 2) All six times it appears in the letter it has a negative connotation, in the context.
 - 3) Now when someone is a babe in Christ by just having been born again, that is a legitimate state, but only as a start, not to remain their.
- b. They found themselves in an arrested spiritual state.
 - 1) They were acting like children, when in fact they should of been further along spiritually.
 - 2) They were living by their selfish ways of thinking and acting.

Illustration

There is not greater heart-ache than that of a father who does everything for his son or daughter to be all he can be, only to see him waste his life and bring destruction upon himself.

Application

1. The potential for being carnal is in every believer in Christ.
 - a. Be they male or female.
 - b. Be they rich or poor.
 - c. Be they educated or not.

- d. Be they living in a third world country or America.
 - e. Because it is a choice of one’s own will to live a carnal life.
 - * “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. Rom. 6:11-13
2. The potential destruction to a believer, due to living a carnal life, sadly too often becomes a reality.
 - a. People do not pay heed to the warnings by the Holy Spirit and people about their drinking or messing with drugs and they end up destroying their marriage, family and their health.
 - b. People do not pay heed to the convictions of the Holy Spirit or warnings by people about their meddling with fornication or adultery and they become slaves, marring their witness and losing their marriage.
 - c. People do not pay heed to the checks of the Holy Spirit, as to carnal state, living, speaking and thinking like the world, living a substandard life in Christ.

* “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Gal. 6:7-8

The declaration of their carnal state was from a brokenhearted father!

II. The confrontation of their carnal state. vs. 2-3a

A. The apostle Paul gave witness to the fact that he was cleared from any fault for their carnal condition. vs. 2a

1. Paul reproved them by reminding them that he had been faithful to feed them with the proper nutrition.

* “I fed you with milk.”

a. He portrayed himself to the Corinthians as a nursing mother.

- 1) Lovingly caring for her children.
- 2) Wisely providing the spiritual sustenance for their new life in Christ.

b. The word milk “gala” indicates the most basic nourishment for an infant after they have been born.

1) It has all the vitamins they need.

2) It is easy for their stomach to digest it.

3) It is craved by the infant.

4) He will use the word only one more time, for the milk of the flock. 1Cor. 9:7

* “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. For everyone who partakes *only* of **milk** is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. Heb. 5:12-13

2. Paul reproved them again by reminding them that he did not feed them with inappropriate nourishment.

* “and not with solid food.”

a. The word solid food “brama”, that which is eaten.

1) It appears 17 times in the New Testament.

2) Every time it means literally food to eat and translated “meat” and “meats”, six times in the letter. 1Cor. 3:2, 6:13, 8:8, 13, 10:3

b. The phrase “solid food” does not indicate two levels of the gospel.

- 1) He is indicating the basic fundamental teachings of salvation, without going into deep details.
- 2) But we must be careful not to conclude that this means that a new believer can not understand prophecy or end time things, while being a new born, because Paul gave great truths about the anti-christ and the end times. 1Thess. 2
- 3) Every Pastor-teacher will have n his teaching milk for the young believer and solid food for the older believer, that they both be mature at their spiritual level.

B. The apostle Paul gave witness to the fact that their carnal condition was their own fault. vs. 2b-c

1. Paul rebuked them by reminding them that they had been unfaithful to move from milk to solid food, due to their own choice. vs. 2b

* “for until now you were not able *to receive it.*”

- a. He said that from the time he came to them and preached the gospel to them, till the present time they had not grown spiritually.
 - 1) Paul spent 18 months at Corinth.

- 2) Paul spent three years at Ephesus.
- 3) Paul is talking about 4 1/2 years.
- 4) Three years since he left them.
- b. He said that they could not handle solid food, even at this present time.
 - 1) The meet of the word.
 - 2) The spiritual understanding.
 - 3) The spiritual maturity.
 - 4) The spiritual conduct, as a habit of life.
2. Paul rebuked them by reminding them they were still in the same condition. vs. 3c

* “and even now you are still not able.”

 - a. He refers to the present time, at the writing of the letter.
 - 1) The entire letter is corrective.
 - 2) The entire letter was a witness against them.
 - 3) The entire letter revealed their infant-like condition.
 - b. He refers to their unwillingness to the present, “still not able”.
 - 1) By their living after their fleshly desires.
 - 2) By culturalizing the church, rather than transforming it.
 - 3) A Christian can not say, “I can not”, but only “I will not”, that is disobedience and rebellion.

- 4) For who God calls, He enables, He is not the author of confusion!
3. Paul charged them with their carnality.
vs. 3a
 * “for you are still carnal.”
- a. The individual “you”, the Corinthians.
 - b. The accusation “are still carnal”.
 - c. They were still carnal “sarkikos”, characterized or dominated by the flesh and after the flesh.

Illustration

There is nothing more tragic than to see a person with all the potential of making something of themselves and by their own choice choose to never to fully develop their potential, while others with less potential pass him right up!

Application

1. The new believers classes that are taught here at Calvary Chapel Pasadena are the foundation of the church.
 - a. Teaching you the scriptural evidence of sin the fall and our need to repent and be saved.
 - b. The importance of the word for growth, development and maturity.
 - c. The need of prayer, different kinds of prayer, impediments to prayer, etc.
 - d. The believers position in the body and function.

- e. The gifts of the Holy Spirit and their operation.
 - f. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - g. The witness of the believer.
 - h. The believer and worship.
 - * ” Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.” 1Pet. 2:1-3
2. Then we have the Sunday morning studies.
- a. Focusing on an in-depth message on a section of a chapter or an entire chapter.
 - b. Learning the text what it meant to the people of the day it was written to by focusing on the context, the cultural background and the language and making application for today.
 - c. On Sunday night we go through that same book beginning with a full introduction, followed by a more general running commentary covering one or two chapters at a time.
 - d. The mid-week study focuses on in-depth studies of a book, taking smaller sections verse by verse, perhaps spending ten month to one year n an epistle like First Peter.
 - e. Then we have men and women studies to focus on the specific needs for each gender.
 - f. There is a married couples ministry, teens, street witnessing, music, etc.

- 1) “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” 1Tim. 4:13
- 2) “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” 1Tim. 4:14
- 3) “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” 1Tim. 4:15
- 4) “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” 1Tim. 4:16
- 5) “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” 2Tim. 2:15-16

The confrontation of their carnal state was from a hopeful father!

III. The condemnation of their carnal state. vs. 3b-4

- A. The apostle Paul stipulated some of their carnal conduct. vs. 3b-e
 - * “For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?”

1. Paul stated his indictments, the evidence of their carnal state. vs. 3b
 - a. He stated there was envy. vs. 3b
 - b. He stated there was strife. vs. 3c
 - c. He stated there was divisions among them. vs. 3d
2. Paul stated his verdict. vs. 3e
 - * “Are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”
 - a. The question is a rhetorical one, having an obvious answer.
 - 1) This is present throughout the Scriptures.
 - 2) Shall we continue in sin that grace should abound?” Rom. 6:1b
 - * No!
 - 3) “Did **Titus** take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did *we* not *walk* in the same steps?” 2Cor. 12:18c-e
 - * No, yes and yes!
 - b. The question to the Corinthians is that they might acknowledge their sin and confess it and repent.
 - 1) Are you not carnal, “sarkikos”, being controlled by the fleshly mind and desire of the old sin nature?
 - * The expected answer is “yes”.
 - 2) Are you then not behaving like men? “anthropos”, human beings

that are sinful, alive but living as dead men, who are not regenerated.

* The expected answer is “yes”.

B. The apostle Paul quoted the very words of their party slogans. vs. 4

* “For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I *am* of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

1. The order in the Greek is reversed.

a. One person says, “I am of Apollos”.

1) Apollos had come to Corinth after Paul and watered what Paul had sown.

2) Apollos had reaped some of what Paul had watered.

4) Apollos was born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty man in the Scriptures, he went to Ephesus and planted, but Paul watered.

Acts 18:24

5) Apollos was going to go to Corinth later. 1Cor 16:12

6) Paul mentions Apollos 7 times in the letter.

b. Another says, “I am of Paul.”

1) Paul was the founder of the church.
Acts 18

2) Paul was their spiritual father.

3) Paul had sown much seed.

4) Paul had watered also.

5) Paul had taught them for 18 months.

6) Paul was sowing in Corinth, while Apollos was sowing in Ephesus.
Acts 19:1

c. Paul only mentions Apollos and himself, without doubt because they were the only two who had been at Corinth.

1) Peter was most likely never went, there is no internal evidence or historical.

2) The party of Christ, he just ignores, altogether.

2. Paul repeated his verdict, “are you not carnal?”

a. The question again is a rhetorical one, having an obvious answer.

1) The answer can not be missed.

2) The answer is necessary.

b. The expected response from the Corinthians was “yes”.

1) Acknowledging their sin.

2) Confessing their sin.

3) Abandoning their sin.

4) Advancing in the faith.

Illustration

A judge merely presents the evidence and it condemns the person.

Application

1. People divide a church over the dumbest things.
 - a. Envy and jealousy over their place in the music ministry.
 - b. Being territorial over ministry positions.
 - c. What color of carpet to put in or what side of the stage will the piano go or vver ministry vision.
 - * “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them.*” Rom. 12:3-6b
2. People today are following men, instead of God.
 - a. They are attracted to the size of the church.
 - b. They are attracted to the fame of the preacher or teacher.
 - c. They believer everything without checking it out biblically.
 - * “Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death,

or things present or things to come--all are yours. And you *are* Christ’s, and Christ *is* God’s.” 1Cor. 3:21-23

The condemnation of their carnal state was from a loving father!

Conclusion

The carnal state of the Corinthians. 1Cor. 4:1-4

- I. The declaration of their carnal state was from a brokenhearted father!
- II. The confrontation of their carnal state was from a hopeful father!
- III. The condemnation of their carnal state was from a loving father!