

BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"The Sarkikos Man"

1 Cor. 3:1-4

Introduction

1. What one ought to be in Christ is often not what he actually is! This is the sad tragedy of many who profess our Lord as Saviour!

2. But this should never shake our confidence in the work of God within the life of a believing sinner (Phil. 1:6). Godliness and holiness are always the goals toward which He drives in one's life (Phil. 3:10-14). He urges to gain the full capacity of His grace in one's total being.

3. There are three levels of relationship to God: a. The natural man. He is controlled by his soul (2:14--the psuchikos man). b. The spiritual man. He is controlled by His Spirit (2:15, 16--the pneumatikos man). c. The carnal man. He is controlled by his flesh (3:1, 3, 4 -- the sarkikos man. It is the last named level that Paul finds describes the Corinthians. It does not suggest that they are not believers, for he distinctly points out that they are! Mark this in two specific phrases: 1) brethren (v. 1) and 2) in Christ (v. 1).

4. But the Corinthians had problems. They rose out of their level of living. It is for this reason that Paul labels them as 1) carnal (v. 1). This means that they were of the substance and nature of so being qualified (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 7:16). The word "carnal" in v. 3 suggests activity, tendency, and control. It is a different Greek term. 2) babes (v. 1). This means that they were "non-speakers" which is the breakdown of the original Greek term. It is a strong contrast with the nature situation of the spiritual man (vv. 15, 16).

Characteristics of this sort of level of living are given by Paul to support his contention. Mark these parallels with babies:-

1. THEIR DIET. v. 2.

The point that Paul makes here is that the Corinthians were unable to take the type of food provided for growing believers. The verb "fed" is really "gave to

drink" and is used with two objects, of which it only suits the meaning of one. This is an instance of the rhetorical figure zeugma. Milk is good food and has its place (cf. 1 Pet. 2:2), but when growth comes, a larger diet is prescribed. The word for "meat" is really all solid foods. Childhood is fine, but it must not be prolonged (cf. 1 Cor. 14:20; Heb. 5:13f.). How tragic and pathetic to be involved with a group of carnal Christians. They are always on the bottle and never desirous of the food which strengthens.

2. THEIR DIAPERS. v. 3.

Perhaps this imagery is too strong, but it certainly fits the Corinthian church. As true infants, they were going around making a mess of things and someone else had to clean up for them! How is this known? Check the text of the Word. Two significant words give the truth away: 1) envy. This means heat, jealousy. Nothing wrong with this if controlled. Today we would say: cool it! 2) strife. This means wrangling. It is envy in words and follows a heated situation! Paul could have pointed to amusements etc. as grounds for carnality, but he didn't.

4. THEIR DISTURBANCE. v. 4.

The word for "divisions" is not in the original text, but the thought is found in this verse. It shows that they were shouting names at one another! The word "another" points to another of a different kind. They were conducting themselves as men (cf. 2:14).

Conclusion. The painful word of Paul is that when he was with them, they were carnal and still were (v. 2). It is not enough to profess Christ as Saviour for sin; HE MUST be acknowledged as Lord. Who controls YOU?