

I CORINTHIANS
Chapter 3:1-10

VERSES 1-2:

In **verse 1** he says, **"I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal,"** As we look at the word **"carnal"** it literally means "fleshly". It is an adjective formed from the Greek word for "flesh". The term "flesh" as used doctrinally in Scripture does not refer to human flesh but to the nature which we have received from Adam, **"That which is born of flesh is flesh"**. A carnal man is a fleshly believer, strange as it may seem, there are many such persons. Many Christian lives are made up of mingled victories and defeats.

This carnal person that Paul mentioned is saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but is not yielded to Him. He is identified in four ways:

THE CARNAL MAN IS SAVED: He is a brother, a member of the family of God through regeneration, **John 1:12**. However, he is not able to receive the same level of instruction as the spiritual Christian. Instead of manifesting the mind of Christ, he is reflecting the mind of the natural man.

THE CARNAL MAN IS FLESHLY: He is carnal. There is a slight difference between the two Greek words translated as **"carnal"** in this section. He is **"carnal"**, (sarkinos in **3:1**) in that he has not gained the victory over his indwelling sin nature, (cf. **Romans 7:14** same word). He is positionally justified, but there is no practical sanctification in his life. This condition marks many immature, unknowledgeable Christians. In addition, he is **"carnal"** (sarkikos in **3:3**), in that he has willfully chosen to yield himself to the sin nature rather than to the Holy Spirit. A child of God does not live in the flesh, **Galatians 2:20**, but he should not live according to the flesh, **Romans 8:12**.

THE CARNAL MAN IS A BABE: He must be treated as a babe (nepios) in Christ. He is a Christian, but he is like a newborn infant that must be supported by others. His spiritual diet is limited. Like a baby, he can only receive milk and not meat. Biblical milk involves fundamental, theological principles, **Hebrews 5:12**. Milk users cannot apply biblical passages to the situations of life, **Hebrews 5:13**. They lack experience to distinguish between good and evil, **Hebrews 5:14**. The carnality of the Corinthians was not new. They had not been able to digest meat in the past, **"hitherto ye were not able"**, and they are still not yet able to handle it, **"neither yet now are ye able"**.

THE CARNAL MAN ACTS LIKE THE UNSAVED MAN: His behavior is no different than that of unsaved men, **3:3**. When he manifests the attitudes and actions of envy, strife, and divisions (cf. **1:11**), he walks according to the standards and lifestyle of men (kata anthropon). Carnality is shown or expressed by following or exalting one Christian at the expense of others, **3:4**.

VERSE 3:

"For ye are yet carnal", though you are Christians, and are the friends of God, your divisions and strifes show you are yet, to some degree, under the influence of the principles which govern the men of this world. Men who are governed solely by the principles of this world show a spirit of strife, emulation - (def. the attempt to equal or surpass somebody or something, usually by means of imitation), and contention. The extent

of participation in strife shows just how far you are controlled by the values, principles, and feelings of the carnal man.

"For whereas", in proof that you are carnal, I appeal to your contention and strife. **"Envy"** is used also in **James 3:14, 16**. It implies appropriately, any fervor of mind and may be applied to any exciting and agitating passion. The envy here referred to was that which arose from the superior advantages and endowments, which some claimed or possessed over others. Envy everywhere is a fruitful cause of strife. Most contentions in the church are somehow connected with envy.

"And strife", contention and dispute. **"And divisions"**, differences of opinion, disagreement and quarrels. The idea is that they were split up into parties, and those parties were embittered with mutual recriminations, (def. to answer an accuser by accusing him in return; reply a counter charge), and reproaches, as they always are in a church.

"And walk as men", the word **"walk"** is used in the Scripture in the sense of conduct or act. You conduct yourself as men commonly do and show the same spirit that majority of men do. Instead of being filled with love, or being united and harmonious as the members of the same family and same body ought to be, you are split up into fractions as the men of the world are.

Example: The scripture says, - **"If one member be honored, all members rejoice with it", I Corinthians 12:26**. We are encouraged to, **"rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep", Romans 12:15**. How different it often is! I can do something reasonably well, somebody else is favored more than I am and I cannot be thankful for what they do. I think I can preach a little bit, but somebody else is liked or appreciated more than I am. Instead of saying, "Thank God for the way He is using His servant", I sit in a corner and think - "just what is it that makes people so interested in him? I don't see anything in that kind of preaching." If you cannot enjoy having somebody else preferred before you, you are carnal. Always having to be number one is a sure sign of carnality.

Verse 4:

Then there are the fraction-makers, the division-makers, those who try to bring in strife among the people of God. Here at Corinth, they were divided into little cliques and were saying, **"I am of Paul, and another, and I am of Apollos"**. Everyone had his favorite. Paul says, **"are ye not carnal"**? When you go on acting like that, you are acting like little babes. **"I, brethren, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ", 3:1.**

If Christians could realize that when they compare one with another, say unkind things about some, and praise others to the skies, it is just baby talk, they should be ashamed of it. Paul says, "Here you are in Corinth, you have such much talent.

You are so proud because you are so gifted, and yet you are just babes. I cannot make known to you the things that I would like to. Instead, I have to feed you with milk, and even now, you are not able to be fed with meat. You are still big babies." The Corinthians gloried in men and they gloried in great swelling words of some, which showed just how carnal they were.

Paul said, "I cannot share with you the deep things of God because you have not grown up, but are still little babes. You are not developed yet, you are just carnal".

The spiritual are a different group of people. The spiritual are those who walk in a spiritual way, those who are guided by the Spirit of God. The highest part of the man is now in the position, which has the control or power. Self does not reign in this man. He lives to glorify Christ and walks on a higher plane than the carnal man.

"He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" – 2:15. The word translated **"judgeth"** is the same word as was used in **verse 14, "discerned"**. **"He that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man."** He is able to see the difference between what is of God and what is of man, what is of the flesh and what is of the spirit, what is of the new and what is of the old man or old nature. The spiritual man discerneth all things but he himself is discerned of no man. Other men cannot understand him, if they are not spiritual. They say, "He is a strange kind of man; he does not seem to be moved by the motives of other men, he is not dominated by the principles that dominate other men." Sometimes they even say as in **Hosea 9:7 – "the spiritual man is mad"**, he is not normal. Of course the spiritual man appears to the world as mad because the spiritual man is controlled by a higher power. One of those old English philosophers wrote, "If I do not seem to keep step with others, it is because I am listening to a different drumbeat." If a man of God does not seem to keep step with the carnal, the worldly and the Christ-less, it is because his ear is in tune with heaven and is getting his instructions from above.

Would you like to be a spiritual man, a spiritual woman? If you would, there is a price to pay. You must surrender your own will; you must yield yourself completely to the control of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. That means the end of all human ambitions and it does not make any difference from this time forth what men may think or say, you have only one to please, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a great deal of talk about surrender, about spirituality on the part of Christians but, who shows by their conduct, the carnality that controls them. May God give us the desire to be controlled by Him!

VERSES 5-11:

The carnal division within the church was caused by following human leaders, **1:12**, and (cf. **3:4**). In this lengthy section, **3:5 - 4:21**, Paul's solution to the problem continued. After pointing out the difference between divine and human wisdom, the apostle wanted the Corinthians to have a proper idea of the ministers through whom the Spirit of God had taught them spiritual truth.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ often used the descriptions of agriculture (sowing the seed; wheat and tares, field white unto harvest) to describe the relationship of the preaching of the gospel to men, **Matthew 9:35-38; 13:1-30, 36-42**. Paul now used this same analogy to point out the minister's relationships both to other servants and to God within the gospel ministry.

Two questions begin this paragraph: **"Who (or what) then is Paul? And who (or what) is Apollos?"** Since the Corinthians had exalted these two leaders, this was a natural question. Five answers were given concerning the roles of Paul and Apollos.

First, they were mere ministers. The word here does not signify the formal office of pastor or deacon. Just as Christ came, **"not to be ministered unto, but to minister"**,

Matthew 20:28, so Paul and Apollos did the same. Just as the ministers or table waiters, **John 2:5**, served by giving wine to the guests at the marriage feast of Cana, so Paul served by giving out the gospel to men and women throughout the world, **Colossians 1:23, 25**.

Second, both Paul and Apollos were instruments or channels by or through whom the Corinthians had believed in Christ. Saving faith was not placed in, nor brought about by Paul nor Apollos. Their faith was a gift of God which came through the Word of God they had preached, **Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:8-9**, but ". . . **how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Romans 10:14-15**. Paul and Apollos were commissioned and obedient preachers.

Third, they had planted and watered the Word of God in Corinth, **3:6**. Paul originally evangelized the city, **Acts 18:1-18**, whereas, Apollos preached in Corinth later, **Acts 18:24 - 19:1**. Although Apollos and Paul had different ministries at different times, Paul pointed out they shared the same purpose, **3:8**. They wanted to see increase and to have God glorified by their effort.

Fourth, ministers will receive a reward or wages for work accomplished based upon their individual effort or faithfulness in their labor, **3:8**, not upon their abilities or success. Note: How sad that often times success is measured by numbers rather than by one's faithfulness in the Lord's work.

Fifth, both Paul and Apollos were fellow workers with one another and with God.

The interrelationship of God and man in the ministry can clearly be seen in this passage, (cf. **John 15:26-27**). **First**, God is responsible for giving converts to ministers, **3:5b**; thus, spiritual children are gifts, not wages. **Second**, only God can give spiritual "increase", **3:6**. Only He can germinate life within a dead sinner and nourish that regenerated soul. Compared to God, the source and sustainer of life, man's ministry at its very best is still insignificant, **3:7**. **Third**, God alone is responsible for giving wages to each laborer, **3:8**. **Fourth**, God saves and works with each minister (note use of "we" **3:9a**). **Fifth**, the church belonged to God, not to any man, (note the use of "ye" **3:9b**). It is His farm or garden and it is His building. Christ said that He would build His church, **Matthew 16:18**. He owns it and He is building it.

Remember, Paul and Apollos were only the instruments of God in the salvation of those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The preacher is not the most important factor in salvation, but it is "**God that giveth the increase**". The preacher is nothing in the light of the power of God that brings salvation to the poor lost sinner.

Paul writes to them as regenerated people and instructs them how to overcome these problems. He speaks to them in simple and clear language so they could understand. We should be most grateful and give thanks to God for that which caused a need in writing this letter as it gives us many simple and plain answers to our church problems today.

Every member of the church should work and labor to the best of their ability knowing that it is the Lord that will give the increase that pleases Him. God is the one who will bless our efforts to His glory and reward us for our faithfulness. The foundation is laid and we need to be careful how we build there-upon. As God's husbandry we should bring forth fruit for Him. Each Christian is responsible to bear fruit in His vineyard that will honor and glorify Him, as our great Husbandman. What a joy it is to be in God's vineyard and in His building.

WORKSHEET
I CORINTHIANS 3:1-10

1. "Carnal" means _____.
2. The term "flesh" as used doctrinally in Scripture does not refer to human flesh but to the _____, which we have received from _____.
3. Is the "carnal" person saved? If he is saved what is their problem?
4. The "carnal" man manifests the mind of the _____ rather than the mind of _____.
5. Paul identifies a "carnal" person in Four Ways, name them:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
6. Men who are governed solely by the principles of this world show a spirit of _____, _____, and _____.
7. _____ everywhere is a fruitful cause of strife. Most contentions in the church are somehow connected with _____.
8. ***"And walk as men"***, the word ***"walk"*** is used in the Scripture in the sense of _____ or _____.
9. ***"If one member be honored, all members _____ with it", I Corinthians 12:26.***
10. We are encouraged to, "***_____ with them that do _____, and _____ with them that _____***", ***Romans 12:15.***
11. Always having to be _____ is a sure sign of carnality.
12. ***"I, brethren, could not speak unto you as _____, but as unto _____, even as unto _____ in Christ", 3:1.***
13. The spiritual man is able to see the _____ between what is of God and what is of _____.
14. The carnal division within the church was caused by following _____.
15. What are the two questions Paul asked in ***verse 5***? _____
_____.
16. First Paul says they were:

First, they were _____

Second, they were _____ or _____.

Third, they had _____ and _____ the Word of God.

Fourth, ministers will receive a _____ or _____ for work accomplished based upon their individual effort or faithfulness in their labor, not upon their _____ or _____.

Fifth, both Paul and Apollos were fellow _____ with one another and with_____.

17. The preacher ____ _____the most important factor in_____, but it is "**_____that giveth the increase**".
18. Every member of the church should work and labor to the best of their ability knowing that it is the _____ that will give the increase that pleases Him.