



First Corinthians 3:1-11

Verse 16 – [From last week's session]

"For who hath know the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Who hath known the mind of the Lord...? There are two kinds of people, the natural man (natural = *psyche*), and the spiritual (spiritual = *pneuma*). The *psyche* of man (where we get our word, psychology) tends to always lean toward the natural world, or the base things of life. When we depend on our *psyche* we will never know God's will for our lives. An unbeliever searches for truth in his *psyche*, yet psychology will never lead anyone to the truth of the Spirit.

But what about believers in Jesus Christ? **We have the mind of Christ.** When we have the mind of Christ we can receive instruction, we can learn the word of God. We can grow in our faith and daily walk with Jesus Christ. We know from previous verses that having this Christlike mind will be a problem for Christians. When we have the mind of Christ we can expect persecution, mocking, slander.

In other words, the natural man will be opposed to and will not like the spiritual man. Expect opposition to your Christlikeness to increase in the latter days.

Chapter 3

Verse 1 -

The KJV does not add the word *people* as NKJV does. It is not in the Greek. Literally, Paul writes, ...**could not speak to you as spiritual.** He calls them **brethren** which, when used in the New Testament, means fellow Christians. The word in Greek is ἀδελφός *adelphos*, which is a masculine term. And while he may have men and women in mind, various translations read *brothers and sisters*. That is a case where the translators made an interpretation and not a translation. The word is literally *brothers*. In this case he refers to those **brethren** who were filled with and governed by the Spirit of God; but these in the Corinthian church were not. He had to take a different approach when he addressed them.

But as unto carnal. The word is, σαρκικός [*sarkikos* /sar-kee-kos/] and it is from the root word, *sarx* which means the *flesh* or the *body*. *Sarkikos* then is someone under the control of their bodily or fleshly appetites.

He defines further the term carnal **As to babes in Christ.** Babies have no control over their desires. When they are hungry, they cry, if they have to wait too long they turn red in the face and scream. They are under control of their flesh!

Babies cannot be reasoned with. They can't chew, and in fact don't even know what meat is. All a mother can do is feed them milk.

Paul could only address these church members as babies in Christ. In other words, while they may have had worldly wisdom, they were spiritually immature.

The Corinthian church was filled with immature, sensual, fleshly, carnal, baby Christians. They have essentially forgotten all that Paul had taught them when he was there for 18 months.

Can a Christian then be carnal? The answer is clear....Yes.

Verse 2 -

Keep in mind the context of Paul's letter. There is a problem with pride, leading to contentions, in the church.

When Paul first arrived in Corinth, in Acts 18, he spent eighteen months teaching and instructing; giving this baby church **milk** so they could grow. By now, the church should have been eating **meat** and should have been able to chew on solid spiritual food, but they were still in the nursing stage of their Christian lives.

Pride had stunted their spiritual growth. The opposite of pride is humility. As we humble ourselves, and take our eyes off others and think of the cross of Christ, we can then begin to become more spiritually minded and grow stronger in our Christian walk. Pride was a destructive force in this church.

Verse 3 -

So again, yes, Christians can be carnal. Remember, Paul is addressing the *church of God in Corinth...them that are sanctified*.

A person doesn't lose their salvation when they live in carnality, and it does not mean they are not saved. Rather, they **walk as** men. Carnality means a sanctified believer is behaving like the world.

What does the world look like? Paul describes it, **envy, strife, and divisions**. The Corinthians should have been different in the Church, they should have stood out from the world and been spiritual *rather* than carnal.

Verses 4,5 -

Paul reviews the original problem he was addressing from chapter one: **One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos**. The contentions in the church were tearing it apart. They were consumed with pride over which man they followed. Paul says, when you do this, you are **carnal**.

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos? Men are not the message. Men are **ministers**, or servants of the One who **gave** the Corinthians salvation. Men may guide others to the cross, but it is the Lord who saves.

Verses 6,7 -

There is a fallacy among Christendom today and it is: *Our programs and our charisma are what will lead men and women to Christ*. But Paul counters that by saying to the Corinthians, **I have planted, Apollos watered**. His point is that they had no control over the final spiritual outcome. If any increase came, it was from God; **God gave the increase**. The increase is not based on any 'wow' factor a church may perform.

The Corinthian church was fighting over who was the best leader. Their pride was causing contentions and divisions. Paul says, all we did was plant and water, without God there would be no growth.

And by the way, Paul is not talking about numeric growth. The context is spiritual growth, i.e, the spiritual man vs. the carnal man. Numeric growth means absolutely nothing. However many people attend a church, the question is, are they spiritual? The size of a church is never the measure of its spiritual maturity.

How can a man, woman, boy or girl grow spiritually? It comes first from planting and watering. How did Paul **plant**? He did it through consistent teaching of the word of God among them ([Acts 18:11](#)). How did Apollos **water**? First, he was teachable ([Acts 18:26](#)), then he reinforced everything the apostle Paul taught the Corinthians ([Acts 18:28; 19:1](#)).

Verse 8 -

So numeric growth is not the key to a spiritual church. Paul says, **he who plants...and waters are one**. Paul and Apollos are not against each other. They are one in Christ and are like minded. The same holds true for the entire local church. There is no counting sheep when the local church is unified--the local church is the Body of Christ, and it is **one**.

When God looks at a church He does not count heads and neither should we. There is only one head, and it is Christ.

But the church, the body of Christ, is made up of individual waterers and planters. Each of them will **receive his own reward**. What the reward is Paul does not say (at least at this point in his letter). Whatever the reward is, or when the reward comes, everyone within the church will receive it based on his or her **own labor**. It is not like one of those group projects at school where one person does the excellent work and four other slackers get the same grade.

Verse 9 -

Notice the change in pronouns, "we" and "you". **We** refers to Paul and Apollos (see context, vs. 5,6). Paul and Apollos are **fellow workers**. The word in Greek is the adjective **συνεργός** [*sunergos* /soon-er-gos/ which is often translated *helpers*. The KJV says, *labourers together with God*, but "with" is added and not in the Greek. The NKJV translates the better sense, that is, Paul and Apollos are **fellow workers of God**.

You, the Church in Corinth, are metaphorically **God's field** (**husbandry** means care and cultivation of a field and **You** are **God's building** (more on that in vs.10ff). Paul and Apollos are **fellow workers of God** as they labor in the Church. Paul says Apollos and I are planting in the **field** and helping construct the **building**.

Verse 10 -

Paul shifts his metaphor from working in the field to constructing a building as a **wise master builder**. When Paul came to Corinth (See Acts 18:1-11), he planted the seed of the cross of Christ, and then through eighteen months of

teaching, he laid the foundation for the Corinthian's faith. He was able to do his work only **according to the grace of God**.

Paul came humbly to Corinth (2:3) and declared only the testimony of God, that is, the cross of Christ. In doing so, and in only preaching that particular message, he was the **wise master builder** of the church. From the work of Paul, by God's grace, others had the task of continuing his work. But he warned them to **take heed** how they build.

Where is the Corinthian church today?

It is gone. They did not take heed to the apostle's teaching and at some point lost their way and disappeared. They became unwise builders. The message of the cross got watered down with other teachings that eventually crept into the church, which was why Paul warned them.

We should **take heed** of everything we teach and how we build--ensuring it's accomplishment through careful study of the Word of God.

2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Verse 11 -

Nothing else belongs in the church except the teaching of **Jesus Christ** and the power which comes from the cross (1:18). I would go so far to say we must be careful of even our music ministries. The church's music productions can overshadow the preaching of the cross. Programs, women's ministries, youth ministries, really anything other than the teaching of the cross, can form **another foundation** in which we must take heed (3:10).

It doesn't matter what other churches are doing. The foundation of the church is *only* **Jesus Christ**.