

## I Corinthians 3:1-7

Paul has described to the Corinthians the different levels of people that are usually in the church. It shows the church often has a mixed multitude that no doubt affects the church. This was so true of Corinth. They had multiple sinful problems that were dividing them. Paul is writing to help correct their problems to bring about peace and moving on in the same direction.

A. I Corinthians 3:1 - And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.

1. Now Paul explains the "carnal" person (natural - spiritual - carnal). These are believers who professed Christ, but now were controlled by the flesh in their thinking and living. It seemed that they had more in common with the natural (lost) men, than the spiritual men.
2. These carnal ones were more motivated by their flesh rather than the Spirit.
  - a. A carnal person could be one who had not had the time or the experiences to grow or mature yet. They were young in the faith.
  - b. Then there were those carnal believers that have been saved for years (older), but they had neglected foundational truths and lived their own desires (flesh)!
  - c. Paul calls them [babes in Christ], signifying they never had grown up. They had to be spoon fed like a newborn infant, supported by or dependent upon others' faith. They were infants spiritually.  
  
\*\*There are too many gray-headed babies.  
  
\*Note: What Paul is saying is important. The believer who is normal grows to become mature, spiritual. But abnormality is equal to being carnal. Carnal believers have to be treated like babies!
  - d. As a result of their immaturity, Paul had to address them on the level they could understand, as babies in the Lord.

B. I Corinthians 3:2 - I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.

1. Spiritual babies (carnal) were those slow and sluggish in hearing and understanding God's Word. They continually needed to be taught the basics.

\*Today, many hardly get past hell is hot, Heaven is sweet, and Jesus saves. This is true, but in the whole counsel of God, the mystery program, there is so much more. Baby believers hardly ever get beyond pabulum or strained beets. They cannot apply Biblical passages to life situations. They lack experience to discern between good and evil in certain situations, and they could not take in or handle solid truth.

Hebrews 5:11-14 - Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. Heb. 5:12 - For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. Heb. 5:13 - For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. Heb. 5:14 - But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

2. [neither yet now are ye able.] Since they **re**mained carnal, they still could not grasp or handle the "meat" (solid spiritual food of the Word), but still were on "milk" (basics of the Word). This had been going on for **3 to 4** years since Paul had left, and they had become mostly dead to the fuller things of God.

Romans 8:5-6 - For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. Rom. 8:6 - For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

C. I Corinthians 3:3 - For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

1. Paul shows them the effects of remaining carnal that had caused them to become **divi**sive. They had created a carnival, carnivorous atmosphere in the Church.

\*This was because they had chosen not to know the things of God, but had chosen to follow human reasonings to fulfill their fleshly desires (Galatians 5:19-20). But one day they will hit their brick **wall!**

2. Proof:

- a. [envying] There was a heated jealousy among them. They had an attitude of envy because of others' **advan**tage.
- b. [strife] These are they who hardly **ever** agree. They are often debaters, wranglers, and sow discord. They constantly contend and **quarrel**.
- c. [divisions] They create separation, schisms, and splits among believers.

Proverbs 6:16-19 - These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: Prov. 6:17 - A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, Prov. 6:18 - An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, Prov. 6:19 - A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

- d. [carnal, and walk as men?] Paul asks them **how** they could deny this because of the way they lived. Their behavior was no different than the lost, natural men. Their lifestyle and standards were no better than the unsaved.

\*As a result of this, they had completely **destroyed** Christ's testimony in their life.

\*\*Later Paul will say:

II Corinthians 4:11 - For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

D. I Corinthians 3:4 - For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

1. Paul is teaching that for a believer to become a groupie of another human being could be an act of one's flesh. Be careful of being a people-**person**ality follower and not the Word, or God.

Acts 17:11 - These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

2. Jesus Christ, God's Word **alone**, must be the object of our devotion. God demands first place from all those in the Body.

Colossians 1:18 - And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

Note: It is understood that there are **few** who stand and share dispensational truth. We appreciate them, respect them, and hold them in high regard. We dispensationalists understand that the Word, rightly divided, is why we follow them. They (Spirit) have helped illuminate Pauline mystery truths that have **changed** our lives.

\*We cannot help but love them in the Lord. However, we also know it is always **God** first.

E. I Corinthians 3:5 - Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

1. Paul's thought here is what is so great about Paul or Apollos that they should be devoted to them and **divide** over them? The point is that all he and Apollos did at Corinth was given them by God. They shared the **gospel** but produced nothing, and anyone who was converted under their ministries was because of the Lord.
2. Both Paul and Apollos were great men. Neither considered themselves a **rival** of the other. Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews, mighty in the mystery revelation given him. Apollos also was great.

Acts 18:24-25 - And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Acts 18:25 - This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

\*Both were **humble**, but bold men:

- a. Apollos - Acts 18:26 - And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.
- b. Paul - I Corinthians 15:9-10a - For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. I Cor. 15:10a - But by the grace of God I am what I am:

F. I Corinthians 3:6-7 - I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. I Cor. 3:7 - So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

1. It was Paul who had **first** shared the gospel, then later Apollos watered (Word) what was growing. Apollos helped ground the grace salvation. Always remember (most do not) we are a **team**. We are in this together serving the same Lord.
2. Whoever we are, we are nothing unless **God** moves. Believers are never to take credit for anything because they have not produced anything. If one is saved, growing, it is because believers have given themselves to planting the gospel and watering the truth. They have been willing to be tools to be used by God, but it is God who spiritually moves to **save** and **illuminate**. All the glory goes to Him.

Romans 8:28-29 - And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. Rom. 8:29 - For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren

Philippians 2:13 - For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

II Thessalonians 2:13 - But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

II Corinthians 3:5 - Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

- a. It is interesting that we do not know how much Apollos taught the **mystery** truths, if **any**.

Acts 18:27-28 - And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: Acts 18:28 - For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

\*We know the Corinth believers had become carnal (**many**). Was this because of a lack of scripture knowledge?

- b. I also believe that Paul uses himself and Apollos as **ex**amples of not to think too highly of men. Evidently there were men in the church at Corinth that he could have named **per**sonally. I think Paul was trying not to embarrass them at this time in order to give them a chance to **turn** it around.

I Corinthians 4:6 - And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and *to* Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think *of men* above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

#### Questions:

1. Why are there gray-headed baby believers?
2. What does carnality cause?
3. Why could personality-following be dangerous? When is it okay?
4. Why do you think most pastors-churches stay separated from one another?
5. What was the seeming area that Apollos lacked in? Why?
6. How did Paul handle the division leaders?
7. Why do some believers say there is no such thing as a carnal believer?