

Three Kinds Of Men

1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4

Pastor John Miller

I want to read the text, beginning in chapter 2, verse 14.

Paul said, “But the natural man...”—there’s our first category—“...does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”—or “understood.” “But he who is spiritual...”—here’s the second category—“...judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged...”—or “understood”—“...by no one. For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal...”—here’s our third category—“...as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?”

Perhaps you have heard the statement, “Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief.” Man is always trying to put himself and others in various categories. Our world is divided by race, by religion, by wealth, by education, by age, by geography and by nationality. Even today we are painfully aware of identity politics and how we want to identify with certain people groups such as national or ethnic groups.

But God divides all mankind into just three categories. These divisions are not according to the measure of our possessions or the color of our skin. God’s divisions of mankind are based entirely upon spiritual conditions of the human heart. The Bible says that God doesn’t look on the outward appearance. God doesn’t look at your skin color, He doesn’t look at your height, He doesn’t look at your bank account and He doesn’t look at your education. God looks at your heart. Men look at the outward, but God looks at the heart.

What are the three categories that we find in this section that God divides mankind into? There is the natural man, chapter 2, verse 14; the spiritual man, chapter 2, verses 15-16; and the carnal man, chapter 3. They are babes in Christ. We’ll break it all down.

The context of this passage in 1 Corinthians is that Paul is describing three responses to divine wisdom. When I talked about 1 Corinthians on Wednesday nights, I titled my sermons “Fool’s Wisdom.” The wisdom of God is foolishness to man. The Cross to man, to the unbelieving, unregenerate mind, is foolishness. They can’t understand the things of God. But we have the mind of Christ, and we understand spiritual realities. To the world, it’s foolishness. So Paul is describing three, different groups by their response to the wisdom of God, to the Word of God, to the revelation of God.

Let’s look at them individually. The first is “the natural man,” chapter 2, verse 14. Paul says,

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.” Why? “For they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them...”—why?—“...because they are spiritually discerned.”

What is “the natural man?” I say jokingly that the natural man is not a hippie. In the hippie movement, you grew long hair and you had a full beard. I won’t talk about women in the hippie movement, because it gets a little frightening. We used to call them a “natural man” or a “natural mama.” We used to take drugs and drink smoothies and eat health food. That’s kind of weird; right? Before you smoke a joint, you have to drink a smoothie or eat granola or something.

“The natural man” is not a hippie but is an unsaved, unregenerated nonbeliever. The word “natural” means that they are soulless. We get our word “psyche” from it. They live by their feelings and their emotions. They are soulless; they are earth bound. In the book of Jude, the word is used for those who are “sensual...not having the Spirit.” So “the natural man” is basically not a Christian.

I want to define my terms. When I use the word “unregenerate”—that’s the technical term—it means they haven’t been born again, they haven’t been given new life and they don’t have the Spirit of God. A non-Christian is unregenerated. A Christian is regenerated; they’ve been given new life. “To regenerate” means “new life.” Either you have the life of God in your soul and you’re a Christian, or you don’t have the life of God in your soul and you’re not a Christian. So when I say “unregenerate, unbelievers, unsaved, non-Christians,” they’re all synonymous terms for someone who is not a Christian. If you’re not a Christian, you’re not born again and you haven’t been regenerated. So “the natural man” is the person who has only been born once, physically, and hasn’t been born twice, spiritually.

A few years ago, the church popularized a term for unbelievers called “the unchurched.” It was part of the secret-sensitive church movement that tried to placate the non-Christian. We wanted church to be nonthreatening, and we really didn’t want to talk about sin, repentance or heaven and hell. We wanted to make church palatable, so we talked about reaching “the unchurched.” At the time, I didn’t like it, and I still don’t like it. I don’t use the term “the unchurched.” They’re not “unchurched”; they’re “unsaved” or “unregenerated” or they’re “not born again.” They’re “lost” is what they are. Without Christ, they’re on their way to a Christ-less eternity in hell, to be Biblical about it.

But “the natural man” can be religious, but he is still lost. You can put a robe on him, put beads on him, he can burn incense, he can chant prayers, he can go to church, he can be baptized, he can sing songs, he can actually get involved in church activities, he can tithe, but he is still lost. It is very possible to be religious and not be regenerated or born again.

Let me give you an example in the Bible. It’s in John 3. You’re familiar with the story of Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews. He was a teacher, a Pharisee, and he was very religious. He was the right race—he was Jewish. He had the right religion and he was very rigid in his beliefs—he was a Pharisee. So he had a lot going for him. The Bible says that

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, so we call him “Nick at night.” Why he came at night, we do not know, but preachers like to bash him and say, “Oh, he was afraid. He was embarrassed. He didn’t want anyone to see him.” We don’t know. It could be that he just wanted Jesus’ undivided attention. During the day, there were a lot of crowds, it was busy and he wanted Jesus’ undivided attention.

But Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, “We know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus said, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Then Nicodemus said, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” There’s your natural man. One physical birth only, you’re soulish. Jesus continued, “And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” So you must be born of the Spirit. You must be born again or from above of the Holy Spirit. “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus said, “How can these things be?”

Jesus said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” As Jesus would go to the Cross and die for the sins of the world, He said to Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

That’s what you need to be saved: the life of God in your soul. Without that, without believing in Jesus, you’re not born again and you’re not a true child of God.

The natural man is governed and controlled by his body appetites. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear? Smell, taste, feel—it’s all sensual.

I want you to notice in the text what Paul says about the natural man. He says, “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God,” verse 14. We’ll see that he can’t, because he doesn’t have the capacity.

I like what Vance Havner said. He said, “You might as well try to explain a sunset to a blind man or discuss nuclear physics with a monument in the city park as try to explain the things of the Spirit to a natural man.” Someone said, “It’s like a deaf critic of Bach or a blind critic of Raphael.” They can’t see and they can’t hear, but they are so in opposition to the things of God.

Have you ever noticed that when you talk to a non-Christian they say, “I don’t believe the Bible! All this Jesus stuff! You really believe in that?! That’s not true!” They just mock and ridicule. “Jonah swallowed by a whale; do you really believe that?!” You say, “Yeah,” and they say, “Well,

I don't believe that!"

I don't know how many times I've had people mock the idea that God created all things or that Noah built a big boat, animals got in it and the world was destroyed by a big flood. These things just seem so crazy to them; they can't comprehend.

One of the greatest verses in the Bible is Genesis 1:1, the very first verse of the very first chapter of the very first book of the Bible: "In the beginning God..."—He exists—"...created..."—He created all things—"...the heavens and the earth." That says that there is one God, and He is the creator and source of all things. So many questions are answered in the first verse of the Bible.

So the natural man is empty, his life is a void and he's trying to fill it with all the pleasures of this world.

I want you to notice the second thing about the natural man. Verse 14 says that "the things of the Spirit of God...are foolishness to him." So he doesn't receive them, because "They are foolishness to him."

Paul was speaking before King Agrippa in Acts 26, and Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Festus cried out and said, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" He said Paul was crazy. He heard Paul preach about Jesus dying and being buried and raising from the dead and he said, "You've flipped out! You read one too many books, and your mind just tweaked. You're gone! You're crazy!"

And that's the way it is with us when you talk to a non-Christian. Maybe when you try to tell a relative or somebody in your family or somebody in your own home about Jesus, they think you're crazy and you've lost your marbles.

Notice the third thing about the natural man. The natural man cannot know the things of God's wisdom. Verse 14 says, "Nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They are understood by the spirit of man. When God created man in the Garden of Eden, man was made in body, soul and spirit. But when Adam and Eve sinned, there was a reversal; the spirit of man died and body and soul took precedence, or their natural man took precedence. Everyone born after that was born in Adam and spiritually died, because they inherited Adam's sin. So they are soulish; they're not spiritual. That's why you have to be born a second time, of the Holy Spirit to be knowledgeable of God, have a relationship with God, commune with God and to understand the things of God.

Remember when you got saved? Then all of a sudden you said, "Wow! There really is a God! Jesus really did raise from the dead! Jesus forgave me of my sins! He's real! He's 'the way, the truth and the life!'" You remember the first time you read that verse in the Bible and it just blew your mind? "Wow! There's only one way to heaven, and that's through Jesus." It was all so new and exciting, but you need the Spirit of God to understand the things of God.

Remember the old radios with antennas we used to have? The other day I was thinking about antennas on our houses. Remember that? I remember getting on the roof and turning the antenna to try to get the best reception. That was before the digital age. You had to have a responder, a receiver. The signal is being broadcast, but you have to have something to receive it. So the natural man doesn't have the capacity or the ability to hear God, to understand God, because he is dead spiritually.

In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul said that you "were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." Being dead in sin means that we are dead spiritually, we are separated from God and we need a regeneration in order to have a new relationship with God. So the natural man is lost and needs salvation and cannot even understand or comprehend the things of God.

Before I move on, I want to say that there are people in this church who are in this category. I don't take it for granted that just because you come to this church you are saved. Coming to church doesn't make you a Christian. Going to McDonald's doesn't make you a Big Mac.

I'm not into McDonald's, but this past week when I was traveling and was in an airport, I thought, Thank God for McDonald's. Pray for me; I ate at McDonald's. When you're hungry, you just have to eat. But you don't turn into a hamburger the minute you walk into a McDonald's. If a mouse gets into the cookie jar, it doesn't become a cookie. Just because you walk into a church you can't say, "I'm a Christian." You can be baptized multiple times, and you're not going to be a Christian. You're just going to be a wet sinner. You can take communion, and it won't get you to heaven. You can put a robe on and become very religious, but if you're not born again, you're lost. That would be a natural man or a natural woman.

If that's you, then God doesn't make sense, the Bible doesn't make sense and Christianity doesn't make sense to you. You can't see it and you can't understand it. Then you need to be born again.

The second category of mankind, based on their response to the wisdom of God, is what I hope and pray that we are here at Revival. It's the spiritual person. Verses 15-16 say, "But..."—here's the contrast to the natural man—"...he who is spiritual..."—there it is—"...judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ."

Who is this spiritual person? This man or woman? They are saved and born again. They are regenerated and indwelt by the Spirit of God. They are yielded to the Spirit. They are no longer blinded to God and Satan. They have been enlightened by God and are spiritually made alive.

Again, back in Ephesians 2:1-2, after being "dead in trespasses and sins," Paul goes on to say, "God...hath quickened us." That's in the King James Bible. The word "quickened" means "regenerated" or "made alive." When you were saved, you were given spiritual life. I love the

definition of a Christian as the person who has the life of God in their soul. You “shall not perish but have everlasting life,” John 3:16. So the moment you are born again, you have the life of God in your soul. That’s what Paul is describing here: an individual who is saved.

There are three things that Paul says about the spiritual person. Number one, the spiritual person “judges all things,” verse 15. “But he...”—or “she”—“...judges all things.” The word “judges” could be translated “discerns” or “understands” or “comprehends.” Paul here isn’t literally saying “all things.” Because you’re a Christian, it doesn’t mean you’re going to be good in mathematics, science or other things. It doesn’t mean that you are omniscient, that you know everything. It’s talking about spiritual things. In the context, “all things” means “spiritual things.” You see things and understand things and you know things that the natural man does not see, understand or know. You know that your sins are forgiven. You know that you’re a child of God. You know that the Bible is true. You know that Jesus is who He said He is. So you discern and you understand. You have the Holy Spirit to teach you.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, inspired the Scriptures. When the Bible was written by men, they wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Peter says that they “were carried along...”—or “borne along.” So the Bible is God breathed, and He carried the authors along, using their own personalities and styles, so that the very words they wrote were the very words of God.

I believe the Bible is the very Word of God. I believe it is inerrant, infallible and was written by inspiration from God. And the Bible is profitable “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” I believe the Bible gives us all things we need to live a godly and righteous life. So the spiritual person understands the things of God, as they meditate and study the Word of God. You can’t be spiritual without the Word of God.

The second thing Paul says, in verse 15, is that the spiritual person is not understood by the natural man. They are an enigma to them. “Yet he himself is rightly judged by no one,” or “not understood.” That means that when a non-Christian looks at you, they don’t understand you. They say, “I don’t understand what you see in the Bible. I don’t understand why you love Jesus. I don’t understand why you go to church on Wednesday nights. Maybe once in a while on Sunday mornings, but you go Wednesday nights, too! Something’s wrong with you.” They don’t understand your joy and your peace. They don’t understand why you have a smile on your face when things are going wrong in your life. It’s because you know God is in control.

What really freaks out the natural man is when they go to a Christian funeral. We’re singing, celebrating, praising God. We’re celebrating their home-going, their coronation. It’s a glorious thing. They’re looking at us like, “What is wrong with you people?!” It’s like you’ve either got something, or you’ve lost something.

When you see someone walking down the street with a smile, you figure he’s either smoking something or they don’t have it all up there. Something isn’t right. “Why are you smiling?” Something’s weird.

The Christian has joy because he has the Holy Spirit. Even though you might lose your job, even though you might be bereaved by a family member's death, you know that "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." You're not ready to live until you're ready to die. And when you're ready to die, you don't have to be afraid. "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."

So the spiritual man is not understood by the natural man. They don't understand your love and your faith. They don't understand when you forgive people, when someone wrongs you and you forgive them. This is very important in a marriage. The Bible says that we should "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." That will keep your marriage going.

The third and last thing about the spiritual man is that the spiritual man has the mind of Christ. Isn't that amazing? Verse 16 says, "For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?'" That is a quotation from the Old Testament prophetic book of Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 13. This is talking about God's omniscience, God's transcendence, that He knows everything and that we can't understand. But Paul goes on to say at the end of verse 16, "But we have the mind of Christ." So being a Christian with the Spirit of God, the Word of God and Christ dwelling in us, we have the mind of Christ. In Philippians 2:5, Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

What kind of mind did Christ have? A humble mind. "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross." A true Christian is humble. They have the mind of Christ. They have a servant's heart. They have a certain attitude.

Everything that happens to you after you get saved is all about making you more like Jesus in your sanctification. If you want to know how you're doing as a Christian, ask yourself, "How much like Jesus am I?" Are you humble? Are you loving? Are you forgiving? Are you gracious? Are you kind? Are you holy? The more like Jesus Christ I become, the further I am down my road of Christian growth and maturity. It is the mark of the believer. We have the mind and attitude of Christ.

We may not be able, in our natural state, to understand the mind of the Lord. We may not be able to instruct Him, but God has actually given the Christian the mind of Christ. That's why Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Another translation says, "Don't let the world press you into its mold." Our minds are renewed by the Word of God, by prayer and by the Spirit of God.

Now there is a third category of mankind. We move from the natural man to the spiritual man and now to the carnal man, in chapter 3, verses 1-4. The carnal man is the one who is a challenge and, I believe, very common in the church today. Paul says in verse 1, "And I,

brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?"

So the natural man is a non-Christian; the spiritual man is a Christian, who is obedient, committed, walking in the Spirit, following the Lord and serving Him. But we also have the carnal man. What does Paul mean by "carnal"? The word "carnal" means to have the nature and characteristics of the flesh. More simply it means "fleshly." We have our word "carnivorous," which means "fleshly."

I want you to understand something very important in your Bible study. Your physical body is not intrinsically evil or sinful. There is nothing sinful about the body appetites or the body drives. They're given to us by God. They only become sinful when they are used out of the will of God or when they are used in a way that God has not prescribed. We have a thirst drive, and it's good that we are thirsty, so we drink, but drunkenness is sin. Sleep is a good thing; praise God for sleep! All the old people say, "Amen. Thank God for naps!" But laziness is sin. The hunger drive is great, but gluttony is sin. The sex drive is a gift from God, but sexual immorality outside the covenant of marriage is sinful behavior. There is no question about that.

But your physical body is not sinful; it is neutral. It can be the temple of the Holy Spirit used to honor and glorify God, or it can be used for sinful, selfish purposes. So walking as the natural man, you're using your body for sinful, selfish purposes out of the will of God, but they don't really satisfy or gratify; they only lead to more emptiness. But if you are walking in the Spirit, you will not be fulfilling the lust of the flesh but will be honoring and glorifying God and experience His love, joy and peace.

What is the carnal man? I believe he is a Christian or a believer, but they are living as though they were an unbeliever. The really big question is, "Is the carnal man a Christian or saved?" My answer is, "Yes." Note two things in the text: Paul calls them "brethren" and "babes in Christ," in verse 1. These terms can only be used for Christians. So he addresses them as believers; he calls them "babes in Christ." If you are in Christ, you are a Christian.

What we have right now are carnal Christians. I know it's kind of hard to wrap our minds around and for some it's a controversy, but it's not for me. We have the natural man—unsaved; we have the saved man, who is Spirit filled—Ephesians 5:18, filled with the Spirit with Christ dwelling in him richly and following in obedience to God's Word; and we have a carnal man, a Christian, who has a saved soul and a wasted life. Sadly, in the church this is a very common thing—people who are saved but have a wasted life. They haven't become disciples; they haven't died to themselves, they haven't taken up their cross, they haven't decided to follow Jesus Christ. They are living for themselves.

The carnal man is saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but he is controlled by the flesh. This

does not mean that they have no spiritual fruit of any kind. A Christian's carnality will not be lifelong or total. This is where the issue lies. Jesus said that if you are truly saved, you will bear fruit; they will know you by your fruit. So a carnal Christian will have some evidence, some sign of spiritual life, but there will be these times of carnality.

But it is possible for every Christian to sin. If I were to ask, "How many of you Christians have ever sinned?" and you didn't raise your hand, you just sinned. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." That's why 1 John 1:9 is in the Bible: It's the Christian's "bar of soap." It says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That verse is written to Christians, because Christians do stumble and fall.

So the question is, "How carnal and for how long?" If you never show any evidence or sign of any spiritual life, the fact may be that you've never been born again. Maybe you haven't truly been saved.

But even good Christians have moments when they lapse into carnality. You get tired and crabby. You drive on the freeways of southern California, and it's easy to get into the flesh. You start talking about other drivers. It's like the little boy who said, "Mommy, why is it that when Daddy drives, all the idiots come out, but they never come out when you drive?" There will be those lapses; maybe a moment in the flesh or a day or two spent in the flesh. Then you say, "Lord, forgive me. Cleanse me from my sin. Help me to dedicate and consecrate my life to You. Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. Help me to get back in Your Word. Help me to pray. Help me to 'walk in the Spirit and...not fulfill the lust of the flesh.'" Jesus said that as a believer, you will have fruit—"some 30, some 60, some 100 fold." So saved, yes; sanctified, no.

I like what John Calvin said about the carnal man. He said,

"Paul does not mean that they were completely carnal, without even a spark of the Spirit of God, but that they were too much full of the mind of the flesh. So the flesh prevailed over the Spirit and, as it were, extinguished the light. Although they are not entirely without grace, yet they had more of the flesh than they did of the Spirit in their lives. That is why he calls them 'carnal.' This is plain enough by him adding immediately that they were 'babes in Christ.' If they would not have been 'babes,' then they were not begotten of God. But this 'begotten' is the work of the Holy Spirit of God."

So it is clear that they are "in Christ," they have been "begotten," but they are primarily dominated and controlled by the flesh.

I want you to look at these verses that describe these carnal Christians. The carnal man is controlled by the flesh and not by the Spirit. That's what the word "carnal" means. "...could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal," verse 1. So they are Christians, but they are living for self. At the end, their lives will be unrewarded "wood, hay and stubble." When they stand before God, give an account for their lives, they have what I call "a saved soul but a

wasted life.”

I’m not concerned about losing my salvation; I’m concerned about losing my rewards. When I get to heaven, I want to hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.” I don’t want to be ashamed. “Lord You saved me, but I lived selfishly. I didn’t use my time, my talents and my treasures for Your kingdom.”

The carnal Christian is more interested in movies than in ministry, in pleasures than in prayer, in buying things than in Bible study, in serving self rather than serving the Savior. They have just enough of the Lord that they are unhappy in the world, but they have just enough of the world, that they are unhappy in the Lord. They are kind of like in between.

I’ve heard of a farmer who had a big apple tree on a corner of his farm. It was next to a fence, and the tree branches went over the fence. The school kids walked by the apple tree every day. They would take sticks and beat the tree to get apples to fall on their side of the fence. So the farmer said, “I would have to get to the other side of the fence and hit the tree, so that I could get apples before the kids would get them.” He said that tree on the edge of his property was the most beat-up tree in his entire orchard.

That is a picture of a carnal Christian. They can’t be happy in the world, because of the Lord, and they can’t be happy in the Lord, because they have too much world. They are miserable. When you see them, they look like they’ve been baptized in lemon juice. They’re going to heaven, but they look like hell.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Isn’t the Christian life wonderful,” they say with sadness.

The Bible says, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” But they have one eye on God and one eye on the world.

They are like Lot in the Old Testament. Lot was considered a righteous man, but he moved into a wicked city. Lot’s carnality influenced his wife and his family, and he ended up losing everything.

On a very practical note for your family, there is nothing more important than you as a parent, as a married couple than to be spiritual. The worst thing you can do is to take your kids to church and then to live like the devil during the rest of the week. God knows I’m not perfect, but you have to be honest and sincere and humble. Don’t play games. Don’t be a hypocrite. Pray, be earnest, be sincere, serve the Lord and make church and Bible study a priority. Make serving Jesus a priority. Live for Him who died for you. How happy then your life will be.

You can be saved, but you can be miserable. You can be saved, but you can be empty. You can be saved but unfulfilled, because you haven’t taken up your cross, you haven’t died to self

and chosen to follow Jesus. It's so very important.

The danger of being a disciple of God is that when we are worldly or carnal, God will discipline us. So you don't want to be disciplined or chastened by the Lord. Do you know that God spans His children? Carnal Christians get spanked. Things go wrong in their lives, because God allows it to bring them to their knees.

How do you respond to problems? Do you grow better or bitter? Do you seek the Lord about your problems? I know people who say, "I'm not going to church, because I lost my job." "I'm not going to church, because I went through this hardship." That's why you should go to church. That's why you should pray. That's why you should get on your knees. That's why you should surrender to God. God may be trying to chasten you and correct you.

I want you to notice the second thing about these carnal people. Carnal people are spiritual babies, verse 1. Paul says, "as to babes in Christ." Babies are fine when they're supposed to be babies. But babies need to grow and mature. So if you're 25 and you're still sucking on a bottle, it's not a good thing. If you're still drinking only milk and you haven't grown into food, it's not a good thing. Diet indicates where you're coming from. Notice that Paul said, "I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it."

I know people who have been saved for years, and they're still living on Bible stories. They haven't graduated into doctrine or Christian truth. They haven't gone into the deeper things of God's Word. It's all surface, light and fluffy.

One of the trends in preaching in the church today is the dumbing down of our sermons. Preachers are dumbing down their sermons to make their sermons palatable and entertaining and enjoyable to people. So the sermons are full of stories. I call them "skyscraper sermons," story upon story upon story upon story. They're based usually on a narrative passage, which is fine. They like stories from the Bible and life applications that are simple, short and quick. I'm all for practical, devotional preaching, but for so many years, I have been feeling a passion and a desire in my heart, as a pastor and Bible teacher, to preach doctrinal sermons, to preach doctrinal content.

Paul told Timothy, "Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." Then he said why: "For the time will come..."—and we are seeing it right now in the church—"...when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." So what is happening in the church today is "sermonettes" for "Christianettes" by the milk of the Word.

When was the last time you heard the book of Hebrews taught in the church? When was the last time you heard a doctrinal sermon? It's all life situational preaching. When we went

through 1 Corinthians 15, those were doctrinal sermons on the resurrection of the body. What an important doctrine that is. My passion and my commitment is to preach all the counsel of God, all the doctrines of God, all the truths found in God's Word. If the Bible mentions hell, we teach on hell. If the Bible mentions heaven, we teach on heaven. If the Bible says repent, we teach on repentance. If the Bible mentions faith, we teach on faith. We explain justification, sanctification, glorification and propitiation. We understand those terms. We understand what it means to be a Christian and lead the Christian life.

Someone put it into an acrostic: G-r-o-w. The "g" stands for "Go to God in prayer." The "r" stands for "Read God's Word." The "o" stands for "Obey God's Word." The "w" stands for "Witness," or "Tell others about Jesus Christ."

When the writer of Hebrews wrote to them, he said, "You have need of someone teaching you, when you ought to be growing in the meat of the Word. You need someone else to teach you the elementary, basic things of God's Word." So as you grow and mature, you go from milk to meat, what Christ is doing today.

Thirdly and lastly, the carnal person acts like the natural man or the unsaved man, verses 3-4. He says, "For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you..."

By the way, a good test is if those things are in your life and in your home, there is carnality; it's a spiritual problem. When you have envy, strife and division in a home, in a family, in a church, in a community, in the world, it's because men are walking as natural men. "Are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"

Another indication was that they were in their groups; they had their famous preachers. "For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" Paul wasn't crucified for you; you were crucified in the name of Jesus Christ. So envy or jealousy is an indication of carnality. Being unwilling to forgive—not getting along; strife—fighting with others; divisions—you're in your little groups ("I'm of Paul" or "I'm of Apollos") are examples of carnality.

We have kind of cult worship today in which people follow the minister rather than Jesus Christ. If there is anything I don't want is I don't want you to follow me; I don't want you to be "Millerites." I want you to be Jesus followers. Should I die, talk about Jesus; don't talk about John Miller. My prayer is that when you come to this church you fall in love with Jesus, that you know Jesus, that you worship Jesus, that you serve Jesus, that you love His Word. My prayer for the people who come to this church is that they love God through His Word, that they are changed by the power of the Spirit and that their focus is all about Jesus Christ. That's spiritual. We're not here to follow man; "I'm of Paul" or "I'm of Apollos." We're here to follow Jesus Christ.

There are natural men and women in the church. There are spiritual men and women in the church. Thank God for them. But sadly, there are carnal Christians in the church. Yes, even in this church. It's so important, in light of this passage, for us to do a little self-examination.

Am I living more like a natural man than I am a spiritual man or woman? Am I walking in the Spirit? Am I obedient to God's Word? Do I love the Scriptures? Do I worship and serve the Lord? Do I pray? Do I share with others about the Lord? Am I devoted to Him? Have I died to self? Have I taken up my cross? Am I following Jesus Christ? Or am I living just for self?

Let's pray.