

The Three Divisions Of Mankind

1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow with me as I begin reading in verse 14 of chapter 2. Paul says, "But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned or understood. But he that is spiritual, verse 15, understands or discerns or, my King James has, judges all things, yet he himself is understood or discerned or judged by no man. For "who hath known the mind of the Lord that we may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ". Chapter 3 verse 1, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but even as unto carnal, even as babes in Christ. For I fed you with milk and not with meat, for up to now you were not able to bear it, neither are you now able. For you are carnal, whereas there is among you envy and strife and divisions, are you not carnal and walk as men? For while one says, "I am of Paul," and another says, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?" Paul in this text that we just read is describing three responses to the wisdom of God. We've been looking at in this section of Corinthians God's wisdom.

God's wisdom in Paul's ministry, God's wisdom in the cross, and thus the title of our series Fool's Wisdom. And now Paul moves into a section where he actually describes three categories of mankind and their response to God's wisdom. When God classifies man, it's not according to sex, it's not according to age, it's not according to the color of skin, it's not according to our education, it's not according to how much we possess or our job or our position. He classifies this according to our spiritual condition.

And the three spiritual conditions that we see here are the natural man, then we see the spiritual man, and then we see the carnal man. And when we say man, I mean mankind. So, you forgive me, ladies, if I use that term, "man". It's a generic term for human beings, spiritual man, spiritual woman, all the same thing, talking about people. So, there are those who are considered natural man, and then there are the spiritual man, and then there is the carnal man, which is the controversial one that we'll talk about when we get there.

So, what are these divisions? The first is the natural man. Notice it with me in chapter 2, verse 14. Paul makes it very clear that the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. So, the question is, who is this natural man? And I have to laugh a little bit, because when I say natural man, it reminds me of my hippie days, right? Some of you hippies are like nodding your head, yeah. Natural man, natural woman. We say natural mama or whatever you'd call her, you know. And a natural man would let his hair grow, and he had a big beard, and I used to do that. I used to have long hair and a big beard, and you were a hippie, and you'd lay in the dirt and sleep at night, you know. What was so bizarre to me, that we would eat health food and take drugs, think about that. It's like, you want to get high? Yeah, let me have a smoothie first. After I finish my granola, then I'll get high with you. It's like, what's with that? I won't even begin to

describe the natural woman, that's a frightening thing. Believe me, I saw many of them back in those days. But that's not what Paul is talking about, okay? For you hippies, wow, groovy, a natural man, you know. He's talking about an unsaved person.

That's simply what the natural man is. In biblical terminology, the natural man is unsaved. They are not a Christian. And these are all synonyms, okay? Unsaved. Not a Christian. Not born again. Technical term, not regenerated. That's the technical term. They haven't been given new life. So, when the Bible talks about the natural man, we're talking about somebody that's not saved. They're not born again. A popular term came on the scene a few years ago, "unchurched". And the secret sensitive ministries were trying to reach the "unchurched". And I've never really cared for the term because they're not "unchurched," they're unsaved. They don't know Jesus. We're not trying to church people. We're trying to bring them to Christ so that they can be saved, amen? It's not a matter of being churched, it's a matter of being born again. That's what's important.

So, the natural man cannot receive the things of God. So as far as the Wisdom of God is concerned, this person has not been saved, does not have the Spirit and cannot know God. Now you can be religious and be an unsaved person. I want to make that very clear. You can be religious and be a natural man. John chapter 3 is a classic example. His name was Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews. He was a Pharisee. He was a teacher of the law. So, he was a Jew. He was a man. And he was a religious man. But he came to Jesus. Came by night, we call him Nick-at-night. Nicodemus came at night. And he came to Jesus and said, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said, you must be what? Born again. Literally that is born from above. It's a spiritual rebirth. So, unless you are born again, you're not a Christian. You can't get into the Kingdom of God. You don't know God. And the things of God are foolishness to you. When you try to talk to an unbeliever about the things of God, they just count them as being foolish to him.

So, this is a man who is governed and controlled by his body. Matthew chapter 6, what do we eat? What do we drink? Where are we going to sleep? What are we going to wear? It's all about the appetites of the flesh and of the body. Now how Paul describes them is interesting. Notice in verse 14, he says he does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. So, he doesn't have the receptors. Right now, in the sanctuary, there are radio waves. But in order to hear them, you'd have to have a radio, right? You'd have to be able to have a receptor to catch that frequency. There are voices and stuff going all through the sanctuary right now. But if you don't have that receptor, you can't take in that information. So, you can't hear it. Well, an unbeliever does not even have the ability to receive the things of God. They are dead, spiritually.

And again, this goes with our study in Ephesians chapter 2, which we study this Sunday. He says, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins". I love what Vance Havner says about this dead person. He says, "the wise Christian, wastes no time trying to explain God's program, or the things of God to the unregenerate man. He might as well try to describe a sunset to a blind man or discuss nuclear physics with a monument in the city park. The natural man cannot receive such things. One might as well try to catch a sunbeam with a fish hook as the lay hold

of God's revelation unassisted by the Holy Spirit. Unless one is born of the Spirit, taught by the Spirit, all these things are utterly foreign to him. He says, being a PhD does not help for in the spiritual realm. That could mean phenomenal death". I like that.

So, you have to have a receptor. You have to have an ability to hear the things of God, to know the things of God. You're not born again. And the Christian understands that. You wonder, why do people do what they do? Well, they're unregenerate. They're not born again. They don't know God. They're without hope.

So, he describes them then secondly in verse 14, as the things of God are foolishness unto him. They mock the things of God. They ridicule the things of God. They seem foolish. When Paul the Apostle was preaching to King Agrippa in Acts chapter 26, and he gets to the end of his sermon and he tries to lead Agrippa to Christ. Agrippa says concerning Paul, he says, "Paul, your much learning has made you mad". I love that. Paul, you are flipped out. Paul had been preaching the resurrection of Christ, that Christ rose from the dead, and Agrippa goes, much learning hath made you mad. You read one too many books and you kind of like "tweak," you know, your mind went. And isn't that what the unbeliever thinks about the Christian today? You check your brains out at the door, right? You're like brainless, you're foolish. You believe the Bible is the Word of God. You believe that Jesus could save you, and man had died on the cross, and just all the foolishness. You believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and Noah built an ark, and all those stories from the Bible, and they mock that concept because they are natural men. They are not regenerated.

Thirdly, verse 14, the natural man cannot know the things of God's wisdom. He makes that clear. He breaks it down there in verse 14. He says he receives not the things of the Spirit of God. He tells us that they are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them. And the reason he cannot know them, verse 14, is because they are spiritually discerned. They are spiritually understood. So, he hasn't got the ability to understand the things of God. So, you may come to church and you're not born again. You go, I don't understand what the preacher is talking about. I don't understand the Bible. You know, what do you do? You know, you're praying, you're in church on a Wednesday night. You know, people think we're crazy for going to church on a Wednesday night. You go to church more than twice a year, Christmas and Easter. You're weird. You go every Sunday. You go Wednesday night. What kind of a freak are you? Wednesday night? And the natural man does not understand the things of God.

Maybe you're married to an unbeliever. Maybe you're a Christian and you're married to a non-Christian. And thus, you're unequally yoked. Now if you're married, you don't just get a divorce because you're married to a non-Christian. You don't freak out and go, ah, cooties, you know, I want a divorce. The Bible says, stay where you're at, stay in your calling. You know, love your husband, your wife, pray for them, and ask God to work in their hearts. I meet people all the time, you know, my husband's a heathen, I want a divorce. Well, that's not what the Bible teaches. You love him, you pray for him, you know, try to be a good wife, and you're married to someone that doesn't understand you, he doesn't understand the things of God, but yet, you know, you need to pray that he would become a spiritual man because they have not the Holy

Spirit. So, if you're here tonight and you are not born again, if you're here tonight and you're not saved, it doesn't make any sense to you. It doesn't really register why we're doing what we do or, you know, why we love Jesus the way we do. You need to be born again. It's not about going to church, it's not about being baptized, it's not about being religious, it's about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, amen? It's coming to know Him.

And that leads me to my next point, verse 15 and 16. Paul describes here the spiritual man. Notice verse 15, But he, that is spiritual. So, he contrasts the natural man, which is soulish, and then he contrasts him, verse 16, with the spiritual man. "But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ". So, there's the contrast, "he that is spiritual". Now who is this spiritual man? This spiritual man is obviously saved, born again, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and yielded to God's Holy Spirit. He no longer is blinded by Satan, he has been lightened by God, and is spiritually alive.

That is the big deal. And I know this is basic and elementary, but I want to make it as clear as I can. You go from death to life, you go from unsaved to saved, in just a second, through faith in Christ, and what the difference is, God gives you spiritual life. You don't try to become a Christian. You don't work at becoming a Christian. That's like saying, I'm trying to be an elephant or something. It'll never happen. You're born into God's family, and it's a work of the Holy Spirit that God does in your heart. A Christian is a person that has had a real experience with God. It was a point in time. Now you, maybe, didn't have an emotional experience, maybe not a traumatic experience, maybe it wasn't a Damascus Road conversion, but there needs to be a point in time in your life when you see that God came into me, and maybe it was just a step by faith. I prayed that prayer, asked Jesus to forgive my sins, received Him as my Savior, and I dedicated my life to following Him. And then you begin to see change. You begin to see change in your life. How much change over how many days is different with different people? I'm going to talk about that in a moment. But there has to be that point in time where you go from unsaved to saved. If you're here tonight and you're unsaved, you can actually leave here tonight saved. Isn't that cool? You can leave here tonight saved. You can come to church lost, without God, and without hope, on your way to hell. And you can leave here tonight with God, with hope, on your way to heaven. That's a glorious truth. And then you become a child of God.

But the spiritual man is more than just saved or more than just born again. I believe this spiritual man is one that is walking in the Spirit, growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Three things Paul says about him. Notice verse 15, the spiritual man judges all things. So, the man that is spiritual, judges all things. What does that mean? The word "judges" means discerns or understands. That doesn't mean that he has all knowledge about everything. He's talking about spiritual things. It doesn't mean you're going to be good at math because I certainly am not good at math. But what it means is that you have spiritual understanding and that you understand the things of God. You have the capacity to be able to comprehend the Grace of God and the Mercy of God and the Love of God and the Forgiveness of God. And when you read your Bible, the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and begins to transform you into the image of Jesus, the Son of God. So, you're spiritual and you're being

changed and you understand all things.

Then notice, secondly, the spiritual man is not understood by the natural man. Verse 15, it says, yet he himself is understood of no man. That no man is a reference to the natural man in the context. In other words, the unbeliever looks at the believer and you are an enigma to them. Let me give you an example. I've done many funerals and been at the graveside of many people that have died in the Lord and their Christian family have such peace, have such confidence, have such joy. We actually sing at a graveside. We actually celebrate in the funeral service. You should see the look on unbeliever's faces. They are freaked out. What are these people singing about? What are they happy about? How do they know they went to heaven? They're like, where did they get this hope? Where did they get this confidence? And it's like you're an enigma to them. And a trial comes into your life and you smile and say, "Praise the Lord". All things work together for good to those that love God, and they're thinking, what have you been smoking? You know, if you see someone walking down the street today smiling, you think he's been smoking something, right? See a guy smiling, that guy must be wasted, he must be loaded or something. He's smiling. It's a Christian. He's got the joy of the Lord. I mean, when you've got to smile, people think you either lost something or you got something. And when you're a Christian, you've got Christ. You show up on Monday morning for work whistling. My dad used to come to work on Monday morning whistling. He was a great whistler. He can just whistle really well. And he'd come on Monday morning whistling. Everybody's just hung over from the parties all weekend. You know, they're all hung over like, "Miller, would you shut up"? What are you so happy about? It's Monday morning, you know. And he used to tell them, "I've got Jesus in my heart. I've got Jesus in my heart. That's why I'm happy. You guys have been partying all weekend and your head's throbbing, but I've been worshiping the Lord, you know. I've been at church. I have Jesus in my heart". And to the unbeliever, they just can't understand that. They don't fathom that. Your joy, your peace, your love, your faith, your hope. Someone wrongs you or abuses you and instead of taking vengeance, you say, "vengeance belongs to God, He will repay". And you love your enemy. You love your enemies. You pray for those which persecute you and despitefully use you. And the world looks on and goes, I don't get it, man. I would go beat them up, you know. And you have forgiveness in your heart. You're an enigma to the world. He doesn't understand you.

And then thirdly, verse 16, the spiritual man has the mind of Christ. This is an amazing statement. "Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him"? By the way, the first part of verse 16 is a quote from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 13, "Who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him"? The answer is, "No one"! Okay? And yet we try to do that. We try to tell God what to do. Who can instruct God? Okay, God, are you listening? Okay, okay, get a pencil, God, get ready, write this down. By this weekend, I need, you know, \$600. You know, He's like, what time do you need that by? We kind of tell God what we need and how we need it when we need it. It's like God's writing it down, okay, could you go over that again? I want to make sure I get this right. We can't instruct God. we can't tell God anything. And apart from the Holy Spirit, we can't even know the things of God. So, if we have the mind of Christ, that is the attitude, the outlook of Christ, then the world cannot know us. If you can't know the things of God, and we have the mind of Christ, then the inference is

that people can't know or understand us. Don't get upset if you're, you know, sharing with an unbeliever, and they don't understand you, and they don't comprehend you. So, we have the mind of Christ, and what a marvelous thing that is. Paul in Philippians chapter 2 said, let this mind be in you, which was also in who? Christ Jesus, right? That's that attitude of humility, that attitude of putting others first and serving others.

So, you have the natural man who is not saved, you have the spiritual man who is saved and walking in the Spirit, surrendered to the Spirit. I would say that they are a disciple, they have taken up their cross, and they're following Jesus Christ.

But now we have the third category. This third category I do admit is controversial, not to me, but it is to some, and that is the carnal man. Chapter 3 verses 1 to 4. "And I, brethren, cannot speak unto you as unto spiritual, so they weren't spiritual, but as unto carnal. They weren't natural, they weren't spiritual, they were carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with meat. For up to now you were not able to bear it, neither are you still able. For you are carnal, whereas there is among you;"

Now this is the evidence that they were carnal. They were having envy, they were striving, and there were divisions among them. "Are you not carnal and you're walking as men"? That phrase walking as men, you kind of know how else would they walk as a giraffe or something? It means that you're walking like unbelievers. You're walking like unsaved people or unregenerated people. You're walking like non-Christians. So, you have a carnal man and he is filled with strife and envy, division walking like an unbeliever.

Now, what does he mean by carnal man? Who is this carnal man? Well, the word carnal has the idea of fleshly and I believe that it means to have the nature and the characteristics of the flesh. Carnal or more simply means that you are fleshly. So, he's talking about a person that is governed and controlled and dominated by their flesh. Not just their body appetites, but their sinful, Adamic nature. And you have to differentiate that when you're reading your Bible. It's not talking about the physical body. It's talking about the sinful nature of man. Now when we were all born, we were born in Adam and we inherited a sin nature. So, he's talking about somebody that is still governed and controlled by this sin nature and acting and looking like an unsaved person, a natural man.

Now the big question is, "is this carnal man saved? Is this carnal person saved"? Are they a Christian? Now I can get into all kinds of issues, all kinds of ins and outs, all kinds of theological things right here. I'm going to try to keep it as simple and to the point as I can. The answer to that question as far as I'm concerned is yes. This may freak some people out. Well, how can you be like an unsaved person but you're really saved? You are saved, you are born again, but you are governed and controlled and dominated, not by the new nature or by the Holy Spirit but by your old nature, the flesh. And the reason why it's sticky is because some people think the minute you get born again, you no longer have a sinful nature. I disagree. I believe we still have the capacity. Call it a sin principle, call it a sin nature, call it whatever you will and people call it different names. Sin which lies in you. Christians have the capacity to sin. How many know that?

If you're a Christian, you don't raise your hand. The Bible says you lie and do not the truth.

Because we all sin, right? Can't tell you how many times today I have to say, Lord, please forgive me. Lord, please forgive me. I'm sorry, Lord, please forgive me.

1 John 1:9 is my favorite verse, "If we confess our sin, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all righteousness". Amen? And I believe that that was written to Christians. I've had people tell me all kinds of, "that was not written to Christians". Every epistle that Paul wrote in the New Testament, every epistle written in the New Testament is written to Christians. There are no New Testament books that were written to heathens. You can maybe say the Gospel of John, but I mean, you know, Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus and the believers in Thessalonica and the believers in Colossae. That's written to Christians. I mean, when he says, if we confess our sins, he's talking about believers. Anybody that says they don't sin, they need help. We all sin. But God wants us to be spiritual as believers, not carnal, motivated and controlled by the flesh.

And just to prove what I'm saying, look in verse 1, Paul says, "And I brethren cannot speak unto you as unto spiritual". I brethren. What does he call them? Brethren or sistren. You have to be born to be brethren. You have to be begotten to be a brother or sister. So, he calls them brethren. And again, in verse 2, he uses the phrase, "babes in Christ". So, you need to mark those two phrases. Brethren. Babes in Christ. Anyone who is in Christ, is saved. If you're not in Christ, you're not saved. You got that? So, these carnal people are Christians. The carnal man is saved indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but he is controlled by his flesh. He is not Spirit-filled, Ephesians 1:18, as he is commanded.

Now this does not mean that they are never bearing any spiritual fruit of any kind. Now there's a lot of inferences here, when I make these statements, I want you to listen very carefully. A Christian's carnality will not be lifelong or total. A Christian's carnality will not be lifelong or total. There will be some fruit. If there is no fruit, then you're not a Christian. I didn't say how much fruit, right? I said some fruit. Jesus said some 30, some 60, and some 100-fold. Some Christians have more fruit than other Christians. Some Christians, they're boxing it up and freight training it out, man. They just have fruit all over the place. I saw a bumper sticker once that said, God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts. I like that. There's a lot of religious nuts. God wants spiritual fruit. And so, it's a person that's saved, but they're carnal. But that carnality, and this is an important statement, will not be lifelong or total. When we talk about fruit, we have to ask how much and for how long?

So, there are questions that we need to ask. People have their idea of what a Christian is and what a Christian does and what a Christian should look like, and if you don't meet up to their standards, well, then you're not really saved or you're not really a Christian because you don't meet my standards. So, we need to make sure we think biblically and that we don't impose false standards on who's saved and who's not. Now, ultimately, only God knows a person's heart. I don't really know. So, there can be a person that's saved, but they're living or acting like they are unsaved or unregenerated. Even John Calvin, and I don't quote John Calvin very often, but

I'm quoting John Calvin for a reason, because Reformed theologians and Calvinists don't believe that there are carnal Christians. They don't believe there's carnal Christians. They believe if you're carnal, you aren't saved. If you're carnal, you're not saved. They don't even believe the category. I've talked to them until you're blue in the face and they don't believe there are carnal Christians. And yet Paul says, "brethren, in Christ". I don't know how you get around that. But listen to what even John Calvin said about the carnal believer. He said, "Paul does not mean that they will be completely carnal or without even a spark of the Spirit of God, but they were still much too full of the mind of the flesh so that the Spirit prevailed over, or the flesh prevailed over the Spirit. And as it were, extinguished his life. Although they were not entirely without grace, yet they had more of the flesh than they did of the Spirit in their lives. And that is why he calls them carnal. This is plainly enough from the adding immediately that they were babes in Christ, for they would not have been babes if they had not been begotten, and this begetting is the work of the Spirit of God". So, I mean, that's John Calvin even saying he believed that there were carnal Christians.

Now notice some information in the Bible here about these carnal Christians. A carnal Christian, carnal man, is controlled by the flesh and not the Spirit. They are controlled by the flesh and not the Spirit. He's a Christian, yet he lives for self. This is the way I describe them. They have a saved soul, but a wasted life. And I see so many people in this category. The goal is that you grow and you mature. My desire as a pastor is that the people of this church grow and mature, that they become spiritual men and women, that they're no longer babes in Christ, or carnal Christians. We don't want a church of carnal Christians. We want a church of spiritual men and women of God, amen? We want to leave babyhood behind, carnality behind, and we want to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But this carnal man is controlled by the flesh and not the Spirit. Everything they do is wood, hay, and stubble into the bema, reward seat of Christ. They will have nothing to show. The Bible says that they will go to heaven, that they'll be saved, but we would use the term they're saved by the skin of their teeth. We're not saved by our good deeds or our righteousness, but we are going to get rewards in heaven. And these people go to heaven, but they get no rewards because they lived for self. Saved soul, wasted life. They are more interested in movies than ministry, in pleasure than prayer, in buying things than Bible study, in serving self than serving the Savior. That's just a fact. They have enough of Jesus that they are no longer comfortable in the world, but they have enough of the world that they are no longer comfortable in Jesus.

I heard the story of a farmer that had an apple tree on the edge of his property. And part of the branches and limbs hung over by a dirt road that the kids would go by on the way to school, and that apple tree was right on the edge of his property, and so the kids would pick up sticks and they would beat the limbs of the tree to get the apples down. And so, the farmer, to try to get the apples before the kids got the apples, he would beat the tree to get the apples over on his side and to get the apples before the kids got theirs. He said, that tree on the border of my property was the most beat up tree in all my orchard. And you know, that's the way a Christian is, that is carnal. They come to church and they're not really all that comfortable at church, and then they go to the world and they're not all that comfortable in the world. I'll tell you something, the most miserable person on planet earth is a carnal Christian. At least before you were saved,

you could go enjoy a party, right? Sin is pleasurable for a season, but now that you're saved, it's like, man, I can't even enjoy this anymore. And you come to church and you're not really into it, you know, and everybody's singing and you're just sitting there and looking at your watch, when's the sermon gonna get over and you're just getting beat up. You got part of you in the world and part of you in the Lord and you're not happy.

And if you're in that place tonight, you need to rededicate your life to God. You need to say to the Lord, "Lord, I'm sorry and I want to live for you. I don't want to be a carnal Christian".

Notice verse one, the carnal man is a spiritual baby. He says you are babes in Christ. But before salvation, we were natural men, but when we were born spiritually, we were born into God's family. We need to grow, right? I'm a father of four, I got three grandkids. Today, we had our lovely little granddaughter with us some and so cute. The kids don't stay small and cute forever, they grow up, right? Not that you don't like them when they're big, okay? But anyone that's raised their kid, you know, you miss the babies and you miss being with them, but you don't want them to stay babies forever. If they're 18, still in diapers, you know, have a pacifier, you got problems. That's a problem. And yet, how many Christians say "I've been saved 30 years, I've been saved 40 years, I've been saved for 10 years", and they're still spiritual babes? They're still in spiritual diapers. They're still just, you know, taking the milk of the word. They can't take the meat of the word. It's time to grow up. It's time to mature. It's time to rise up, oh man of God. Be done with lesser things. Give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the king of kings, amen? It's time to really get serious about the things of God.

And for so many Christians in America it's difficult today because we have so many things to distract us. That's why in verse 2, you notice he says, their diet was milk and not meat. What does he mean by the milk of the word? The milk is the basics, the foundational things. And a person that is on the milk is a person that can't discern spiritual truths. I know Christians that have been Christians for years and they haven't moved on in their knowledge of the Word of God. They haven't graduated. They haven't got out of kindergarten. They can't handle the things of God and the deeper things of God. If you read the book of Hebrews and it's all enigmatic, it's like, I don't understand what's..., it's like, that's the meat of the word. You're going deeper into things of God. What Christ is doing in heaven right now and the doctrines of the scriptures. Because they want to be entertained. They want to be padded and cooed and entertained like a little baby. I've often said that sometimes we have more babies in the sanctuary than we do in the nursery. It's not enough just to come listen to me preach. I think that this will facilitate your growth and I'm hoping I'll whet your appetite for Bible study. But you've got to take up the Bible. You've got to pray. You've got to get serious about being a Christian. You're not working your way to heaven but you're growing in your knowledge of Christ. Where Paul after 30 years of being a Christian, he says, I want to know him. I want to know the power of his resurrection. I want to be made conformable to his death. It's like Paul, you've been a Christian 30 years and you go, I want to know him? Yeah. Paul says, I want to know Him deeper and better and more fully. I want to experience Him in my life. That's what it means to be spiritual but not these people. They're carnal. They just take the milk of the word, not the meat of the word.

Someone developed it in an acrostic, G-R-O-W. The word, "grow" written straight down in a column. The G stands for go to God in prayer, R stands for read God's word, O stands for obey God's word, and W, witness to someone. Begin to share your faith with somebody else. Tell other people about Jesus Christ. Carnal Christians don't generally evangelize and share the gospel. So, we need to grow in the Lord.

And then thirdly, notice a carnal man acts like the natural man or unsaved man, verses 3 and 4.

They are marked by, verse 3, envy, or we would translate that jealousy. It is a rivalry. It's a dislike of seeing someone getting something ahead of you. And it's really sad in the church when people are jealous of others. You know, if there's somebody that you disagree with or you don't like that's a believer, guess what, you're going to be in heaven together. You ever think about that? You go, oh man, Pastor John, you have to bum me out tonight. And it would be just like the Lord to give you a mansion right next door to them. They are Christians I don't agree with. We don't agree doctrinally or scripturally, but you know what? We're going to be in heaven together. We're going to be in heaven together. So, we need to learn to get along. And the spiritual person... you know how kids fight and argue? That's mine. No, that's mine. Only that's mine. Kids fight and argue. That's what Christians do. The jealousy and the rivalry.

And then notice secondly, strife, verse 3. Fighting with anger, unkind words, again like babies. Now I believe this has application to all our human relationships. Tonight, I'm speaking probably to a lot of married people. If you're married tonight, you know, I believe that 99.9 of your problems in marriage can be traced back to a spiritual issue. I said Sunday that if you're right with God everything else will come into harmony. I believe that. If you get right with God, I didn't say your problems would go away. But you'll be in fellowship with God and in tune with God, able to handle your problems. And in a marriage relationship if there's strife and envy in your marriage, it's a spiritual problem. So, their feelings or emotions and their words and then divisions.

Verse 4. For when one says, "I am of Paul, I'm of Apollos. Are you not carnal"? This is what carnal Christians do. They wave their little preacher flags. They group behind certain people or certain denominations or organizations. They have a party spirit. It's not about focusing on Christ. And carnality brings division in the church. You show me a divided church where there's jealousy and strife and division. I will show you a carnal church. You show me a group of believers where there's unity and harmony and they're considering others more important than themselves. And they're forgiving and loving and serving one another. I'll show you a spiritual church. People who are spiritual. Some churches have natural people in them. There are a lot of people going to church that aren't born again. There are people who are church members that aren't born again. There are people that are singing in the choir that aren't born again. There are people that are teaching Sunday school that aren't born again. And there are pastors in the pulpit of many churches who aren't born again. That's a scary thought. So-called spiritual leaders and they don't even have the Spirit. So, what we want is a church of spiritually minded people. We don't want the division. We don't want the strife.

Now we need to ask ourselves, if I am battling the flesh, it's an indication that I've been born again. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. These two are contrary. Before you are saved you just went with it. Now that you're saved, you're convicted. The Holy Spirit speaks to you. That's wrong. You don't want to do that. So, if you find yourself tonight a carnal Christian what should you do? You should repent. There should be repentance. "Metanoia", change your mind about your sin and about which way you're going and turn back to the Lord. And say Lord I want to grow. I want to be mature. I want to bear fruit for you. I remind you that these Corinthians had all the gifts of the Spirit but they were carnal. You can have gifts and be carnal. I believe in speaking in tongues. But did you know that you can speak in tongues and be carnal? Did you know that you can preach a sermon about Christ and be carnal? But you cannot have the fruit of the Holy Spirit and be carnal. They are mutually exclusive. Love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness, temperance, self-control. That's a spiritual person. Not their gifts. Oh, but they're so gifted. Oh, but they're so talented. Oh, but they're so anointed. That doesn't mean anything. The fruit of the Spirit is an indication of the Spirit filled life.

But maybe you're here tonight and say well I don't even know if I'm saved. Especially after this sermon. I listen to that. I don't know if I'm a natural man, a spiritual man, a carnal man. I don't even know if I'm a human being man. I don't know what the heck I am. Well then before you leave here tonight you need to invite Jesus Christ to come into your heart and forgive your sins. Amen? We don't want anyone to leave here tonight without knowing that you are a child of God. And then once you're born into God's family, we're here to help you grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ. We're here to encourage you in your walk with the Lord.

So, if you're here tonight and you say "Pastor John, I don't know whether I've been really born again. I don't really know if I am truly a Christian". Then make sure tonight. The Bible says, "all have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God". The Bible says, "there's no one righteous, no not one". But the Bible says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That whoever believes in Him would never perish but have everlasting life". Jesus died on the cross for you to be forgiven and have everlasting life. Please don't leave here tonight without saying, "Jesus come into my heart. Be my savior. Forgive my sins. Give me eternal life. Start that work in me today so that I can grow in the grace and the knowledge of you". Let's pray.