

Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #21

Judgment Seat of Christ: Carnal Christians

June 5, 2024

Scripture teaches that you and I will stand one-on-one before Jesus Christ.

Consider: The Judgment Seat of Christ with rewards and loss is before the Marriage.

II Cor. 5:10a For we must ALL appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ;

I Cor. 3:11-15 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Does Paul teach we can lose our salvation by being disqualified, a castaway or by shipwrecking our faith?

➤ I Cor. 9:24-27 Running the race of faith; Going for the prize; Finishing well

➤ I Tim. 1:18-20 Fight the good fight; good conscience; unlike Hymenaeus & Alexander

Consider: Are these the believers who will suffer loss, but they will be saved?

What about a "carnal" Christian? How does Paul define "carnal?"

Acts 18:11-12 Paul stayed 18 months in Corinth during his second missionary journey

I Corinthians was written about 4 years after Paul left Corinth.

The church in Corinth may have grown in numbers, in wealth, in giftedness, but the church had not matured spiritually. It looked too much like the world in which it existed. It was tragic.

It needed to change. Repentance was called for.

I Cor. 3:1-4 The church is a family whose goal is maturity. Goal of each believer.

Application: Addressing carnal churches and individual carnal believers.

I Cor. 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

I Cor. 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

➤ True of the universal church, the local church and the individual believer

Flow: Carnality Foundation Refiner's Fire Temple Of God Do Not Defile Temple

Characteristics of the Carnal Church & A Carnal Christian

I Cor. 3:1-4 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,

but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 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.

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?

⁴ For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

- This is the only place where the New Testament uses this language. 4x
 - Paul uses the term carnal to describe the condition of many Christians.
 - He defines true spirituality and contrasts it with the "carnality" of the Corinthians.
- Understand Paul's definition of true spirituality and carnality.

Context of I Corinthians 1 - 2

During the eighteen months he ministered in Corinth, Paul had tried to feed his spiritual children and help them mature in the faith. Paul had been boasting in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He exhorted them to do the same.

I Cor. 1:2 His letter is written to all the saints.

I Cor. 1:4-9 God has abundantly provided for their salvation, sanctification, and glorification.

I Cor. 1:10 Problem of division among the saints. Exhorts them to live in unity.

I Cor. 1:11-12 Factions seem to focus on following a particular leader.

I Cor. 1:13 These factions are contrary to the Gospel.

I Cor. 1:17 Paul's preaching is not done in "cleverness of speech," which is detrimental to the Proclamation of the cross of Christ.

Men who boast they are followers of a certain prominent leader [I am of...] or of Christ Himself, are exhibiting pride.

I Cor. 1:18-31 The preaching of Christ crucified is opposed to worldly pride.

The Gospel is an offense to them, and they are attracted to worldly wisdom & power.

I Cor. 2:1-5 Paul's message and his method were those the world's elite disdain.

He preached only Christ and Christ crucified.

I Cor. 2:6 Paul taught wisdom to those who are mature in Christ.

His wisdom cannot be grasped by those who are "wise" in this world.

I Cor. 2:6-10 Paul admonished them to treasure God's wisdom which is out of this world.

I Cor. 2:14-16 Paul speaks of 2 categories of men = with the Spirit & without the Spirit.

He elaborated on their incredible privilege to have been given the Spirit of God enabling them to live enigmatically before the world. As those who are now "spiritual," they should see the world two dimensionally. They were able to see beyond the obvious and the temporal to the not-so-obvious yet the eternal. It is this maturity that Paul, the pastor, desires for them.

II Cor. 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Problem: The Corinthian saints have begun to look down upon Paul and the Gospel message he preaches because it is simplistic, Christ crucified. It was proclaimed in a way which does not stimulate or appeal to the flesh. They are beginning to turn from Paul to others whose wisdom and power are of the world. Why? Paul fails to measure up to the new standard set by the cultural elite whose message and methods appeal to the lost.

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

I Cor. 3, Paul introduces a sub-category of born-again believers who are indwelt by the Spirit.

- They are saved but do not live in accordance with who they are in Christ.
- They do not appropriate who God has given them to live a spirit-filled life.

We could use the terms: carnal, fleshly, or unspiritual to describe the "sub-standard saint."

Alan Redpath: A carnal Christian is a child of God, born again and on his way to heaven, but he is traveling third class.

Romans 7 is a portrait of the carnal Christian: indwelt by the Spirit, but mastered by the flesh.

Gal. 6:1 Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.

- "Spiritual" Christians are to come to the aid of those "caught" in a particular sin.
- Such a saint is not spiritual. Need a category in which to place them.

Paul's bombshell: You are not mature!

I cannot speak words of wisdom to you because you are carnal.

He had written in I Cor. 2:6: Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature.

I Cor. 2:1-6 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

² For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

³ And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

⁴ And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

⁵ That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

⁶Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect [mature]:

yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

Paul begins chapter 3 with an astonishing turn in light of the closing verse in chapter 2.

I Cor. 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?

but we have the mind of Christ.

Having just discussed the natural man's inability to receive the things of the Spirit of God, while confirming that the Corinthian believers had the mind of Christ, he, nevertheless, was forced to say that while the Corinthians enjoyed this decided spiritual advantage, they had not availed themselves of all its potentials.

Context of I Cor. 3: Characteristics of the Carnal Christian

I Cor. 3:1-4 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 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.

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?

⁴ For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

Could not speak to you as to spiritual men [pneumatikos] Who are spiritual men in context?

He who is spiritual appraises [anakrino - present tense- continually examines carefully] all things." [I Cor 2:15] But these believers were not spiritual men,

Wuest: "was not able to speak to you as I would to those dominated by the Holy Spirit."

Carnal = 4559 sarkikos = pertains "to behavior which is typical of *human nature*, but with special focus upon more base physical desires"

This term does not refer to the body but rather to the sinful nature. It refers to life lived in rebellion to God, "nature governed by mere human nature, not by the Spirit of God"

(Louw/Nida).

Fleshly, when used of a person means, "characterized by the flesh."

It speaks of the one who can and should do differently but does not.

- Instead of feeding on Jesus Christ and His Gospel, they were choking their spiritual life by feeding on their favorite teachers and leaders.
- Instead of growing in Christ, they were turning away from Him due to their worldly obsessions, and their fleshly evaluation of the ministers of the cross instead of being consumed with Jesus Christ, the one to whom the messengers were pointing.
- Instead of being focused on and passionate about Jesus Christ crucified and His resurrection, they were focused on and passionate about the ones who proclaimed the message.
- Instead of being obsessed with the content of the Gospel, they were obsessed with the ones who communicated the message.

Problem: They were living as though Jesus Christ crucified meant nothing to them. They were therefore living "only in a human way." They are behaving in a deeply debilitating immature way. This is revealed in everything that follows in the letter: factions, immorality, idolatry, self-indulgence. These believers were behaving as though they did not have God's Spirit.

They were guilty of attitudes and actions that were merely human. Because they had God's Spirit, they should be characterized by behavior that was far more than merely human.

During these 4 years, the church in Corinth may have grown in numbers, in wealth, in giftedness, but the church had not matured spiritually. The church looked too much like the world in which it existed. It was tragic. It needed to change. Repentance was called for.

A. Carnal Christians are babes in Christ.

When Paul first came to Corinth, he spoke to these pagans as unbelievers who did not possess the Spirit. Even after they were saved, Paul said he still had to speak to them as babes. He began to list some of the traits of babies and the immature in Christ.

- You are immature and need to grow up into Christ. With babies, we give and they take.
- They become more independent and have trouble getting along with others.
- They are self-centered, selfish, and fight and squabble over toys and attention.

B. Carnal Christians stay babies and do not grow up.

- Don't confuse a carnal Christian with a brand-new Christian.
- They have remained babies. They have not matured into adult, serving saints.
- Growth is normal. When spiritual growth does not happen, it can be tragic.

I Cor. 3:2-3a 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. ³ For ye are yet carnal: When he planted the church, they were infants in Christ. When he was with them, they were not ready for "meat" but only for "milk." Four years later, they are still infants.

Recall: In studying the Bible, stay in context and look for other passages that bring harmony to your interpretation. Scripture must remain in harmony.

"Milk" is used twice more in the NT with reference to the Christian.

Heb. 5:12-13 The writer of Hebrews rebuked his readers because they stumbled over the Gospel. They had not taken to heart the deep life and loyalty implications of the Gospel. They had not considered and digested its depth.

The result: They had not grown to the point where they could feed others. The writer challenged them to grow up, grasping the gospel and then living like they grasped it.

Carnal Christians are referred to as those who fall short of the goal of being "spiritual."

Heb. 5:11-14 : The Danger of Immaturity: Factors that lead to or indicate immaturity:

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| 1. Being "dull of hearing" | Heb. 5:11; Matt. 13:14-15 |
| 2. Failing to use time wisely | Heb. 5:12; Ps. 119:97, 148; Eph. 5:5-17 |
| 3. Constant diet of milk | |
| Lack of experience with meat | Heb. 5:13; II Pet. 3:16 |
| 4. Failure to apply or use what we learn | Heb. 5:14; Ps. 119:104, 128 |

Key: Applying Scripture trains us to discern both good and evil.

- Immaturity causes them to depend on others and continue to require "milk."

C. Carnal Christians are "Wimps in the Word." What is "milk," and what is "meat"? Heb. 5:13-6:2 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore, leaving the elementary doctrines about Christ, let us press on to maturity...

- Indicates their immaturity is due to their lack of use of the Word.
- The mature are wise concerning good and evil because they put their knowledge to use.

Key: The problem they have with Paul is really their problem. Their failure to grow up through the Word to mature Christians caused them to turn from the "milk of the Word" and return to the teachings and wisdom of men.

Col. 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,

after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

¹⁰ And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

The carnality is not evident by their lack of religious talk or activity, but by shallowness in their knowledge and practice of the Word of God and in their distorted dependence on one person, whom they proudly claim to follow.

Consider: The milk and the meat of the Christian's diet is the Word of God, centered in Christ crucified. The Corinthian Christians were feeding on "junk food." It seems they have turned up their noses at "milk" and are seeking truth or wisdom from those teachers who give them "food" that appeals to their fleshly desires. They do not want any diet that requires study, hard work and thought.

D.A. Carson: They are infants still and display their wretched immaturity even in the way that they complain if you give them more than milk. Not for them solid knowledge of Scripture; not for them mature theological reflection; not for them growing and perceptive Christian thought. They want nothing more than another round of choruses and a 'simple message'—something that won't challenge them to think, to examine their lives, to make choices, and to grow in their knowledge and adoration of the living God.

A Christian matures by allowing the Spirit to teach him and direct him by feeding on the Word. God's Word will build you up, feed your soul, give you strength and direction, hope & faith.

The Word of God is our spiritual food: I Pet. 2:2 milk Matt. 4:4 bread

Heb. 5:11-14 meat Ps. 119:103 honey

I Pet. 2:1-3 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord

- It is not wrong for them to digest only simple truths as newborn babes, but it is wrong for them to fail to grow up and not to take solid food. To stay immature is sin.

Paul exhorts his readers to continue to hunger for the "milk of the word": the Gospel of which he had just written. In both cases, I Pet. & I Cor. 3, the difference between milk and meat has to do with depth of appreciation and understanding of the message of the cross, not the message itself.

Those whose lives are determined and designed by Jesus Christ crucified are meat-eating Christians, growing up and growing deeper in the love of Jesus, whereas milk only Christians have a shallow and often crossless lifestyle and mindset. [VanMeter]

When I preach, I never think, "How can I provide milk and meat?" Instead, I think, "How can I clearly, accurately, effectively, reverently, and simply preach Jesus Christ and him crucified?" Those who can only handle milk will leave burping and soon empty, while those who are serious about the Lord will leave filled to the brim still chewing on the meat. [Van Meter]

Phil. 3:10 That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death;

Question: Was Paul a committed Christian when he wrote this? Did He know Him?

I Cor. 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?

Corinthian church was characterized by "the passions of the flesh" rather than by a passion for Jesus Christ and Him crucified. They were "milky" rather than "meaty." The result: Their church had become man-centered rather than gospel-centered. They had become *worldly*.

Doug VanMeter It is tragic when Christians and even entire congregations are worldly. We often associate "worldly" with sexual immorality, drunkenness, and moral compromise. Certainly, these were problems within the Corinthian church. But a church can be morally squeaky clean and still be worldly. When a church becomes man-centered and personality-driven, it is infantile. I care not how well-known or how doctrinally solid it is.

I Cor. 3:3-4 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? In contrast to the power of unity, there is weakness which comes from division.

Consider: The ideal = All Christians should be "spiritual."

- Every born-again believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and should walk in the Spirit.

Consider: A "carnal Christian" is not that far removed from the experience of the "spiritual Christian," whose daily life manifests the constant battle we face between the flesh and the Spirit. [Rom. 7:14, 18-19, 24-25; Rom. 8:1-4; Galatians 5:13-24]

The "spiritual" Christian and the "carnal" Christian BOTH struggle with the pull of the flesh and its opposition to the Spirit. The difference:

- The carnal Christian whose thinking and actions are prompted by his flesh, "old man," is losing the battle. He possesses the Spirit, but he chooses to follow the promptings of the flesh and to walk in the power of the flesh.
- The spiritual Christian whose attitudes, thinking and actions are due to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, experiences some victories by the power of the Holy Spirit.

<p>Ignorance of his spiritual heritage Unbelief Disobedience Loss of love for God and for others Poor prayer life No desire for Bible study</p>		<p>Legalistic attitude Impure thoughts Jealousy Guilt Worry Discouragement Critical spirit Frustration Aimlessness</p>
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<p>Christ-centered Empowered by the Holy Spirit Introduces others to Christ Effective prayer life Understands God's Word Trusts God Obeys God</p>		<p>Love Joy Peace Patience Kindness Faithfulness Goodness</p>
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Since a carnal Christian lives according to his fleshly desires, it may be hard to distinguish him from the unsaved, "natural," man who also thinks and walks according to the flesh.

What is the difference? The carnal Christian has the means and the power to live a spirit-filled life. The unsaved, natural man does not possess the means to live a godly life.

- The saved carnal Christian will go to heaven and face the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- The unsaved natural man is lost and doomed for an eternity apart from God.

D. Carnal Christians usually think of themselves as spiritual.

I Cor. 1:2-5 How did Paul think of the ones he addressed in I Cor. 3?

Paul says they are "sanctified in Christ Jesus," they are recipients of "the grace of God," enriched by Christ "in all utterance, and in all knowledge."

Paul rebukes them in I Cor. 3: For acting, despite their privileges, like babes and like the unregenerate in one area of their lives.

Paul has a completely different kind of person in mind than we do when he refers to those who are "carnal" or "fleshly" in his epistles.

- The carnal Christian is not the person who once made a profession of faith and who has done nothing since.
- The carnal Christian is the person we think of as spiritual—the kind of person who thinks of himself as spiritual.

Paul does not have in mind someone who has made a profession of faith, carried on in the Christian way for a short while, and then reverted to a lifestyle indistinguishable in every respect from that of the world. After all, these Corinthian believers:

I Cor. 14 are meeting together for worship.

I Cor. 1:2 they call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

I Cor.1:5, 7:12-14 they are extraordinarily endowed with spiritual gifts.

I Cor. 8-10 they are wrestling with theological and ethical issues.

They are in contact with the apostle whose ministry brought them to the Lord.

Far from being sold out to the world, the flesh, and the devil, they pursue spiritual experience, if sometimes unwisely.

The carnal Christian may be regarded as "spiritual" by others.

Rev. 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write;

 These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;

 I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Notice what is said to the "carnal" saints at Sardis. They are not rebuked for having done no works. God indicates that He is aware of their deeds. It seems the saints in Sardis have a reputation for being "alive" on the basis of their works.

But in spite of this apparent evidence, God exposes them as being "dead," not "alive."

How can the ones who consider themselves as "spiritual," and whom others consider as "spiritual," be the very ones God designates as "carnal"?

We have the wrong criteria for judging spirituality.

Our judgment is based upon outward acts, upon appearances of spirituality.

Jesus warned about making judgments on the basis of externals.

What is the difference between the "works" of those who are unspiritual (even unsaved), and the "works" of those who are "spiritual"? *The works of those who are "fleshly" or "carnal" are those prompted and empowered by the flesh. The works of those who are spiritual are prompted and empowered by the Spirit. Seemingly spiritual people may hustle and bustle around the church, doing so much they appear to put others to shame, while in reality their works are fleshly. The "fleshly" Christian may even prostitute his or her spiritual gifts, employing them in self-serving and self-promoting ways.*

Ray Ortlund: Every pastor and teacher is in the midst of his own sanctification.

 Every pastor and teacher must crawl his way to the pulpit.

 Every pastor and teacher will preach or teach things he is struggling with
 in his own life and struggling to live out.

Scott Lindsay: I began to understand that all true Christian growth is growth toward the Cross. Understanding who Jesus is, getting to know Him is the pursuit of a lifetime, indeed, of all eternity.

Grasping the depths of sin and depravity in my own heart, which made Jesus' death a necessity - that is not the discovery of a single moment but is more like successively peeling back the layers of an onion as God, graciously, takes years and decades to reveal the profundity [deep insight] of my sin. And then, accompanying this progressive revelation of my own sin is an ever-deepening repentance and brokenness OVER my sin and a lifetime process of learning to hate what God hates and love what God loves.

Then along with all of that there is an expanding recognition of the NEED for grace and forgiveness that begins with acknowledgment and, over the years, becomes absolute desperation. Finally, as a result of all this, I am increasingly confounded and amazed by the mercy and grace of God toward his people in the Cross of Christ and I am, to this very day, just coming to understand that at the heart of all my struggles is a failure to really believe the Gospel.

The Corinthian catastrophe sounds a clear warning of what can happen when the church moves its focus away from the Cross of Christ and, in its place, pursues some other wisdom or takes some other course:

When we move our focus away from the Cross of Christ and in its place adopt worldly ideas about wisdom and power, we will tend toward an inflated view of our own giftedness, over against the value and giftedness of others, causing us to discount both them and their ministry, resulting in jealousy and division in the church.

When we move our focus away from the Cross of Christ we will become increasingly impatient and restless with the message of the Cross and more and more taken with practically anything else that comes down the pipe and thus susceptible to "every wind of doctrine." [Eph. 4:14]

Eph. 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro,
and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,
and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Finally, when we move our focus away from the Cross of Christ, we will develop an increasingly distorted view of ourselves. The more this distortion progresses, the greater will be our tendency toward discontentment with the result that we will become envious of things which we feel we simply must have to be fulfilled.

This too can only result in jealousy and increased division within the church.

Vance Havner: The cause of Christ has been hurt more by Sunday-morning benchwarmers who pretend to love Christ, who call Him Lord but do not His commands, than by all the publicans and sinners. They say they are evangelical but not evangelistic. They glory in being... disciples of the Lowest Common Denominator. They traffic in unfelt truth and refuse to get excited over religion. Their ideal service is "a mild-mannered man standing before a group of mild-mannered people, exhorting everybody to be more mild-mannered"... How many nice, comfortable, lovely people rest smilingly in church pews, their conscience drugged, their wills paralyzed, in self-satisfied stupor, utterly unconscious of their danger while the Lord of the Lampstands warns them, "I am about to spit you out of My mouth.