

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Paul Teaches the Fleshly Corinthians to be Spiritual

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The Issue In Corinthians 3:1-4

Interpretations of "Spiritual versus fleshly"

1. The "spiritual" are Christians who have achieved a superior level by being baptized by the H.S. Fleshly Christians are believers, but don't have "the gifts of the Spirit."
2. The "spiritual" are believers. Those of the flesh are unbelievers. Paul, therefore, is speaking to only those in the congregation that are unbelievers who were creating problems.
3. The "fleshly" Corinthians do have the Holy Spirit, but they are acting like those in the world. Paul is calling them out in such a way that they realize they must stop acting like those of this age. (Position versus Action)

Spiritual	Fleshly
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The Corinthians Act Like Those of This Age

1 Cor 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.

Spiritual = Links back to 1 Cor 2:14-15 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God...he cannot understand them...But he who is spiritual appraises all things...

Men of flesh = Biting irony – in that the Corinthians boasted in being spiritual to the point of denying the importance of the flesh. (They had arrived! This is why they deny the resurrection 1 Cor 15:12).

Infants in Christ = links back to 2:6 "Yet we speak wisdom among those who are mature..."

Division Among The Corinthians

1 Cor 3:2-3 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

The argument of 2:6-16 implies that for Paul the gospel of the crucified one is both "milk" and "solid food." As milk it is the good news of salvation; as solid food it is understanding that the entire Christian life is predicated on the same reality—and those who have the Spirit should so understand the "mystery." Thus the Corinthians do not need a change in diet but a change in perspective. As Morna Hooker nicely puts it: "Yet while he uses their language, the fundamental contrast in Paul's mind is not between two quite different diets which he has to offer, but between the true food of the Gospel with which he has fed them (whether milk or meat) and the synthetic substitutes which the Corinthians have preferred."

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For = introduces the evidence of their "fleshly behavior"

Jealousy and strife = recall that the Corinthians were boasting in themselves because they had elevated their own wisdom to being the pinnacle of what they desired to attain. (Jealousy better rendered "rivalry" BAGD)

Walking = περιπατεω used to indicate the way one lives. The Corinthians were living inconsistent with their calling.

Boasting Vicariously Through Leaders

1 Cor 3:4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

* The boasting in leaders was driven by the Corinthians' longing to be superior in wisdom than their peers.

Mini Application:

1. I am a "Calvinist" (Used as a way to describe a system that represents how one understands Scripture.)
2. I am a "Calvinist" (Used in a parochial way: "John Calvin's wisdom and understanding of Scripture surely cannot be matched.")

The Need For Biblical Exegesis

God's Word

Sproul, MacArthur, Carson, Piper, Geisler, Calvin, Wise

1. The church at large needs to be equipped to recognize strong and weak exegetical arguments.
2. Too many sermons are "stories" that don't wrestle with what the Bible teaches.
3. Too many seminaries are not teaching biblical exegesis because they have given up on knowledge itself!

Leaders Are Servants: No More

1 Cor 3:5-6 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul?
 Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

Through = Paul is pointing out that the Corinthians didn't believe "in" Paul or Apollos, but "through" them.

Believed = Aorist, active, indicative – indicates the point of time in the past that the Corinthians believed

The Lord gave to each one = 2 Points: 1. The differences between Paul and Apollos that divided the wayward Corinthians were designed by God for their good. 2. The Corinthians should focus on the Lord, not His servants

The Farming Analogy

1. Planter: Paul
2. Irrigator: Apollos
3. Crop: Corinthians
4. Cause of growth: God

Application: No one can create "spiritual crops." Christians are merely hired hands who work for a God that supernaturally causes growth. (Bible Study Story)

Paul and Apollos: God's Hired Hands

1 Cor 3:7-9 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Reward according to labor: Looks forward to 3:10-15 which warns the teachers of Corinth to build upon the gospel (foundation)

2 Analogies: We are God's 1. field 2. building

Summary

Paul's words in 1 Cor 3:1-9 apply to both clergy and laity alike. Pastors and elders should always remember that they are "hired hands" and that the church is Christ's flock, not the leader's personal enterprise. Laity must also remember that their leader's words are to be valued if they represent God's word, and rejected if they do not.
