



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

The Master's Indwelling

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"That Christ may dwell In your hearts by faith." Eph. 3:17

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CARNAL CHRISTIANS I.

1 Corinthians 3:1 "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal."

THE apostle here speaks of two stages of the Christian life, two types of Christians: "I could not speak unto you as unto *spiritual*, but as unto *carnal*, even as unto babes in Christ." They were Christians, in Christ, but instead of being spiritual Christians, they were carnal. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were .not able to bear it, neither yet are ye able, for ye are yet carnal." Here is that word a second time. "For-whereas"- this is the proof 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?" Four times the apostle uses that word carnal. In the wisdom which the Holy Ghost gives him, Paul feels: -- I cannot write to these Corinthian Christians unless I know their state, and unless I tell them of it. If I give spiritual food to men who are carnal Christians, I am doing them more harm than good, for they are not fit to take it. I cannot feed them with meat, I must feed them with milk. And so he tells them at the *very* outset of the epistle what he sees to be their state. In the two previous chapters he

had spoken about his ministry being by the Holy Spirit; now he begins to tell them what must be the state of a people in order to accept spiritual truth, and he says: "I have not liberty to speak to you as I would, for you are carnal, and you cannot receive Spiritual truth." That suggests to us the solemn thought, that in the Church of Christ there are two classes of Christians. Some have lived many years as believers, and yet always remain babes; others are spiritual men, because they have given themselves up to the power, the leading and to the entire rule of the Holy Ghost. If we are to obtain a blessing, we must first decide to which of these classes we belong. Are we, by the grace of God, in deep humility living a spiritual life, or are we living a carnal life? Then, let us first try to understand what is meant by the carnal state in which believers may be living.

We notice from what we find in Corinthians, four marks of the carnal state. **First:** It is simply a condition of protracted infancy. You know what that means. Suppose a beautiful babe, six months old. It cannot speak, it cannot walk, but we do not trouble ourselves about that; it is natural, and ought to be so. But suppose a year later we find the child not grown at all, and three years later still no growth; we would at once say: "There must be some terrible disease;" and the baby that at six months old was the cause of joy to every one who saw him, has become to the mother and to all a source of anxiety and sorrow. There is something wrong; the child cannot grow. It was quite right at six months old that it should eat nothing but milk; but years have passed by, and it remains in the same weakly state. Now this is just the condition of many believers. They are converted; they know what it is to have assurance and faith; they believe in pardon for sin; they begin to work for God; and yet, somehow, there is very little growth in spirituality, in the real heavenly life. We come into contact with them, and we feel at once there is something wanting; there is none of the beauty of holiness or of the power of God's Spirit in them. This is the condition of the carnal Corinthians, expressed in what was said to the Hebrews: "You have had the Gospel so long that by this time you ought to be teachers, and yet you need that men should teach you the very rudiments of the oracles of God." Is it not a sad thing to see a believer who has been converted five, ten, twenty years, and yet no growth, and no strength, and no joy of holiness? What are the marks of a little child? One is, a little child cannot help himself, but is always keeping others occupied to serve him. What a tyrant a baby in a house often is! The mother cannot go out, there must be a servant to nurse it; it needs to be cared for constantly. God made a man to care for others, but the baby was made to be cared for and to be helped. So there are Christians who always want help. Their pastor and their Christian friends must always be teaching and comforting them. They go to church, and to prayer-meetings, and to conventions, always wanting to be helped, - a sign of spiritual infancy.

The other sign of an infant is this: he can do nothing to help his fellow-man. Every man is expected to contribute something to the welfare of society; every one has a place to fill and a work to do, but the babe can do nothing for the common weal. It is just so with Christians. How little some can do! They take a part in work, as it is called, but there is little of exercising spiritual power and carrying real blessing. Should we not each ask, "Have I outgrown my spiritual infancy?" Some must reply, "No, instead of having gone forward, I have gone backward, and the joy of conversion and the first love is gone." Alas! They are babes -in Christ; they are yet carnal.

The second mark of the carnal state is this: that there is sin and failure continually. Paul says: "Whereas there is strife and division among you, and envying, are ye not carnal?" A man gives way to temper. He may be a minister, or a preacher of the Gospel, or a Sunday-school teacher, most earnest at the prayer-meeting, but yet strife or bitterness or envying is often shown by him. Alas! Alas! In Gal. 3:5 we are told that the works of the flesh are specially hatred and envy.

How often among Christians, who have to work together, do we see divisions and bitterness! God have mercy upon them, that the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, is so frequently absent from His own people. You ask, "Why is it, that for twenty years I have been fighting with my temper, and can not conquer it?" It is because you have been fighting with the temper, and you have not been fighting with the root of the temper. You have not seen that it is all because you are in the carnal state, and not properly given up to the Spirit of God. It may be that you never were taught it; that you never saw it in God's Word; that you never believed it. But there it is; the truth of God remains unchangeable. Jesus Christ can give us the victory over sin, and can keep us from actual transgression. I am not telling you that the root of sin will be eradicated, and that you will have no longer any natural tendency to sin; but when the Holy Spirit comes not only with His power for service as a gift, but when He comes in Divine grace to fill the heart, there is victory over sin; power not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. And you see a mark of the carnal state not only in unlovingness, self-consciousness and bitterness, but in so many other sins. How much worldliness, how

much ambition among men, how much seeking for the honor that comes from man - all the fruit of the carnal life - to be found in the midst of Christian activity! Let us remember that the carnal state is a state of continual sinning and failure, and God wants us not only to make confession of individual sins, but to come to the acknowledgment that they are the sign that we are not living a healthy life, - we are yet carnal.

A third mark which will explain further what I have been saying, is that this carnal state may be found in existence in connection with great spiritual gifts. There is a difference between gifts and graces. The graces of the Spirit are humility and love, like the humility and love of Christ. The graces of the Spirit are to make a man free from self; the gifts of the Spirit are to fit a man for work. We see this illustrated among the Corinthians. In the first chapter Paul says, "I thank God that you are enriched unto all utterance, and all knowledge, and all wisdom." In the 12th and 14th chapters we see that the gifts of prophecy and of working miracles were in great power among them; but the graces of the Spirit were noticeably absent.

And this may be in our days as well as in the time of the Corinthians. I may be a minister of the Gospel; I may teach God's Word beautifully; I may have influence, and gather a large congregation, and yet, alas! I may be a carnal man; a man who may be used by God, and may be a blessing to others, and yet the carnal life may still mark me. You all know the law that a thing is named according to what is its most prominent characteristic. Now, in these carnal Corinthians there was a little of God's Spirit, but the flesh predominated; the Spirit had not the rule of their whole life. And the spiritual men are not called so because there is no flesh in them, but because the Spirit in them has obtained dominance, and when you meet them and have intercourse with them, you feel that the Spirit of God has sanctified them. Ah, let us beware lest the blessing God gives us in our work deceive us and lead us to think that because he has blessed us, we must be spiritual men. God may give us gifts that we use, and yet our lives may not be wholly in the power of the Holy Ghost.

My last mark of the carnal state is that it makes a man unfit for receiving spiritual truths. That is what the apostle writes to the Corinthians: "I could not preach to you as unto spiritual; you are not fit for spiritual truth - after being Christians so long; you can not yet bear it; I have to feed you with milk." I am afraid that in the church of the nineteenth century we often make a terrible mistake. We have a congregation in which the majority are carnal men. We give these men spiritual teaching, and they admire it, understand it, and rejoice in such ministry; yet their lives are not practically affected. They work for Christ in a certain way, but we can scarce recognize the true sanctification of the Spirit; we dare not say they are spiritual men, full of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let us recognize this with regard to ourselves. A man may become very earnest, may take in all the teaching he hears; he may be able to discern, for discernment is a gift; he may say, "That man helps me in this line, and that man in another direction, and a third man is remarkable for another gift;" yet, all the time, the carnal life may be living strongly in him, and when he gets into trouble with some friend, or Christian worker, or worldly man, the carnal root is bearing its terrible fruit, and the spiritual food has failed to enter his heart. Beware of that. Mark the Corinthians and learn of them. Paul did not say to them, "You can not bear the truth as I would speak it to you," because they were ignorant or a stupid people. The Corinthians prided themselves on their wisdom, and sought it above everything, and Paul said: **"I thank God that you are enriched in utterance, in knowledge, and in wisdom; nevertheless, you are yet carnal, your life is not holy; our life is not sanctified unto the humility of the life of the Lamb of God, you can not yet take in real spiritual truth."**

We find the carnal state not only at Corinth, but throughout the Christian world to-day. Many Christians are asking, "What is the reason there is so much feebleness in the Church?" We can not ask this question too earnestly, and I trust that God Himself will so impress it upon our hearts that we shall say to Him, "It must be changed. Have mercy upon us." But, ah! That prayer and that change can not come until we have begun to see that there is a carnal root ruling in believers; they are living more after the flesh than the Spirit; they are yet carnal Christians.

There is a passage "from carnal to spiritual." Did Paul find any spiritual believers? Undoubtedly he did. Just read the 6th chapter of the Epistle of the Galatians! That was a church where strife, and bitterness, and envy were terrible. But the apostle says in the first verse: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, **ye which are spiritual**, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." There we see that the marks of the spiritual man are that he will be a meek man; and that he will have will and love to *help* and restore those that are fallen. The carnal man cannot do that. If there is a true spiritual life that can be lived, the great question is: Is the way open, and how can I enter into the spiritual

state? Here, again, I have four short answers.

First, we must know that there is such a spiritual life to be lived by men on earth. Nothing cuts the roots of the Christian life so much as unbelief. People do not believe what God has said about what He is willing to do for His children. Men do not believe that when God says, "Be filled with the Spirit," He means it for every Christian. And yet Paul wrote to the Ephesians each one: "Be filled with the Spirit, and do not be drunk with wine." Just as little as you may be drunk with wine, so little may you live without being filled with the Spirit. Now, if God means that for believers, the first thing that we need is to study, and to take home God's Word, to our belief until our hearts are filled with the assurance that there is such a life possible which it is our duty to live; that we can be spiritual men. God's Word teaches us that God does not expect a man to live as he ought for one minute unless the Holy Spirit is in him to enable him to do it.

We do not want the Holy Spirit only when we go to preach, or when we have some special temptation of the devil to meet, or some great burden to bear; God says: "My child can not live a right life unless he is guided by my Spirit every minute." That is the mark of the child of God: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." In Romans V we read "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto us." That is to be the common, every-day experience of the believer, not his life at set times only. Did ever a father or mother think, "For to-day I want my child to love me?" No, they expect the love every day. And so God wants His child every moment to have a heart filled with love of the Spirit. In the eyes of God, it is most unnatural to expect a man to love as he should if he is not filled with the Spirit. Oh, let us believe a man *can* be a spiritual man. Thank God, there is now the blessing waiting us. "Be filled with the Spirit." "Be led by the Spirit." There is the blessing. If you have to say, "Oh, God, I have not this blessing," say it; but say also, "Lord, I know it is my duty, my solemn obligation to have it, for without it I can not live in perfect peace with Thee all the day; without it I can not glorify Thee, and do the work Thou wouldst have me do." This is our first step from carnal to spiritual, to recognize a spiritual life, a walk in the Spirit, is within our reach. How can we ask God to guide us into spiritual life, if we have not a clear, confident conviction that there is such a life to be had?

Then comes the second step; a man must see the shame and guilt of his having lived such a life. Some people admit there is a spiritual life to live, and that they have not lived it, and they are sorry for themselves, and pity themselves, and think, "How sad that I am too feeble for it! How sad that God gives it to others,...but has not given it to me!" They have great compassion upon themselves, instead of saying, "Alas! It has been our unfaithfulness, our unbelief, our disobedience, that has kept us from giving ourselves utterly to God. We have to blush and to be ashamed before God that we do not live as spiritual men."

A man does not get converted without having conviction of sin. When that conviction of sin comes, and his eyes are opened, he learns to be afraid of his sin, and to flee from it to Christ, and to accept Christ as a mighty deliverer. But a man needs a second conviction of sin; a believer must be convicted of his peculiar sin. The sins of an unconverted man are different from the sins of a believer. An unconverted man, for instance, is not ordinarily convicted of the corruption of his nature; he thinks principally about external sins, -"I have sworn, been a liar, and I am on the way to hell." He is then convicted for conversion. But the believer is in quite a different condition. His sins are far more blameable, for he has had the light and the love and the Spirit of God given to him. His sins are far deeper. He has striven to conquer them and he has grown to see that his nature is utterly corrupt, that the carnal mind, the flesh, within him, is making his whole state utterly wretched. When a believer is thus convicted by the Holy Spirit, it is specially his life of unbelief that condemns him, because he sees that the great guilt connected with this has kept him from receiving the full gift of God's Holy Spirit. He is brought down in shame and confusion of face, and he begins to cry : "Woe is me, for I am undone. I have heard of God by the hearing of the ear; I have known a great deal of Him and preached about Him, but now mine eye seeth Him." God comes near him. Job, the righteous man, whom God trusted, saw in himself the deep sin of self and its righteousness that he had never seen before. Until this conviction of the wrongness of our carnal state as believers comes to each one of us; until we are willing to get this conviction from God, to take time before God to be humbled and convicted, we never can become spiritual men.

Then comes the third mark, which is that out of the carnal state into the spiritual is only one step. One step; oh, that is a blessed message I bring to you -it is only one step. I know many people will refuse to admit that it is only one step, they think it too little for such a mighty change. But was not conversion only one step?

So it is when a man passes from carnal to spiritual. You ask if when I talk of a spiritual man I am not thinking of a man of spiritual maturity, a real saint, and you say: "Does that come in one day? Is there no growth in holiness?" I reply that spiritual maturity cannot come in a day. We can not expect it. It takes growth, until the whole beauty of the image of Christ is formed in a man. But still I say that it needs but one step for a man to get out of the carnal life into the spiritual life. It is when a man utterly breaks with the flesh; when he gives up the flesh into the crucifixion death of Christ; when he sees that everything about it is accursed and that he can not deliver himself from it; and then claims the slaying power of Christ's cross within him, -it is when a man does this and says: "This spiritual life prepared for me is the free gift of my God in Christ Jesus," that he understands how one step can bring him out of the carnal into the spiritual state.

In that spiritual life there will be much still to be learned. There will still be imperfections.

Spiritual life is not perfect; but the predominant characteristic will be spiritual. When a man has given himself up to the real, living, acting, ruling power of God's Spirit, he has got into the right position in which he can grow. You never think of growing out of sickness into health; you may grow out of feebleness into strength, as the little babe can grow to be a strong man; but where there is disease, there must healing come if there is to be a cure effected. There are Christians who think that they must grow out of the carnal state into the spiritual state. You never can. What could help those carnal Corinthians? To give them milk could not help them, for milk was a proof they were in the wrong state. To give them meat would not help them, for they were unfit to eat it. What they needed was the knife of the surgeon. Paul says that the carnal life must be cut out. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh." When a man understands what that means, and accepts it in the faith of what Christ can do, then one step can bring him from carnal to spiritual. One simple act of faith in the power of Christ's death, one act of surrender to the fellowship of Christ's death as the Holy Spirit can make it ours, will make it ours, will bring deliverance from the power of your efforts.

What brought deliverance to that poor condemned sinner who was most dark and wretched in his unconverted state? He felt he could do nothing good of himself. What did he do? He saw set before him the almighty Saviour and he cast himself into His arms; he trusted himself to that omnipotent love and cried, "Lord, have mercy upon me." That was salvation. It was not for what he did that Christ accepted him. Oh, believers, if any of us who are conscious that the carnal state predominates have to say: "It marks me; I am a religious man, an earnest man, a friend of missions; I work for Christ in my church, but, alas! temper and sin and worldliness have still the mastery over my soul," hear the word of God. If any will come and say: "I have struggled, I have prayed, I have wept, and it has not helped me," then you must do one other thing. You must see that the living Christ is God's provision for your holy, spiritual life. You must; believe that that Christ who accepted you once, at conversion, in His wonderful love is now waiting to say to you that you may become a spiritual man, entirely given up to God. If you will believe that, your fear will vanish and you will say: "It can be done; if Christ will accept and take charge, it shall be done."

Then, my last mark. A man must take that step, a solemn but blessed step. It cost some of you five or ten years before you took the step of conversion. You wept and prayed for years, and could not find peace until you took that step. So, in the spiritual life, you may go to teacher after teacher, and say, "Tell me about the spiritual life, the baptism of the Spirit, **and** holiness," and yet you may remain just where you were. Many of us would love to have sin taken away. Who loves to have a hasty temper? Who loves to have a proud disposition? Who loves to have a worldly heart? No one. We go to Christ to take it away, and he does not do it; and we ask, "Why will he not do it? I have prayed very earnestly." It is because you wanted Him to take away the ugly fruits while the poisonous root was to stay in you. You did not ask Him that the flesh should be nailed to His cross, and that you should henceforth give up self entirely to the power of His Spirit.

There is deliverance, but not in the way we seek it. Suppose a painter had a piece of canvas, on which he desired to work out some beautiful picture. Suppose that piece of canvas does not belong to him, and any one has a right to take it and to use it for any other purpose; do you think the painter would bestow much work on that? No. Yet people want Jesus Christ to bestow His trouble upon them in taking away this temper, or that other sin, though in their hearts they have not yielded themselves utterly to His command and His keeping. It can not be. But if you will come and give your whole life into His charge, Christ Jesus is mighty to save; Christ Jesus waits to be gracious; Christ Jesus waits to fill you with His Spirit.

Will you not take the step? God grant that we may be led by His Spirit to a yielding up of ourselves to Him as never before. Will you not come in humble confession that, alas! the carnal life has predominated too much, has altogether marked you, and that you have a bitter consciousness that with all the blessing God has bestowed, He has not made you what you want to be -- a spiritual man ? **It is the Holy Spirit alone who by His indwelling can make a spiritual man.** Come then and cast yourself at God's feet, with this one thought, "Lord, I give myself an empty vessel to be filled with Thy Spirit." Each one of you sees every day at the tea table an empty cup set there, waiting to be filled with tea when the proper time comes. So with every dish, every plate. They are cleansed and empty, ready to be filled. Emptied and cleansed. Oh, come! and just as a vessel is set apart to receive what it is to contain, say to Christ that you desire from this hour to be a vessel set apart to be filled with His Spirit, given up to be a spiritual man. Bow down in the deepest emptiness of soul, and say, "Oh, God, I have nothing!" and then surely as you place yourself before Him you have a right to say, "My God will fulfill His promise! I claim from Him the filling of the Holy Spirit to make me, instead of a carnal, a spiritual Christian." If you place yourself at His feet, and tarry there; if you abide in that humble surrender and that childlike trust, as sure as God lives the blessing will come.

Oh, have we not to bow in shame before God, as we think of His whole Church and see so much of the carnal prevailing? Have we not to bow in shame before God, as we think of so much of the carnal in our hearts and lives: Then let us bow in great faith in God's mercy. Deliverance is nigh, deliverance is coming, deliverance is waiting, deliverance is sure. Let us trust; God will give it.

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