1 Corinthians 3 Verse 1

* There is a debate on this first verse of this chapter and that debate revolves around ***were they Christians or not.*** Can a Christian, meaning someone who has believed on Jesus and now has the Holy Spirit within them, ***can a Christian be carnal?*** (Did he say “carnivore?” HA!!) **What is carnal?** Carnal basically means *behaving according to the flesh.* **What’s the flesh?** The flesh is a term we use for the affections, desires, habits and behaviors of a person that are contrary, ***not like the heart of God.*** So, the debate rages. Can a Christian be carnal? **Um, yes.**
* Do you ever know what you should do and not do it? Of course you do, I mean not me…I always do what’s right…*give me a break!* HA!! Paul describes three types of persons in the first three Chapters of this book. There is the *“natural man.”* 1 Corinthians 2:14. One who has not received the Spirit of God and therefore does not know God. What I will call a ***“first nature person”*** because when you come to God, **He installs in you a new nature.** Then there is the *“spiritual man.”* 1 Corinthians 2:15. The one who is filled with the knowledge of God and judges correctly and wisely. And then there is the *“carnal man.”* The one who knows the things of God, yet in some significant way continues to walk in the flesh. Question, which one are you? ***Because you are most certainly one of the three.***
* But let me be clear, first pragmatically. Paul begins by saying to them, *“brethren”* and then ends by calling them ***babes in Christ.*** He is **quite obviously** identifying them as Christian. And now *practically…*I am confident that carnal Christians are among us. Someone say *“amen!”* (Don’t look at your spouse!) HA! We probably know a few don’t we? We probably ***are*** a few times a week ourselves, aren’t we? A very important truth to remember is that ***its not your performance that makes you a Christian, its your position.*** Are you **in** Christ?
* Now, I have no confidence and I am concerned for one that is apparently *dominated* by the flesh but I’m not in the storm of their heart…I don’t know what’s really going on in there…but what I do know is this…I am saved as saved can be. I love Jesus and want nothing but more of Him in my life. **AND I am an idiot!** Carried away sometimes so easily by my stupid flesh! And so I trust in Jesus and why *would or should or could* I be so surprised when someone else does the same?
* I don’t think this should be the focus of this verse at all! Isn’t it interesting how even we, Christians, theologians can focus on the ***minor*** issues? The thing about this first verse is that Paul and this goes for us, God through Paul has outstanding hidden manna of joy, wisdom, strength, purpose, depth….all that to share with us but there are things God cannot speak to us because we aren’t listening to Him, we are listening to the flesh. Being a bunch of babies!

1 Corinthians 3 Verse 2

* What does this mean? What is *milk* and what is *meat?* Is Paul opening some sort of **food truck?** What is this? *“Corinthian Fried Chicken!?”* HA!! If he did I bet you could pay him using *PayPaul!* HA!!!! Ok, that was bad! Newborn babies are **beautiful.** They’re amazing! All of a person packed into this tiny package. What will they do? Who will they become? The sky is the limit! What do they need now? Milk. Why? Their stomachs aren’t yet ready for solid food and oh by the way, no teeth! HA! They can’t even chew! 1 Peter 2:2 says, *“Laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow.”* The milk is the first principles of the oracles of God. Look at Hebrews 5:12…
* A baby is amazing, even thrilling, but a carnal Christian is one that over time does not develop, has not matured and that can be tragic and damaging. Hebrews 5:13-14, *“For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil.”* Ultimately, to be able to receive solid food means that you have grown to the point to trust God, to obey God, (same thing really) and through that faith, by experience, your discernment is keen/sharp. That was not this church…
* Its not so much second level teaching or knowledge, that ***cultish***…there really is nothing deeper than the gospel of grace itself…***the meat of the Word has everything to do with the receiving and very little to do with the information.*** I can know someone is rich, but go to their home, live with them, move in EVEN…now I know to an entirely different level!

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 Verses 3 – 4

* Marks of carnality…immaturity and really foolishness. *Envy, strife and divisions*. To pit against one another in the Body of Christ rather than **wanting and striving for unity**…envy and loving sensationalism or loving only people that make you *“feel good,”* these are all sure marks of a carnal Christian. You say, *“Well they stinketh! That’s why I’m at odds with them!”* The Word of God would say something different!
* James 4:1, *“Where do those wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?”* Buuuuuuuuurn! It’s the truth though! Think about it! Every time your inner pride is kicked there are two options, ***one is a sword and one is a cross.*** I guarantee you that 9.9 times out of 10 I ***lunge*** to the sword! Even if only in my heart…but here’s what we ought to know.
* Strife is a product not of God but of hatred. Love is a product of God and it covers all sins. Proverbs 10:12. Strife is opposite of wisdom. Proverbs 13:10. Strife is a perversion of how we ought to be. Proverbs 16:28. Strife in your home will ruin your children and your heart for your spouse. Proverbs 17:1, *“Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife.”* Strife stands in opposition to trusting the Lord. Proverbs 28:25. If you are one to stir up strife, you’re an infant in terms of how you ought to be and you know nothing. 1 Timothy 6:4. So if you’re one to elevate the discussion to ***insults and shouting and wrath and grudges*** and all that…know what you’re doing, you’re messing your own diaper…**diaper baby.**
* Now, I’m not saying avoid opposition and disengage…I’m saying avoid ***strife.*** You *can* engage all day long without strife. Think of the difference between a game a chess and an MMA fight. Both are intense contentions but in one, one gets completely beat down! (All the nerds just said, ***“Yeah, chess!!”*** HA!) I want to engage and the truth is I won’t be able to avoid it because problems happen…but man I want to do it with ***wisdom***…***self-control***…giving place to God and walking towards the cross rather than the sword. When you and I do that, somehow, in some supernatural way, we are reflecting heaven as Paul says here when we war, enter into strife, all we are doing is behaving like *mere* men…

1 Corinthians 3 Verses 5 – 7

* Who are ***we*** anyway?  ***Without God what work are we accomplishing or can we accomplish!*** If something *supernatura*l is going on, then **why would we exalt the natural!?** What’s cool is the tenses of these words! Man have I become nerdy in my old age!! *Tenses are cool!?* HA! Anyway, the ***planting and watering*** are one-time events but the ***increasing*** is given as a continual event in the tense! I love that!

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 Verse 8

* Notice that! The reward is not *results based!* Isn’t that so entirely opposite to this world! ***Rewards are according to labor when it comes to the ministry, not results.*** But oh, how my mind frets at that! And notice, we are all a team…*one does this and the other does that* ***but “each one” is rewarded.***  We are rewarded individually. It’s not the college group project where one person does all the work and the group receives the grade! HA! God is **just** in assigning rewards!

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 Verses 9 – 11

* *“According to the grace of God…”* Not because Paul or anyone else is anything…God chooses whom He desires to use according to His grace!
* If a church has its foundation, how it stands and withstands, on anything else but the person of Jesus Christ then my friends, that is not a church at all. There is **no other** foundation!

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 Verses 12 – 15

* Can wood, hay and straw make it through fire! **Of course it can!** Ever seen petrified wood? Wood that is so old…been around so long, that it literally turns into rock (somehow)! Even small seemingly insignificant things given or done for God…***in consistency over time***…man that’s faith. *Long obedience in the same direction.* Well what about hay and straw? **Combine them!** Put them together, work with them a bit…I believe Paul is talking about *strategic teaming* in the Lord!! Because when you put these together and put in the sun, they will **brick up!** And then they will pass the fire’s test.
* So what fire is Paul talking about? Well on the practical level, **life!** Criticism, seemingly failing…hard ministry…hard obedience…all of those things burn. But interestingly, *spiritual level*, Revelation Chapter 1 Verses 12 – 14…the eyes of the Lord man…when the Lord looks into the heart of your life, the heart of ***why*** you are ministering…will you pass? What’s step 1? Build on nothing but the Person and gospel of Jesus Christ! You’re off to a good start!

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 Verses 16 – 17

* Pretty stark words from Paul but they are *entirely practical*. The word used for ***temple*** here is ***naos*** which refers to the Inner Sanctuary of the Temple. This was where the divine activity took place. Our lives, even our bodies, if we are submitted to God should become **centers of divine activity!** Styles, habits and attitudes that glorify and point to the One true God! The Spirit of God dwells in you, right? Isn’t that just *reasonable* then?
* Give your body to the world, or to some man that isn’t your husband or to some woman that isn’t your wife…give your styles and habits to serving money or the world and not God, give your attitude to the influence of the demons who are constantly trying to make you ineffective and dull so that you ***reach no one and harm everyone***…and the **weight of the Word of God** will be upon your life. The word for *destroy* is most often translated *corrupt.* *Defiled.* What God has made pure and intends to be sound, through your free will you indeed ***can*** corrupt…and then you chug along on reduced power and sometimes, none at all.

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 Verses 18 – 23

* **Of course the Corinthians thought themselves wise!** This is what they were known for…Paul is saying, *“Is there any among you that will peel away from this world to seek the Lord?”* That is most certainly a question for you and for me as well. Are we ready to renounce all humanism…the *clockwork* of this human reality…and search the deep things of God? When you do, you will find that the human rationality of this world and even how the human brain naturally reasons things out is **foolish and futile** compared to the ways of God.
* So no need to exalt men or woman or a man or a woman…no need…because the measure of the Spirit of God that we give them credit for is available to **every single** human being on earth. Can you dig it!? All are yours? Whose? Yours! Where? **In Christ**…waiting for you. All are yours…this is the promise of God…the gift of God through the cross of Christ…and yet, you are Christ’s…this is the responsibility of man…of you and me…***to become His and in that step in to all that God has for us!***