

# Being the Church in an Unbelieving World

## THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:3

INTRO: Have you ever wondered how so many people can read and quote from the Bible and come up with a multitude of conflicting doctrines and practices? Even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints uses the KJV Bible.

- Translations? – No, all honest translations give the same general meaning.
- Difference in manuscripts? – No, there are no manuscript differences upon which key doctrines hang.

So in light of the fact that the truth about God and the things of God have been revealed by the Holy Spirit in words that make up the Bible, why is there so much disagreement?

Paul explains it in our next passage of 1 Cor. by telling us about three kinds of people.

1 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:3 NKJV 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. 16 For “*who has known the mind of the LORD* that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. 1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

**The first kind of person the Holy Spirit through Paul identifies is the natural man.**

14 But the **natural man** does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are **foolishness** to him; nor can he know them, because they are **spiritually** discerned.

**Natural man** – psuchikos (psychiatry, psyche – soul) – ikos ending means those characterized or controlled by – **a person controlled by his soul** (body, soul, spirit) – soul (**mind, will, and emotions**) – lost, spirit dead and inactive until saved

foolishness – moria (moron) - moronic

**Spiritually discerned** – pneumatikos – (pneuma – spirit) + ikos – **controlled by the spirit**. The understanding comes by the indwelling Holy Spirit through the spirit of the person.

So, the lost man cannot understand the Scriptures because they are only understood with the aid of the Holy Spirit through the spirit of a person.

- No wonder we have a lot of contrary doctrine.
- A lost man may read the gospels and conclude that Jesus was not really God.
- There are a lot of religion professors in our colleges and seminaries today teaching that very thing!
- They are natural men and women, controlled by the wisdom of the world accumulated in their own minds, emotionally committed to their own intellectualism, and exceedingly willful in their conclusions.
- They are lost. Their spirit is dead. They are incapable of understanding Scripture.

Next Paul identifies the **spiritual** man.

15 But **he who is spiritual judges** all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

16 For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

**He who is spiritual** – the adjective form – pneumatikos – **a person controlled by the Holy Spirit**.

**judges** – anakrino – examine, discern (different word than judges as in Mt. 7:1, where it means do not condemn) – The Holy Spirit, working through a saved person’s spirit leads that person to examine all things. As long as he or she is under the control of the Spirit, no mere mortal has the right to examine or question him or her.

**The spiritual man or woman is the person who has trusted Christ and is living and acting under the control and empowerment of the Spirit of God. He or she understands the Word of God and thereby understands the mind of Christ!**

So, Paul has identified the natural man and the spiritual man. Now he tells us about the third kind of person:

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to **carnal**, as to **babes in Christ**.

These descriptions are synonyms so we must be careful to interpret them together.

**Babes in Christ** – Obviously Paul is describing someone who is saved, in Christ, but they are like an infant in the Lord.

**Carnal** – sarkinos – of the flesh, and in 3:2 sarkikos - **controlled by the flesh**; the chief characteristic of their life is the flesh.

The next verses really help us understand who the Holy Spirit is describing through the apostle.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

You are so controlled by the flesh, I cannot even delve into the deep things of God with you. You still need to learn the basics.

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

**The proof that your flesh is still in control is that you envy one another, your lives are filled with strife, and there are divisions, cliques among you.** In short you behave like the natural man or woman. You act like lost people.

So, **the third kind of person is a genuinely born again person, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but who is not living in obedience to the Holy Spirit.** Consequently, when someone looks at the life they are living, it is hard to tell the difference between them and a lost person.

So, which am I? Which are you? Natural, spiritual, carnal?

- If natural, lost, be saved today through faith in Christ.
- If carnal, (and we all are sometimes. If we sin, we have slipped into carnality.) begin obeying what the Holy Spirit has written in God's Word and following His instructions in applying that Word to your life. Ephesians says to be filled. For myself this is my most common prayer. Every time I prep for preaching and/or teaching, every time before beginning to preach or teach, I ask the Lord to "fill me" with the Spirit again.

**But sometimes we are blind to our own carnality, the way our flesh controls us.**

There are many, many applications of this, but I will only mention one today that strongly applies to those of us Christians who live in the United States of America. I am not speaking of political division. Political division among Christians should be resolved by comparing candidates and parties to the truth of God's Word. But I speak of more subtle divisions that evidence carnality.

**There are divisions among us along racial lines that we as believers ought not to have.** Galatians 3:28 NKJV There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

But in practice, we are not all one in Christ. There remain divisions and sometimes strife. It ought not to be and it is a mark of carnality.

How do we end this? Well, ultimately by yielding to what the Spirit tells us to do to love one another. But sometimes we have trouble with that because we don't even know one another. I came across a suggestion a little over a week ago that I thought would help believers wanting to see racial divisions and strife destroyed and to honor God by loving one another. It comes from two U.S. Senators who are Christians. I want you to hear it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGQJ558s-f4>

I hope this is something each of us will do. We have lots of different races and nationalities in PC and PCB. Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Brazilians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Romanian, Czech, Polish, other Eastern European, Russian, Australian. Later this year, we are going to do something along this line on a larger scale as a church. Some might say, "My house is not ready!" Mine either! But we can put it on top of the list when it is.

What kind of person are you? Natural, Carnal, or Spiritual? What kind of person are you willing to become in obedience to the Holy Spirit?