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# 1

## THE MARKS OF A CARNAL CHRISTIAN

THERE ARE TWO KINDS of Christians clearly named and described in Scripture. It is of the utmost importance that every Christian should know which kind he *is* and then determine which kind he wishes *to be*. Paul, in I Corinthians 3:1-4, speaks of Christians as either carnal or spiritual.

And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto *spiritual*, but as unto *carnal*, even as unto babes in Christ.

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.

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*?

Which kind of Christian are you? Have you ever had your picture taken in a group? Were you eager to see it? And you quickly found the picture *of one person*. If the picture of that one person was good, then the whole picture was good, but, if not, then the picture was poor, and you did not care to own one. Well, tonight, we are going to have a photograph taken of the carnal Christian, and I wonder if you will see yourself in it. It will be an absolutely accurate one because it is to be taken by the Divine photographer who knows each of us through and through.

## THE MARKS OF THE CARNAL CHRISTIAN

### IT IS A LIFE OF UNCEASING CONFLICT

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; But I see *another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind*, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom. 7:22-23).

*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are*

contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:17).

Two diverse laws warring against one another in the same personality; two forces absolutely contrary to each other, contesting for its control—this is indeed the language of conflict. Two natures, the divine and the fleshly, are engaged in deadly warfare within the Christian. Sometimes the spiritual nature is in the ascendancy, and the believer enjoys a momentary joy, peace, and rest. But more often the fleshly nature is in control, and there is little enjoyment of spiritual blessings.

May I illustrate this conflict which is so common? A friend told me this story of her six-year-old nephew James, who had the bad habit of running away from home. One day his mother told him she would have to punish him if he ran away again. The temptation to do so soon came and he yielded to it. Upon his return home his mother said, "James, didn't you remember that I said if you ran away again I would punish you?" "Yes," said James, "I remembered." "Then why did you do it?" asked his mother. James replied, "It was this way, mother. As I stood there in the road thinking about it, Jesus pulled on one

leg and the devil pulled on the other, and the devil pulled the harder!" The Lord Jesus pulling on one leg and Satan pulling on the other is the constant experience of the Christian, but habitually yielding to the devil and giving him the control of the life is the wretched condition of the carnal Christian. Is yours a life of such unceasing wearying conflict?

#### IT IS A LIFE OF REPEATED DEFEAT

For that which I do I know not: *for not what I would, that do I practice: but what I hate, that I do* (Rom. 7:15, R.V.).

For *the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice* (Rom. 7:19, R.V.).

Romans 7 is someone's spiritual biography. It was no doubt Paul's. But could it not have been yours and mine as well? It is the revelation of a true desire and an honest attempt to live a holy life, but it is surcharged with the atmosphere of deadly defeat; a defeat so overpowering as to burst forth in that despairing cry for deliverance.

*O wretchel man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (Rom. 7:24).

Who of us has not uttered it? We have made countless resolutions at the dawn of a new day or of a New Year regarding the things we would or would not do. But our hearts have been repeatedly heavy with the humiliating sense of failure. The things we steadfastly determined to do were left undone, and those we solemnly resolved not to do were repeatedly done. Sins of both commission and omission, like evil spirits, haunt our bedchamber and rob us even of the balm of sleep. We have lost our temper, we have been as full of pride, selfishness, and worry this year as we were last year. We have neglected to study the Bible and pray, and we have had no more concern for souls today than we had yesterday.

The trouble is not with the will, for it was very sincere in the decisions made and fully purposed to carry them out.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh.) dwelleth no good thing: *for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not* (Rom. 7:18).

But there is a divided control over the carnal Christian's life and that always spells defeat. He may have deliverance, if he will, but

it must be a deliverance out of Romans 7 into Romans 8. Is such a deliverance yours?

#### IT IS A LIFE OF PROTRACTED INFANCY

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, *but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*. 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* (1 Cor. 3:1-2).

The carnal Christian never grows up. He remains a mere "babe in Christ." The Corinthian Christians should have been fullgrown, strong, meat-eating grown-ups: instead, they were immature, weak, milk-drinking infants. They did not measure up in either stature or strength to what they should have.

Nothing on earth could be more perfect to loving parents than a baby in babyhood, but oh, the indescribable heartache endured by the parents if that precious child remains a baby in body or in mind! Nothing on earth sets the joy bells of heaven ringing as the birth of one into the family of God, but oh, what pain it must cause the heavenly Father to see that spiritual babe remain in a state of protracted infancy!

Which are you, my friend, a spiritual babe or an adult? To answer this question you may have to answer another. What are the marks of a baby? A baby is helplessly dependent upon others. A baby absorbs attention and expects to be the center of his little world. A baby lives in the realm of his feelings. If all goes well, he is pleased and smiling, but he is exceedingly touchy and, if his desire is crossed at any point, he quickly lets it be known in lusty remonstrance. The carnal Christian bears these selfsame marks.

Hebrews 5:12-14 shows us that the carnal Christian is still dependent upon others. He ought to be far enough advanced to be teaching others: instead, he is still having to be taught, and has not even come to the place where he can take meat instead of milk. He is incapacitated to either receive or impart the deep things of God.

Why were the Corinthian Christians such babes? Paul tells us clearly in the first two chapters of I Corinthians. They were following human leaders, esteeming the wisdom of men more highly than the wisdom of God. They were substituting fodder for food and attempting to satisfy hunger on husks.

The average Christian does not go first-



hand to the Bible for food, trusting the Holy Spirit to give him the strong meat of the Word. He is looking only to human teachers for his spiritual nourishment and gulps down whatever they give him. He is a spiritual parasite living on predigested food, consequently he is underfed and anemic. In this weakened state he is open to all forms of spiritual disease. He is an easy prey for temper, pride, impurity, selfishness; and because of his close relationship to other members of the body of Christ, the result is often just such an epidemic of sin as existed in the Corinthian church. Which are you, still a helpless babe or a mature Christian able to be used by God to help others?

#### IT IS A LIFE OF BARREN FRUITLESSNESS

*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit (John 15:2).*

The influence of the carnal Christian is always negative. Because of the inconsistency of his life he is unable to win others to Christ or set a true example to other Christians. He is, therefore, a fruitless branch in the Vine.

## IT IS A LIFE OF ADULTEROUS INFIDELITY

*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).*

This language is very drastic. God plainly states that any Christian who is a friend of the world is His enemy, nay even an "adulterer" or "adulteress." To realize the force of this statement one must know what is meant by "the world." What the church is to Christ, the world is to Satan. It is his eyes, ears, hands, feet combined to fashion his most cunning weapon for capturing and holding the souls of men. It is Satan's lair for the unsaved and his lure to the saved to keep them from God. "The world" is human life and society with God left out.

What, then, should be the Christian's relationship to the world? The answer is found in the Christian's relationship to Christ. Christ and the Christian are one. They are joined together in such an absolute identification of life that the Holy Spirit says the love relationship they bear to one another is analogous to that of marriage.

Is it any wonder, then, that Gods says that friendship with the world on the part of a Christian is tantamount to spiritual adultery? Hobnobbing with the world in its pleasures, entering into partnership with it in its pursuits, fashioning one's life by its principles, working to carry out its program, all make one an accomplice of the evil one against one's own Beloved. Such adulterous unfaithfulness in love marks one as a carnal Christian.

But perhaps you ask, "What constitutes worldliness?"

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (I John 2:15-16).*

The acid test of worldliness is given here. Worldliness is "all that is not of the Father." Whatever would not be as fitting to Christ's life in the heavenlies as to the Christian's life on earth is worldly.

Worldliness is also "the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes" and "the pride of life."

Worldliness may be manifested in one's conversation, in one's style of hairdress, in one's clothes, in one's friendships, in one's pleasures, in one's possessions, in one's reading, in one's appetites and in one's activities. Anything which feeds or pampers the flesh, the animal part of man, is "the lust of the flesh." Anything that caters merely to the fashions of the world, that stimulates desire for possessions, that keeps the eyes fixed on the seen rather than the unseen is "lust of the eyes." Anything that exalts self, that fosters pride and pomp and that clips the wings of the soul so that it grovels in the dust of earth instead of soaring heavenward is "the pride of life."

Do you love the world and the things of the world? Then you are a carnal Christian.

#### IT IS A LIFE OF DISHONORING HYPOCRISY

For ye were sometimes darkness, but *now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light* (Eph. 5:8).

Are ye not carnal, and *walk as men?* (I Cor. 3:3).

The carnal Christian says one thing and does another; his walk does not correspond with his witness. He walks as those who make

no profession of being Christian, so he has no power to win them to Christ.

Has God shown you your photograph tonight? Are you a carnal Christian? Do you wish to continue to be one? There is abundant hope for the Christian who, wearied with the conflict, humiliated with the defeat, chagrined by the immaturity, distressed by the fruitlessness, convicted of the infidelity, and pained by the hypocrisy, turns to God and cries out for deliverance from the wretched captivity of carnality into the glorious liberty of true spirituality.