

## Three Classes of People: Which One are You?

I Corinthians 2:14-3:3

Dr. R.G. Lee once preached a message in which he came down fairly hard on sin. After the service a lady that was obviously upset met him at the door. She said, "I didn't appreciate that sermon one bit." Dr. Lee replied, "The devil didn't either, so classify yourself." <sup>1</sup>

It is a fact of life that our society places all people into certain classes. We are designated economically as rich, middle class, or poor. We are classified academically as educated or uneducated. We are viewed socially as being cultured or uncultured.

Clearly the spiritual realm is no different. In the OT, God spoke of His people, Israel, and those of the Canaanite nations. In the NT, there are Jews, Gentiles, and the church. In essence there are the saved and the unsaved. We are either saved or we are lost. There is no other category in which people can be classified spiritually. However, among those who are saved, there are two types within that category.

I want to examine our text today and consider the [facts](#) regarding: [Three Classes of People](#). As we do, ask the question: [Which One are You?](#)

**I. The Depravity of the Natural Man** (2:14) – [But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.](#) The “natural” man lives according to the flesh. He is unsaved, living only to promote and please the lusts of the flesh. He was born physically, but never spiritually.

**A. His Rebellion** – [the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.](#) The word [receiveth](#) means “*to welcome, embrace, or approve.*” The natural man does not welcome or embrace the things of the Spirit. He rebels against all that is holy and godly. He has no desire for the things of the Lord. He has no use for the spiritual aspect of the church.

- That is not to say that a natural man, a lost man, can't be found among the church or even on the church role. He may attend regularly, but his desires are not for the things of God. He will not welcome or promote a godly agenda; rather he will seek to promote that which pleases the flesh.

**B. His Reasoning** – [for they are foolishness unto him.](#) The natural man sees no benefit or reasoning to the things of God. He considers it all [foolishness](#), “*absurd, unrealistic.*” He sees no need concerning spiritual things. To him the gospel is all a myth, a legend, or a hoax.

- Have we not all met those who disregard the gospel of Christ? Have we not met those who refuse to believe that Christ died upon the cross and rose again? There are those who refuse to believe that God would send His only Son to die for the sins of humanity. The natural

man lives by the creed of: eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die. He sees no need of preparation to meet God. His only concern is satisfying the flesh.

**C. His Restraint** – [neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned](#). This reveals the reason that the natural man rebels against the Spirit and counts it all foolishness. He cannot receive these things because they are [spiritually discerned](#). The things of God are given only of God.

- The natural man has never been quickened in his spirit. He has not been made alive to the things of God. He may read the Bible, but there is no comprehension. He may have the ability to recite Scripture, but it does not move him. He may hear the message, but it is of none effect.

- [Ps.119:18 – Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law](#). Martin Luther said, “*The Bible cannot be understood simply by study or talent; you must count only on the influence of the Holy Spirit.*” I know there is much about the Bible that we cannot comprehend or understand, but much of the problem lies with natural men dealing with spiritual matters. The Spirit will reveal Scripture to those who belong to God.

## **I. The Depravity of the Natural Man** (2:14)

**II. The Dedication of the Spiritual Man** (2:15-16) – The “spiritual” man is one who has been born again. He has been delivered from the deadness of the natural state and is made alive in the Lord. He is much different than the natural man. (By the way, we all ought to desire to be as the spiritual man.) We discover that he is:

**A. A Man of Discernment** (15a) – [But he that is spiritual judgeth all things](#). The word [judgeth](#) means “*to examine or discern.*” The spiritual man differs from the carnal man in that he has the ability to consider the evidence and reach a proper conclusion. He views the things of God in a spiritual light. He affirms that God’s Word is truth and God has given him the ability to rightly divide the Word.

- The natural man may have the ability to reach a proper conclusion concerning secular things, but only the spiritual man can discern spiritual things. God has placed wisdom within his mind and a hunger for the things of God within his heart.

- It is clear that our society and nation as a whole is suffering due to a lack of spiritual discernment. We need a hunger for the wisdom that only comes from the Lord. [1 Jn.2:27 – But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.](#)

**B. A Man of Distinction** (15b) – [yet he himself is judged of no man](#). Here the meaning is the same. The world cannot discern the spiritual man. They cannot figure him out. They cannot understand why he behaves the way he does. How can he show love even when he has been wronged? How can he be so patient and understanding in all situations? How can he have such peace and faith when the world is falling apart around him? The world doesn't know the God he serves, so they will never understand how the spiritual man exists.

**C. A Man of Discipline** (16) – [For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ](#). The spiritual man has a resource that this world cannot touch. He has the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

- As I looked at this I was reminded of the tendency of men to refute the Word of God for the teachings of men. They will argue about much of the Bible because they cannot reconcile in their minds. (Remember, they don't have the ability.) Our world is filled with scholars, scientists, and even theologians who assume to know more than God Himself.
- The spiritual man is not subject to that type of arrogance or ignorance. He believes the Word of God by faith. He discerns the will of God because He has been given the [mind of Christ](#), or "*a deep and unchanging under-standing of the things of God.*" [Lu.24:45 – Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures](#),
- The spiritual man does not argue with truth. He does not seek scientific evidence to prove the miracles of God. He has no problem with "[In the beginning God...](#)" He stands upon the promise of salvation by faith and the hope of resurrection in Christ the Lord.

## **I. The Depravity of the Natural Man** (2:14)

## **II. The Dedication of the Spiritual Man** (2:15-16)

**III. The Deficiency of the Carnal Man** (3:1-3) – Here Paul speaks of the third class of people, the "carnal" man. These are those who are born again, and yet their lives are dictated according to the flesh. They seek what makes them feel good. They belong to the Lord, but they are lacking.

### **A. They Lack Maturity** (1-2)

**1. Their Description** (1) – **And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.** Paul reveals that they are **brethren**, born again believers, but he also reveals that they are **babes in Christ**. That means just what it says. These had not yet matured in their faith; they were yet babes, not even adolescents.

- Now, being a baby is a natural part of life. None of us were born completely mature. This takes time and life experiences. For those who have just been born again, being a babe in Christ is natural. They haven't had the time or experience to mature. Where the problem lies, is in those who have been born again for years, and yet haven't matured. **I Cor.13:11 – When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.**

- There comes a time when we must mature. If our children lived for years and never learned to talk or walk, we would take them to every specialist we could find; that isn't normal behavior.

**2. Their Consumption** (2a) – **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.** The babes in Christ were only fed milk because they were not ready for meat. Babies don't eat the same foods adults do. They require milk and soft foods. Spiritually we must mature to the meat of the Word as well.

- It is sad to say, but I fear that many Christians are still nursing the bottle and have yet to learn to eat and digest the deeper things of God. We need to grow and mature in our spiritual diet the same as we did physically.

- I like to prepare and preach in such a way that even the youngest hearer could understand, but that is no excuse for lack of depth. Many today don't want the preacher to get too deep in the Word. They want him to preach a superficial message that makes them feel good. Life is not lived only in a superficial realm and we need to learn to partake of the meat of the Word.

**B. They Lack Unity** (3:3) – **For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?** Babies behave like babies. They are often selfish and want things their way, right now!

- Using a lack of unity as an indicator, there are a lot of carnal Christians in Baptist churches. Most often problems arise over frivolous and petty issues. We can agree on which Bible we use, which quarterlies we use, and sound doctrine, but we see division over the color of the carpet or who cuts the grass.

- Most problems churches have will not matter one bit in eternity. I have heard of folks getting mad over a parking space or a particular pew. I heard of one couple who quit visiting a certain church because they were told every Sunday, you have my seat. A lack of harmony in a church reveals carnal Christians.

- Our text mentions 3 things that are prevalent in carnal Christians. They had **envy** in their hearts, “*envious and contentious rivalry; jealousy.*” There were grudges and anger toward fellow believers. These things can go on for generations, with no one really remembering why they’re mad.
- There was **strife** among them. Simply the church in Corinth couldn’t get along. They were bickering and back-biting.
- Envy and strife always leads to **division**. Church, we’ll never prosper if we are divided. **Jesus said – And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.**
- These are problems of thought, word, and deed. If we’ll get our hearts right, talk right, and walk right, we’ll have unity.

These verses reveal three classes of people: the natural or lost man, the spiritual or mature man, and the carnal or babes in Christ. Which class do you fit in? If you are a natural man I would urge you to seek Christ in salvation. If you are a spiritual man I would encourage you to press on. If you are a carnal man I would ask you to seek growth and maturity in the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> <http://kentrivette.com/1cor9.htm>