

Must Christians act like Christians?

Study Outline – Grace Bible Chapel

1st Corinthians Study– 1st Cor 3:1-4

July 7th, 2013

Context: Paul has been addressing the troubled Corinthian church. Their disturbing behavior has caused Paul to write two chapters of corrective thinking in which the unity in Christ, value of the Scriptures, God's election by grace alone, and the work of the Holy Spirit have been emphasized - all of this to show these prideful and erring Corinthians the character of God's great salvation. In the last three verses of chapter 2, Paul explains there are only two kinds of people – those who are saved (spiritual or having the Spirit), and those who are lost (natural) or unsaved.

Paul now directly chastises them with a scathing assessment. His assessment addresses them according to what he has just written, scolding them in by their thinking and actions as being more akin to the unsaved that have not the Spirit. Because of Paul's wording in this section, some theologians have formed a technical third classification for Christians called the "carnal Christian." This is a Christian that thinks and lives as a non-Christian. This passage is however not authorizing a third classification, but expressing Paul's resounding concern, and strong rebuke. We must keep in mind that most instruction and clarity concerning Christianity (the New Testament) had not been written. Paul is not judging their possession of salvation (he addresses them as brethren), nor excusing their actions, but instead is correcting their errors. The emphasis is on the fact they are not thinking or acting as those having the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:12-16). Christians do sin, and at times wander from the righteous path (1 John 1:8); but the Scripture is clear that such sins are not the standard or on-going continuous manner of a Christian's life (1 John 3:2-10). Paul is rebuking and warning these Corinthians in the strongest terms.

Broad outline of 1st Corinthians (underlined is the immediate context).

- I. Reader Introduction (1st Cor 1:1-9)
- II. Reported Divisions (1st Cor 1:10-4:21)
 - A. Schisms over personalities (1:10-12)
 - B. Solidarity in Christ (1:13-16)
 - C. Superseding priority – the message (1:17)
 - D. Special status of the Word (1:18-25)
 - E. Strange wisdom of God's election (1:26-31)
 - F. Sole dependence on God's power (2:1-5)
 - G. Spiritual illumination (2:6–2:16)
 - H. Significant inconsistency (3:1-4)

Context –
clarity on true
salvation

Key Words

- men (2)
- able (2)
- fleshly (2)
- flesh
- infants
- milk

Opening:

H. Significant inconsistency (3:1-4)

1. Scathing assessment (3:1)
 - a. Semblance to unsaved

b. Surmise as infantile

2. Spiritually deficient (3:2)

3. Sad testimony (3:3-4)

a. Shameful actions (3:3)

b. Severe evidence (3:4)

Conclusion: