

**The So-called Carnal Christian and the Bible**

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## **The So-called 'Carnal Christian' and the Bible**

The Bible uses many different terms for the two classes of people found in the world. Some examples are: saved vs. lost, elect vs. depraved, righteous vs. unrighteous, covenant keepers vs. lawless, sheep vs. goats, people of the kingdom of heaven vs. people outside the kingdom, good trees vs. bad trees, spiritually resurrected and alive vs. dead in trespasses and sins, seeing vs. blind, hearing vs. deaf, believer vs. unbeliever, kingdom of light vs. kingdom of darkness, wheat vs. tares, branches that bear fruit vs. branches that are cast out and burned, wheat vs. chaff, faithful servant vs. evil servant, repentant vs. unrepentant, one who denies himself vs. one who loses his soul, people on the narrow road vs. people on the broad, and spiritual people vs. natural people, to name a few. Just a simple reading of the four Gospels in a good English translation will make it abundantly clear that Jesus constantly and consistently divided people into two groups. He does not leave room for another category. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Mat. 6:24 NIV).

Theologically these two groups are called the elect and the reprobate, but Baptists often prefer the terms, the saved vs. the lost, or the converted vs. the unconverted. Historically the Holy Spirit has confirmed the teaching of the two classes of humanity in the church among the gifted men Christ has given to His Church. No orthodox believer ever challenged this truth for the first 1,840 years of the New Covenant church's existence. Among all the gifted scholars and Bible students that were full of the Holy Spirit, no one ever believed anything different from this until sometime between 1840 and 1909. Why would the Holy Spirit allow so many highly gifted men who studied the Bible in the original languages to be confused about the nature of the believer and the classes of men, as well as the proper interpretation of first Corinthians chapter three? If you read the writings of the believers that lived in this period, you will find that their gifts, skills, and godliness far exceeds what is common among most believers of our own day. This is one of the reasons why seminaries require Bible teachers not only to learn both church history and theology, but how to exegete the inspired Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament as well. If a Bible student's exegesis (drawing out the truth) of the Bible produces a doctrine no orthodox believer has ever seen, this person better have many texts and lots of evidence to back up this new position. Otherwise, the safest assumption is that this new teaching is wrong. The fruit of the Spirit of meekness alone would demand such a position.

Sometime after 1840 a new teaching arose in the church in regards to the classes of people in the world. This new teaching came from the Plymouth Brethren Movement in Great Britain and the United States of America. The major proponents of this new view of dividing mankind into three groups are now being propagated by the Brethren system of dispensationalism now

popular in America. Many of the supporters of the extremes of Plymouth Brethrenism are associated with Dallas Seminary; however, other believers, who call themselves progressive dispensationalists, teach against this system regardless of their connection with Dallas Seminary. Regardless of one's loyalty to Scofieldism, Darbyism, or hyper-dispensationalism, the real question is, "Does the Bible divide Christians into two classes, carnal and spiritual?" The simple answer is, "No, it does not."

Furthermore, the carnal Christian teaching violates many principles of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics), and the proper exegesis of the book of first Corinthians, as well as contradicting orthodox and Baptist theology, church history, biblical evangelism, Christian experience, church discipline, Christian unity and humility, self-discipline for godliness, and sanctified common sense.

What is the Carnal Christian theory? This theory was popularized by the man C.I. Scofield. He began working on his study Bible in 1879 and completed the first edition in 1909. Most of his unique views were taught to him by Dr. James H. Brooks who received them from the Plymouth Brethren leader, John Nelson Darby. It is not clear if this is just another one of Darby's theories that Scofield popularized with his Bible-in-text notes, or if Scofield came up with this as a logical extension of dispensationalism's tendency to divide everything and their views of the believer's personality. Nevertheless, the carnal Christian theory arose after 1840 somewhere in the Darby-Scofield connection. [In 1918 Scofield's friend Lewis Sperry Chafer, the first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, included this teaching in his book, *He That Is Spiritual*]. Thus, it would be wise to begin with the definition of the man who first exposed American Christianity to this theory. The *Scofield Study Bible* says:

Paul divides men into three classes: (1) <psuchikos,> meaning <of the senses, sensuous,> (James 3:15; Jude 19), <natural,> i.e. the Adamic man, unrenewed through the new birth (John 3:3,5); (2) <pneumatikos,> meaning <spiritual,> i.e. the renewed man as Spirit-filled and walking in the Spirit in full communion with God (Eph 5:18 - 20); and (3) <sarkikos,> meaning <worldly,> <fleshly,> i.e. the renewed man who, walking "after the flesh" (Rom 8:4), remains a babe in Christ (1 Cor 3:1 - 4). The natural man may be learned, gentle, eloquent, fascinating, but the spiritual content of Scripture is absolutely hidden from him; and the worldly [carnal] Christian is able to comprehend only its simplest truths, "milk" (1 Cor 3:2).<sup>1</sup>

Carnal . . . This is Paul's description of the Adamic nature and of the believer who lives under the power of it (compare 1 Cor 3:1,3; 2 Cor 10:4). "Natural" is the apostle's characteristic word for the unrenewed man (1 Cor 15:44,46), as "spiritual" designates the renewed man who lives in the Spirit (1 Cor 3:1; Gal 6:1).<sup>2</sup>

For more information on the Darby-Brooks-Scofield connection see William Cox, *Why I left Scofieldism*, Dave MacPherson, *The Incredible Cover-up* and *The Great Rapture Hoax*, Joseph

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<sup>1</sup> C.I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Study Bible*, NKJV (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1909, 1989), 1393.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1375.

M. Canfield, *The Incredible Scofield and His Book*, and John Gerstner, *A Primer on Dispensationalism*.<sup>3</sup>

Next, consider this teaching in the Ryrie Study Bible:

V.s. 2:15 he who is spiritual. The mature Christian, who is led and taught by the Spirit, appraises all things; i.e., he can scrutinize, sift, and thereby understand all things; but unbelievers and even carnally-minded Christians cannot appraise (understand) him.

V.s.. 3:1 men of flesh. The Greek word *sarkinos* means "fleshly" or "of the flesh," with the idea of weakness; in verse 3 fleshly has the overtone of willfulness. Fleshly Christians (brethren) are babes in Christ (i.e., undeveloped) who cannot understand the deeper truths of the Word of God (v. 2) and who are characterized by strife (v. 3).

V.s.. 3:3 still. Their condition was inexcusable, for they had been saved long enough to have grown up. walking like mere men. Carnal Christians are scarcely distinguishable from natural or unsaved men.<sup>4</sup>

To view a contrast to these two dispensational works, compare these words with *The Believer's Study Bible* or *The New Geneva Study Bible*. Ryrie expands his view in his book, *So Great a Salvation*, written to refute John MacArthur's work, *The Gospel According to Jesus*.<sup>5</sup>

Another work that is not dispensational at heart, but embraces this view is *MasterLife* by Avery T. Willis, Jr. He writes:

The carnal Christian's big mistake was that he left the door of the flesh open. Satan still has access to him, and the flesh dominates his thoughts, his will, and his emotions. The word carnal means fleshly, and he is more likely to follow his physical senses and fallen nature than the spiritual nature he received at his conversion . . . If, as a Christian, you do not allow Christ continually to be Master of your life through his Spirit, you will be a carnal Christian. That means that although you have allowed Christ to come into your life, you still are struggling to control your life. The big "I" of the old, natural man is still dominating you . . . How can you have victory in this kind of situation? Do not despair. Christ wants to be your Lord and give you daily

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<sup>3</sup> William E. Cox, *Why I left Scofieldism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963); David MacPherson, *The Incredible Cover-up* (Medford, OR: Omega Publications, 1980) and *The Great Rapture Hoax* (Fletcher, NC: New Puritan Library, 1983) John Gerstner, *A Primer on Dispensationalism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979). Also see Richard Belcher, *A Comparison of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology*, (Columbia, SC: Richbarry Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: Expanded Edition*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), from Parsons Quickverse Study Bible Deluxe 4.0 for Windows, footnote on 1 Cor. 3.

<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988). Every pastor and seminary student should read this book rather than discussing it based on the opinions of others. Layman should read Richard Belcher, *A Layman's Guide to The Lordship Controversy* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1990).

victory . . . When you are willing to let Christ master your life, his death on the cross and resurrection give you a life of victory . . . As you yield yourself to God fully, the Holy Spirit helps you to master your mind, your will, your emotions, your body, and your soul through the power of Christ . . . Are you a natural man whose spirit is dead? Are you being controlled by your bodily senses and natural desires? Are you a carnal Christian who has allowed Christ to come into your life but is still being mastered by the desires of the flesh? Is the big “I” still in control? Are you a spiritual Christian who has been crucified with Christ and is being controlled by the Spirit?<sup>6</sup>

These three works teach certain things about this so-called third category of humanity, carnal Christians. This person is both worldly and fleshly (two very different things<sup>7</sup>). They are in control of their lives, the flesh is their master, Christ is not their Lord, they are dominated by sin and Satan, their fruit is barely distinguishable from lost men, yet part of Christ is in their lives (not His Lordship), and they are saved, secure, and on their way to heaven. Their problem lies in their will. They have nothing else to do or to be changed for them to enter heaven. But, if they ever, for some reason desire (their desires are controlled by the flesh and Satan) to move up to the Spiritual Christian class, they do so ‘by yielding’ fully (also called repentance). Christ then becomes their Lord and Master, and they now are crucified with Christ and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Their benefit for doing so is to obtain more rewards and possibly a greater position in heaven (Is this not an appeal to their flesh?). The most they can lose according to Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges (see *Absolutely Free*<sup>8</sup>) are some heavenly prizes, however, Oliver Greene taught that the carnal Christian would be kept out of hell, but not allowed to enter heaven. They would be weeping and gnashing their teeth outside of heaven's gate, but by acknowledging their Jesus as Savior, they could not be sent to hell (see *The Revelation Verse by Verse*, Oliver B. Greene<sup>9</sup>). Either way, they get to escape hell, but remain under sins dominion and enjoy the fleeting pleasure sin brings, with the sole loss of rewards in exchange. Why even the Rich Young ruler would have accepted these terms. Now, if you accepted the writings above, don't start changing your carnal Christian definition now. Honestly admit that the definitions quoted above is the popular view. It is time to see why Jesus did not offer this man He loved this lower level of Christianity, and allowed him to go to hell as a covetous man rather than changing His terms for admission into eternal life. If the carnal Christian teaching is true, and you are a Christian, then you have a bigger problem. You have a Savior who deliberately

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<sup>6</sup> Avery T. Willis, Jr., *MasterLife: Discipleship Training For Leaders* (Nashville, TN: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1982), 118 -122. This tool is very good if the carnal Christian section is modified to represent the unsaved religious man who is a make-believer.

<sup>7</sup> Sins of the Flesh, deal with appetites and desires and bring pleasure of some sort. Worldliness is the systems, world views, and institutions that are against Christ. Drunkenness is a sin of the flesh. Believing in Evolution or Marxism is worldly. Paul says “don't let the world squeeze you into its mold of thinking, but rather be transformed by renewing your minds with the truth (Romans 12:2).” Legalistic Fundamentalists are in error when they call wearing make-up or jewelry ‘worldly’. If these were sinful, and they are not of themselves, they would be sins of the flesh. Supporting abortion on demand is worldliness or making the Bible equal or inferior to human reason or atheistic science. For more on this listen to the message, “The World, The Flesh, and The Devil,” by Donald Grey Barnhouse available from the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

<sup>8</sup> Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Oliver B. Greene, *The Revelation Verse by Verse* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1963).

allows this Jewish man to enter Hell rather than offer this easier entrance that Paul offers to the Gentiles. However, if “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it,”<sup>10</sup> is true, then you have a loving Lord offering this man the only way, which this one chooses not to take because the cost is too great. The Rich Young Ruler would have accepted Zane Hodges or Charles Ryrie’s conditions for heaven on the spot. However, it would have done him no good, as Jesus alone sets the terms of the gospel.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is important to search out this topic and see if the carnal Christian theory has the support of Holy Scripture and is consistent with the gospel preached by both Christ and His Apostles to both Jews and Gentiles.

What type of word is “carnal?” It is an adjective in English. Adjectives modify nouns. The word “Christian” is a noun. So when one says, “she is a joyful Christian,” he is saying that this person’s chief characteristic or main attribute is being joyful. Joy permeates their Christian experience. Now it may come as a surprise to learn that the two words carnal and Christian are NEVER used together in the Bible. Even in the NIV’s poor interpretive translation of ‘*sarkinos*’ [sar-kin-noise] or *sarkikoi* [sar-kick-koe] as “worldly” for “fleshly,” they do not dare to insert the word “Christian” in first Corinthians chapter three. To say one is a carnal Christian is to say that their most predominant attribute, the main description of their Christianity, is carnality. Think about those two words together. A Christian is a follower of the holy second person of the trinity, the LORD Jesus Christ [Christ + ian]. How do you respond to the following combinations? An unsaved Christian, a spiritually dead Christian, an un-Christ-like Christian, carnal saints, or a devilish Christian? Now, it is true that every real Christian is un-Christ-like in one or more areas of their life on any given day. Nevertheless, to be a Christian means that one has to have a bent toward following Christ in most areas of one’s life on that same day. If that is not true, then the term Christian should not be applied to them. It is a contradiction in terms to say someone is a sin-loving Christian, a lost Christian, or a carnal Christian. That makes as much sense as an underwater bird or burning fireplace ice. This is clearly a violation of sanctified common sense.

How does the Carnal Christian theory measure up to the use of proper methods of interpreting the Bible or the discipline of hermeneutics? This Plymouth Brethren hypothesis violates the following rules of interpretation:

1. In understanding a passage, the context of the verses determines the interpretation. The context of the previous verses and following verses must be explored and studied. The carnal Christian theory violates this rule. The whole of Chapter 2 teaches that there are two categories of mankind when it comes to how men relate to preaching and hearing the truth, i.e., the natural man and the spiritual man (esp. V.s.. 13-14). After Paul describes these two classes, he changes the subject to further describe the spiritual man. It is totally unnatural to insert another class of men. This is why the older commentaries omit this new theory. What

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<sup>10</sup> Mat 7:14 NKJV

<sup>11</sup> See John MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus*; Walter Chantry, *Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), and Ernie C. Reisinger, *Today’s Evangelism: It’s Message and Methods*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Craig Press, 1982).

has changed? Maybe our evangelism is less than Biblical and we are producing millions of make-believers that need a separate category in order to explain how they can love sin and still have assurance of heaven.

2. Each Scripture passage must be interpreted in light of other Scripture passages. The Bible never contradicts itself. Thus, any interpretation that makes one passage contradict another is therefore wrong. Always interpret the difficult verses in light of other clear texts on the same subjects.

The carnal Christian theory violates this rule. Every other passage in the New Testament that describes the two classes of people omits this new teaching (Romans 8:4-17, Galatians 5:16-26, Romans 6:1-23, 7:1-25, Ephesians 2:1-13). The two places where Paul would most likely teach it, if it were true, are Romans and Ephesians {study the plan, outline and purposes of these two letters}, and it would be strange to omit it from Galatians 5 considering this epistle's background and purpose. If a teaching cannot be found in seed form in the Old Testament or in the gospels, and is only supported by one text in a historical section of an epistle, it probably has resulted from a misinterpretation of the text. But the carnality view has a greater problem than being omitted from every other text that teaches on the two classes of men. It flatly contradicts Romans 8:5-10 (NKJV) which states:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. {7} Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. {8} So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. {9} But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. {10} And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

These verses teach that those who truly have the Holy Spirit indwelling them are not in the flesh. Can a person be a Christian who does not have the Holy Spirit indwelling in them? Can a follower of Christ be an enemy of the God who chose him in love before time began? Do Christians have to taste the second death in hell? If the answers to these questions are no, then Paul teaches in these verses in Romans that it is impossible for a Christian's mind, will, and emotions to be carnal and the chief characteristic of his spiritual life to be carnality. According to Paul, carnal people will experience the second death. Thus, any interpretation of I Cor. 3 that creates this third class of people who are saved yet mastered by sin and Satan and best described as fleshly in all areas of their life has to be incorrect. The Bible does not contradict itself. This theory also contradicts numerous other passages, including I Cor. 6:9-11, Hebrews 4:6, 5:9, 10:19-30, 12:14, Galatians 5:18-21, Eph. 5:1-7, Matt. 7:21-27, Col. 3:1-17, I Thes. 1:2-10, Titus 2:11-14, Rom. 8:28-30, I John 3:9-10, James 2:14-26, Rev. 22:14-15, etc. Read these passages and ask yourself, can there be carnal Christians if these texts are true? Actually, the entire book of Hebrews and I John teaches against this view {see appendix #2}.

3. One needs more than one verse to present a new teaching of the once delivered to the saints' faith. Teaching passages carry greater authority for Christian doctrine than historical passages, as Scripture is compared with Scripture. A text that describes one church's situation may not be applied to all believers in every era and every context as authoritative without first discerning the principle being conveyed in that historical situation, if this teaching is not clearly represented elsewhere in the Bible (i.e., women's hair lengths, wearing of veils in worship, baptism for the dead, Peter's walking on the water, Paul's snake bite, etc.). There is a difference between what the Bible describes and what it prescribes (see Gen. 4:19, I Tim. 3:2<sup>12</sup>).

The point here is that if all mankind in every era and every locality are properly divided into three classes, why is it only in the Greek city of Corinth (just west of Athens in Greece) do we find these people? Why are the carnal Christians missing from Rome, Ephesus, Phillipi, or Thessalonica? Why do all the other teaching epistles omit this doctrine? If this troublesome group were in every church, they would need to be addressed in every epistle to challenge them to become spiritual people.

Is Paul not describing one particular local situation at Corinth in chapter three? Is not the principle in the passage that when followers of the Lord Jesus divide up over ministers of the gospel, that such division is fleshly and not godly? Where do we find in the text that Christ is not the Lord of these folks, note that everyone in the church fellowship is charged with improper behavior in this One area, not a small group of carnal holy ones (pastors, deacons, elders too)? Compare 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 with Romans 5:1-21. Notice the careful, logical teaching Paul is giving in Romans 5. Can you see the difference in describing a historical problem and a clear teaching passage? If Darby and Scofield are correct, why don't we find this teaching in Romans, or Ephesians, or Galatians? The problem can be illustrated like this: a person reads in Acts 12 that Peter was released from prison by an angel, and he takes this one historical event and makes it into a doctrine, namely, whenever a believer is put in prison God will send His angels to free him. If he is put in jail while witnessing in India, should he claim this doctrine as a promise from God? And what about John the Baptist and Paul? Neither of these men were delivered from prison. You see, this interpretation of one historical situation ignored the teaching of the rest of the Bible and the rest of the church.<sup>13</sup> Historical situations do contain doctrines, but they must be carefully drawn out and compared with the teaching of the Bible as a whole and the orthodox churches understanding of this text for the last 2,000 years. Furthermore, if one comes up with a new view that is supposedly found only one time in the Bible, and none of the other Spirit-filled scholars and Bible students have understood this text to teach this position before them, and this person's view is based on a text describing a historical situation in one locality, and this view contradicts whole books of the Bible (Hebrews, I John)

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<sup>12</sup> (Gen 4:19 NIV) "Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah." This is a true biblical description of what this man did in a historical section. Because these words are in the Bible does not mean that God sanctions what happened and was recorded. What the Bible prescribes can be seen in Paul's words, " Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, [a one-woman-man] (1 Tim 3:2 NIV). Also see Matthew 19:3-12.

<sup>13</sup> See George Fox, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*; and Steve Estes, *Called to Die* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986); or read church history. Many have died in prison for their faith.

and numerous passages (i.e., Mat. 7:21-27, Acts 17:30) their safest assumption is that they have misunderstood the text.

4. Interpret each passage in relation to the author's purpose, plan, and structure of the book. The text in I Corinthians 3:1-3 has been lifted out of a context of a singular problem in the church. Paul will address other problems later, but in I Corinthians chapters one through four, he is dealing with the one problem of divisiveness in the local church (see *Believer's Study Bible Outline*<sup>14</sup>). Therefore, to introduce worldliness into the text is a violation of the author's plan and purpose for the section where these verses are located.

A good Bible student will ask himself how these verses relate to the author's, purpose, theme, and plan for the book, for the section, for the chapter and for the smaller sections. To follow this practice will lead one away from the view of Scofield and shows how carelessly he would handle texts at times. The context reveals that these folks were saints under Christ's Lordship. Furthermore, chapter two declares that there are only two types of people in the world, spiritual and natural. As Paul describes how the spiritual man is and ought to be, he launches into his confrontation to the Corinthian Church for their sectarian spirit. He spends many verses in chapter three and four dealing with this problem of division at Corinth.

The purpose, plan, theme, and flow of the sections reveal that these are solid growing believers that need a rebuke in this one area, so with great fatherly concern he addresses this problem. Paul will deal with other problems in the book that show a corporate failure rather than an individual participation in various click groups. This is a sin of commission where some of the other failures were sins of omission of the group as a whole.

5. Interpret each passage according to the historical, geographical, and cultural background available. The wickedness at Corinth and past sins of the members there would lead one to think that they would struggle with issues not found in the predominantly Jewish churches. However, if one thinks through the majority of the cultural issues occurring at Corinth as he studies these verses he would never come to the conclusion that Paul adds a third class in this text, that is, if he does not read his study Bible footnotes.

The carnal view is part of a larger theological scheme that divides the gospel into four separate gospels and has eight different manifestations of the kingdom of God as well as dividing the Bible into seven distinct time periods. Dispensationalism's key verse is the King James Version of 1 Tim. 2:15, "rightly dividing the word of truth." However, some scholars believe that the artificial divisions of this system are not helpful and like eating potato chips, it's hard to stop dividing once you start. If these divisions were clear in Scripture then you would expect each

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<sup>14</sup> The Believer's Study Bible Outline of I Corinthians:  
Introduction (1:1-9).

I. Disorders Reported to Paul (1:10-6:20).

A. Division at Corinth (1:10-4:21).

The division theme goes from chapter one to the end of chapter four according to these Bible scholars.

dispensationalist to come up with the same number of gospel messages {some say there is only one, some two, some four} and dispensations {the numbers vary from 4 - 7 - 10 - 14} However, because this system is imposed on the Bible, even the adherents can't agree on what to divide and on what not to divide or how many divisions there are. [ See William Cox, *An Examination of Dispensationalism*, and Clarence B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism*<sup>15</sup>]

What on earth does Paul mean when he writes the following words: “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? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?” I Cor. 3:1-3

The proper exegesis of this text includes the reading of what Paul says about these folks in chapter one. (1 Cor 1:2) “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

Our exegesis of chapter one should reveal the following:

1. These people are part of a called out assembly that belongs to God.
2. These people are called *hagiois*, saints or holy ones.
3. These people are described as those “having been made holy” or “having been sanctified.”

This Greek participle shows an action that was done to them by someone else (passive voice) and it happened at one time in the past with the results continuing up to today (perfect mood). Thus, God has made them holy in the past and they continue to be holy to the present.

4. These people are just as much under the Lordship of Christ as Paul was himself, “our Lord.” Furthermore, consider what Paul reveals in I Cor. 1:10
  - a. Paul calls the entire group “brethren.” They are not two classes of Christians, no, just one.
  - b. Paul reaffirms for the sixth time that all the Corinthians are under the Lordship of Christ.

[Look at Avery, Ryrie and Scofield above. Both cannot be correct, either Paul is wrong or Scofieldism is wrong.<sup>16</sup> ]

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<sup>15</sup> William E. Cox, *An Examination of Dispensationalism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963); and Clarence B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977). Also see O.T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969); Curtis Crenshaw & Grover E. Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow* (Memphis, TN: Footstool Publishing, 1987); Greg Bahnsen & Kenneth Gentry, *House Divided: The Break-up of Dispensational Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1988); Keith Mathison *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1996) and Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1994).

<sup>16</sup> See John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (1994)

c. Paul launches into his theme for this section (chapters. 1-4) -- Divisiveness in the Corinthian assembly. In the remaining verses Paul talks about preaching and how the powerful Gospel affects different kinds of natural men<sup>17</sup> and how it affects the chosen ones. He continues to talk about the Gospel and preaching, divisiveness and the two classes of people. Why so many verses about how men respond to preaching? Because the divisiveness in the church was over who was the best preacher of the gospel and who deserved to be followed. If you read the rest of this book and 2 Corinthians you will discover that there were men at Corinth who were saying that Paul was a bad leader, a poor preacher, that he did not love them, that he was not a true apostle and that he should not be followed. In response, Paul proves that the Gospel reaches the elect regardless of the skills and gifts of the preacher, if a man will stick with God's method, namely, preaching. In chapter four he tells them it is sinful to compare preachers and to assume the motives of the men God calls into the ministry. They are to be examined by whether or not they stick with God's method (preaching the word) and God's message (the Bible). It does not matter how skilled a man is, if he abandons the preaching of the Word of God, he is to be rejected. If he is faithful to the Word and preaching, he is not to be compared to any other gifted or skilled men of God. Pastors' are servants of God and are not to be treated like football teams, car companies, or political parties.

There was a Pauline group at Corinth. Apollos also had his own group at Corinth. There was even a Peterite group in this church. Evidently, because Timothy and Titus did not come to Corinth alone until later or because they were not impressive enough speakers, they did not have their own party. There were also people so headstrong in this assembly that they would follow no man, they each had their own separate agenda, but they said, "We only follow Christ." Thus, with each of these so-called followers of Christ with their own plans for the church, and combined with these three other clicks, there were probably at least 30 different agendas for this one local body. Paul says they all need to 'speak the same thing.'

So Paul tells these saints, who are under Christ's Lordship, that they are acting like mere pagan men when they section off into divisive groups. They are acting **FLESHLY IN ONE AREA OF THEIR CHRISTIAN LIVES**. Every Christian who is alive is also guilty of this. On any given day, every real Christian thinks, speaks, or acts less than Christ like in some area of their lives.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> A stumbling block to unsaved Jews and total foolishness to unsaved Gentiles, but the power of God to all who believed Paul's gospel. Paul preached not himself, but Jesus Christ as, yes, LORD, and he preached Christ crucified or in other words, about the cross work of Christ Jesus. Neither group wanted this, but Paul stuck with God's method of preaching (see Richard Belcher, *Preaching the Gospel: A Theological Perspective*, (Columbia, SC: Richbarry Press, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Many people are ignorant of how severely man was damaged at the Fall. All of our motives, desires, and faculties are depraved. Regeneration opens us up to new possibilities and choices that we did not have before. Sin is no longer our master (Romans 6), but it still indwells us as a very present (Romans 7) and dangerous enemy. The remaining corruption or indwelling sin in every believer keeps us from ever having a 100% pure motive, and will parade selfish or even vile thoughts across our minds even while we are in worship. Likewise, we are mature in several areas and immature in several other areas at the same time. No one can be consistently spiritual like Jesus was because of indwelling sin. We all act like natural men at times, and we must repent of these times, actions, and sins. Those who teach the two levels of Christianity ignore these truths and are often filled with spiritual pride, after all, they are first class spiritual Christians, with a lot of rewards those second class Christians will all lose. But the truth is no one has

Likewise, if a brother like Paul came to us and said, You are acting fleshly (sarkikoi), like unsaved men in this area of your life, and we repented, if he was observant, he could find another area to confront us on the following day. Furthermore, because of the nature of divisiveness, the area the Corinthians were delinquent in, they were spiritually dull and had to be talked to like spiritual babies. Why? A sectarian spirit produces a holier-than-you attitude, spiritual pride, and this stunts spiritual growth. Thus, because the saints at Corinth were thinking and acting like pagans arguing over the Dallas Cowboys and the Washington Redskins, or over Chevy's being better than Ford's, their growth was progressing slowly. Paul tells the whole church they are acting like mere natural men, yes carnally, in this **one area of church life**.

Notice he **does not exclude** in this rebuke the current pastor, or the elders, or deacons, or even the men he commends in 1 Cor. 16:15-18. He calls every member of this church carnal in the area of divisiveness. Think about that . . . the whole church is the same, not two groups. Likewise, when you consider the maturity of their response to the issue in chapter 5 as is recorded in II Cor. 2:1-11, the definitions above of the so-called carnal Christian become unfounded and ridiculous. Like us, they had areas that needed immediate growth and areas they were acting maturely, at present.

Anyone who truly understands Romans chapter seven's teaching about the presence and residual power of indwelling sin in every believer's life can say as Paul did near the end of his life, "I am [not was, I am now] the chief of sinners." To use 1 Corinthians three to divide Christians into a Spiritual class and a Carnal class produces the very divisive spirit this chapter is calling us to mortify in our lives. In 1 Corinthians chapter three there is not a hint of a person being worldly, not a hint that these people accepted Jesus as Savior only and were being controlled only by their flesh, and not a phrase declaring two levels of Christianity. No one can derive this view from a correct exegesis of this text, it must be forced in to support a doctrinal system that one has loyalty to above Scripture. This is eisegesis (reading into the text) rather than exegesis, (drawing out from the text). That, unfortunately, is behaving carnally, and should be repented of and forsaken.

How does the carnal Christian theory square with orthodox theology and Baptist doctrine? Well, one orthodox believer, who is a progressive dispensationalist, felt so strongly on this issue that he wrote three excellent works. This person is Dr. John MacArthur, who wrote *The Gospel According to Jesus*, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* and *Hard to Believe*. In this first work MacArthur proves that both repentance and faith were part of the gospel Jesus preached. Furthermore, he demonstrates over and over again that a follower of Christ, a true

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arrived. And if we were members at the church in Corinth, we would also have joined in the party spirit until we were called on to repent of this sin and forsake it. Furthermore, we could fall into the same trap five years later and require the same rebuke. When we realize the sinfulness of sin and the residual power of indwelling sin, we can see ourselves in the wilderness complaining about a no variety bread diet and lack of water, or at Corinth, dropping the ball in this one area and others areas as well. This is the state of every real Christian. But, if we are people who love sin and the world, our entire bent in life is to follow the flesh, we are still in control of our lives, we have refused to accept all of Christ (Savior only) and all of his terms (mental assent only) then we are no more saved from sin (a real Christian) than Sam's house cat.

believer, a disciple, and a real Christian are all the same thing, according to the New Testament and this has been the position of Orthodox Christianity since the Apostles went to heaven. Actually, Luke settles the issue with one verse, "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch," (Acts 11:26). All the followers of Jesus were FIRST called disciples, then another name for a disciple of Jesus arose in the Gentile world, namely Christian. Luke was convinced that the terms 'disciple' and 'Christian' were synonyms. This has a radical implication for the Southern Baptist discipleship course, *MasterLife*. If this is true, almost every verse used in the disciples cross proves there can be no such thing as a carnal Christian. Only if you make a disciple = a spiritual Christian, and not equal to a carnal Christian can you believe those verses are true. You need to prove John MacArthur's two books to be in error to hold this position with any credibility. Below is a sample of the disciples' cross verses: (Luke 9:23 NKJV) Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

How can a person still be in charge of their lives, refusing to "let" Jesus be Lord of their life; and at the same time be denying themselves and daily following Jesus with their cross? Both cannot be true. If a disciple is the same as a Christian, then there can be no Christian's with the 'big I' in control. This is basic logic that A does not equal non-A. If I am my own Master, and Jesus said no man can serve two masters, then I cannot be following Jesus and myself at the same time. That is two masters and the Lord Christ will not share His throne with any man. I cannot be exalting myself as a master and denying myself at the same time. Only one can be true at a time. Thus, if Jesus is my boss (Lord and Master), then I have surrendered to Him and I am one of His sheep. If I am my own boss, then my sin nature is in control and I do not yet belong to Him.

Now listen to Jesus evangelize the crowd: (Luke 14:25-30 NKJV) Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, {26} "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. {27} And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. {28} For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it; {29} lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, {30} saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' . . . {33} So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

The above definition of a person who is a so-called carnal Christian, according to Jesus, cannot be saved. He cannot be a Christian. The reason their fruit is indiscernible from natural men is because they are natural men. Zane Hodges claims that disciples are on a higher level of spirituality than a mere Christian cannot be supported from this text. Jesus put the two together. What God has joined together, let not man separate.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Both of Dr. John MacArthur's books cited above give numerous texts to show how wrong Zane Hodge's view is. Read his books with an open Bible and the Spirit of truth in your heart, and you will see that the Sandemanian heresy is not biblical and is dangerous. The great Particular Baptist missions leader,

(John 15:5-6 NKJV) "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. {6} If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. The fruit in this chapter is first, good works, as is common in Jesus' teaching (see Mat.7). Second, it is the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians five that is missing in every so-called carnal Christian. Third, it is reproducing, DISCIPLES, not mere decisions from men longing for fire insurance while still married to their sin.

The second work by Dr. MacArthur, *Faith Works* shows the errors in the non-lordship position of Zane Hodges and Charles Ryrie and describes the true nature of the faith that will save. As the Apostle James points out in James Chapter two, a faith without works is a dead faith and a demon's faith. Unfortunately, this type of faith will take you to a demon's hell. That is why Lordship preachers' feel so strongly about this topic. We want to destroy the presumption of the carnal people, because they are heading for hell. This is serious stuff! MacArthur writes:

Almost all no-lordship theology leans heavily on the notion that there are three classes of humanity: unsaved people, spiritual Christians, and carnal Christians . . . In recent years the idea of the carnal Christian has been disseminated through a series of tracts and booklets published by Campus Crusade for Christ. The Campus Crusade literature features a diagram with three circles representing the three classes of humanity. At the center of each circle is a throne. The non-Christian has 'self' on the throne with Christ outside the circle. The carnal Christian has "invited" Christ into the circle but keeps 'self' enthroned. The spiritual Christian puts Christ on the throne, with self at the foot of the throne. The tract challenges carnal Christians to become spiritual. Millions of these pamphlets have been distributed worldwide over the past thirty years or so. They are undoubtedly the most widely read single bit of no-lordship literature and have helped influence multitudes to accept the carnal-spiritual Christian dichotomy as biblical. But the whole idea is based on a misunderstanding of 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3.<sup>20</sup>

Truth is not determined by who has the largest publishing houses and who can influence the most people. Truth is based on a correct understanding of God's word.

Baptists have not been silent on this issue. The Reformed Baptists have been sounding a warning against easy-believism and carnal assurance for more than thirty years. Likewise, many Southern Baptists have risen to defend the faith including Bailey Smith, *The Grace Escape: Jesus as Lord and Savior*, Richard Belcher, *A Layman's Guide to the Lordship Controversy*, and Ernest C. Reisinger, *What Should We Think of the Carnal Christian?* and *Lord and Christ: The Implications of Lordship for Faith and Life*.<sup>21</sup> Others such as Danny Akin, Millard

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Andrew Fuller exposed and fully refuted this error in the 1800's (see Ted Manby, "Carnal Security v.s. Eternal Security as Seen in the Lordship Debate," unpublished paper, May 1996).

<sup>20</sup> John MacArthur, *Faith Works!* 124-125.

<sup>21</sup> Bailey Smith, *The Grace Escape: Jesus as Lord and Savior* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1991); Richard Belcher, *A Layman's Guide Lordship Controversy*; and Ernest C. Reisinger, *What Should We Think of the Carnal Christian?* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985); and *Lord and Christ: The*

Erickson,<sup>22</sup> David Dockery, and Adrian Rodgers have preached clearly and strongly against the modern half gospel offering half of Christ for a half of the commitment. But more importantly the question is how did our Baptist fathers respond to this system. Our Baptist roots came from the Puritans in England. They were men and women of conviction who attempted to purify the Church of England. In order to keep their consciences pure, they came to the conviction that it was necessary to separate and form local assemblies of people who had been baptized after they demonstrated proof of being regenerated. Thus, our beginnings as a people came from a deep desire for regenerate church membership made up of those who both professed and possessed saving faith. It should be no surprise then, that the Baptist confessions of 1644 and 1689 warn against those who may profess Christianity without possessing it. Both documents call all who are carnal to forsake their sin and embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Baptist Catechism used by Benjamin Keach and Charles Spurgeon as well as the one that is available today all warn against this mere profession of faith without possession of salvation. They do not embrace any carnal Christian clause. The *Philadelphia* and *New Hampshire Confessions* still in the bylaws of so many Southern Baptist Churches, do not accept this teaching. The 1933 *Baptist Faith and Message* was a slight modification of the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*. It likewise stood for the truth. The 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* as well as the 1995 printed version's sections on salvation and sanctification makes no room for a person to be saved who has not repented or submitted to Christ as Lord. Our Particular Baptist fathers were not just concerned with those who had been baptized at six days old and showed no signs of regeneration. They were also concerned about those Baptized at six years old and were still in love with their sin.

When Alexander Campbell tried to spread these false views our Baptist fathers stood against him. He had to form the Church of Christ or Disciple's Church in order to propagate these teachings. Unfortunately, many Baptists were won over to Campbell's spreading of the Sademanian heresy and we lost thousands of people and hundreds of church buildings from Kentucky to Tennessee. Easy-Christianity or cheap grace sounds good to make-believers and to true believers married to make-believers. However, no matter how good it sounds, it is not Biblical, it has never been Baptist, and it is simply not true.

The Church of Christ is not the only group that has formed over errors such as dividing of Christians into two classes. The Wesleyan and Nazarenes as well as the Keswick Movement all have a method for you to move up from a lower class to a first class Christian. They too ask people to ask Jesus to now be their Lord and yield and submit to Him to experience the "second blessing." Two class Christianity is the mother to all second work of grace and perfectionism teachings. However, the second blessing advocates do go a little further than the non-lordship

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*Implications of Lordship for Faith and Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Mind & Heart: Perspectives on Theological and Practical Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993). Other Southern Baptists such as Terry A. Chrisope, *Jesus is Lord* (Welwyn, England: Evangelical Press, 1982) and Robert L. Hamblin and William H. Stephens, *The Doctrine of Lordship* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1990); have also written powerfully on this subject.

teachers in teaching that the spiritual Christians are entirely sanctified, no longer committing willful sins, having removed all vestiges of the flesh.<sup>23</sup>

If we close the door to cheap grace, easy-believism, decisionism, and carnal Christianity, we also close the door on these other errors that are the fruit from the two-class Christianity root. All second blessing teachings (deeper life, perfectionism, higher life, let go and let God) are almost as dangerous to Christians as the carnal security theories are to false believers. The Plymouth Brethren pastor and writer Harry Ironside had a nervous breakdown trying to experience this second blessing to free him from indwelling sin in this life. There are other lesser known believers that have endured untold harm by these errors that this writer has either heard of or witnessed firsthand. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. A little poison in your cup can do a lot of damage. As one Puritan pastor told his congregation, "As long as I am your pastor, you will be in Romans chapter seven." He preached on other texts, but living Christians will have indwelling sin in their bodies and souls until their deaths.

How we share the gospel is radically affected by the position we take on the Lordship Debate. The gospel message of the two camps is very different. If the carnal Christian view is true, then we should offer either this lower level of Christianity to those who are reluctant to give up the sin they love or we can, like Zane Hodges, offer the gospel of intellectual assent to all and then call the more committed to discipleship later. If the Lordship preachers are right, this easy-believism and decisionism are creating thousands of false believers and adding them to the church rolls with the privilege to vote and assurance of heaven. If the Free-grace teachers are correct, then we Lordship teachers are requiring things for the seeker that God never intended and keeping people who have obstinate wills and a committed love of sin out of heaven, for many of them will assent to the fact that Jesus came to earth and died.

However, such assent is not saving faith, as the demons believe much more truth than this and are still under the wrath of God. No, assenting to a few facts in one's mind about a man named Jesus cannot make anyone a Christian. The biblical gospel message includes both a genuine trust and faith in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>24</sup> and a turning from the sin we love with all our minds, wills, and emotions (repentance). And the Christ we embrace by both faith and repentance is both Lord and Messiah.

If we refuse to surrender to and follow (obey) this Jesus, The God-man who is Lord and Savior, then we have not trusted in the Jesus of the Bible who can deliver us from the love, control, and eternal punishment of sin. Dear reader, is Jesus your boss and king (Lord)? Do you obey His commands, do you love and worship Him supremely? If you will not deny yourself as lord, and take up your cross daily and obey Jesus, then you cannot be a Christian. You must divorce the

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<sup>23</sup> See Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Perfectionism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1958); John Owen, *Sin and Temptation: The Challenges to Personal Godliness* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1983); and Sinclair Ferguson, *Know Your Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> See Michael Horton, ed., *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992) and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Lord of the Saved* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1993).

sin you love and are married to and cleave to Christ. If Jesus is asking too much, you can go away like the rich young ruler or the man wishing to bury his father first, but you will go away lost. There is no other way. There is not a K-Mart blue-light sale salvation available. You must come to the Lord Christ on His terms of genuine repentance and real faith, or enter the lake of fire on your terms, still married to the sin you love, still following your obstinate will. Granted the sin you love brings pleasure, but the retirement plan for the non-Christian is a poor one indeed.

This author was a second generation make-believer. I used to fit the description of the carnal Christian, and I had asked Jesus to be my Savior close to a hundred times. But deep down I knew I was a make-believer until God saved me. It was not until I believed in the Jesus of the Bible, who is both Lord and Christ, that I became a real Christian. For nine years I played games with God. My father was what some call a carnal Christian for 32 years, and then God saved him. Do these stories prove anything? No, not unless they are based on the teachings of the Bible. But because so many use personal experience to try to prove the carnal Christian theory, I was compelled to show that there are experiences on both sides of this issue. (See *Letter to a Friend: Concerning the So-Called 'Lordship Salvation'* by John Piper.<sup>25</sup>) So this leaves us to 'go to the Law and the Prophets,' back to the Word of God.

I used to believe in the carnal Christian theory. In 1983 I rejected it and started studying this issue on a much deeper level. I also started the ten-year process of praying for my dad's salvation. After 100's of hours of study, I am more convinced that the carnal Christian theory is false, dangerous, and unbiblical. I have learned the hard way what John MacArthur wrote so well, "*A righteous, holy, pure God cannot tolerate evil. He will not save those who try to come to Him harboring sin.*"<sup>26</sup>

Some Baptist churches have returned to the practice of church discipline. What are they to do when they come across one acting like or even professing to be a carnal Christian? They might even reply to the leadership, "hey, this is how I am supposed to act, I have only accepted Jesus as my Savior and I am not ready for the next step yet." Can we dare disturb the comfortableness of a man living in sin while claiming to be a believer? For if he is a carnal Christian and we follow Church discipline to the step of declaring this one a non-believer and a Tax-gatherer (traitor), won't we damage the assurance of a true child of God? You cannot have effective church discipline if you embrace this doctrine. I was confronted by a pastor who has accepted the carnal Christian doctrine. He claimed that I was part of a Church that erred in following through on church discipline on one he had labeled a carnal Christian. You cannot question anyone's profession of faith if they fit this category. You must move very slowly or not at all. Jude's description of "hidden reefs in your love feast" or Jesus' description of "wolves in sheep's clothing" become meaningless as well, as these troublesome folks are also obviously carnal Christians. You just have to tolerate this sin until they grow up. They are just 15 year old babies in Christ. This may sound extreme, but this author has heard these words and seen what this doctrine does to church discipline firsthand.

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<sup>25</sup> Previously available from Mount Zion Publications 2603 W. Wright St. Pensacola, FL 32505 for \$2.00 including postage. See <https://www.chapellibrary.org/about/mt-zion-bible-church/>

<sup>26</sup> John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 85.

How can we have a unified body if some are spiritual and some are carnal? Furthermore, who will be humble in this crowd? The spiritual folks will be tempted to look down on their second class brethren. Moreover, we can expect the carnal folks to be filled with spiritual pride. If you want to see how difficult unity is between first class and second class Christians, between 'merely saved' folks and true disciples, visit India and see the caste system in operation. Whenever you have the 'haves' and the 'have-nots,' you have division of the strongest kind. Jesus prayed that we would be all one. The dividing wall between Jew and Gentile has been torn down. Dare we erect this two-class Christianity distinction and start the division all over again? God forbid!

What should we do with the passages that call us to discipline ourselves for godliness? These appear to be addressed to all Christians. Can someone who is still lord of their own lives bring their bodies under discipline for godliness sake? Paul lists the commands in I Tim. 4:7, "But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness"; and in I Cor.9:27 "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." He states that he brings his body under discipline so that he will not become 'an apostate'. He takes his walk seriously as a disciple because he knows that those who are not genuine will drop off in time. The true believer will remain with Christ, His truth, and His people. Why does Paul not specify that these verses are only for spiritual Christians? What happens to the doctrine of the fear of God, if godliness is optional and is for spiritual Christians only, while carnal Christians can live as they like, and believe as they like, as long as they at one point in the past made a profession of faith? Think about it. This theory makes a mockery out of the strong warnings in these texts.

The 'Carnal Christian' teaching is very popular in America today. Some fear this type of thinking is a symptom of what is wrong with American Christianity. This view is new, it is supposed to be based on only one text of Scripture, [not by exegesis] it contradicts the rest of Scripture and it produces disastrous results in the church. Furthermore, the carnal Christian teaching violates many principles of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics), and the proper exegesis of the book of 1 Corinthians, as well as contradicting orthodox and Baptist theology, church history, biblical evangelism, Christian experience, church discipline, Christian unity and humility, self-discipline for godliness, and sanctified common sense.

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## **Appendix # 1**

### **How to Study the Bible**

The following rules are adapted from *How to Understand Your Bible*, T. Norton Sterrett, IVP.

**RULE #1:** Interpret each passage based on its context. The context is King for most interpretation problems. Context is the verses before and after the verse you are studying. Read them and think.

**RULE #2:** Interpret each passage according to the correct meaning of words. Use a dictionary and a concordance to be sure of what the key words mean. Each context will limit the possible meanings for each word.

**RULE #3:** Interpret each passage based on the grammar used in each sentence. Pay attention to the subjects, verbs (tenses also), pronouns, adjectives, etc. Use a dictionary and an English grammar book for help. If the passage is difficult to understand, label the key words grammatically and note their relationships to each other.

**RULE #4:** Interpret each passage according to the author's purpose and plan. The "purpose" is the object, goal, and/or reason for the writing of this book, chapter, passage, and verse. The plan is the author's method or structure for communicating his purpose. The purpose of the gospel of John is "that you might believe." The plan of the book of Acts is 1)Jerusalem & Judea; 2)Samaria; 3)Gentile world.

**RULE #5:** Interpret each passage according to the historical, geographical, and cultural background available. You may use Atlas'(maps), Marginal references, Bible dictionaries, or other books on the Bible's culture, geography and history to aid your study. Don't back read American culture into the text.

**RULE #6:** Interpret each passage according to the Bible's teaching as a whole. In other words, interpret Scripture by Scripture. Regular reading of the Bible and the use of cross references is the best way to apply this rule. Regular studies of Bible books will also help. You may check Commentaries for related passages and cross references as well as a Concordance.

**RULE #7:** Interpret each passage according to the literary style chosen by the author. Observe what type of literature the book, paragraph, and sentence are before seeking to discover the meaning of words. Look for:

- |                      |               |             |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| a) figures of speech | b) proverbs   | c) parables |
| d) narratives        | e) teaching   | f) poetry   |
| g) prophecy          | h) allegories |             |

**RULE #8:** Learn to identify some of the different types of figures of speech used in the Bible.

I. Figures of speech that show comparison.

- A. Metaphor (implied comparison - 2 unlike things)
  - B. Simile (comparison using - words "like" / "as")
- II. Figures of speech that show relationships or associations.
- A. Metonymy (an object named to represent another)
  - B. Synecdoche (part of a thing - represent - whole or the whole thing for a part [flesh])
- III. Figures of speech that show humanization.
- A. Personification (non-living things - as alive)
  - B. Anthropomorphism (human traits given to God)
  - C. Irony (saying - opposite of what is meant)
  - D. Hyperbole (deliberate exaggeration - emphasis)
  - E. Interrogation (a one-answer-only question)
  - F. Idiomatic expressions (riddles, fables, euphemism, understatements, litotes, etc.)

RULE #9: When considering sections that were originally Hebrew poetry, look for two lines that are parallel, contrasting, repeating, adding, or expanding the thoughts of each other.

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## APPENDIX #2

### How can I know I am going to heaven?

1 John's Test (5:13-14)

1. Have you enjoyed fellowship with the body of Christ, Christ, and the Father? (1 John 1:2-3)
2. Are you living by the truth? (1:5-6)
3. Do you consistently tell the truth? (1:6,10; 2:4)
4. Are you sensitive to sin? (1:7-10)
5. Do you obey God's Word? (2:3-5, 14)
6. Do you live a lifestyle that is like Christ's? (2:6)
7. Do you love other true Christians? (2:9-11; 3:10, 14-19; 4:7-11, 17)

8. Do you know for sure that your sins have been forgiven because of Christ's work? (2:12)
9. Do you personally know God the Father and God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ?  
(2:13-14, 22-25; 5:20)
10. Do you reject this evil world's views, perspective, thinking, and lifestyle? (2:15)
11. Are you remaining with the people of God? (2:19)
12. Do you practice proper behavior? (2:29)
13. Do you eagerly await Christ's return? (3:2-3)
14. Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? (3:4-10; 5:18)
15. Have you experienced the 'new birth' being 'born again'? (2:29; 3:9; 5:1,18)
16. Have you suffered rejection because of your faith in Christ? (3:13)
17. Do you experience answered prayer? (3:22-4; 5:13-15)
18. Can you discern between spiritual truth and error? (2:14, 20-22; 4:1-3; 5:20)
19. Do you listen to, believe, and obey the Word of God? (4:6)
20. Do you experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life? Have you been indwelt by the Holy Spirit? (2:20, 27; 4:4, 12-13)
21. Do you fully acknowledge that Jesus is the Savior and the Son of God? (4:14-15; 5:5)  
Do you believe on Him? (2:13-14; 3:23)
22. Are you fearful that God will punish or torment you for your sins? (4:18)
23. Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? Do you love Jesus? (2:22-23; 5:1)
24. Do you have a recognizable faith? Do you overcome the world? (5:4-6)
25. Do you refrain from sin? (5:18)