

"Babes In Christ ..."

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not able to bear it. Nay, not even now are ye able ..." (1 Cor. 3:1-2).

The fact that these Corinthians were not spiritual, but carnal, in such close proximity to Paul's earlier statement that the "*natural*" man does not receive the things of the Spirit, reinforces that idea that the "*spiritual*" and "*natural*" man of the preceding chapter has no reference to inspired and uninspired men, but to spiritual minded or carnal minded men. Paul writes here of his inability to speak unto these brethren as unto spiritual because of their carnal mind, demonstrated that in that each of them said, "*I am of Paul, I of Apollos, etc.*"

These Corinthians were babes; they could not eat meat: they would have choked on that. They still needed milk. These words were not complimentary to Corinthians. Those with such attitudes and the Corinthians are described by the Hebrew writer. "*For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone that partaker of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full grown men, even those who have by reason of strength have their senses exercised to discern good and evil"* (Heb. 5:12-14).

The reproof was well deserved by Corinthians. "*By reason of time*" they ought to have been teachers of others. It had been at least six years since the church had its beginning in Corinth (Acts 18). They had been helped with good teachers. Paul had spend a year and half in their midst; further more they had Apollos for some time as their teacher after Paul had departed their midst. Apollos was described as an eloquent man, mighty in the scriptures (Acts 18).

Not only had the Corinthians had the distinct blessing of having Paul and Apollos as their teachers, they had been blessed with spiritual gifts. They "*came behind in no gift;*" indicating they were generously endowed with these gifts (1 Cor. 1:6). This endowment alone was sufficient for the teachers among them who were inspired should have helped them to develop and mature. But, the blessings of great teachers, as well as having all gifts and wisdom, had not produced maturity in this church. Its failure was not due to something being missing in their teaching; it was that the Corinthians, like the Hebrews, were "*dull of hearing.*"

They were yet "*carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal and do ye not walk after the manner of men?*" (1 Cor. 3:3). They were jealous about spiritual gifts. The one which seemed most desirable to them was the gift of tongues. Yet that gift was inferior to other gifts; which gifts they obviously scorned. They were commanded to desire the greater gifts and to remember the most excellent way of love (1 Cor. 12:31).

The passing of time had not wrought in them maturity. Their devotion to different men rather than Christ ("*I am of Paul, I am of Apollos,*" etc.) deserved to be and was sternly rebuked by Paul. Paul asked, "*Who then is Paul and who is Apollos?*" He, Apollos, Cephas, and others were just instruments through which they believed on Christ.

Have we grown in grace and knowledge of our Lord? Are we carnal or have we maturity and are full-grown men in Christ. If there is envy and jealousy among us, we can lay no claim to spiritual maturity but deserve the same rebuke Paul directed toward the Corinthians.

Jim McDonald