

1Corinthians 2:15 - 3:1-2 "What's Your Passion?"

As we ended our study last week we saw how Paul was exhorting the believers in Corinth to consider the awesome spiritual work God the Holy Spirit had done in their lives by opening their eyes to the truth, as they were also given the ability to reach out to Christ for their salvation.

1CO 2:12 "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."

And what He has freely given us is a relationship with Himself where we are no longer viewed by Him as an enemy because of our sin, but as a child of His family, forgiven of our sin and welcomed into His presence.

ROM 8:15 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

This is what Christianity is all about, a relationship with the living God through faith in Christ. And unfortunately, the world-at-large does not see the need for this personal relationship with God because they are content to live their lives pleasing only self, not God.

1CO 2:14 "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

When a man is devoid of the Holy Spirit he sees only with natural eyes, not with spiritual. He is content to live in the world without God. In fact, the natural man's god is anything but the one true God. It could be wealth, fame, family, career or any number of things which takes the place of God. This is why Paul calls him fleshly as opposed to spiritual.

ROM 8:6-8 "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

In contrast to that the spiritual man is the one who has the Holy Spirit of God residing in his life as our Lord gives spiritual life

which includes the ability to see spiritual things related to the Kingdom of God, along with the ability to choose those things which please God by faith, thus enabling us to be controlled, not by the flesh, but by the Spirit.

ROM 8:9-11 "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

What Paul is saying here is that every believer has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him. Therefore, we now have real life in Christ which has made us new creatures in Him. No longer are we controlled by the sinful nature, which was dead without Christ. We have a new nature alive to the things of God and desirous of those things because of the Spirit who resides in our lives.

What all of this means is that God is going to make sure that those He purchased with the blood of His Son will in fact be brought home one day to be with Him forever. None of His children in Christ will be lost. In fact, this is exactly what Jesus said.

JOH 6:39-40 "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

We are spiritual men and women because God has made us spiritual by giving us spiritual life in Christ. And because we are spiritual we are able to discern the things of the Spirit who is always pointing us toward the things of God as well as encouraging us to flee from the things of the flesh or the natural man.

COL 3:1-2, 5-10 "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things

as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

And so, as we come to our text we must understand that Paul is saying we, who are in Christ, now have the spiritual life and ability to look at life in a spiritual manner which translates to a life pleasing to the Lord as we walk according to His ways.

1CO 2:15-16 "The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" (Isaiah 40:13) But we have the mind of Christ."

What in the world does Paul mean when he says, "The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:..."?

The NASB is a little more clear as to what Paul means when it states: "...he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one."

To appraise all things, the spiritual man looks at life through the eyes of Christ. His world and life view is one which takes God's perspective into account as he evaluates what is going on around him and then appropriately acts on those things to please his Lord and Savior.

In other words, he actually has the proper spiritual ability to make these evaluations because he's not limited to the fleshly approach to life which produces death. His decisions in life are actually controlled by the Spirit if he is willing to be led by the Spirit of God.

And in that sense we can spend our lives delighting our Lord and pleasing Him as we faithfully represent Him in this world. On the other hand, the world does not have the ability to evaluate what is going on in our lives as it relates to the things of God. How can the flesh evaluate or judge what is spiritual in nature?

That's what Paul means when he says, "...but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:..."

The "any man" here is the one who does not have the Spirit of Christ because he does not know Christ. The natural man, may certainly have enough sense and good judgment to see if a

Christian is acting in a fleshly way because this is his way. But, the natural man cannot truly discern why a Christian chooses not to follow the ways of the world.

He may understand that the Christian is an odd sort of duck who paddles upstream against the current of popular thought and actions, and he may even attribute that to the Christian's choice to follow God. But he doesn't truly understand the driving force behind that choice.

It may amuse the non-Christian, or even anger him, but he can't reconcile why anyone would not use his own good sense to live in this world as he pursues the things in this world as an end in itself.

This is the difference between someone who knows Christ and someone who doesn't. One sees this life and concludes that this life is the only thing that matters and therefore we must pursue it with all the gusto we have.

The other sees this life and can certainly enjoy the things of this life, but with the understanding that this world is not our home and therefore does not hold on to this world with a death grip like the natural man. Jesus speaks of this when making the sharp contrast between either loving this world or loving God.

JOH 12:25 "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

To love this world is to imitate this world. To love this world is to push God to the side in favor of the things of this world. To love this world is to live in a way that cannot be distinguished from the unbeliever of this world.

ROM 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Loving this world, for the believer, will in essence replace the hope that we should have for God. Because loving this world gives a false sense of security. And once the world looks as though it's caving in on us, as it will ultimately do, then what are we left with if God is not on the throne of our hearts? We're left with coping in our own understanding and in our own strength.

That's all the world has. But we don't belong to the world, we belong to Christ. So, don't worry if the world doesn't understand your walk with Christ. Just concern yourselves with having the mind of Christ. That's what Paul says in verse 16 of our text.

1CO 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

The world does not understand the ways of the Lord and therefore who are they to dictate to Him? But we do have the mind of Christ as we are new creatures in Him. We actually have the ability to hear from our God and understand His ways if we're willing to listen to Him and then follow Him according to His word.

But there's something else here about having the mind of Christ that is essential in understanding our relationship to God. It's not just an ability to think God's thoughts after Him, it's the reality that He is intimately united to us and us to Him. His Spirit is united to our spirits and therefore we share in the intimate things which Jesus shares with the Father, and the Spirit shares with Jesus, and the Father shares with both.

In other words, the relationship that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit shares, we share in to the degree that we now have eternal life with God because we are connected to God. Jesus points this out in John's gospel.

JOH 15:15 "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

This is the kind of intimate relationship Jesus wants with us. And this intimate relationship can't be accomplished on just a Sunday morning or Wednesday evening as we come together, as important as that is.

This intimate relationship, not unlike a marriage relationship, must be worked at diligently every moment of our lives. But even there God has provided the Spirit to help accomplish that. He has left no stone unturned in enabling us to be close to Him all of our days.

And yet, it seems that even with the Spirit of God indwelling us and strengthening us there is still that sinful or fleshly desire to look for the comfortable approach to a life with Christ which inevitably seeks the path of least resistance.

And so, what we sometimes end up with is a life which straddles the fence. When it's convenient to follow God we do. When it's inconvenient to show our allegiance and dedication to Him with lives of obedience we often use the catch-all phrase, "God understands because of my present situation."

No, what God understands is that we are either walking as spiritual people or fleshly people at any given time. It's hard to imagine that we can act as a hybrid or a combination of spiritual and fleshly at the same time.

This doesn't discount that we war against the flesh because we do in fact have both a spiritual nature and a sinful nature, it just means that we are either operating in one or the other.

And what God desires is that we operate in the Spirit He has given us. And this is the frustrating part of our walk with Christ at times, because we all have a tendency to waver between the two natures even as Paul did.

ROM 7:21-25 "...I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God -through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."

But we need to be careful not to use this excuse to pursue the things of world as we battle in this spiritual war. We need to constantly realize that this spiritual battle must be approached in such a way that takes into account the means to growing in this relationship with Christ.

This is what Paul begins to deal with in the third chapter of 1Corinthians. He begins to shed light on one of the major problems with the Christians in Corinth and how that will affect their ability to walk as spiritual people.

1CO 3:1 "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly -mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling

among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?"

What an indictment. How would you like someone to tell you that they couldn't deal with you on a mature spiritual level because you didn't have the spiritual ability to even understand them?

I'm sure this hit these Corinthians like a ton of bricks. But before we accuse Paul of being harsh and insensitive keep in mind that this is the Holy Spirit who is sending this message to the church through the agency of Paul.

The Holy Spirit loves the church here in Corinth as He warns them of what they're doing. If God didn't love them nothing at all would have been said. This love the Lord has for them, as well as the love of Paul, dictates the approach that is going to be used.

In this case, we must understand first of all that though Paul is certainly upset with their spiritual state, he doesn't discount that they belong to Christ. Notice the way he opens this part.

1CO 3:1 **Brothers**, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly **-mere infants in Christ**.

Paul still views them as brothers and, by extension, sisters in the Lord. This word brothers is the Greek word *adelphos* and was the customary way of addressing any natural sibling of a family.

And so, what Paul is saying is that they are part of the same family he's a part of, the family of God. Now, he doesn't discount the fact that though they are part of the same family most of them would be viewed like little infants scurrying around the house in need of special attention.

The only concern of an infant is self. They don't care if you're tired, or if you're sick, or if you need a break. They take center stage and they will do anything and everything to make sure their particular need is met, whether that's being fed or being changed or in need of rest.

Little ones, by their very nature, are high maintenance. And in the spiritual realm babes in Christ, by their very nature, are usually high maintenance. And that's okay. That's acceptable. It would be an odd sort of parent who expected their 2 year old to be behaving like an adult. And so, allowances are made in light of the fact that immaturity has its own peculiarities and expectations.

The problem arises when the baby never grows up. In the natural world this would be seen as a problem. If a 2 year old's body never got past that stage of being 25 pounds and 2 and a half feet tall when it turned 13, then the parents would probably be in a panic long before he turned 13.

The same would be true if that child never grew in its mind or ability to speak and think like a mature person after it grew up. This is what Paul is addressing. He's not upset because babes in Christ exist. He's upset that these people should no longer be babes. They've had plenty of time and opportunity to grow up in their faith.

Keep in mind that Paul had previously spent at least 18 months; 1 and half years with these people. He is the one responsible for starting this church in Corinth. He is the one who nurtured and cared for this flock which belongs to Christ.

The time in which Paul was first in Corinth was around A.D.50. The time in which 1Corinthians is written is around A.D. 55. Many of these people are 5 years in the Lord. Now, I don't know about you, but having the apostle Paul as your teacher and counselor and Pastor for 1 and a half years would have been an awesome experience, just from the stand-point of how he came to Christ.

I'd want him to recount that story to me every day. And yet, what Paul says is that while he was with them in Corinth during that 18 month period he felt compelled to feed them a diet fit for babes which was milk.

What he's talking about here is that he taught them the basics of the faith. Salvation in Christ and how they grow in that salvation. I'm sure he encouraged them with how Jesus was born into this world of a virgin according to the Scriptures, and how He lived the perfect sinless life to be our substitute and how He was tried before Pilate and put to death on the cross for our sins and then how He victoriously rose from the dead defeating sin and death for us.

I'm sure he taught them how to rely on God by seeking Him in prayer and the Scriptures, as well as asking the Holy Spirit to fill them and use them for service to God. But it appears that they had a tendency not to be able to get past these basics as the meat of the word was not easily digested.

And I'm sure Paul spent an adequate amount of time trying to feed them food fit for a mature spiritual person. He certainly didn't hold back with other churches. Just read some of the epistles he wrote to the Romans or the Galatians, for example. There is some weighty theology there.

But the Corinthian's were not willing to incorporate these things into their lives and so their walk with Christ suffered as a result. The reason we study the deep things of God is so that we might have a better appreciation for the greatness of our God and the salvation He secures for His people.

And by the way, there is no mystery associated with the meatier things of God's word. The solid food Paul talks about here in verse one is really nothing more than the basics, with the added emphasis on the particulars of the basics.

It's one thing to talk about forgiveness of sin. It's another thing to delve into what our salvation entails as we study justification, or propitiation as it relates to Christ satisfying the wrath of God on our behalf and why that was necessary.

We can touch on the doctrine of sanctification, but what a blessing to get into the solid food of how that's accomplished as we learn about the power of the Spirit and the work of the Spirit as it relates to our salvation and the growth associated with the truths of God's entire word.

We can talk about Christ coming back, but what a difference when we take the time to actually study the different aspects of Christ's return as we consider the last days in which we live and how the word of God has set the table for how these last days are coming to a close with Christ Himself near the door as He comes back in judgment and will make all things new so that we can rule and reign with Him in the new earth and the new heavens that He will establish from the old.

As we learn these things it just opens our eyes to the reality of how big our God is and the grace and mercy of His eternal plan for our lives as He allows us to share in His eternity. When we begin to meditate on these things we find ourselves learning and growing and acquiring a taste for more solid food.

I remember as a kid how my mom tried to get me to try different things at the dinner table, especially vegetables like Brussel sprouts. Why would someone do that to a child? What is with

Brussel sprouts? Miniature cabbage things. But there were other things I wouldn't try as a child that later in life I learned to appreciate.

Acquiring a taste for something means you have to try it more than once. In the spiritual realm it's much more difficult because even though we may use the metaphor of food, the fact is we're talking about learning something and then putting it into practice. Our brains and spirits need to be engaged and disciplined enough to digest the new things we learn, and then be appreciative enough to be doers of the word and not just hearers.

If we're not willing to study the word of God, either on our own or in regular bible studies, then we will never acquire the appetite for solid food and when the need arises for us to have to exert our spiritual legs we will find that they give out much too quickly.

Feeding our spirits promotes faith which enables us to trust God and then walk after God as we please Him with lives of love and obedience. And yet, after 5 years of being fed both solid food and milk, through Paul, Apollos and others, these Corinthian's, like many Christians today, prefer the milk which doesn't challenge them to grow in their faith in quite the same way as solid food.

Being bottle fed all of our lives doesn't require much effort. And if we're not willing to put much effort into something like dining on a healthy diet of spiritual meat and potatoes along with the milk and cookies for dessert, then the effort won't be there to continue putting one foot in front of the other by faith when trials come our way.

It's all associated with seeking those things above, which must include the word of God which was given from above. If we would be spiritual then we must seek spiritual things consistently. We must be in this race for the long haul, not just as a sprinter who thinks one short run is enough.

Being a Christian is not like running uphill for a time with the idea that when we get to the top we can coast down the other side. There is never room for coasting. The coasting comes in glory. That's why this world can never be seen as our place of residence. Our ultimate goal is heaven on the new earth not a condo on the back nine, as nice as that may be.

Spiritual priorities; that's what Paul is talking about here. Because when our spiritual priorities are out of whack our lives will be out

of whack in one way or another, which is not to be confused with having trials. We can have trials and still not have our lives out of whack as we trust and follow our Lord.

My goal has always been and will continue to be to feed the flock of Christ the healthiest spiritual food I know how. Some days you'll leave here or one of our bible studies with a morsel of solid food and a little milk. Other days, you'll come into the bible studies and be able to feed others some filet mignon you got from the Lord in your personal studies that week.

The objective for all of us to edify the body of Christ and encourage each other toward love and good deeds. But if we're not dining on Christ and His word, with the passion of a nursing infant who can't live without the milk of God's word, then we'll end up being finicky eaters picking here and there and never really being satisfied.

May Christ be our all in all and may we appreciate Him so much that we could never get enough.