

# THE PROBLEMS OF CARNALITY

## Part 1

### What Is Carnality?

1st Co. 3:1-5

#### INTRODUCTION

There are doctrines that the church avoids teaching because of the fear that teaching them would cause believers to yield to them. For example, many will not teach that tithing is not for today because they believe that believers will not give apart from the motivation of tithing. Scriptural teaching about suicide is not taught because of the belief that many would commit suicide. Likewise, the doctrine about carnal Christians is shunned by many due to the belief that it teaches license to sin. In doctrines like these, there is a failure to trust in God's ability to get the believer to where he needs to be in His will for their lives. One writer who denies the doctrine of "carnal" Christians writes:

***"Many who regularly occupy church pews, fill church rolls, and are intellectually acquainted with the facts of the gospel never strike one blow for Christ. They seem to be at peace with his enemies. They have no quarrel with sin and, apart from a few sentimental expressions about Christ, there is no biblical evidence that they have experienced anything of the power of the gospel in their lives. Yet in spite of the evidence against them, they consider themselves to be just what their teachers teach them -- that they are 'Carnal Christians'. And as carnal Christians they believe they will go to heaven, though perhaps not first-class, and with few rewards."*** -- "The Carnal Christian" -- Ernest C Reisinger

The term "carnal" is a biblical term. It is a term used in Scripture not to excuse behavior that a believer can fall into, but to reveal it. Over the next several weeks we will study the doctrine of the "carnal Christian" and explore the conditions that cause one to be carnal; God's attitude towards such a believer; and the pathway for such a believer to restoration.

- I. THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS USED IN SCRIPTURE TO EXPRESS THE DOCTRINE OF CARNALITY.
  - A. "Backsliding" is an Old Testament term used to describe the waywardness of the nation Israel that is often used to explain carnality.
    1. Meshubah is the prominent word used for "backsliding".
      - a) Meshubah is used to note "**turning away, turning back, apostasy,**" -- Brown, Driver & Briggs
      - b) Solomon notes that it was the foolish that engaged in this type of thing. Prov. 1:32 (foolish is the Hebrew word pethee -- "**one who is silly, seducible**" -- Strong's lexicon
    2. Idolatry lured Israel away from God on numerous occasions. Jer. 3:6 -11; Hos. 11:7

3. The terms for backsliding/ backslider is prominently used with reference the nation of Israel and Judah
    - a) The term “sug” which translated “backslider” once for a man -- Prov. 14:14
    - b) The term is prominently used of a call to turn back to God. Is. 42:17; Ps. 129:5; Jer. 46:5
  4. The term backsliding/backslider is not used in the New Testament.
- B. The word “carnal” appears 10 times in the Authorized Version (King James).
- C. Two Greek words translate the term “carnal”.
1. Sarx is the word for “flesh” which is used in several ways in Scripture.
    - a) It is used to denote the human body. John 1:14; 2 Co. 12:7
    - b) It is used to denote lineage. Rom. 9:3
    - c) It is used to denote the fallen nature of man passed on through the human genes. Rom. 13:14
  2. Sarkikos is the prominent word used to translate “carnal” in the New Testament.
    - a) Sarkikos is driven by the suffix for its definition
      - (1) Sarx -- flesh
      - (2) Ikos -- pertaining to or emanating from
      - (3) Some definitions support this fact:
        - (a) **“Pertaining to the flesh, controlled by the flesh; flesh is the outlook orientated toward the self, that which pursues its own ends in self-sufficient independence of God.”** -- Reinecker/Rogers
        - (b) **“Having the nature of flesh, i.e. under the control of the animal appetites; governed by mere human nature not by the Spirit of God; having its seat in the animal nature or aroused by the animal nature; human: with the included idea of depravity.”** -- Joseph Thayer
    - b) It is used to indicate things that pertain to physical matters. Heb. 7:16 (of commandments that relate to the physical world); 9:10 (of ordinances that relate to the physical world)
    - c) It is used to emphasize the works of the flesh.
      - (1) Paul could identify carnality from the behavior that was evident. 1st Co. 3:3-4
      - (2) It is seen as the opposite of being spiritual. 1st Co. 3:1; Rom. 7:14

II. THERE ARE SEVERAL EXPRESSION USED IN SCRIPTURE TO EMPHASIZE A CARNAL BELIEVER.

- A. Those who are carnal are similar to “babes” in Christ. 1st Co. 3:1
1. “Babes” is *napios* which means “***an infant (minor); figuratively a simple minded person, an immature Christian: - babe, child.***” -- Strong’s lexicon
  2. *Napios* is used negatively in a spiritual connotation. Cf. Eph. 4:14; Heb. 5:11
- B. “Sold under sin” -- Rom. 7:14
1. The word “sold” is *piprasko* (per. Pass. part.) -- “***is “borrowed from the practice of selling captives taken in war, as slaves.” (Stuart.) It hence, means to deliver into the power of anyone, so that he shall be dependent on his will and control.*** --Johann Friedrich Schleusner
    - a) *Piprasko* is used in Scripture of selling something for the purpose of one buying a pearl of great price after selling all he had. Matt. 13:46
    - b) Acts 4:34 (per.pass.part. -- of the selling of land to distribute to other believers)
  2. Paul states that he was sold was “under” the sin nature. Vs. 14
    - a) “Under” is *hupon* in the accusative has the idea of ***being under servitude***. Matt. 8:9 (of one with a human master)
    - b) “Sin” is the articular use of *hamartian* which is used to note the sin nature. John 8:34 (servitude is a result of practicing the sin nature); Rom. 7:7 (the sin nature is revealed through law)
- C. “The Carnal Mind. -- Rom. 8:7
1. “Carnal” is the word *sarkos* referring to the flesh.
  2. “Mind” is the Greek word *phronema* which focus is upon the results of continually restricting the mind to the things of the flesh. Cf. Rom. 8:6,7 (of carnality); Phil. 3:19 (of the unsaved)
- D. They are “living according to the flesh”. Rom. 8:13
1. The word “live” is *zao* (pres. Act. ind.) which is used in Scripture of conducting a life in a certain manner. Cf. Gal. 2:14 (of conducting a life after the customs of the Gentiles); Rom. 6:2 (of living in the sin nature); Gal. 5:25 (of living by the Spirit)
  2. “After” is the Greek preposition *kata* and the use of it emphasizes according to a standard of measurement -- it is the script that one follows for living.
  3. The use of *mello* (shall) with *apothnesko* looks at an impending situation -- “you are about to die”.

CONCLUSION