

No Distinct Classes in the New Testament

by Daniel Steele

The New Testament does not separate churches into distinct classes, but rather describes different characteristics of Christians.

Scripture: Romans 8:7, 1 Corinthians 3:1, Galatians 5:16, Philippians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:2

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Church Unity"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches on the distinction between the spiritual and less spiritual classes within the New Testament churches, as highlighted by Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Philippians. Paul's classification of church members in Corinth as 'babes in Christ' and 'carnal' reflects the existence of distinct classes based on spiritual maturity. While some were described as 'spiritual,' others were criticized for seeking their own interests over Jesus Christ's. Despite the offensive distinction, Wesley never categorized believers in such a divisive manner.

Transcript

WE are told in this book that "the New Testament churches are nowhere separated into the two distinct classes . . . known as 'the merely justified' and the 'sanctified.'" In his Epistle to the Corinthians Paul, after describing the natural man and the spiritual man, attempts to classify his church members in Corinth as all of them spiritual. But his good judgment and conscience would not allow it. If that phrase, "merely justified," had been in vogue, I think he would gladly have used it of a class who were having a disgraceful church quarrel over the selection of their next preacher.

In the absence of that designation the apostle had to invent another not quite so complimentary -- "babes in Christ" and "carnal." We charitably believe that there were at least a few adults in Christian character whom he could call "spiritual." In that case, there were two quite distinct classes. When Paul writes to the Philippians that he would station a preacher there, if in the absence of Timothy he had a man likeminded with himself, who would take genuine care of them, he makes the sorrowful statement that all the Christian ministers with him "were seeking their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

It seems that Paul made this odious distinction, a few in whom self was crucified, and others whom he calls brethren -- "the brethren which are with me salute you" -- who are pilloried in his immortal epistle as self-seekers. I should prefer to be called "merely justified." But two distinct classes exist. Wesley never made a distinction so offensive to the less spiritual class.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/daniel-steele/no-distinct-classes-in-the-new-testament/>

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