

# Natural, Spiritual or Carnal

by Dennis Kinlaw

---

*Dennis Kinlaw's sermon explores the distinctions between the natural, spiritual, and carnal states of humanity, emphasizing the transformative power of the Holy Spirit and the importance of living selflessly in Christ.*

**Duration:** 53:48

**Scripture:** John 5:19, John 6:63, John 8:28, John 8:58, John 10:30, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, Philippians 2:5

**Topics:** "Carnality"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the mind of Christ and the characteristics that should not be present in believers. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing the difference between capital R reality, which is the truth of God, and little R reality, which is the distorted perception of the natural man. The speaker uses the example of Jesus feeding the 5,000 to illustrate how people often miss the true reality until they experience regenerating grace. He concludes by highlighting four negative imperatives that should not be present in believers, such as selfish ambition, and encourages listeners to align their agendas with Christ's.

---

## Transcript

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom, as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. He was a person of one focus.

I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but they were with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing.

No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 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.

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths and spiritual words. 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. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment.

For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.

Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly, for since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Apollos, are you not mere men? Yesterday we were speaking about the radical character of Paul's discipleship, that it was a discipleship that centered itself in the cross of Christ, that the cross was a determinative key for Paul for understanding how his relationship should be to Christ and how his relationship should be to everybody else as well. He said there was a power in the cross, a power that could set a person free so that a person could be free to make another person's well-being more important than his own.

He summed it up in that verse that has become a pivotal one for me in the 10th chapter, verse 24, where he says, Nobody should seek his own good but the good of others. He said a person can come to the place where he finds his own personal fulfillment in giving himself away. A person can come to the place through the cross where he can find his own fulfillment in what we would refer to as self-sacrifice, self-giving.

Coming to the place where we live, not with this concern first, but a concern outside of us first. None should seek his own good but that of another. Now, it'd be interesting how to spell that word another, wouldn't it? Let me intrigue you.

Do you capitalize it or don't you? None should seek his own good but that of another. Maybe what we ought to do is capitalize it and then put in parenthesis after it a little a, and then n-o-t-h-e-r. But we will come, maybe we can come back to that.

The basis of this is found in his view basically of what is the difference between what some translations, the King James calls the natural man and the spiritual man. In other words, what he's talking about is what grace can do for a person and what grace wants to do for a person. You find that in this passage that we read a few moments ago.

And it comes to focus in verse 14 of chapter 2 where he speaks and says, now the natural man, to use the King James, some other translations, the NIV is very interesting. It translates it, the man without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God. He doesn't understand them for they're foolishness to him.

He cannot understand them because they're spiritually discerned. The spiritual man, so that the NIV contrasts the man without the spirit with the spiritual man. Now, if you know anything about the original text here, you will remember that it is the psuchikos man, it is the soulish man, that is, does not able to

understand the things of God, and it is the pneumatics man, the spiritual man.

And interestingly, the NIV puts its finger on the heart of it. When it gives you an interpretation rather than a literal translation, it says the man without the spirit can't understand these things, which fits with what Mark was saying last night. And the spiritual man is in a different realm as far as understanding goes.

Now, if you'll follow that down, you will find that he says, it's a magnificent passage that so often times we have misquoted and used out of context, eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those that love him. But then he says, but they've been revealed to us. Now, what is it that has been revealed to us that natural man cannot conceive? I want to give you my bottom line ahead of time, which may not be good psychologically, but I'd hate for you to miss it.

So whether you hear any of the rest of what I say, I want you to hear this. What is it that he is saying? Eye has not seen nor ear heard, and it hasn't entered into the heart of man. Nobody has conceived this, what God has prepared for his own.

And what is it? It is escape from self-reference. Let me reword that a little. It is escape from the tyranny of self-interest.

Now, that's what God has prepared for me, and that's what God has prepared for you, and that is what grace wants to do. You know, I never saw that passage in that context before, but I think if we'll look solidly at the full thrust of the book, we will find that that's what he's talking about. He says that there is a difference between the natural man and the spiritual man.

The natural one is the one untouched by regenerating grace. Prevenient grace may be at work. At first I started to say untouched by grace, but nobody is untouched by grace.

Everybody is touched by grace, but everybody is not touched by saving grace. So you have to qualify it when you say the person who has never been touched by saving, transforming grace. I went and checked a number of translations.

Interestingly, Weymouth, Moffat, RSV, and the new RSV call him the unspiritual man. The NIV says the man without the spirit, and the King James calls him the natural man. That's the person as he is before regeneration takes place in his life.

Now that's an interesting state, and I never come to this passage about the natural man, but that I find myself thinking of Wesley's hymn. You remember the verse of the one that most of us love so well? Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night. Now that expression, that phrase, nature's night, has become a magnificent phrase to me.

I wish I were a poet. I wish I were a good writer. I'd like to see something written briefly, briskly, powerfully on nature's night, because that's what everybody lives in until regenerating grace comes to him.

And you will notice that the concepts that are behind that verse are imprisonment and blindness, or death and life with concomitant seeing and understanding. Long my imprisoned spirit lay, imprisoned, fast bound in sin and nature's night, imprisoned in sin and in darkness. Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night.

How does the next line go? Now I've forgotten it. Come on. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray.

I woke the dungeon, the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off. My heart was free.

I rose, went forth to follow thee. Now that's a very dramatic and pictorial way of describing what Paul is talking about here. The natural man is in that kind of bondage.

He's in that kind of darkness. He's in that kind of spiritual death. But thine eye diffused a quickening ray.

The spirit came and something happened. Now you will notice that the person who is in that natural state cannot see capital R reality. He sees little r reality.

You get massive numbers of illustrations of that all through scripture. Just let me mention one. Jesus feeds the 5,000.

The next day they chase him down and say, we'd like to make you boss around here so you could take care of us. And he said, you missed it, didn't you? And they say, what do you mean we missed it? We saw the bread and fish and got our bellies full. He said, that's right.

You saw the bread with a little d. But that's not what I came for. I came to give you the bread with a capital D. And unless you eat that bread with a capital D, you'll never know what life is. I am the bread of life.

Now the natural man sees the bread and the fish. But the natural man sees Jesus as a Galilean carpenter who's a religious teacher, not the difference between life and death, heaven and hell, righteousness and unrighteousness. So you get a lot of illustration.

So the person who is untouched cannot see reality with a capital R, the eternal world. He cannot understand the ways of God. Because when God comes and quickens us in prevenient grace and shows us which way to go, we say, Lord, that ain't natural.

And it isn't for our natural state. We don't understand. And we cannot relate to the one who is there whom we can't see.

Now, the other class that he talks about, and so people go through life and never know that Christ is all around them. I'm sure that Caiaphas and Annas and Pilate and Herod all went to sleep on Good Friday evening more comfortable. Because they'd taken care of that problem.

I'm sure they slept pretty well until probably along about Monday. And then the question came was, was he more than we saw? Now, the world around us lives that way. I was that way.

You were that way. He's there, and we never know he's there. But he says there's another class.

That's the spiritual class. That's the term which Weymouth, Moffat, the RSV, the NRSV and the NIV and the King James joined them here, the spiritual man, the pneumaticus person. Now, what is it that makes the difference? It's not a change in us.

It's another person present. It is the Holy Spirit, what Mark was talking about last night when he's with us and then fills us, comes into us, but there's a difference. But he says when the Spirit comes, the change takes place in the person.

Now, that's the reason I think we get two passages in the book of 1 Corinthians on us being temples, temples of the Holy Spirit. So at the end of chapter 3, he's picking this thought up again. And at the end of chapter 6, he's picking this thought up again.

What is it that makes a Christian different from anybody else? The Spirit of Christ is in that person. That's the thing that makes the difference between the natural man and the spiritual man. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ has come into that person and is now working within that person and making changes.

Now, who is he? It's interesting that he's the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ is the key to the life of Christ. Let me repeat that because I'm saying more than just making a connector here. The key to the life of Christ is the Spirit of Christ.

He was conceived by the Spirit. He was anointed by the Spirit. That's what he's called.

He's called the anointed one. Now, what's he anointed with? He's not anointed with abstract messiahship and the preacher should not be anointed with abstract ordained-ship or MDiv-ship or something else like that. It is a personal anointing.

He is anointed by the Spirit. The Hebrew word, mashach, mashia, mashia, he is the anointed with the Spirit. He is henceforth led by the Spirit.

That's what the text tells us. I'm not implying he wasn't led before, but the text is very explicit that when he begins his public ministry, he is led by the Spirit. He's led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the enemy.

And the text tells us he is empowered by the Spirit. The dynamic within the second person of the Blessed Trinity, interestingly enough, was the third person of the Blessed Trinity. Now, what's the text? He looked at his enemies and said, if I but the Spirit of God cast out devils, then the kingdom has come to you.

And in the other gospel he says, uses a metaphor, if I but the finger of God, and I never think of that, read that, but that I remember Michelangelo's picture of the creation of Adam, after God has formed him and he's lying there inert, God reaches out that long divine finger and from that finger goes the spark that hits the inert form of Adam and he comes alive. And it is the Spirit that makes that. Interestingly enough, that is not a picture just or primarily of the creation of Adam, that is a picture of the recreation of the natural man.

The Spirit of God bridges the gap and makes the connection. So I wish you would hear me. You know, my biggest problem is thinking Christian.

I've been a Christian a good while. You know, I blush to say that. But the problem for me is not being a Christian, I've been one a long time.

The problem is thinking Christian. Now, the power, the dynamic within the ministry of Jesus was not the second person of the Trinity. It was the third person of the Trinity.

He says, if I but the Spirit of God cast out devils, I ought to pay great attention to whether the Holy Spirit is the dynamic in my life too, in ministry. All right. So in this he contrasts the natural man with the spiritual man.

Now, what's the end of all this? The end of that chapter is, he says, the Spirit now can come into a person and control him. And when he does come into him and control him, no eye has seen or ear heard, neither

has entered into the heart of man. How glorious it is when the Spirit liberates and frees a person.

Now, the Spirit searches all things. He understands all things. The man without the Spirit doesn't.

He says, but we have the Spirit to instruct us. In fact, we have the mind of Christ. Now, I don't know about you, but I've slid over many of these verses over the years as I've read them and never stopped to sense what cataclysmic things Paul is saying when he says that.

It is a blunt affirmative statement. We have the mind of Christ. Now, what he's saying is the natural man doesn't.

The spiritual man has the mind of Christ. Now, what is that mind for? It's to help me to think, understand, and it's to help me to act, because more is involved here than simply the cognitive. But now, what characterizes the mind of Christ? Those of you who have heard me many times, you're going to hear me repeat something.

You'll have to forgive me. I don't know enough not to repeat some things. And let me say, I've gotten to the place where I'm ready to do it intentionally, because I don't know about you, but hearing something one time doesn't change my thinking.

It's when I've looked at it and heard it and it's been repeated again and again and again that slowly I find myself thinking differently. I'd like to think the way Christ thought. Now, I don't think I'm going to get that through a sermon.

I'm going to get that through living with the truth until it seeps through my thick head and gets down through all those layers of the onion until it's at the heart of me and is what motivates and works out. Now, I notice in Philippians 4, in Philippians 2, he describes for us the mind of Christ. Now, let me give you briefly what I think is in chapter 2 of Philippians when he says to the Corinthians, the spiritual man has the mind of Christ.

The natural man doesn't. Now, he says, what is the mind of Christ? In Philippians, I always thought the mind of Christ was what Paul was preaching was in verses 5 through 11. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, but that's the illustration.

And it's the illustration in Christ's life. The sermon in Philippians is what is supposed to be in the Philippians' life. And you only see that in the introduction to that passage and in the paragraph, two paragraphs that follow it.

Now, we don't have time to take the time to do it slowly through here, so let me drop it. I find four characteristics in verses 1 through 4 and in verses 12 through 21, four characteristics of the mind of Christ. Paul gives them in negative imperatives.

There are certain things that aren't supposed to be inside of you. One of these things that isn't supposed to be inside of you, if the mind of Christ is there, the Greek term is eritheia. The NIV translates it, selfish ambition.

Moffat translates it, never acting for private ends. Did you ever live with anybody who had an agenda separate from yours? Did you ever have anybody work with you that had an agenda that was in contradiction, conflict with yours? I think what he's saying, the mind of Christ is you get to the place where

Christ's agenda is your agenda. And it's not something you pay lip service to, it's something that comes from the inside out.

Christ's agenda has become your agenda. I think this is part of what Paul is saying when I determine not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, because the cross was his agenda when he came. It was the Father and the Holy Ghost who took care of the resurrection.

Christ's agenda was the cross. Now, he's saying, the person who has the mind of Christ doesn't have a private agenda. Now, do you know why we hold on to our private agendas? Do you know how hard it is to turn loose of a personal agenda? I'm sure that's the reason that God won't let us live alone.

He sticks us with other people and their agendas come into conflict with ours. And then we find out who we are and what we're committed to. Now, I boil this first characteristic of the mind of Christ down to this.

The person who has the mind of Christ is not under the tier any of the question and the mindset, what's in it for me? You've got a new job opportunity. How do you look at the new job opportunity? The district superintendent sits down and says, I think we're going to move you this year. And you say, oh, that's right, where are you going? Now, let me ask you, do you think the typical preacher in the Methodist church or the typical Salvation Army officer, we were talking about the Army last night, when he gets a new assignment, is the first and the controlling thought, what does this have to do with my career? Or is it, what does Christ want to do there and what are the opportunities there? Wouldn't it be interesting if you had two opportunities in life and one of them provided significantly less salary than the other? And when it was presented, you looked back to the guy who was presenting it and say, well, I'm really not interested in the dollars, but I am interested in what the opportunities are to extend the kingdom of God.

Now, I think Paul is saying, the Holy Spirit can give you that kind of mind, because if he can't, you're not free. Okay. The second thing is, we don't have time to go through all this, the second thing is, he says, don't let there be any kenodoxia among you, and kenos is empty and doxia is appearance, so don't let there be, the NIV says, any vain conceit, Moffat says vanity.

What it means is basically appearance. I was interested in Mark talking last night about how, as a young Methodist preacher, the question was, how will I look? And don't tell me you've never been tyrannized by that. Is it possible to get to the place where how you look is not the significant thing? That's changing human nature, isn't it? That's changing natural reactions.

Only the Spirit can do that, but that's the mind of Christ. Do you think if God had had any good sense of the second person of the Blessed Trinity, he'd have wanted to have been born in Nazareth and spent his early life as an illegitimate child, really just a bastard? Who wants to be a bastard? From the earthly point of view, that's what he was, in spite of all these stories that Mary told. Now, there is a tyranny in appearances.

No person is free. Now, I didn't say you get to the place where you don't think about those things. I said he can get you to the place where they don't tyrannize you.

There's a difference between those two things. Now the third one is, the Greek term is gungusmos, and it means grumbling or complaining. Weymouth translates it, a grudging spirit.

Did you ever do the will of God with a grudging spirit? You know, the Hebrews. It's interesting, in chapter 10, Paul talks about the Hebrews on this, and he tells about how they got out into the wilderness and they

grumbled, and how many thousand of them were killed because they grumbled. It's a good thing that God doesn't treat us the way he did the Hebrews, because that's sort of our favorite indoor sport except when we're outside, isn't it? Grumbling, complaining.

Now he says, God can deliver you from the tyranny of that. You don't have to complain. That's the mind of Christ.

Nobody ever heard a complaint cross Christ's lips. Now, his father heard some questions, but the people around him didn't hear complaints about his life. And the fourth thing is the Greek word *diologosmos*, which means an argumentative spirit.

Let me go back to grumbling for a minute. Talking about that self-reference. You know, I noticed I never complain when I get better than I thought I deserved.

Only time I ever complain is when I think I deserve better than that. You notice the self-reference in that? Now, the fourth thing is sort of the yes-but mentality. I know you're God and you're going to win on this one, and if that's what I have to do, I'll do it, but.

Now, that's the mind of Christ, deliverance from the tyranny of those characteristics. Now, you know what I think is the key element in all of that? Let me go back and let me look at Philippians 2. It's in the introduction to this sermon when he says, this is an astounding verse. It's so astounding that I read over it for 60 years without looking at it.

Fifty some. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but even to the interests of others. And do you know the only way you can ever come to that point? Is when you've taken seriously and found the possibility of grace to do what Paul says in 1024, nobody should seek his own good, but the good of another.

Capitalize the A and then put a little A in parenthesis after it. Because in this passage he's talking about the little A others. But the only way you're going to get to the place where you can take, be more concerned about the well-being of the little A another, the little O others, is to get the capital O other, central, absolutely central, and that's what the Spirit of God does.

He came not to speak about himself, he came to speak about the Christ and the glories of going his way. Now that helps me with what Paul is trying to say in 1 Corinthians when he says, you have the mind of Christ. What is the mind of Christ? It fits with what Paul is saying about the spiritual man is the person who has come to the place where he can give himself for others.

Now, there's another body of material in the New Testament that now I instantly think about when I think about this. Because there are passages in the Gospels that help us understand the way Jesus thought. Now, I've got a set of passages that I have in mind.

I know there are plenty more, but let me tell you the ones that have been most helpful to me in my understanding. They are the father passages in the Gospel of John. And they come in the 5th chapter, in the 6th chapter, in the 8th chapter, in the 10th chapter, where Jesus speaks about his relationship to his father.

Now, I want to say that all of my thinking about the Gospel of John was turned upside down about five years ago, when it dawned on me that the main character in the Gospel of John is not Jesus, any more

than the main character on Mount Moriah was Isaac. Because the key word in the Gospel of John on this is the word sin. I think it's used about 44 times in the Gospel of John.

And Jesus says, I'm not here on my own. I'm not the one who thought this business up. I'm here representing somebody else.

So when you see me, you're dealing with somebody else. You're dealing with the guy who sent me. And the key figure in the Gospel of John is the father, first person of the Blessed Trinity, not the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

And if you read those father passages, you find the way Jesus thought. And it's astounding the way he thought. Now, this is the eternal Son of God, the one before whom every knee will bow and whom every tongue will confess that he is Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

He is the King of kings. And you know, you think of a king ruling, don't you? You think of a king having a measure of independence and stand on his own feet, don't you? Then I find passages like this. I tell you the truth.

The Son can do nothing by himself. He can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son does. Now, as I read that, I hear two things.

I hear one possibility and I hear, secondly, choice. Now, sometimes the possibility is in my life, but the choice isn't there. He says, I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself.

He can only do, he is only able to do what he sees his Father do, because whatever the Father does, the Son does. Now, I think when he says, whatever the Father does, the Son does, there's choice in that. The Son has opted that the Father's will will be his.

Because he said, I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but I came to do the will of the one that sent me. So, what's going on here wasn't my idea. It came, originated in somebody else.

It originated in my Father. Because he said, you see, the bread of God, which is what you need, not this bread and fish, is the one who comes down from heaven. And what does the one who comes down from heaven do? He gives life to the world.

But you know, I always thought he gave life to the world the way the Father, you know, stuck out and the spark jumped and he came to life. How does he give life to the world? By giving his own life. And I don't believe anybody ever gets life except if somebody else gives his own to him.

And so he says, I'm the living bread that came down from heaven. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. That's a cross, isn't it? Jesus is saying, that's what I came for.

And Paul's saying, if that's what Jesus came for, that's going to be the central thing in my message. It's going to be the central thing in my life. It's going to be the central thing in my thinking.

He says, and this is fascinating in this context. Hear it. And it fits with 1 Corinthians 2 and 3. The spirit gives life.

The sarks, the flesh profits nothing. There in John, you've got 1 Corinthians 2, 14, 15, and 16. And the spirit gives life.

The flesh profits nothing in giving life. He says then in chapter 8, I do nothing on my own. I speak just what my father has taught me.

Jesus didn't ad-lib it. I notice that even President Bush gets in trouble when he ad-libs. But the son did not ad-lib it through here.

He says, I speak just what my father has taught me. I always do what pleases him. Now tell me about the measure of independence in that and psychological maturity.

I have not come on my own. He says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

And the reason my father loves me is because I lay down my life. I lay it down only to take it again. But let me tell you, nobody takes it from me.

You know, I've taken God's will sometimes because I didn't have any option. The son says, I choose it. I've had circumstances pin me in to the will of God.

He says, no man takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. Now many of you have heard me use this line, but it's interesting to me how a sentence or two sometimes will throw things into focus. Jesus was talking to the priests in Jerusalem, temple priests, religious leadership.

And he says, you're looked upon as the shepherds of Israel. That's what the prophets called you. You read Ezekiel, you read Jeremiah, the priests are called the shepherds of Israel.

Now he says, you're shepherds, but I'm the good shepherd. Now let me tell you the difference between you and me and the difference between ordinary shepherds and the good shepherd. Ordinary shepherds keep sheep so they can eat and wear them or else so they can sell them so somebody else can eat and wear them.

But I keep sheep so they can eat and wear me. And it's the difference between those two kinds of shepherds. There are many of us that take our opportunities to use, not to be consumed by.

I know there's danger in what I'm saying, but the only way I know how to get at the truth that's there is to risk the danger of missaying it a little bit, because I haven't gotten my language polished enough and I don't understand enough to hedge all the corners on that kind of thing. But what he is saying is the difference between you and me is you use Israel for your advantage. It's a job opportunity and security and bread and meat and a chance to fulfill your ambitions.

But I have sheep so they can consume me, use me up, poured out water. You know what's interesting, poured out offerings, and Paul uses this, you know when you pour the water out it disappears. You know the last thing we want? I heard an interesting discussion yesterday on foundations.

Somebody said foundations are the biggest farce in this country, because you see what you do is you have a lot of money left and you want to build a reputation and make yourself eternal, immortal. And so then you turn it over to a group of people to run it, to perpetuate your memory. And then 99 times out of 100 the people who take control of it use it for something other than what you gave your life to.

So your memorial becomes a memorial to something that isn't you. And this was a guy who spent his life working with foundations. Now the guy said, you know it might be better just to give it all away before you

go.

But if you give it all away before you go, what's going to be left to tell about you? That drink offering bid is interesting, isn't it? Now, as I said, the son says I came to sacrifice myself, but I want to say the big sacrifice is not on the part of Jesus, the big sacrifice is on the part of the Father. If we could go back to Mount Moriah, the biggest pain is not in Isaac, because he looks at that fire on the altar, but the biggest pain is in the heart of Abraham. It's an incredible sight, isn't it? I used to preach on this occasionally and it's interesting what comes to your mind as you see the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, because you see there was more than Abraham and Isaac there.

You remember that was the site for the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and there were two more people there. And as Abraham gets ready to sacrifice Isaac, I can hear a conversation between the first person of the trinity and the second person of the trinity. And the second person of the trinity says, Father, this is not the last time we're coming to this hilltop, is it? Father said, no, son, it isn't.

And the son said, Father, the next time we come, it's not going to be one of them on that altar, is it? And the father said, no, the next time we come, it's not going to be one of them on that altar, it's going to be one of us. And the son says, Father, when we come back to this hill the next time, it's going to be me on that altar, isn't it? And the father said, yes, son. Next time we come, it's going to be you on that altar.

And the son said, Father, when we come back the next time, and the guy gets ready to stick that sword in, spear in, are you going to say, stop, don't touch the boy? Father said, no, son. Next time we come, and it's you on that altar, we're not going to say stop. We never ask them to do in symbol what we haven't done in reality.

Now, I wish I knew how to preach that. I want to tell you something. God has never asked anybody to go anywhere he hasn't been.

God never asks anybody to do anything he hasn't done. And Jesus said, I and my father are one. And Paul said, Christ and I are one.

I don't know about you, but that's an astounding thing to me. My time's gone. I'm halfway through.

But hold on. I can't quit without this. He says there are two classes of people.

There's the natural, and then there's the spiritual. But he said, you Corinthians, you're a funny bunch. You're neither one.

You've created a third order of beings. And you know what you are? You're a fleshly bunch. It's interesting that he'll play on two different words that are adjectival forms of the noun *sarx*, which means flesh.

Now, you've got to realize that in the New Testament, flesh is in itself not evil. God created our flesh. God created our egos.

God created ourselves. So there's nothing wrong with the self. It's the selfishness in the self that makes the self wrong.

And so he says, you've created a third order of beings. And he says, what's the characteristic of the third order of beings? Well, he said, you're still carnal because there is jealousy. Now, my translation here says, jealousy and quarreling among you.

Are you not carnal? Now, it's interesting. Jealousy and the word for the next word is a word which means to strive. There is the Greek word eris, and it comes from erizo, which means to strive.

It's interesting that word is used when it tells about Jesus coming, and he won't put out a burning flax, and the striving won't be in him. What's being gotten at is what you do when you see the other person and you think you're not getting what you deserve, and so you decide to do something about it. Or you look at your circumstances and say, I deserve better than this, and then you make a move to improve your position.

It is a word which speaks of self-interest. And after all, it's interesting nobody's ever, Robinson Crusoe wasn't jealous of anybody on the island with him until Friday showed up. It said, jealousy is what you feel when you think the other person got more than you, got a better position than you, and envy is when you wish he didn't have it.

Now, both of those are involved here. One, when you look at another and you get unhappy about your situation, and then when you get to the place where you'd like to have him back at your level or so forth. Then the next word is when you do something about it, which means you've taken your life back into your own hands.

Now, I'm not saying that real well, but he says, what is the third mindset that you've developed? The third mindset that you've developed that's neither natural nor spiritual is the Christian who has some self-interest in, that tyrannizes his life. And he says, you know, that's a temporary spot. You can't stay there.

It's not a part of God's purposes, because God sees us in one of two ways. He sees us as natural or else he sees us as beneficiaries of the cross. And the person who's in the middle has only begun to receive the benefits of the cross.

Now, there's one thing wrong with most of our interpretations of 1 Corinthians 3. He says, are you not yet babes in Christ? Mark, can I take two and a half minutes here? Let me finish with this. Are you not yet babes in Christ? The Greek word teleos is used in here, and it's translated sometimes by perfect. It is translated, many translations, by mature.

Now, there is an element in which the term mature is appropriate, because I think the normal person has to live a while before he sees how much self-orientation there is in him. That's the reason that I believe Wesley talked about a second work of grace. The magic was not in the secondness, but it took a little while for you to realize the inadequacy of what had happened to you in the beginning, that you were in that third class like the Corinthians.

Now, the implication, if you use the word napeos, if you use the word you're babes in Christ, and if you translate teleos, mature is, if you give me time, I can remedy it. And that is the delusion of all delusions, because nobody has ever delivered himself from an iota of sinful self-interest at any point, anywhere in the history of the human race. If you ever got rid of a flicker of it, it was God that delivered you from it, not you.

And growth won't do it. Time may help you see the extension of it within us. Usually, if we get enough time, we find everybody else is like us and we're relaxed.

The answer is not time. The answer is grace. Grace and grace alone.

And there is grace for the sin that remains after conversion, the way there is grace for sin before conversion. And he says, you don't have the mind of Christ yet. You got part of it.

But I want you to come to the place where you're free. And do you know what he says? We look at the cross from the side where we see it in its gloriness and its horror. Do you know where Paul is looking at it? He's looking at it from the other side and said, boys, it's fun to be here.

It was sort of rough getting through, but it's fun. It's so much fun to get on the other side of it. I want to tell all the world about it.

And do you know our fulfillment is never this way? Our fulfillment is always this way. You remember Dante when he had gone through hell and gone through purgatory and was headed up into the Empyrean to meet God. You will remember that Beatrice, the one that he loved, was the one who led him.

And now she's leading him up all the way to God. It's interesting, a woman leading a man, isn't it? And I think he's dealing with human sexuality. I think this is the purpose of human sexuality, our other-orientedness.

We find that there is a joy in another person that is not in ourselves. Else it can do for me, give me joys that I can never give to myself. And so he's got a male and a female.

It's interesting that Beatrice was eight and Dante was nine when they fell in love. I love that. It's pre-orgasmic sex.

It's pure masculine into feminine energy, the kind of stuff that we're going to have in heaven. Now, Dante is being led by Beatrice up to the very presence of God. And as they move, you know, at lightning speed, suddenly he's aware he's approaching God.

He's never taken his eye off Beatrice because she's leading him. And he knows she's worthy to lead him. And as she leads him, suddenly he's aware they're near God and he can't resist it.

He looks away. And when he looks away, he's instantly smitten by guilt because he's taken his eyes off the one that has brought him so far. And then suddenly he hears a tinkling laughter and it's Beatrice laughing at him.

She's not disappointed because he's looked past her to God. She has had the supreme fulfillment that can ever come to a person. I once thought that was earthly, creaturely fulfillment.

No, I think it is personal fulfillment. It's in the nature of what it means to be a person. Because, you see, what I find is that Christ's glory is not himself.

We're his glory. And if you read the Song of Songs, you know what you'll find? You'll find that the most ecstatic passages are not her speaking about him. The most ecstatic passages in the Song of Songs are him speaking about her and he is the type of Christ and she's the type of us.

You know that God gets more fun out of us than we out of him? Because his enjoyment factor has more potentiality in it than ours, for one thing. I'm now convinced that God's greatest fulfillment is in what he does for somebody else. And Paul says, you can get that mind.

You can be like God. I'm following Christ, you follow me, and then let's both follow Christ who is following his father. I'm convinced that's what holiness of heart is for, to liberate me to where I can know that kind of freedom and that kind of joy.

And that's fulfillment.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/20/SID20952.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dennis-kinlaw/natural-spiritual-or-carnal/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**