

1 Corinthians 2:14

by Robert F. Adcock

Robert F. Adcock's sermon on 1 Corinthians 2:14 emphasizes the dangers of carnality in believers and the necessity of spiritual growth for maintaining church unity and effective testimony.

Duration: 41:02

Scripture: Romans 12:1, Hebrews 3:7-13, Hebrews 3:16-19, Hebrews 12:25-27, James 4:4

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Carnal Nature"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of carnality in the life of a Christian. He emphasizes that a person who is not spiritual cannot understand the things of God, as they are spiritually discerned. The preacher also highlights the importance of spiritual maturity and warns against being carnal, which leads to strife and division. He references the book of Hebrews and examines four passages that address the causes and consequences of carnality in the life of a believer.

Transcript

Starting at the fourteenth verse, an actual man receiveth not things of the Spirit of God, for there are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged as no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? For we have the mind of Christ.

And thy brethren should not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food. For to this end ye were not able to bear it, neither yet.

Now are ye able? For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you ending, and strife, and division, are ye not carnal, and walk as men. I think that will suffice. I thought tonight that, in view of some studies that we've been having in the book of Hebrews, in which we have discovered afresh and examined some of the warnings that are given in the word of God regarding the conduct of the believer in Jesus Christ, at the outset I'd like to say that carnality, which is a condition whereby a Christian is ruled by his fleshly nature rather than the Holy Spirit that indwells him, is something that is probably more common among believers than we would like to admit.

I think we find ways of excusing it. We sometimes want to ignore it. But indeed, a carnal Christian is a real threat to the unity of the Spirit of God among a group of individual believers.

He is a threat to the whole body of Jesus Christ, and I speak of the Church, the corporate body of our Lord Jesus Christ in the largest sense in which you can think of that. Carnal believers, those that are motivated by fleshly nature rather than by the Spirit of God, can cause so much harm within the body. I remember a few years ago, a preacher that I heard that used to visit the Gospel Center quite frequently spoke about this subject, and he said that carnal Christians inside the Church do far more harm to the cause of Christ than do the ungodly outside the Church.

And we find ourselves in a world in which we recognize that there are many people that do not know one thing about the sovereign grace of God, and they've never been introduced to the love and the grace of God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. And yet they represent no threat to harmony and unity within the body of Jesus Christ. Yet those believers that, because of some reasons that I'd like to call to your attention tonight, become fleshly motivated.

They are victims of this thing that we call carnality. They become a real threat to that spiritual unity that God wants above all else. Numbers of the body, but no division, no strife, as the Apostle Paul reminds us.

The Church at Corinth evidently had many, that their manner of life, their walk in this life, it was a carnal walk, and they did a lot of harm. So one Church that we find that the Apostle Paul addresses himself to, that time after time he has to warn them. And for this express reason, the world had such a grip, and the ways of this world in which individual believers were responding, that old nature was feeding upon the world.

And indeed, this brought upon that Church tremendous problems. When babes in Christ remain babes too long, you'll have deep-seated problems. The word of God knows nothing about an individual getting saved and saying, Well, I'm content with that.

That satisfies me. That's what I was looking for. I have found that fire escape.

I'm not going to hell, I'm going to heaven. And they sit down right there and wait for the Lord to come, and spend the rest of their days living pretty much like they choose to live. There is no growth in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as Peter enjoins us.

Be sure that there is progress made. They're just content to stay right there, babes in Christ, no spiritual growth whatsoever. Anytime you have a local Church in which that condition exists, you've got a real problem on your hands.

I've said this before, it's worth repeating. It's nice to have kids in a nursery. I like to hear those cries from that nursery.

We need them. I like to have a good number of young people in this assembly, because just a few years from now, if our Lord be not come, they'll be the leaders in this assembly. They're needed, and we know they're needed.

But if all of those babies that have passed through that nursery were still in that nursery, we'd have a real problem on our hands. It would take just about all the people that are qualified to look after babies to stay in that nursery to look after all those babies. Thank God there are some in this audience tonight that I can remember when they were in that nursery.

They're not in the nursery tonight. They're sitting in this room, and thank God they've made some progress along the Christian pathway. There's been some growth.

But in a spiritual sense, you can see the danger that exists. If individual believers remain spiritual babes very long, they're going to present a real problem. It is unnatural in the spiritual sense for a man or woman to be saved and to never make any progress whatsoever in their understanding, in their apprehension of spiritual truth, the enrichment of their soul in feeding upon the person of Jesus Christ, who is indeed heavenly manner to the soul.

None of this experience of knowing Him more intimately and gaining day by day a fresh and fuller insight into the will of God for their life, if that is not the experience of a believer, that believer ultimately will present a real problem to that church that he or she affiliates with. You might even label it as a very deadly condition, one in which, like that virus that sometimes attacks a human body and can do so much harm, destructive, the same thing can be true in a spiritual sense of those that are labeled as being carnal, motivated again by that fleshly nature. I said that in the book of Hebrews we had discovered just recently in a study that there are a lot of warnings given in the book of Hebrews.

I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but when you study that book, you have to be sure that you always keep things in perspective and remember that it was written to Hebrews. I'm reminded of this. The whole word of God is fact.

It can be for our good and for our learning, for our instruction, but a lot of it is not written directly to us, and that's true of the book of Hebrews. It's written to Hebrews, and there are many passages, of course, that have special significance only to those people that it was addressed to. But I believe that in reading these warnings that are issued in the book of Hebrews, I've discovered some of the causes for carnality within the body, carnality in the life of an individual believer.

I'd like for us to turn, and I have four passages, like any good table that stands on four legs. I've got four points. I've got four passages.

We'll read them and take a look at them and pass on. Hebrews chapter 2 is the first one that I examine, thinking always in terms of this condition that we just described to you of a Christian that is carnal, that the Apostle Paul was so deeply concerned about, because it presented problems of carnal, and it will present problems wherever you find it. I'll read the first four verses of chapter 2. Hebrews 2. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

For if the word spoken by angels was said fast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. I'm thinking about how an individual Christian views the salvation that he has received from the Lord. Salvation is a divine gift, and we didn't merit it, and we couldn't work for it, we didn't earn it.

Indeed, it is a gift. It's something that God has given to us. But to be content with just being saved was never in the mind of God.

He saved us not only from going to hell, but he saved us from sin. And it's important to be aware that the individual life should be marked by holiness. We belong to God.

We've been purchased with a price, we're not our own. And the quicker we understand that, I think that we'll better understand what salvation is all about. I'm not my own.

Remember, we are sealed with the Spirit of God. The earnest of the Spirit, the earnest money has been paid, and we are indeed God's property. His stamp is upon us, his seal is upon us.

We are marked up, not for judgment but for blessing. Oh, what a horrible thought that an individual with a salvation that is described as something that is great, something that is wonderful, that an individual Christian would neglect. All of the various aspects of being saved, it's worth exploring.

There's more to it than just being saved from going to hell. The chief end of man is to glorify God. Once I've discovered God in salvation, I should go on and on and on.

And there should be progress every day of my Christian experience until I am ultimately in his presence. I believe God expects that. But if we become carnal and we're no longer motivated by the Spirit of God that indwells us and God would have us sew up for service, then we will discover that we can drift.

You can't stand still. Nothing in this world ever stands still. There are moments that we think that I've reached this point in my Christian experience when I'm going to settle down right here and I'm well satisfied, I feel comfortable with all of the various aspects of my Christian life.

I think there's pretty good balance in what I see and believe in the Word of God, and I like the place that I'm in fellowship with. I like the Christian, and I'm just going to kind of settle down here and enjoy things. And I'm not intending to put forth any of that effort.

I'm not intending to generate any of that enthusiasm that sometimes I'm urged to show in my Christian life. Well, you won't stay there very long. There are moments you think, well, I'm just going to take it easy.

You can't take it easy because life, as we're reminded so often times, is passing on. And you may think that you're just standing still, but you'll be drifting backwards. You'll be drifting away from these things that are precious and dear to our salvation.

You begin to drift, and you're drifting because of neglect. The Apostle Paul used the word very generously in addressing Christians in the New Testament. He talked about ignorance.

Brethren, I don't want you to be ignorant concerning these things. This is important, and ignorance is no excuse. I haven't forgotten that.

I heard that in court one time. I heard this man, who seemed to have such a good argument for the reasons why he was in court, sounded real good to me, and it was based upon that one premise he was ignorant of what he had done. I can remember that judge looking right down at him and saying, Sir, ignorance is no excuse.

The Apostle Paul reminds us regarding this great salvation that we have, listen, if we're not working out this great salvation in the way that God has directed that we should work it out, and we claim ignorance as an excuse, God looks down from heaven and says, My dear child, ignorance is no excuse, and we're encouraged to study and meditate upon the word of God so that we don't err in our judgment about this great salvation. This is not just a matter of rejecting salvation. You can see it's the neglect, neglecting to work out that salvation in our daily living.

It's not something that we practice one day a week. We come together and we say, Today I talk about things of the spiritual. I concern my mind with those things that relate to my God that, again, is foreign to the word of God.

Every day is a new experience with God. As Alma says, this is a day that the Lord has made we will rejoice and be glad in it. There's a consciousness of God in our lives every day, and worship and praise should be a part of our Christian experience every day.

We don't wait until we assemble together as a body to worship the Lord, to praise the Lord, to give thanks unto God. It's a part of my being every moment of every day, a consciousness of God and what he has done for me, the deliverance that he has provided, and how he maintains and sustains each one of us in a way that we can live for his glory and honor. Titus says something that, to me, just brings us all into focus in a perfect way.

Paul, writing to Titus, says, The grace of God that brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live our lives soberly, righteously, godly in this present evil world. Let's face it, we are living in a world that is still at enmity with God. This world system and the hearts of all of those that are still blind to the gospel of Jesus Christ, this world is in a condition of complete rebellion against the authority and the will of God.

Yet, we've discovered the mind and the will of God in salvation. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each one of us to realize what the grace of God has done for us, and to appreciate it to the extent that we do not neglect so great a salvation. Brother, don't be drifted.

Don't say, you know, I've memorized enough scripture, and I know the language of Christianity. I know how to talk about salvation. I rarely ever have to read my Bible anymore to acquaint myself with these things.

I know it! In other words, I'm satisfied with what I know. Well, don't you think for a moment that God is satisfied with that attitude? Because for my God to really be all that he wants to be to me, it demands that I be in contact with him moment by moment of every day that I live. He saved me for a purpose, that I might serve him, that I might indeed discover his greatness in salvation and the person of Jesus Christ.

And indeed, it's not something that I'd relax in. It is something that is sight to souls. The more that we know about the person of Jesus Christ, the more that we know about him in eternity past, what he has done for us that makes us acceptable in God's presence, all of these things should excite each one of us every day.

We should be reminded moment by moment that he revels to have each one of us come to him, not just in our hour of need when we say, Lord, I need this, I'm crying out, I'm asking for something, but to just come for the sake of communion and fellowship. Lord, I just enjoy communion with you, fellowship with you. You saved me, and it means something to me, and I'm not content just to drift along with the tide of this life.

Lord, I want my life to have some direction to it. And the Apostle Paul could say, indeed, God wants us to let him have the preeminent place. You know, when an individual Christian has Christ first in his life, I'll tell you, it's a joy to be around that person, that believer.

You know, not a self-centered life. Christ is the center of that life. The Apostle Paul could say, for me to live is Christ.

Christ meant everything to the Apostle Paul. That's a good, good commendation to be said of anyone. Christ means so much to that individual.

I think each one of us should covet such a commendation, that others might see Christ in us, that as we yield and as we seek to work out this wonderful salvation and to discover all of the intimate details of what God has done for us, is doing for us, and will do for us throughout eternity. So, heaven be content with the progress that you've made to this point. Always think in terms of growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Don't neglect anything as wonderful as the salvation that you have in Jesus Christ. And then Hebrews 3, a few more verses that I like to read. Hebrews 3, and this passage is a little more lengthy, but it concerns itself with a condition that the writer of Hebrews recalls, in which, beginning at verse 7, "Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit saith today, if ye will hear his voice, pardon not your hearts, as in the provocation and the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test, proved me, and saw my work forty years.

Wherefore, I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always e'er in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, and departing from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made for takers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence set back unto the end. What is said today, if you will hear his voice, pardon not your hearts, as in the provocation.

For who, when they had heard, did provoke? Did not all that came out of Egypt by Moses? But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?' It is just the thought in this passage that reminds me that the Spirit of God calls to our attention how serious it is to have this thing said of us that, though we are believers, we are unbelievers. That's a paradoxical statement. We believe, but we don't believe.

We believe God for salvation, but day by day is it an experience, a fresh experience every day of believing and trusting God with the intimate details of our life? The children of Israel, indeed this is such a sad commentary upon their varied experiences with God, but because of unbelief, you know what you could do? You could go, and for that forty years that they wandered in that wilderness, you could follow their trail by the carcasses that fell in that wilderness. It was marked by gravestones, if you want it that way. You could tell where they had been.

The mark of death was upon that experience in that wilderness. Why? Because of unbelief, and I do believe that in this world in which we're living today, there are many Christians, and this is really fact. Over their Christian experience, you might as well go ahead and put up the gravestone.

He's dead. His usefulness for God and for God's people, it's over. He's living in a state of unbelief.

He's no longer trusting God. He's just motivated, and he just lives by that natural instinct, that baser instinct. The Spirit of God no longer has control of his life.

He's living like those in the world. He is carnal, and if you don't think that doesn't hurt Christian testimony, you just haven't had your eyes opened. Why is it that so many people direct? That is, these are people that have no association with the Church whatsoever.

They direct so much criticism toward the Church, talking about those individuals that identify with the Church, those individuals that call themselves Christians, those individuals that say, that I have received the salvation of God, and yet there is no evidence in that life that it's a life of faith, and Christian experience for them is no longer something that is meaningful. The gravestone has already been erected. Here lies John Doe, a Christian, a man that knew what the salvation of God was all about, but he copped out.

He no longer trusts God from day to day. He's no longer walking obedient to the pathway that God has directed for his life. The Spirit of God never accomplishes in his life that which he was given to him for.

He's no longer a witness and a testimony for good. He lives a powerless life that is just so near that condition of death spiritually that you might as well put up the gravestone and mark him off the list. The children of Israel learn through a very painful experience what it meant to disbelieve God.

Oh, I'm so furious that sometimes God's dear children, when the pathway is so clearly marked by the instructions that we have in this book, and others see it, others discern, take this way. This is the right way. You can go in and you can claim all that God has for you in that area of your life, and they choose some other course.

They disbelieve. They don't take God's word seriously. What a tremendous price they pay when they do that.

And believe me, when you go into the far country and you stay in the howling wilderness for forty years, it has its impact upon you. Think of all the time that is wasted, all of the energy that is expended. Indeed, a painful experience to disbelieve the God that we have trusted for salvation.

That's another one of those causes, that's another one of those warnings that is given in the word of God. This is a very familiar passage, I believe the most, found in Hebrews 5, reading from verse 11. Here's another warning, of whom we have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing.

For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again 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 uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to them that are full age, even to those who by reason of youth have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The individual Christian that tends to drift into this condition of unbelief and a lack of trust upon God daily, soon he'll discover, I believe, because I don't think the Spirit of God is going to let a Christian live in such a state of disobedience. He's going to be aware, he's going to be conscious of what he's doing. Disobedience.

And he causes a breakdown, I believe, in the spiritual strength and makeup of that individual Christian. You know how you watch a fellow and he's competing in some sport activity. He never wins.

He's always a loser. He's one of those all-so-rants, and this happens throughout the course of his career as an athlete. Pretty soon he develops some attitude, I can't win, I can't win.

You see, things begin to degenerate for him. He loses any spirit of ever winning. So many of God's people, I believe, because of the impact of unbelief and just drifting aimlessly through that Christian experience, they no longer have a winning attitude.

I can't do it. I've tried it and I failed. No, we can do it, but we belong to one that can do it, if we're willing to turn the control of our lives, the reins of our lives, over to him.

Believe me, these are solemn words. You think of some individual that's been saved a number of years with absolutely no excuse. That man being a spiritual babe.

While he should actually be providing something in the way of instruction and help and strength for the local church, other believers should be being refreshed because he knows and understands and discerns the will of God. But he doesn't. Someone's still feeding him with a spoon, giving him a little milk, just enough to keep that flicker of divine light, just enough so that you can see and still say, he's still alive.

I heard him the other day, he said he was saved. You have to drag it out of him, but he is so defeated. I tell you, he's accepting a whole lot less than God intended for him.

And any time we reach that state, I tell you, that's a sad state. Now, when a man gets that far down, as far as disobedience to the word of God, he's been drifting so long, I'll tell you, it'll take something to wake him up. I know that we're told when we go to restore an erring brother that we go with a spirit of humility and kindness and love, but when someone is in this state, you've got to carry a baseball bat.

And I say that in a spiritual sense. You've got to take the word of God, the soul of the spirit, and you're going to have to use it in a way that will not be pleasant at all. And I've seen some carnal Christians squirm under the light of the word of God.

It's not pleasant, but it'll have to be done if we recover from that condition. There'll have to be that awareness in the full light of divine revelation and truth that, indeed, we have been out of touch with God, and that warning must be a firm warning. And we need never speak any stronger than the word of God speaks.

It speaks for itself, and so with skill and discernment we take and we use the word of God to correct this condition. Degeneration in our Christian experience, we become carnal. And then finally, and I'll close with this, in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, this final warning from Hebrews, which I believe is designed to draw our attention to the danger of turning away from God who speaks with such power and authority.

In the twenty-fifth verse of chapter 12, see that you refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escape not who refuse him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth. But now hath he promised, saying yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word yet once more signified the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, and those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Wherefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace of which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire. This idea of departure, leaving, going astray, drifting, all of these things to me are a reminder of how serious it is for each one of us to not let the word of God and the power of the Spirit of God govern and rule and direct in the affairs of our life. When God speaks, he means exactly what he speaks, and sometimes he speaks softly, and sometimes

when he speaks the whole world is shaken by that voice that we hear from heaven.

Ultimately, the Lord will speak from heaven. There will be a dissolving of heaven and earth itself. His spoken word will result in a catastrophe, the fusing together of all that is upon the face of this earth by a fervent heat, a consuming fire.

There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Why? God just spoke the word, that's all. He spoke, and it was so.

Does that grip you when you think that God has spoken to you in his words? He has enlightened your heart and mind to the salvation that he has given to us. He has asked us to work it out in such a way that we would bring glory and honor to his name. You wouldn't take lightly those words that he spoke in the past to his earthly people.

When he spoke to them in judgment, it happened. He will chase them out if we're disobedient. He will make every endeavor to draw us away from our foolish ways, to deliver us from our carnality.

Our only thought of one verse in closing comes to mind so frequently. I wouldn't be surprised if it isn't one of those key verses that would be the perfect remedy for this condition of carnality. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice.

This is something that is holy and acceptable in the sight of our God, and it's just our reasonable service. Don't be conformed to the ways of this world. You're living in a world that is in rebellion against God, a world that crucified the Lord of Glory.

Don't be a friend of this world. Don't let this world press you into its mouth. Discover the perfect will of God in obeying his will and his way.

You'll find happiness in your Christian experience, and you'll be delivered from this terrible plague that afflicts the Church today, carnality. Shall we pray? Our Father in Heaven, we bow in thy presence, deeply grateful to thee for the word of God. Thanking thee again for these moments of assembly with thy people, here's we pray thee these things that we've considered from the Word.

Let them serve a warning to those that need warning. Let those be exhorted that need to be exhorted. Provide comfort and cheer for the hearts of those that may be discouraged, and ever let us be built up and edified in our most holy faith, to the end that the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord, that he might be precious and dear to each one of us.

For this we ask in his wonderful name. Amen.

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