

Symptoms of Carnal Life

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon highlights the symptoms of carnality in the Corinthian church and the importance of keeping the unity of the Spirit and living according to the righteousness of God.

Duration: 54:11

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:4

Topics: "Carnality"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the condition of the world and how its wickedness can influence God's people. He emphasizes the need for believers to be delivered from living according to the flesh and to judge one another within the church rather than seeking help from outside sources. The preacher also highlights the importance of focusing on Jesus Christ and His crucifixion, rather than relying on human wisdom. He concludes by urging believers to maintain unity in the Spirit and to eagerly await the maturity of the body of Christ.

Transcript

...had been absent for some years, and yet in my prayers you are always remembered. Will you please turn to 1 Corinthians? 1 Corinthians chapter 1, we'll read from verse 4 to verse 9. I thank my God always about you, in respect of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus, that in everything ye have been enriched in Him, in all word of doctrine and all knowledge, according as the testimony of the Christ has been confirmed in you, so that ye came short in no gift, awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you to the end, unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 2, from verse 1 through verse 5. And I, when I came to you, brethren, came not in excellency of word or wisdom, announcing to you the testimony of God. For I did not judge it well to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling.

And my word and my preaching, not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not stand in man's wisdom, but in God's. And then finally, chapter 16. 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verses 13, 14.

Be vigilant, stand fast in the faith, quit yourself like man, be strong. Let all things ye do be done in love. Let's have a further word of prayer.

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us together here tonight. We do realize that we are standing on holy ground. We do sense Thy presence here with us.

And we want to remove our shoes and bow before Thee and say, Lord, what hast Thou to say to us? Speak, Thy servants hear it. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Before the Apostle Paul came to Corinth, he made a decision before God. And I believe that this decision came not from himself, but from God. He decided that when he came into the midst of the Corinthians, he would know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The Corinthians at that time was noted for two things. They were noted for their eloquence. There was a saying going around at that time, He speaks like a Corinthian.

In other words, a Corinthian can speak logically and convincingly. But at the same time, the Corinthians are noted for their moral corruption. So another thing was going on during that time.

They live like the Corinthians. Now, to face with a people both eloquent and corrupted, what are you going to say to these people to really help them? And that's where the Spirit of God led Apostle Paul to decide that when he was to be among them, he would know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him. He would not match his wit with their wit, his eloquence with their eloquence, because he realized that this was useless.

He realized that the only thing that a Corinthian needs is Jesus Christ and the cross of our Lord Jesus. And in Acts chapter 18, we find that he spent a year and a half in Corinth. He reasoned with them.

He ministered to them. He met oppositions. He was in fear.

And the Lord had to appear to him in a dream and said, Do not be afraid. Keep on. I have many people in this city.

Nobody will really seize you. And during those year and a half, he faithfully preached nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And when you read the beginning of this letter to the Corinthians, you'll find Paul mentioned, when the word of God first came to these Corinthians, when the testimony of Christ was announced to them, it was so powerful.

They received the word and they were enriched in knowledge and in gifts. And they were almost prepared for the revelation of Jesus Christ. And Paul had such hope for them, that when Christ shall reveal, they shall be unimpeachable before the Lord.

So what an expectation Paul had with these Corinthians. A tremendous beginning. But not many years, many time passed.

And we find that the Corinthians, instead of growing steadily to maturity, they remain as babes in Christ. They have received the Lord Jesus as their Savior. They have their sins forgiven.

But somehow they fail to accept the Lord Jesus as their Lord and Master. They receive the forgiving power of the blood. But they fail to receive the deliverance that came from the cross of our Lord Jesus.

Paul, no doubt, preached a full gospel. But they received only a part of it. Instead of the full gospel.

And because of this, you'll find that they are not growing as they should. They remain as babes in Christ. And they acted according to man, not according.

And as we find, Paul said, you are yet. They still live according to their flesh. Even though they were saved.

They were gifted. They were knowledgeable. And yet, in their lives, they do not allow the cross of our Lord Jesus to work deeply in them.

And this is the reason why they remain. So when we read the letter to the first Corinthians, if you want to use one word to write upon that letter, that word would be carnality. And through the letters you'll find there are many symptoms showing that how carnal these Christians.

First of all, Paul mentioned this matter of the spirit of division. Now even though in their letter to Paul, they did not mention this problem. Maybe to them this was no problem.

But strangely you'll find, before Paul answered their letter concerning different problems they had, and they wanted to ask Paul for help, Paul thought that this actually was the first problem. The most important one. So in the beginning you'll find Paul started this letter, mentioning this matter of the division, the spirit of strife among these Corinthian believers.

Some say, I'm of Paul. Some say, I'm of Paul. Some say, I'm of Cephas.

And some say, I am. Especially. And Paul's answer to them was, is Christ divided? Now division is natural to the world.

So far as natural man is concerned, that is the norm. It will be a surprise if we can be united in one. But for God's people, to continue in that kind of spirit, it is a great surprise.

It shouldn't be. Why? Because it is a violation of our very calling. Paul said, God is faithful.

Who has called us into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ, our Lord? We are called into a fellowship. And this fellowship is called the fellowship of God's son Jesus Christ. In other words, it is the fellowship of God's son with his father in the spirit.

This is the most exclusive fellowship in the whole universe. Because in this fellowship there are only three members. The father, the son, and the Holy Spirit.

And this is the most ancient fellowship. Most everlasting one. The son fellowship with the father.

And the father fellowship with the son. And it's all in the spirit. It is the most beautiful, the most harmonious, the sweetest, the most peaceful fellowship you can ever imagine.

I don't think we can really fathom the perfectness of this divine. And this fellowship is a fellowship of life. They share the life together.

There is no shadow, no shade, no changing. But you find that perfect fellowship, oneness. And nobody actually can join that fellowship.

You know, in this world we have clubs, fraternity, these things, and golf club maybe. And if you want to join, well, you may have to pay a lot of money or try a lot of means trying to get into it. But this fellowship, called the fellowship of God's son, Jesus Christ, is beyond any payment.

No matter how you try, you cannot try it. It's very, very exclusive. But thank be unto God that it pleases Him to extend that fellowship to man.

I think this is the most wonderful thing. You know, we try very hard to join a club or a fraternity, willing to pay some cost for it. But have we ever thought that you are in a fellowship that no fellowship, no club, no fraternity can compare with that? And are you contented with that? It pleases God to open up that fellowship, to include man in it.

And the only way to do it is to give His life to us. Because there is no other way to join it but to be born into it. And we find that through our Lord Jesus, through His cross, through His death and resurrection.

This divine life is given. And when we receive the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior, we have not only our sins forgiven, that's great, but don't forget, you are born into that most exclusive fellowship in the whole universe. You belong there.

And in Acts chapter 2 verse 42, the early Christians, they persevered in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers. That's their life. They continue on in the teaching of the apostles.

Now you notice here, the teaching is singular number, the apostles plural number. There are twelve apostles, more, but only one teaching. How can it be possible? We will say that Paul has his teaching, and his teaching is in direct opposition to James.

Now, even Martin Luther thought that way. He thought very highly of Galatians, because Galatians, he said, is my wife, my Catherine, I am wedded to it. And with Galatians, he fought the battle of reformation.

But with James, he said, I have no use for it. It is a letter of straw. I cannot fight with it.

But brothers, sisters, the Bible said, the teaching of the apostles, whether it is Paul, or whether it is James, or Cephas, Apollos, they have their emphasis, that's true. But their teaching is one. Why? Because it is not Paul's teaching.

It is not Apollos' teaching. It is not Cephas' teaching. They only teach what they are taught by the Lord.

It is the teaching of the Lord. And that's the reason why their teaching is one. And we need to receive all the different aspects of the teaching of our Lord Jesus through the various apostles.

And then you find the fellowship of the apostles. Again, the fellowship is singular number. Apostles, plural number.

You know, the Corinthians, they try to make a Pauline fellowship, or a Pauline fellowship, or a Cephane fellowship. They think that each apostle has his own fellowship. Gathering a group of people around themselves, receive what they teach, and nothing else.

Paul said, no. There is only one fellowship. The fellowship of the apostles.

Now, what is the fellowship of the apostles? If you read 1 John chapter 1, you'll find the apostle John said, We report what we have seen and heard to you, that you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. So, in other words, the fellowship of the apostles is nothing but the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ. It is the same and one.

And into this fellowship we are called. We belong to this fellowship. But with the Corinthian believers, even though they are called into this one fellowship, and that is the testimony of the Christ.

And yet, among themselves, they acted as man, people in the world. They were strives, emulations. And one said, I am for Paul.

The other said, I am for Apollo. One said, Paul led me to Christ, therefore, I belong to his fellowship. And others said, well, I am helped by Apollo's teaching.

So, I belong to Apollo. And others said, well, we'll go even further back to the original twelve. And here is Cephas.

And some people said, well, we are more spiritual than you, all of you. We belong to Christ exclusively. And they divide Christ.

This spirit of division is a sin against Christ. It is a sin against the fellowship that God has called us into. It is not a small matter.

It is very serious. And it is for this reason you'll find Apostle Paul dealt with this problem first of all. Because unless this problem is solved, the other problems cannot be solved.

We have to see one thing, and that is Christ is not divided. And Paul said, now, who is Paul? Who is Apollo, that you think so great of them? He said, Paul is nothing. Apollo is nothing.

Paul may plant, Apollo may water, but it is God who gives the increase. So, why are you so small? Do you not know that Paul belongs to you? Apollo belongs to you? Cephas belongs to you? Everything belongs to you. And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Don't be so narrow-minded. Enlarge yourself, and see that you are one in Christ Jesus. And how we need to walk according to the calling wherewith we have been called.

So you find in Ephesians chapter 4, Paul said, we need to diligently keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond. Thank God we have been called into one fellowship. Thank God He has already given us this unity of the Spirit.

Thank God there is seven ones that we all share equally together. One baptism, no, one body, one spirit, one hope of our calling. We are one body.

In one spirit we have been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles. And we are all made to drink of one spirit. And being the body of Christ, what is our hope? The hope is when the body is fully matured, then our Lord will come back and claim that body as His bride.

That is the hope that we share together. And these three are related to the Spirit. One Lord, our Lord Jesus, no other Lords.

One baptism, baptized unto the name of our Lord Jesus. It is one. We are one in the Lord.

We have one Father, of us all. So you find that the Lord has already given us that unity of the Spirit. It is in us.

It is not something we have to attain to. It is something that is already given and all we need to do is to keep it diligently. And if we keep it diligently, in spite of all the differences, we may have different interpretations about the Scripture, but we all believe the Scripture.

We may have different experiences of the Lord, but if we diligently keep the unity of the Spirit and continue fellowship with one another, one day we will arrive at the unity of the Spirit, of unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. We will arrive there. So here you find the Apostle Paul first of all deals with this matter of unity, oneness in Christ Jesus.

That we may not be divided and sin against this holy calling, against Christ, against that fellowship that we have been called into. So this is the first symptom of being carnal. And then you'll find, that's from chapter 1 to chapter 4. And then from chapter 5 to chapter 9, you'll find Paul begins to deal with another question.

And it is the sin against the righteousness of God. You know, God is righteous and he who practices righteousness is of God. You'll find that in 1 John chapter 2. God is righteous and because he is righteous, we who have been reckoned as righteous before God, we ought to practice righteousness in our daily life.

And here you'll find the Corinthian believers. There are situations in their midst that are directly violating the righteousness of God. In chapter 5 you'll find there was a scene among the Corinthian believers an incest that even in the world you hardly heard of it.

And yet it happened among God's people. And when this thing happened to them, the church as a whole did not deal with the situation. Tolerated it.

In other words, they felt that they were being broad-minded. And when Paul heard of this thing, he was so exasperated. He said, though I'm not with you in body, but I'm with you in spirit.

And there, with you, I'm dealing with the situation. Why? He said, because the church today is celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Christ is our Passover.

We have received Christ Jesus as our Passover lamb. And after we have received Him, we are now in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. You know, immediately following Passover, you have the seven days of Feast of Unleavened Bread.

During those seven days there shall be no leaven found in all the borders of Israel. Because if there is leaven left there, you will be excommunicated from the Commonwealth of Israel. No leaven should be found.

So Paul said, if you allow a leaven to remain there, it may begin very small, but it will so leaven the whole. And only a leavened meal can be presented to God as a sacrifice, as a meal offering. There should be no leaven there.

Not the leaven of malice and wickedness, but the unleavened bread of truth and sincerity. So you find that it is more than just a matter of dealing with a particular sin. It is a matter of that sin is in direct opposition to the very character of the Church.

Because the very character of the Church is three meals of unleavened meal. It is an unleavened bread. That is the character of the Church.

And if there is any leaven in it, it has to be there. Now from what we can gather, most people believe that because Paul, he tried to arouse the conscience of the Church. And thank God, eventually the conscience of the Church was aroused, and they began to deal with the situation.

And thank God that brother repented and was restored. Because discipline is for restoration. So here you find this sin is sin against the righteousness of God.

You know, today we feel that among God's people the sense of righteousness is a little bit blunt. It is not that sharp. You know, I think one reason is because of the condition of this world.

You know, the world is going down and down and so wicked and so unrighteous that when there is righteousness, unrighteousness, people do not feel that anything is wrong about it. And it begins to influence God's people. So here you find being carnal, living according to the flesh can fall into such a depth.

And Paul is trying to help them to be delivered out of this kind of situation. And then of course you find in chapter 6 you find how believers, they accuse one another, prosecute one another even before Gentile judges. And Paul said now, where is your dignity? You are supposed to even judge the angels and you are not able to judge anything among yourself? You have to go to the Gentile world that we despise and ask them to help? And why is it that you are not willing to suffer and to be defrauded? So again you find it is a violation of the righteousness of God.

And then further on you will find that they actually wrote to Paul and asked about this whole matter of marriage. They have marriage problems, evidently. And Paul tried to help them on this matter.

In other words, they find themselves not under control of their passions and lusts. And furthermore, you will find that there comes the question of eating meat. Because they love social things.

And in the old days, social things are usually carried on in the temples. And the best meat that was sold during those days actually were meat that had been offered to idols and these monks would sell them in the market. So they are the cheapest and the best.

And because of the lust of their flesh, you know, they like to have the best and the cheapest. So they said, well, what is idol? Idol is nothing. We believe in one God, one Lord, so all these idols are nothing.

And things offered to nothing is nothing. So, just get the best of it and enjoy yourself. And going to the temple is nothing.

So enjoy the social activities, but unfortunately there were people. I mean, as a matter of fact, in Corinth, you will find most believers were Gentiles, not Jews. And because they were Gentiles, they used to go to temples and offer to idols and their conscience were bothered.

But when they see these others who say they have the knowledge and just went ahead, so they just follow. And they follow with wicked conscience. And that's sin.

And Paul said, where is your love? Where is your love? Are you willing to, for your brothers and sisters sake, you know, even forfeit your right and not to eat meat. Are you willing to do that? So, brothers,

sisters, you'll find that what happened in Corinth is because they do not allow the cross to work in their lives. So they just want what their flesh desires.

And the result is they sin against the righteousness. So this is another thing, a symptom you'll find with the Corinthian Church. And then from chapter, I'm just generalizing, from chapter 10 to chapter 14, I would say it is a sin against the body of Christ.

Against the body. Why? Because Paul reminded them that when we take the Lord's Supper, we are in communion with the blood of our Lord Jesus. The cup.

We are in communion with the blood of our Lord Jesus. And how can we have communion with the Lord's cup and then have communion with the devil's cup? We cannot do that. And how can we take the loaf, which, before it is broken, it represents the body of Christ, broken for us.

But after we have taken each a piece of it, when God looks down from above, He still sees that one loaf. He must. So it is not only a communion with the Lord, it is also a communion with our brothers and sisters.

We are one loaf. And if we are one loaf, one body, then we need to wait for one another. We need to think of one another, and not to try to act as if I myself and you are you.

So here you find these Corinthian believers. When they celebrate the Lord's table, they have a feast first. Now, not like the feast that we have.

The feast we have is a love feast, and you find brothers and sisters, you bring your food together and share together. But with the Corinthian believers, you know, in the early days, because when our Lord Jesus instituted this breaking of bread, it was during the Passover feast. So the custom in the beginning was they usually have a meal, and then following the meal, they have the Lord's table.

So that's the reason why they can, at every meal they can have the breaking of bread. You know. But unfortunately with the Corinthians, you find those rich.

They bring their wine, and they bring food, and they ate by themselves. And the poor, they came in and they have nothing, and they just left them starving. That is the very violation of the principle of the body of Christ.

As a body, all the members of the body share with one another. So how can one be so drunk, until drunkenness and the others are starving to death. And after that you come and break the bread together.

Now it's a contradiction. So Paul said now, if this is the case, better not do this so-called love feast. There's no love there.

And I think probably because this reason, later on you'll find these two things are separated. Paul said, what I received from the Lord is very simple. Not a big meal, but it's just the loaf and the cup.

And we share together. Remember Him. Very simple.

So it's a violation of the body. And not only that, you'll find that even among the Corinthians where they are meeting together, they are not meeting for profit. Why? Because when they meet together you'll find that they all try to display their gifts.

Instead of thinking of how we can edify, build up one another. So you'll find among the Corinthians, the gift they love most is speaking in tongues. Because that's spectacular.

They don't mind whether people understand or not when people are edified or not. And everybody is seeking that kind of display. So Paul tried to correct them and said now, you are one body and you are members one of another.

And you should seek the gifts that will really build up the body. Instead of just thinking of yourself. So here you'll find it is because that self is not dealt with.

They are still self-centered. Even though they are saved, they are still self-centered. We need to care for one another, think of one another and prefer one another and try to encourage edify one another.

So this is, again you'll find a clear sign that they are carnal and not spiritual. And then of course in chapter 15 you'll find it is a matter of against the truth of God. They sin against the truth of God.

The truth of God, Paul said, I receive from the Lord and I deliver to you is Christ. According to the scripture He died. He was buried.

And according to the scripture He was raised from the dead on the third day. And it appeared to many people. And yet among the Corinthians there are people who say there is no resurrection.

They do not accept the word of God. The truth of God. Now the church is the church of the living God.

The base and the pillar. So when truth is being denied you have loosed the very testimony the meaning of the church. So Paul said now if Christ is not resurrected then we who believe in the Lord Jesus we are the poorest most pitiful in the world because we have no hope.

Our sins are not forgiven at all against the truth. So here you find in 1 Corinthians these are believers and they have a good beginning but unfortunately they do not receive the cross of Christ into their lives. They do not allow the cross of our Lord Jesus to work in them.

We know that our Lord Jesus on the cross not only bore our sins in his body so that our sins are forgiven. But when our Lord Jesus died on the cross he took you and me all who were in Adam he took us all with him and in him we were crucified. And we need to accept this.

We need not only to accept his substitution substituting us as our sin offering but we need to accept him as our representative that in him we were dead. They who are in Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with their passions and lust. And that's the reason why Paul can say I am crucified with Christ.

Not only I, it is Christ who lives in me and now I live in the flesh. I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So dear brothers and sisters we find that after we believe in the Lord Jesus there is one thing that is very very basic, important, fundamental to our lives afterwards and that is how do we look at the cross of our Lord Jesus? Do we accept all that the cross means? Do we realize that not only we need to receive his blood we need to allow his life to live in us that we do not live in ourselves, for ourselves but we live by him and for him.

In other words there needs to be a real presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice and allow his life to work out in and through us and by doing that we will be delivered from all these symptoms of canality that we find in the first letter to the Corinthians. So this evening this is my burden and I feel that we need to remind

ourselves before the Lord that there is always that possibility that we may sin against the Lord against those very basic principles in the Bible and the only way for us to be delivered is to ask the Lord to open our eyes to see the fullness of his provision in Christ himself crucified. Christ we have received but him crucified is also something that we need to take it to heart.

So let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord we want to thank thee that thy redemption is perfect and complete. We have to acknowledge that often times we only receive part of it and because of this we feel we are in weakness.

So Lord we come to thee tonight and again we want to open our hearts to thee and say Lord do reveal thy full salvation to us. Show us that not only thou has taken our sins away but thou has taken us away. Lord we are willing to surrender our life to thee and allow thee to work out thy salvation in each one of us that we may not fall into sin but we may glorify thy name.

We praise and thank thee for the sufficiency of thy redemption and we just come and accept all that thou has accomplished for us. We want to thank thee and praise thee. Bless thy people we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus.

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