

NOT BY BREAD ALONE:
THE RELATION OF HUMANKIND TO THE WORD OF GOD

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Introduction

“The attitude of any person toward the Word of God is a certain indication of the innermost character and reality of that person's spiritual state.”¹ Lewis Chafer’s words here crystalize a most difficult concept. Spiritual maturity is directly proportional to submission to God’s Word or lack thereof. God’s Word bears uniform testimony to the reality that comprehension of truth is inseparably connected to submission to truth. This is what lies behind the words of Jesus when He was tempted by Satan. In Matthew’s account of this exchange (*Matt. 4:3-4*), we find the following “*Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’*”” (NKJV).² Expressed here by Jesus is the reality that obedience to the Word of God is of primary importance. However, as was first stated, people have varying attitudes toward the Word of God.

The various attitudes of people toward God’s precious, holy Word reveal the spiritual state of that person. Conversely, the spiritual state of a person has a direct effect on their view of Scripture. With this understanding, the apostle Paul divides humankind into three categories. These are listed in *1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3*;

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1993), 6:168.

² All Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

The three categories are the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man. With each category, Paul mentions the attitude of that person toward the Word of God. This paper will demonstrate the condition, ability, and need of each category of person revealed by the attitude of each toward the Scriptures. As Paul began with the natural man, the same will be done here.

The Natural Man

“Natural” is the Greek word ψυχικός (psychikos) meaning “natural; unspiritual.”³ This word appears six times in five verses of the New Testament (NT)⁴. Of these uses, the most revealing is found in *Jude 1:19*, which states “*These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.*” According to *Romans 8:9*, “*...if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*” Therefore, the designation, “natural man” refers to an unbeliever. Anthony Thiselton proposes that the word be translated “*ordinary person* or **person who lives on an entirely human level** [original emphasis].”⁵ The apostle Paul reveals significant truth regarding unregenerate persons and their attitude toward Scripture.

At this point it is necessary to consider the larger context of *1 Corinthians 2* to demonstrate that it is an accurate understanding of the text to apply it to the Word of God. In verses 6-8 reference is made to the wisdom of God. In verse 9, the words “*it is written*” make it clear that Scripture is being cited. Verses 10-12 speak of the things given by God and revealed through the Spirit. Verse 13 mentions the teaching of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture (*2 Pet. 1:21*), it would be included among the things the natural man cannot

³ Faithlife Corporation. “Finitely Natural.” Logos Bible Software, Computer software. *Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, April 29, 2018. <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.finitely+natural.a.01>.

⁴ 1 Cor. 2:14; 15:44, 46; Jas. 3:15; Jde 1:19.

⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 268.

receive. In examining the natural man's attitude toward the Scripture, the outline given above will be followed.

His Condition

As already stated, the natural man refers to a person who is an unbeliever. Scripture bears abundant testimony to the estate of such a one. During Jesus' earthly ministry, He stated, "*For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost*" (Matt. 18:11). Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ and been redeemed by His grace are lost. Worse, they are enemies. *Romans 5:10* says, "*For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God...*" *Colossians 1:21* is even more specific. "*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.*" The one not reconciled to God is His enemy. An enemy is "a person who is actively opposed or hostile to someone or something."⁶ The natural man is an enemy of God, actively opposing and hostile to Him!

Ephesians 2 holds some powerful statements about the unbelieving condition. *Ephesians 2:1-3* makes the following revelation.

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

As if that were not enough. Later in that same chapter Paul writes "*that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*" (Eph. 2:12). Dead in trespasses and sins, conformed to the world, disobedient, filled with fleshly desires in body and mind, deserving of nothing but wrath. Without Christ, foreign to God's chosen people, strangers to God's

⁶ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

promises, without hope, without God. That is the condition of natural man. Such a one has nothing to commend them to God.

The natural man, in separation from God, is under the dominion of Satan. This estate leaves them blind. *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”* (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

This then is the condition of the natural man. Lost, enemies who actively oppose God, dead in sin with no hope of escape, corrupt in character, body, and mind, completely alienated from God, and held captive under the dominion of Satan. The *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* states, “Plainly, Paul has in view someone utterly without and even opposed to the Holy Spirit and God’s revealed truth.”⁷ With this understanding of the natural man’s condition, the discussion returns to Paul’s statement in *1 Corinthians 2*.

His Inability

Paul makes and explains two statements regarding the inability of the natural man (*1 Cor. 2:14*). First, he *“does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.”* “Foolishness” is the Greek word μωρία (mōria) which has the sense of being a “ridiculous thought. A wildly mistaken or unfounded opinion or idea.”⁸ With the corrupt character and mind possessed by the natural man, it is little wonder that the things of the Spirit are perceived as ridiculous opinion. Secondly, Paul also states, *“nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* “Know” is the Greek word γινώσκω (ginōskō). The sense of this word is “to grasp (intellectually), to get the meaning of something.”⁹ It is not only that the natural man

⁷ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 852.

⁸ Faithlife Corporation. “Ridiculous Thought.” *Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon*, April 30, 2018. <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.ridiculous+thought.n.01>.

⁹ Ibid. “To Grasp (intellectually).” <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.grasp.v.02>.

cannot experience spiritual things; they are beyond their ability even to intellectually comprehend! “Not only *does* he not, but he *cannot* know them, and therefore has no wish to ‘receive’ them (Ro 8:7).”¹⁰

The “*things of the Spirit of God*” are revealed to us in the pages of Scripture. If the natural man cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit, it follows that he will not be able to understand Scripture. Chafer writes, “The declaration respecting the natural man regarding his incapacity to know the things of God is of great import as an explanation of the religious situation in the modern world. No injury to the effect of God’s truth is more harmful in its extent than that wrought by unregenerate men who, on the ground of human scholarship, are allowed to interpret and define the things of God.”¹¹ People who are the enemies of God cannot be expected to accurately handle His self-revelation. When the starting place of so-called “scholarship” is that God’s Word is a collection of fairy-tales, error and confusion are the inevitable result. David Lowery expresses it well when he writes, “Like a deaf critic of Bach or a blind critic of Raphael is the unregenerate critic of God’s Word.”¹²

In addition to being unable to comprehend Scripture, *Romans 8:8* reveals that “*those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*” This conclusion is obvious when one considers that the natural man cannot accept or hold as true the things of the Spirit and, furthermore, cannot even comprehend them. The reality that the natural man cannot please God leads to the final consideration under this topic.

¹⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 267.

¹¹ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:168.

¹² David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 510.

His Need

“The basic need of unregenerate man is not education or culture – of great value as they are in their place – but salvation.”¹³ This is well said. Sinners do not need more information; they need transformation that only comes through a Savior. In Paul’s letter to Titus he writes, *“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”* (Ti. 3:3-5a). These verses inform of both the need and the provision. In the natural state, people are as described in *verse 3*. Yet, through the kindness, love, and mercy of God, He saves sinners.

Charles Ryrie writes, “The need for Christ’s salvation is readily seen in His estimate of the nature of man. He declared that by nature man is evil (Matthew 12:34; Luke 11:13) and capable of great wickedness (Mark 7:20–23). Since this corruption is internal (Matthew 15:11, 17–20), man stands in need of repentance (Matthew 18:3).”¹⁴ *Romans. 10:9* declares, *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”* The need of the natural man is salvation. This need God has supplied. It remains for the natural man to receive it by faith.

Summary

The natural man is lost, dead in sin, and bound by Satan. This leaves the unbeliever unable to receive or even fully understand spiritual things. One of the primary ways this is evidenced is the incapacity to comprehend the Word of God. What the natural man needs is to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly proclaimed. After hearing the truth, the unregenerate must

¹³ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:169.

¹⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Dubuque, IA: ECS Ministries, 2005), 54.

believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. Though Paul turns from his discussion of the natural man to the spiritual man, this paper will reserve that consideration for last. Instead, this presentation will skip ahead.

The Carnal Believer

With this consideration, an area of some controversy is entered. To some, the words “carnal believer” do not belong together. It is worth a moment to define the hermeneutic method that will be used. This author believes in the literal, grammatical, historical method of Bible interpretation. Using this method, it becomes clear that when Paul calls the brethren carnal in *1 Corinthians 3:1*, he means exactly what he says. At this point, definitions are in order.

“Carnal” is the Greek word σάρκινος (sarkinos) meaning “fleshly; merely human.” The word describes the “characteristic of this world and its attributes and concerns as opposed to the supernatural.”¹⁵ Paul contrasts this word with “spiritual”. This is the Greek word πνευματικός (pneumatikos). The sense of this word is “of or characterized by the Holy Spirit; especially of the mature, Christian life and its relation to the Spirit.”¹⁶ Though those spoken of here are fleshly and not characterized by the Spirit, Paul still refers to them as brethren and states that they are “*in Christ*.” Chafer says the following of this term brother. “When this title is used of a spiritual relationship it refers only to one who is definitely a child of God by a birth from above.”¹⁷ The terms that are used to describe the Corinthians make it unmistakably clear that they are blood bought believers in Jesus Christ. However, equally clear is the reality that they are fleshly, infantile believers. These realities need to be considered in greater detail.

¹⁵ Faithlife Corporation. “Worldly ⇔ Fleshly. *Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon*. May 3, 2018. <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.worldly+fleshy.s.01>.

¹⁶ Ibid. “Spiritual (mature).” <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.spiritual.a.02>.

¹⁷ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:169.

His Condition

Though carnal, they are brethren; though babes, they are in Christ. Someone who is a brother and who is in Christ is eternally secure. Chafer writes that such a one is “perfectly saved and secure in Christ... he is saved and safe. His union with Christ is established, and since it depends on the imputed merit of Christ it can never be broken.”¹⁸ The old adage, “once saved, always saved” is manifestly true. That being said, such a believer faces serious consequences from living a fleshly life which will be considered in the next section.

Though secure, the believer faces discipline for disobedience. This truth is powerfully presented in *Hebrews 12:3-11*. Space will not permit a full quotation of the text; however, some pertinent passages will be repeated. “...do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked...” (v. 5). “...whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges...” (v. 6). “if you are without chastening... you are illegitimate...” (v. 8). “...no chastening seems to be joyful... afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness...” (v. 11). The child of God is never permitted to continue in sin blissfully unaware and uncorrected.

From *1 John* Lewis Chafer draws seven “penalties” brought on the sinning believer.

First, the light of God, which in normal conditions falls upon the believers mind and upon his path, is turned to darkness (1 John 1:6). ... Second, in 1 John 1:4 it is implied that sin in the Christian will result in the loss of joy. ... Third, the loss of fellowship with the Father and with His Son is inevitable for those among the children of God who walk in darkness. ... Fourth, the loss of the experience of imparted divine love will be the portion of those Christians who do not keep the Word of God and who love this world (2:5, 15-17; 4:12). ... Fifth, the loss of peace, according to 3:4-10, is another penalty which the believer must suffer when he sins. ... Sixth, the loss of ‘confidence’ toward God in the experience of prayer is also certain for the believer who sins (3:19-22). ... Seventh, the loss of confidence at the coming of Christ (2:28).¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. 2:334-5.

Chastened, darkened, joyless, without fellowship, without experiential love, without peace, without confidence in prayer or at Christ's return. While saved and secure, the carnal believer is nevertheless under the judgment and discipline of God the Father; that is his condition. This brings the discussion to the next section.

His Inability

A carnal believer cannot be fed with solid food; instead they need milk. This consequence of fleshly living is readily seen in the text. What is being referenced here is made clear through comparison with *Hebrews 5:12-14*.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The carnal believer will have difficulty in understanding the Word of God. In introducing the topic under discussion, it was stated that God's Word bears uniform testimony to the reality that comprehension of truth is inseparably connected to submission to truth. That is precisely what Paul is emphasizing for the Corinthians.

The believer's ability to understand Scripture is a work of the Holy Spirit (*Jn. 16:12-15; 1Cor. 2:9-16*). When the child of God lives in disobedience, fellowship with the Spirit is broken. This is referred to as both "grieving" and "quenching" the Holy Spirit (*Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19*). The carnal believer, living in a fleshly state, breaks fellowship with the Spirit and is hindered from a deep grasp of Scripture.

The lack of ability in handling the Scriptures leaves the carnal Christian unfit for leadership (must be taught instead of teach), stunted in growth (babes, still carnal) and ultimately facing God's disapproval (*2 Tim. 2:15*). As previously mentioned in discussing *1 John*, this

fleshly believer also faces a hindered prayer life (3:19-22 cf. *Ps. 66:18*). The carnal Christian is both unable to handle the Word of God and pray effectively.

His Need

In his commentary on *1 Corinthians 3*, Thomas Constable bluntly states the problem and within the problem, lies the solution. “The fleshly believer then is an immature Christian.”²⁰ The cure for immaturity is growth. Both *1 Cor. 3* and *Heb. 5* give direction for growth. In *1 Cor. 3* the solution is to receive the “solid food”. In *Heb. 5* the need is presented as exercising the spiritual senses to “discern both good and evil.”²¹ They do not need an easier diet, they need to take in the Word of God and put it into practice (*Jas. 1:21-25; 1 Pet. 2:1-3*).

However, before that is possible, they need to repent. In *Revelation 2:4-5* Christ is addressing the church at Ephesus. Though they had some commendable behavior, He calls them to repent because they had left their “first love.” Before they can return to a right relationship and fellowship with Christ, they must repent. “Repent” is the Greek word μετανοέω (metanoēō). The idea of this word is to think differently, to reconsider, the have a change of mind and heart that leads to a change in direction.²² The believers in Corinth need to change how they are thinking about Scripture. It is not merely information to learn, it is truth to be assimilated. Through this change of heart and mind, the relationship with God is restored and the child of God grows. It is this growth that the carnal Christian so desperately needs.

Summary

The carnal believer is secure in Christ, yet stunted in growth, without joy, peace, or confidence, and is unable to handle the deep truths of Scripture. Their prayers are hindered, their

²⁰ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 3:1.

²¹ In *The Bible Exposition Commentary* Warren Weirsbe presents an unusual understanding of what doctrines constitute milk and meat (p. 578). The reader would be greatly benefited by this discussion.

²² Faithlife Corporation. “To Reconsider (repent).” *Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon*. May 3, 2018. <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.reconsider+repent.v.01>.

hearts are laden with sin, and they will face the discipline of God. This discipline will last until there is repentance and a return to fellowship and growth. The carnal believer needs to submit to the Word of God and allow it to both transform and conform them to the image of Christ. This brings the discussion to the final area of consideration.

The Spiritual Man

The first hint, given in the text, of the spiritual man is found in verse 14. The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned. The obvious antithesis to the natural man is a spiritual man, able to know the things of the Spirit. This is precisely where Paul goes in verse 15. However, we first need to be refreshed on the definition of “spiritual.” As noted previously (p. 7), this is the Greek word πνευματικός (pneumatikos). The sense of this word is “a person characterized by the Holy Spirit; especially of the mature, Christian life and its relation to the Spirit.”²³

When comparison is made of the spiritual man to the natural and carnal men considered above, the contrast is striking. However, in the matchless grace of God both the natural and carnal man are able to become spiritual. Warren Weirsbe powerfully stresses this point. “At one time, every Christian was ‘natural,’ having only the things of nature. When we trusted the Saviour, the Spirit came in and we moved into the plane of ‘spiritual’—able to live in the realm of the Spirit. *Then we had to grow!*”²⁴ What distinguishes the natural man from the spiritual is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. What distinguishes the carnal man from the spiritual is submission to the Holy Spirit and His inspired Word. What then, is the spiritual man?

²³ Faithlife Corporation. “Spiritual Person.” *Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon*. May 3, 2018. <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.spiritual+person.n.01>.

²⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 577.

His Condition

In the text under consideration, it is stated that a spiritual person is one who exercises discernment, and can distinguish between what honors God and what does not. This person is not judged by men, but by Christ. The ability to exercise discernment is a direct result of being filled with the Spirit. *Ephesians 5:18* makes a clear distinction. “*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,*” Pictured here is a contrast. One can either be controlled by the Spirit, or by something else. Wine and the Spirit are mutually exclusive. Also of note is that this speaks of a continual filling. The implication is that if one were to be filled with wine, they could not also be filled with the Spirit. The spiritual man then, is one who is filled with the Spirit. This filling brings discernment and growth.

Filling of the Spirit is only possible when the believer does not grieve or quench the Spirit. This means that a necessary component of Spirit filling is obedience. As Paul is wrapping up his letter to the Philippians, he challenges them to obedience by reminding them of its blessing (4:9). “*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*” The believers must do what they have been taught in order to have peace. *Romans 6:16* states “*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*” The Spirit filled believer is one who walks in obedience to the Word of God.

The above passage in Romans also speaks of surrender. When the child of God yields or surrenders to the flesh, the Spirit is grieved, filling is lost, and fellowship is broken. Yet when surrendering to the Spirit, righteousness is the result. When the follower of Jesus Christ is Spirit filled, obedient, and yielded to the Spirit's control, that follower is able to be used. *1 Corinthians 2:15* states that the one “*who is spiritual judges all things*”. The ability to be used by God, to

show discernment and distinguish between good and evil, these are the province of the spiritual man. Spirit filling gives ability to the child of God.

His Ability

In this point, there is a departure from the previous outline. Where the natural and carnal man have inability, the spiritual man is able. He is able to discern (*1 Cor. 2:14*), judge (v. 15), and have the mind of Christ (v. 16). The natural man can do none of these. The spiritual believer is able to partake of solid food (*3:1-2*)! The carnal Christian can only stomach milk. In sharp contrast to the carnal believer, the spiritual Christian can teach (*Hebrews 5:12*). Being mature, the spiritual Christian has exercised spiritual discernment to the point of being able to accurately distinguish good and evil (v. 14). This means the spiritual Christian is skillful in handling the Word (v. 13). “The spiritual man (ὁ πνευματικός [*ho pneumatikos*]) is qualified to sift, to examine, to decide rightly, because he has the eyes of his heart enlightened (Eph. 1:18) and is no longer blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).”²⁵

The ability of the spiritual believer to handle God’s Word brings with it God’s approval (2 *Timothy 2:15*). The careful study and analysis of Scripture gives the ability to correct those who are in error. *Titus 1:9* stresses this point, “*holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*” The correction of false teaching and defense of sound doctrine are paramount to the Christian faith. These abilities come only to the spiritual believer who is filled with the Spirit and who walks in obedience to God and His Word. The essential nature of the Holy Spirit’s presence in believers lives highlights the necessity of testing the spirits (*1 John 4:1-4*).

²⁵ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 1 Co 2:15.

Being Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled, and thus exercising the abilities listed above, ought to be the experience of every believer. Chafer stresses this when he points out how “A spiritual Christian is God’s *normal* child, though in the outworking of daily life with its human weakness and failure he may not be that *usual* type. It would still remain true that Spirit-filled life with all its wealth of reality is God’s standard, normal, and ideal, even though none ever attained to it.”²⁶ God’s desire and expectation for His children is for them to walk in obedience to His Word and thus be continually filled with the Spirit. The Spiritual man can handle the deep things of Scripture, can study, and teach, and correct, and discern. Each and every child of God ought to strive for this goal.

His Need

At first glance it may seem that the spiritual man has no need. He is Spirit filled, able to handle the Word, and approved by God. However, when *Ephesians 5:18* commands the believer to be continually filled with the Spirit, there is a call to greater and greater surrender. One cannot be continually filled with the Spirit without continual surrender. If at any moment surrender is thwarted, spiritual intimacy ceases. The spiritual man needs greater surrender. Along with that surrender comes deeper intimacy. Even a cursory reading of the Psalms reveal the various authors laying their hearts bare to the Lord. Within those pages lies a depth of intimacy that few ever attain. Consider *Psalms 130:5-6*, “*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning--Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.*” There is great passion and longing here. No matter the depth of intimacy attained, there is always deeper to go. The spiritual man needs deeper intimacy with God.

²⁶ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:199.

In *Ephesians 3:16-19* Paul records his prayer for the Ephesian church. This prayer reveals the need of the spiritual Christian.

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The Spiritual Christian needs increased strength, greater faith, a foundation of love that enables a grasp of all that Christ is, the fullness of God. No matter the spiritual condition of the child of God, this side of heaven, perfection will not be attained. More growth is always possible.

Summary

The spiritual man is filled with the Spirit, obedient to God and His Word, surrendered to the Lord's direction, and able to be used for Christ's purpose and glory. These realities enable the Spirit filled believer to feast on the meat of God's Word, to teach others its matchless truth, to study and be approved of God, to lovingly correct those who err, and to test the spirits of false teachers. When all of these are present in the life of the spiritual Christian, it leads to greater surrender, deeper intimacy, and a comprehension of the matchless love of God manifest in Christ Jesus. The spiritual believer needs the Spirit to have more of him.

Conclusion

The relationship of the natural man to the Word of God is that of confusion and a lack of understanding. The spiritual state of such a one prohibits the proper comprehension of God's Word. The greatest need of this sinner who is lost and dead in sin is to be gloriously and wondrously saved through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The relationship of the carnal believer to the Word of God is that of basic comprehension and watered down truth. Living in disobedience blocks proper fellowship with the indwelling

Holy Spirit and thus hinders the ability to grasp the deeper truths. This individual needs to repent, to change their mind and behavior and return to unimpeded fellowship.

The relationship of the spiritual man to the Word of God is one of obedience, submission, and studious wrestling with difficult passages. The vital relationship with the Spirit flows into deep understanding, intimacy, and communion with God. The greatest need of the Spiritual believer is more of the same.

As the reader considers these three categories, it would be well to consider where one resides. Is the need salvation? Is the need repentance? Is the need deeper intimacy? God's desire for each individual is the life of the spiritual man. This life is arrived at through submission to the Word of God. "Biblical spirituality is a mindset, a way of viewing life, which comes from welcoming the things of God by means of His Word."²⁷ May the child of God always welcome the Word of God to strengthen, correct, comfort, and grow.

²⁷ Dwight L. Hunt, "The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 720.

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