

Church Live Re-Visited: Session Two - Part 3

by Ron Bailey

The sermon explores the distinctions between living as a natural, spiritual, or carnal person and emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 13:55

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:9

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the concepts of the natural, spiritual, and carnal ways of living as described in the Bible. It emphasizes how true knowledge and understanding come through spiritual revelation rather than human effort or intellect. The distinction is made between living soulishly (naturally), spiritually, and fleshishly (carnally), highlighting the importance of being led by the Spirit of God to live a life aligned with His will. The sermon also touches on the transformation that occurs when God gives us a new spirit and the significance of walking in the Spirit to live out the normal Christian life.

Transcript

This will take us from the last verses of Chapter 2 into Chapter 3, and I'm going to pick out three words, and the words that are most likely to be in your Bible are natural and spiritual and carnal. So let me read from, I'll read from that 8th verse of Chapter 2, which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, I have not seen, nor heard, nor have entered into the heart of men the things which God has prepared for those who love him.

But God has revealed them to us through his Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, and gave the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him.

That's an important thing. Apparently, what we really know, we know as a result of our spirit. We're talking about spiritual things here.

You don't know it by deduction, you don't know it by brain effort, all that really is, is just more data gathering. And data gathering can have its place, but you don't know as a result of data gathering, you know as a result of revelation. One thing that Mr. North used to often say was that when people said to him, I really believe something, he knew that they didn't.

What he meant is that people said, well, you know, I know my daughter's going to come to the Lord, I really believe that. And what he was really saying is that when people say, I really believe, we know that they're actually trying to convince themselves. And what they're really saying is they hope so, and they want to kind of make a point of making a claim.

And he said when people really say, really believe, they don't say I believe, they say I know. I know this is going to happen. That's the real conviction of genuine faith.

And what it says here is that we really know things we know because of an action of our spirit. And what we don't know, we don't have. I don't know if it's just mental junk, maybe a religious junk, maybe a biblical junk, but it's just information.

And so God chooses to do something with it. Verse 11, For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the spirit of God. Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but that way of thinking, that mindset, but the spirit that is in God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing or combining spiritual things with spiritual. But, and here's the first one, but the natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to them, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual, I'm going to change the word here to make a point, appraises all things, yet he himself is rightly appraised 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 a baby. You are still carnal.

For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like men? I like that You're behaving like people, he says. What's the matter with you? You know, Christians aren't supposed to behave like people, they're supposed to behave like Christ. So there are three words here, and the version I'm using, it's natural, spiritual, and carnal.

In fact, each one of these is a kind of adjective, and the first one that's translated natural is this word psychikos, which is really soulish. So if you're going to be consistent with this, you have to kind of put these three ways of living as the first one is soulish, the second one is spiritish, and the third one is fleshish. And you say, I don't know what any of those words mean, well that's why I've chosen them, because I want to define them.

And you just kind of suddenly run to a rough, because you know what carnality is, or you know what spirituality is. The first one, soulish, this is the natural energy of the person. In other words, it is natural, it's not a wrong translation, but the actual word is soulish.

This is someone who is living from his soul. This is what a normal person does. You know, you get people, and in spite of what we might think, there are some very happy pagans around, who give no thought to any consideration, they live their lives just absolutely satisfied with their own instincts and desires, their expectations are pretty low, and they live for today, and that's soulish, that's natural, that's the way people are.

Now Paul says, that's how people are without the spirit. When God gives you the spirit, something happens which makes a completely different way of life possible. And I think maybe one way I can do it is if I quickly go to Ezekiel 36, and it's this passage where, it's the promise of a new generation.

Yes it is, thank you. Two parts actually, there's 26 and 27. This is a kind of a prophecy about a new generation.

In a sense it's talking here corporately about the whole of God's people. But when the promise, a similar promise from Jeremiah is repeated in the book of Hebrews, it doesn't speak about God putting his word and his law in the heart, but in the heart alone. So it's an individual thing as well as a corporate thing.

But this is verse 25 and 26. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you.

So this is the promise, this is the full implications of the new covenant. That God gives us a new spirit. We have by first birth a spirit which is dead to us, which cannot be what God wanted it to be.

Unfortunately it isn't dead to other spirits, but it is dead to God. But what happens in regeneration is that God gives us a new spirit, but not only does he give us a new spirit, but he gives us his own spirit. So this man now, the regenerate man has two spirits.

He has his own and he has God's. And actually the spirit is the place where God's spirit dwells, that's his habitation in the spirit. Now the man who has God's spirit in his spirit is now linked with God so that the spirit of God who knows the things that are in God, who knows God's heart, is able because he now dwells in man's spirit to communicate what's true of God into man's spirit.

And man is able to know what he could never know by discovery. He could never know by any amount of energy or hard-working potential. It comes directly as a result of revelation.

Now this is a spiritual man. And the spiritual man is someone who is not just born of the spirit, that's what makes him a spiritual man, but he's someone who is walking in the spirit. That's to say he's someone who is listening to what the spirit is saying.

He's not living from his own inner resources. He's not living from the things he's learned in the past. He's learning to listen to what God is saying.

And this kind of perfection is not an absolute standard. It's a work in progress and it's almost like a project that you're doing and the project has certain milestones. And when a person is hitting the milestone, when you're bang on schedule with the way that God is taking you through things, it's like you're perfect.

Not perfect in absolute terms, but you're perfect in what God is doing. So this is God's intention. Actually this is the normal Christian life.

The normal Christian life is a man who at every moment is absolutely right with God. He's doing the thing that God has told him to do. Now you can't carry this moment being right into the next moment.

That's a new moment and you'll have to become right again in the new moment by listening and being dependent upon God. Now very quickly then, what was going wrong with the priest? Well you've got soul-ish, you've got spirit-ish people whose instinct is to live from the spirit. But what was happening with the Corinthians is that they had become flesh-ish.

Flesh-ish or carnality, to give it a term that most people are most familiar with, really is a man who is born of the spirit, who is living as though he hadn't been born of the spirit. He is allowing other things to dictate the pattern of his life. He is allowing natural instincts to dictate the pattern of his life.

He is allowing he himself and his own personal whims and opinions to dictate the pattern of his life. He is choosing to live his own life, that's what he's doing. And a man who chooses to live his own life but has the spirit of God is actually carnality.

There are two ways you can actually become carnal. One, Corinthians shows that these people have become carnal because they had not progressed. They had not gone on with God.

They'd stayed where they were in this kind of baby stage of things. They'd not developed, they'd not grown, they'd not been open to new challenges and the will of God coming in again. They'd settled for where they were at and they were fine with that.

And that produces carnality. Now in the book of Hebrews you've got another day in which there's people who have become carnal really because they've gone back. The Corinthians have become carnal because they hadn't gone on.

The people in Hebrews have become carnal because they've gone back. So these are the two ways. It's all the result of not moving step by step with the spirit of God.

And we'll see some of these implications in our time that's pretty much gone now. And I want to leave just five minutes anyway for questions. There are three ways in which human beings can live on the earth.

One is the natural man. This is the happy paper. This is the man who has no revelation.

His conscience isn't troubled and he just kind of lives his life in the way that he wants to. Then there's the spiritual man. This is the man who has received the spirit of being born again.

God has written his law on his heart and God has entered into communion with him and fellowship with him. Not just given him a big banging counter, but actually entered into a relationship with him to take him on step by step. This is the spiritual man.

And then there's the carnal man. And I think one of the great dangers of the carnal man is that actually he lives in the spirit of the spiritual man. If you take the things that you get as a spiritual man used today and live your life based in some kind of confidence on them because you've achieved or you've understood or you've got to some level, actually you're very quickly going on.

You're into this trust in your own inward resources rather than this utter dependence upon God. And I think it was this morning I quoted you this little letter from Dave Webberley who had his own specialty attitude, blessed are the desperate. And this is the man who knows and is absolutely dependent upon God.

And this is the normal Christian life.

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