

What Are Three Levels of Living?

TEXT: 1 Cor. 2:14-3:4

THESIS: To see the level of living we are living on.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible is God speaking to man.
 - a. Every single law that God has ever ordained, which has to do with the soul of man, is contained in a single book, the Bible.
 - b. The fact that He is God is assurance enough that we have all the law.
2. His book is God breathed, that is, every Scripture is inspired.
 - a. And, there is nothing that compares to the Bible.
 - b. Inside its pages lie the answers to all the problems man has ever known.
3. Now as to the world, the character of division is a terrible problem and one of the most damaging things that exist in the world.
 - a. It leads to anger, fights, divorce, murder and war.
 - b. But, one of the answers to solving division is to see ourselves as God sees us.
 - c. When God looks at a person, He sees that person in one of three classifications:
 - i. The natural man.
 - ii. The spiritual man.
 - iii. The carnal man.
4. In 1 Cor. 2:14-3:4, it talks about these three levels of living and that everyone lives on one of these levels and so I would like to explore these this morning.

DISCUSSION

I. NATURAL LEVEL.

- A. 1 Cor. 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."
 1. The word natural here is one who, of course, has life or is living.
 2. When God was creating the world, he created "living souls," that is, things that breathe and possess consciousness—things that have life within their bodies.
 3. At this point, the natural man is a living soul, an animal soul; he is a man who is living on this earth, just as an animal.
 - a. And, that is all he is doing.
 - b. He is living in the flesh only.
 - c. He has gotten no further than the flesh, no further than his animal life.
 - d. He has never progressed to the level of the spiritual.
 - e. His mind, his life, his energy and his effort are all focused upon:
 - (1) The physical.

- (2) The material.
 - (3) The flesh.
 - f. And, his decision are based upon:
 - (1) What can be felt.
 - (2) What can be possessed.
 - (3) What can be seen, touched, heard or tasted.
 - g. Yet, the natural man is also one who is:
 - (1) The fallen and depraved man.
 - (2) The sinful and corrupt man.
 - (3) The aging and deteriorating man.
 - (4) The dying and doomed man.
- B. Why, the natural man or woman is one whose spirit is dead to God.
1. He is a man with a human nature, and the human nature is all he has.
 2. His nature is human nature apart from God.
 3. It is a Christless human nature, a nature that will not believe and will not obey and therefore, will not live for Christ.
 4. It is life lived without the presence and influence of Jesus, the Christ.
- C. Now, let's notice some of the descriptions that Paul gives to the natural man:
1. 1 Cor. 1:21—"For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God..."
 - a. The natural man considers the things of God foolishness, dull and distasteful.
 - b. He lives primarily for his animal senses, primarily for what turns him on and for anything that attracts and appeals to the animal nature and who gives in to these instincts.
 - (1) To him the things of God are secondary, of less importance because he cannot see, feel, taste, hear, or prove spiritual things—not with his physical senses.
 - (2) And therefore, to his mind, it is utterly foolish to put spiritual things first.
 2. Rom. 1:21—"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
 - a. The natural man knows that God gives them life and cares and provides for them, and that God runs everything in an orderly and lawful way, giving purpose and meaning to life.
 - b. Men can see that God is great and good; therefore, God deserves to be glorified and given thanks.
 - (1) But the natural man becomes worthless in his reasoning and they push God out of their minds.
 - (2) Their hearts also are blinded in the dark and without understanding.

3. Eph. 4:17-18, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:”
 - a. The natural man does not receive things of the Spirit of God.
 - b. He welcomes only the world and therefore, God is not welcomed into his life.
 4. Eph. 2:2-3, “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”
 - a. The natural man is disobedient to God and is classified to God as a child of disobedience, but does not care because he seeks to fulfill the desires of his flesh and mind.
 - b. He has nothing else to live for.
 - (1) His life is self centered instead of being God centered and heaven centered.
 - (2) Primarily, the natural man has little or no interest in spiritual things.
- D. But, he needs redemption.
1. He needs to be turned to God.
 2. For without a spiritual rebirth, he remains a natural man (Rom. 6).
 3. Jesus’ death has made this redemption possible—if men will turn to Him.
 - a. But notice Rom. 2:7-8, “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,”
 - b. If he continues in sin, he is under the condemnation, that is, under the judgment of God.

II. THE SPIRITUAL LEVEL

- A. 1 Cor. 2:15, “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”
 1. A man is spiritual because the Holy Spirit dwells in him.
 - a. This man is spiritual because he is living under the influence of the Spirit filled Word of God.
 - b. In Jn. 3:5-6, “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh;

and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

(1) His mind is on the things of God, not the things of the flesh.

(2) And, the spiritual life is one that is quickened or given life by the Spirit, walking in the Spirit.

2. And so, the spiritual man judges all things.

a. He allows the Spirit of God to dwell within him because we are the temple of God (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16).

b. He partakes of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

B. Look at some of the description of the spiritual person.

1. In Rom. 6:1-6, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

2. Col. 3:1-3, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

3. 2 Pet. 1:5-10, Peter tells us to add to our faith:

a. Virtue or moral strength and courage of our character.

b. Knowledge which is practical intelligence and knowing what to do in every situation.

c. Temperance or mastering and controlling our bodies: self control.

d. Patience or to have the spirit that stands up and faces life’s trials and overcomes them.

e. Godliness, which is living the way God wants us to live in reverence and awe of God. To live as if God was walking next to us on earth.

f. Brotherly Kindness is the special love that exist between brothers and sisters within a loving family, who cherish one another.

g. Charity is that love that loves regardless of our feelings, regardless if the person does or does not deserved to be loved or if they are unworthy to be loved.

(1) The spiritual level man is one who loves selflessly.

h. And, “if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:”

4. Rom. 8:5, 6—“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on

the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit...to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.

- C. Now, the spiritual man is not understood by the natural man for, “no man judgeth.”
1. One must tune his mind to spiritual matters when he reads and studies the Bible.
 2. One must become spiritually-minded in his thinking.
 - a. Take for instance, Nicodemus misunderstood the Lord's statement about the new birth (John 3:1-8), thinking Christ was speaking of a second natural birth.
 - (1) By thinking along that line, the new birth could only be foolishness to a man, but the Lord showed that he had an entirely different kind of birth in mind—a *birth* of the soul.
 - b. You know, one who reads the book of Revelation from a worldly point of view is doomed to utterly miss the message of that great book of symbols.
 - (1) A man once said that he did not consider the Bible to be of any importance because he had read Revelation, and the notion of seven-headed beasts is incredible; since he decided Revelation was preposterous, the rest of the Bible must be no better!
 - (2) But he failed to see that there is such a thing as representative language in the Bible, which figuratively expresses the message.
- D. Thus, the spiritual man says, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. 2:16)
1. So, the challenge is to remain a spiritual man!
 - a. And, it requires continual crucifying of the old man of sin.
 - b. And to allow God’s Spirit to take full control of our lives.
 2. Not to quench the Spirit, Grieve the Spirit, but listen and obey His Will.

III. THE CARNAL LEVEL

- A. 1 Cor. 3:1-3, “And I, brethren, could 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 meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”
1. This is a man who is not spiritually mature; he is a babe in Christ.
 2. He should be more mature, more developed spiritually, but he has not grown in Christ.
 - a. He does not know the things of God like he should.
 - b. His mind and behavior is not focused upon Christ like they should

- be.
 - c. He has been a believer for many years, but he knows little about Christ and God.
 - 3. So, he has to be fed with milk because he has little growth.
 - a. The same gospel is preached to all, and the same Word is studied by all; but some have paid attention, studied, prayed, and served Christ more than others.
 - (1) He is content with milk of the word and cannot bear the meat of the word.
 - (2) For, he cares little about study and learning the deep treasures of God's Word. (2 Tim. 4:1-5)
 - b. And, there is one main characteristic of the carnal man: division.
 - (1) When people become jealous of one another, they become divided and begin to strive or argue and wrangle with one another.
 - (2) Carnality is seen when believers begin to walk and act like men of the world.
 - (a) Men in the world live for the world, so they want and struggle for all they can get for the least amount of effort.
 - (3) Carnality is seen when believers begin to follow men and form cliques.
- B. Carnality seems to be identifying back with the natural man.
 - 1. And so, there is a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.
 - 2. Gal. 5:16-17, "*This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."
 - a. The flesh fights for dominance.
 - (1) It lust against the spirit and fights to control the man.
 - (2) But, the flesh is contrary to the spirit.
 - (3) Yet, the flesh keeps a person from doing what he should do.
 - (4) He fails to keep the law.
 - b. Now, the spiritual man has common victory because he yields to the Spirit.
 - c. The carnal man suffers repeated defeat & failure—because he is unwilling to fully yield to the Spirit.
- C. The solution for the carnal minded is found in Rom. 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

1. Think about what God has done for you and present yourselves as living sacrifices.
 - a. Be in constant dedication to God, desiring to please Him and live for Him.
2. But why?
 - a. Because it is acceptable, God is extremely satisfied with us as a living sacrifice.
 - b. It is what is needed in order to renew our minds and to have us walk humbly before God.
 - c. It is what is needed to arm ourselves against the world.

CONCLUSION

1. Every human soul is living on one of these levels.
2. The highest and greatest life is the spiritual level.
3. It is the only one that has the promise of everlasting life.
4. May we all be challenged to live on this level!

