

Spiritual Immaturity – 1 Cor 3:1-4

1 Cor 3:1-4 (Start with 2:14,16)

Brothers – meaning brothers/sisters in Christ, just like it did the previous 4x in ch1&2 . . .

And just like it does the other 23 times in 1 Cor; So he’s speaking to believers here

People of the flesh – people who live to satisfy their sinful desires

Infants in Christ – baby believers who don’t yet think right

I fed you with milk – I taught you only the basics; the things easy to accept and grasp

Not solid food – the things that take time/effort to understand, and especially live out

Behaving only in a human way – just like those w/out the Spirit (**Intro**)

- **Paul is saying**, “Hey, you have the ability to understand the things of God . . .
You have the capacity to comprehend spiritual truths . . .
You have what it takes to digest solid spiritual food . . .
But you don’t, and you can’t, b/c some of you are still in diapers, and others of you are still in sin”

Some of you are *baby* believers who don’t *think* right – you’re *infants in Christ* . . .

And others of you are *sinful* believers who don’t *live* right – who live according to your flesh, instead of the Spirit

Who seek to satisfy your *old* nature instead of your *new* one

The result of which is spiritual immaturity in both camps – infant and sinner

That’s the issue Paul is getting at here – **spiritual immaturity**

And his first implication from v1-2 is . . .

If you don’t apply yourself, you’ll forever be a baby (v1-2a)

Believer that you are, if you don’t apply yourself to the things of God – to knowing who he is, how he is, and what he wants, more and more . . .

You’ll forever be spiritually immature

If you don’t apply yourself to being a doer of the Word, as opposed to a hearer only – you’ll forever be a baby

I don’t care how mature you are in life, or how high up the corporate ladder you are, or how many businesses you own, or how well respected you are in the community . . .

If you don’t apply yourself to the things of God, you just as well walk around with a bib around your neck and a bottle in your hand – b/c you’re a baby

Immature in the sense that matters most – the spiritual sense

And ill-prepared to think right **and live right**

You have to apply yourself, no matter who you are; And *keep* applying yourself

- Otherwise you’ll never be able to move on from the milk of . . .
God’s love, to the meat of God’s discipline – you won’t understand, and won’t want to
God’s mercy, to the meat of God’s justice
Heaven, to the difficult to digest, meat of hell

From Jesus as your friend, to Jesus as your judge

From encouragement in the Lord, to obedience to the Lord

From what God *gives* you, to what *you* give God

If you don’t apply yourself, you’ll never be ready for solid food, and forever be a baby

Which is why it’s so important to get here on the weekends

Being in church *consistently* is one of the best ways to apply yourself to the things of God

As is reading your Bible on a *regular* basis; And *devoting* yourself to prayer

And getting involved with others in a SG or Bible Study or Discipleship Class

Spiritual ignorance is *not* bliss – you miss too much of God’s goodness

And getting out of diapers doesn’t just happen – even with the HS’s help

You have to **apply yourself**

- **My parents grew** up in Missouri, and went to High School back in the ‘50’s with a guy named “Woody”
I have no idea what his real name is, and I’m not sure they do either, b/c Woody is a hermit – he’s un-kept, lives in the sticks, keeps to himself, and *plays* dumb
Which is why he almost always comes up in our conversation when we visit my Mom and Dad – b/c he’s just flat-out childish and laughable in the way he conducts himself

And the conversation almost invariably ends with my Mom getting all serious on us, and saying, “You know, Woody’s not dumb, he’s just lazy. He doesn’t apply himself.”

To which we’re like, “We know, we know; Let us enjoy the laugh for crying out loud”

But the point is well taken – Woody acts like a baby, b/c he hasn’t applied himself to the things of life

And the same is true of some of u when it comes to the things of *God*

You act like babies, spiritually immature infants in Christ, who don’t think right or live right – b/c you don’t apply yourself

Start applying yourself consistently and regularly, or you’ll **forever be in diapers**

If you don’t fight your flesh, your growth will be stunted (v2b-3a)

In v2b, having said that they weren’t ready to receive anything more than the basics of the faith, he says . . .

Even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. (2b)

You’re still dominated by your sin nature

You’re still living to satisfy *your* desires, instead of God’s

You’re still living according to ways of the *world*, instead of the ways of *God*

You may not be an infant, but have you stopped growing?

Are you still dominated by your *sin* nature instead of your *new* nature?

Are you still trying to be accepted, instead of set apart?

Are you still trying to be *cool*, instead of *holy*?

If so, you’re not fighting your flesh, and your growth **will be stunted**

- **I gotta tell ya**, I’m so down on cool these days it’s not even funny
So many Christians are trying to be cool; Instead of being who they are, they’re . . .
Trying to be thought highly of b/c of their swagger, sway, clothes, speech, music, or hair
Trying to keep one foot in church, and the other in the world
And what they end up with is a pathetic version of the hoky-poky

Jesus doesn’t call us to be *cool* in this world, he calls us to *die* to this world

To be *immune* to its lure and attraction

To *deny* ourselves the sinful pleasures that others enjoy

Far from cool, he calls every single one of us to die to this world for the sake of his glory
And some of us, he calls to die *in* this world for the sake of his glory

In either case, if you don't fight your flesh to that end, your spiritual growth will *always* be stunted – no matter how old you are; **Fight your flesh**

- **Like your fleshly** desire to keep every last penny that you make, and ignore God's command to tithe
Or your tendency to rationalize your financial situation and so convince yourself that it's "okay" if you only give a little, or every now and then
It's not okay; It's flat-out disobedience, and robs God – Rd Mal 3 yourself; Or 2 Cor 8-9
Fight your flesh to keep your money, or your spiritual growth *will* be stunted

- And the same is true of serving
If u fail to serve the Lord by serving others, you'll fail to grow in your spiritual maturity
That's why every single person who calls this church their home, should be *worshipping* one service, and *working* one service
Worship One / Work One – every single week; That s/b your commitment
Not only will it contribute to the spiritual maturity of others, but to your **own as well**

It's a crying shame that John Walters, our CM Pastor, gets in a pinch from time to time . .
B/c not enough people are willing to fight their flesh and serve our kids
It's a shame that David Olson, our AM Pastor, has to *ask* for volunteers to serve on the Service Teams, instead of turning people away

- **If you've been** coming/going around here for several months, without a care in the world, it's time to step up and grow up
It's time to fight the complacent tendencies of your flesh, and get involved

I don't care how old you are, or how much you served in the church 40 years ago . . .
I don't care how filled your YA social calendar is . . .
And I don't care how busy you are with your family and kids

And neither does God
Except to the extent that it keeps you from serving, and feeds your flesh
Then he cares very much; And so do I

- Fight your flesh and start serving, will you? Fight your flesh and start tithing
Not b/c we need you to keep the "great big Harvest machine" going – don't give me that
You need to serve and tithe for *your* sake
So *you* can fight your flesh, and *you* can grow in maturity, just like **the rest of us**

If you don't fight your flesh, your growth will be stunted

If you don't apply yourself, you'll forever be a baby

If you don't repent of your sin, you'll never grow up (v3b-4)

I'm not talking about the initial repentance of *unbelievers* when they first come to Christ
I'm talking about the repentance of *believers* when they're doing wrong things, or not doing the right ones

I'm talking about confessing that sin to God, and then stopping it

Fail to do *that*, and you'll never grow up

Which was evidently the situation in the Corinthian church – they were spiritually immature b/c of their ongoing sin and lack of repentance (3b-4)

Are you not behaving totally contrary to who you are? Like a natural person instead of a spiritual person?

Are you not unmistakably showing your spiritual immaturity for all to see? You are

- And some of **you are too**
Oh, it may not be strife or jealousy like it was for them . . .
But **some of you, having** professed Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and having received the forgiveness and grace of God – are continuing in sin
And you make a mockery of the HS within you as you do

Whether it's . . . (Gal 5:19-21)

Whatever it is, some of you are succumbing to sinful behavior on a regular basis
And I'm here to tell you – keep it up, and you will be a spiritual runt the rest of your life
And that's *if* you're **saved at all**

- **Listen**, sin is an obstacle to spiritual maturity
It suppresses your appetite for spiritual things, milk or meat . . .
It alienates you from God; It stalls your growth; And stops your progress

Much like an *airplane*'s forward progress is all but stopped, when it drops below its stall speed – the speed at which the air flowing over the wings fails to provide enough lift to keep it in the air

When that happens, there's not only little forward progress, but it's only a matter of time before it crashes and burns

And so too for us – for those in Christ, mounted on eagle's wings as we are (Is 40:31)
Ongoing, un-confessed sin stalls our spiritual growth, and prevents us from further flight

And there's only one solution – repentance

That is, confessing your sin to God, and being done with it

If you don't, you'll never grow up; And you may even **crash and burn**

Let's pray (keyboards in background; couple of minutes)

- **If you're not right** with the Lord, I want to give you a couple of minutes right now, to repent, and get right
If you're living in sin, or you have an issue in your heart, or an attitude that's wrong, or a grudge you're holding, or a hatred you're harboring . . .
Or a general apathy and complacency toward the things of God . . .
You *have* to repent

You have to confess it to the Lord, make a commitment to never return, and then do whatever it takes to make sure you don't

Otherwise you'll *never* grow up; And your growth will *always* be stunted . . .

And you'll *forever* be spiritually immature

So take some time while the music plays, and get right with God

Waste no more of your life in **spiritual immaturity**

- (Close in prayer – 1:13)
B/c of your love, we're forgiven; And b/c of your love, our hearts are clean
And we promise Lord, to apply ourselves to the things near to your heart, and fight our
flesh so we can grow in you
We're forever changed God, b/c of your love
(No amen; Go right into song – Because of Your Love)

Close

Take a minute to announce something that I think most of u know, but I want to make sure
And that is, Nathan, our Worship Leader, is going to be leaving

For some time now, the desire to get out of leading worship and into an associate pastor
type of role, has been growing within him
So for the last 10 months or so, he's been looking for the right fit . . .
And has recently decided to join Harvest Bible Chapel–KC to plant a church there
The SP is moving there this week, and Nathan and Emily plan to join them ASAP

Which is bittersweet for us
Bitter, b/c he's going to be leaving us
But sweet, b/c he's going to fulfill a much needed role in another Harvest church

- All of that of course, means that we too have been looking for a new Worship Pastor
And I'm happy to tell you that we just hired him this past week, but he won't start until
August 1st

So Glenn McCrea, who's been around here the last 2 summers as a worship intern, will
be joining our staff and filling the gap until he comes

- For now though, Nathan's last Sunday is May 23rd – 4 weeks from now
And we'll have a couple of Open Houses that weekend for he and Emily . . .
One after the Saturday service, and the other after the 11 a.m. service on Sunday

So stay tuned for those details . . .
And in the meantime, be sure to express your love and thanks to Nathan for his faithful
and fruitful service