

The
Master's
INDWELLING

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ANDREWMURRAY



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This new edition from Whitaker House has been updated for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been revised for clarity and readability.

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THE MASTER'S INDWELLING

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Chapter One



Carnal Christians

Chapter One



Carnal Christians

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.”

—1 Corinthians 3:1

Here the apostle spoke about two stages of Christian life—two types of Christians—spiritual and carnal. The Corinthians were Christians; they were in Christ. But, instead of being spiritual Christians, they were carnal. *“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”* (1 Corinthians 3:2–3). Here is that word a second time. *“For whereas”*—in other words, “this is the proof”—*“there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one*

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saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:3–4).

Four times the apostle used the word *carnal*. In the wisdom that the Holy Spirit gave him, Paul felt this: "I cannot write to these Corinthian Christians unless I know their state and unless I tell them of it. If I give spiritual food to men who are carnal Christians, I am doing them more harm than good, for they are not fit to take it. I cannot feed them with meat; I must feed them with milk." And so he told them at the very outset of the epistle what he believed their state to be. In the two previous chapters, he had spoken about his ministry being by the Holy Spirit. Now he began to tell them what state people must have in order to accept spiritual truth, and he said, "I cannot speak to you as I would like, for you are carnal and cannot receive spiritual truth." That suggests to us the solemn thought that, in the church, there are two classes of Christians.

Two Classes of Christians

Some have lived many years as believers yet they always remain babes; others are spiritual men because they have given themselves up to the power, the leading, and the entire rule of the Holy Spirit. If we are to obtain a blessing,

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we must first decide to which of these classes we belong. Are we, by the grace of God, living a spiritual life in deep humility, or are we living a carnal life? Let us try to understand what is meant by the carnal state in which believers may be living.

Marks of the Carnal State

We notice, from what we find in 1 Corinthians, that there are four marks of the carnal state. First, it is simply a condition of protracted infancy. Let me illustrate what that means. Imagine a beautiful baby, six months old. He cannot speak; he cannot walk. But we do not trouble ourselves about that. This is natural and ought to be so. But suppose a year later we find the child not grown at all, and three years later, still no growth. We would at once say, "There must be some terrible disease." And the baby, who at six months old was the cause of joy to everyone who saw him, has become a source of anxiety and sorrow. There is something wrong; the child cannot grow. It was quite right at six months old that he would eat nothing but milk. But years have passed, and he remains in the same weak state.

Now this is the condition of many believers. They are converted; they know what it is

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to have assurance and faith; they believe in pardon for sin; they begin to work for God. Yet, somehow, there is very little growth in their spirituality, in the real heavenly life. We come into contact with them, and we at once feel that there is something missing. There is none of the beauty of holiness or the power of God's Spirit in them. This is the condition of the carnal Corinthians, expressed in what was said to the Hebrews: "*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God*" (Hebrews 5:12). Is it not a sad thing to see a believer who has been converted for five, ten, or twenty years, yet has no growth, no strength, and no joy of holiness?

What are the marks of a little child? One is that a little child cannot help himself but is always keeping others occupied with serving him. What a tyrant a baby often is in a household! The mother cannot go out, for she must be there to nurse him; he needs to be cared for constantly. God made man to care for others, but the baby was made to be cared for and to be helped. Likewise, there are Christians who always want help. Their pastor and their Christian friends must always be teaching and comforting them. They go to church, to prayer meetings, and to conventions, always wanting to be helped—a sign of spiritual infancy.

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The other sign of an infant is this: He can do nothing to help his fellowman. Every man is expected to contribute something to the welfare of society. Everyone has a place to fill and a work to do. But the babe can do nothing for the common good. It is just so with Christians. How little some can do! They take part in work, as it is called, but they exercise little of the spiritual power or the carrying of real blessing. We each should ask, "Have I outgrown my spiritual infancy?" Some must reply, "No, instead of having gone forward, I have gone backward, and the joy of conversion and the first love is gone." Alas, they are babes in Christ; they are still carnal.

Continual Sin and Failure

The second mark of the carnal state is this: There is continual sin and failure. Paul said, "*For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?*" A man gives way to temper. He may be a minister, a preacher of the Gospel, or a Sunday school teacher—most earnest at the prayer meeting—yet he often shows strife, bitterness, or envy. Alas, in Galatians 5:20–21, we are told that the works of the flesh are characterized especially by hatred and envy. How often we see divisions and bitterness among Christians who have to work together!

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God have mercy upon them so that the fruit of the Spirit, love, will not be so frequently absent from His own people.

You ask, “Why is it that for twenty years I have been fighting with my temper and cannot conquer it?” It is because you have been fighting with the temper, and you have not been fighting with the root of the temper. You have not seen that it is because you are in the carnal state, not properly given up to the Spirit of God. It may be that you never were taught it, that you never saw it in God’s Word, or that you never believed it. But there it is; the truth of God remains unchangeable. Jesus Christ can give us the victory over sin and can keep us from actual transgression. I am not telling you that the root of sin will be eradicated and that you will no longer have any natural tendency to sin. But when the Holy Spirit comes, not only with His power for service as a gift but also with divine grace to fill the heart, there is victory over sin. There is power to resist the lusts of the flesh.

We see a mark of the carnal state not only in unlovingness, self-consciousness, and bitterness, but also in so many other sins. How much worldliness, ambition among men, and seeking for the honor that comes from man—all the fruit of the carnal life—may be found in the midst of Christian activity! Let us remember

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that the carnal state is a state of continual sinning and failure. God wants us not only to make confession of individual sins but also to acknowledge that they are the sign that we are not living a healthy life—that we are yet carnal.

A Difference between Grace and Gifts

A third mark that will further explain what I have been saying is that this carnal state may co-exist with spiritual gifts. There is a difference between gifts and graces. The graces of the Spirit are humility and love, like the humility and love of Christ. The graces of the Spirit are to make a man free from self. The gifts of the Spirit are to fit a man for work. We see this illustrated among the Corinthians. In the first chapter, Paul said, *“I thank my God...that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge”* (1 Corinthians 1:4–5). In the twelfth and fourteenth chapters, we see that the gifts of prophecy and of working miracles were in great power among them. But the graces of the Spirit were noticeably absent.

This may occur in our day as well, as it did in the time of the Corinthians. I may be a minister of the Gospel; I may teach God's Word

beautifully; I may have influence and gather a large congregation, yet, alas, I may be a carnal man. I may be a man who is used by God, a blessing to others, yet the carnal life may still mark me. You all know the law that a thing is named according to its most prominent characteristic. Now in these carnal Corinthians there was a little of God's Spirit, but the flesh predominated. The Spirit did not have rule of their whole lives. And spiritual men are not called so because there is no flesh in them, but because the Spirit in them has obtained dominance. When you meet them and have fellowship with them, you feel that the Spirit of God has sanctified them. Ah, let us beware of allowing the blessing God gives us in our work to deceive us and lead us to think that, because He has blessed us, we are certainly spiritual men. God may give us gifts that we use, yet our lives may not be wholly in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Unfit for Spiritual Truths

The last mark of the carnal state is that it makes a man unfit for receiving spiritual truths. That is essentially what the apostle wrote to the Corinthians: "I could not preach to you as unto the spiritual. You are not fit for spiritual truth after being Christians so long; you cannot yet bear it. I have to feed you with milk." I am

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afraid that the church of today often makes a terrible mistake. The majority of people in our congregations are carnal. We give them spiritual teaching, and they admire it, understand it, and rejoice in such ministry. Yet their lives are not practically affected. They work for Christ in a certain way, but we can barely recognize the true sanctification of the Spirit. We dare not say they are spiritual people, full of the Holy Spirit.

Now let us recognize this with regard to ourselves. A man may become very earnest and may take in all the teaching he hears. He may be able to discern, for discernment is a gift. He may say, "That man helps me in this line, and that man in another direction, and a third man is remarkable for another gift." Yet, all the time, the carnal life may be living strongly in him, and when he gets into trouble with some friends, a Christian worker, or a worldly man, the carnal root grows and bears its terrible fruit because he has failed to allow spiritual food to enter his heart. Beware of that. Mark the Corinthians and learn from them. Paul did not say to them, "You cannot bear the truth as I would speak it to you," because they were ignorant or stupid people. The Corinthians prided themselves on their wisdom and sought it above everything. Notice that Paul said, in essence, "I thank God that you are enriched in utterance,

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in knowledge, and in wisdom; nevertheless, you are yet carnal; your life is not holy. Your life is not sanctified unto the humility of the life of the Lamb of God; you cannot yet take in real spiritual truth." (See 1 Corinthians 1-3.)

We find the carnal state not only at Corinth but also throughout the Christian world today. Many Christians are asking, "Why is there so much feebleness in the church?" We cannot ask this question too earnestly, and I trust that God Himself will so impress it upon our hearts that we will say to Him, "It must be changed. Have mercy on us." But, ah, that prayer and that change cannot come until we have begun to see that there is a carnal root ruling in believers. They are living more after the flesh than the Spirit. They are yet carnal Christians.

There is a passing from carnal into spiritual. Did Paul find any spiritual believers? Undoubtedly he did. Read chapter six of the epistle to the Galatians. That was a church where strife, bitterness, and envy were rampant. But the apostle said in the first verse, "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.*" There we see that the marks of the spiritual man are that he will be a meek man. He will have power and

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love to help and restore those who have fallen. The carnal man cannot do that. If there is a true spiritual life that can be lived, the great question is this: Is the way open, and how can I enter into the spiritual state? Here, again, I have four short answers.

How to Enter the Spiritual State

1. *We must know that there is such a spiritual life to be lived by men on earth.* Nothing severs the roots of the Christian life as much as unbelief. People do not believe what God has said about what He is willing to do for His children. Men do not believe that when God says, *“Be filled with the Spirit,”* He means it for every Christian. Yet Paul wrote to the Ephesians, each one, *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18). Just as little as you may be drunk with wine, so little may you live without being filled with the Spirit. Now if God intends this for believers, the first thing that we must do is study and take home God’s Word until our hearts are filled with the assurance that there is such a spiritual life. And it is our duty to live that life. We can be spiritual men. God’s Word teaches us that God does not expect a man to live as he ought for one minute without the Holy Spirit enabling him to do it.

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We do not want the Holy Spirit only when we go to preach or when we have some special temptation of the devil to meet—some great burden to bear. God said, “My child cannot live a right life unless he is guided by My Spirit every minute.” That is the mark of the child of God: *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”* (Romans 8:14). In Romans, we read, *“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”* (Romans 5:5). That is to be the common, everyday experience of the believer, not only at certain times. Did a father or mother ever think, “Just for today, I want my child to love me?” No, they expect love every day.

And so God wants His child to always have a heart filled with love of the Spirit. In the eyes of God, it is most unnatural to expect a man to love as he should if he is not filled with the Spirit. Oh, let us believe a man can be a spiritual man. Thank God, the blessing is now waiting for us. *“Be filled with the Spirit.”* Be led by the Spirit. There is the blessing. If you have to say, “O God, I do not have this blessing,” say it. But also say, “Lord, I know it is my duty, my solemn obligation to have it, for without it I cannot live in perfect peace with You all the day. Without it I cannot glorify You and do the work You would have me

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do.” This is our first step from carnal to spiritual—to recognize that a spiritual life, a walk in the Spirit, is within our reach. How can we ask God to guide us into a spiritual life if we do not have a clear, confident conviction that there is such a life to be had?

2. *A man must see the shame and guilt of his having lived such a carnal life.* Some people admit there is a spiritual life to live, acknowledge that they have not lived it, and then feel sorry for themselves. They pity themselves and think, “How sad that I am too feeble for it! How sad that God gives it to others but has not given it to me!” They have great compassion for themselves, instead of saying, “Alas, it has been my unfaithfulness, unbelief, and disobedience that has kept me from giving myself utterly to God. I must blush and be ashamed before God that I do not live as a spiritual man.”

A man is not converted without first having a conviction of sin. When that conviction of sin comes and his eyes are opened, he learns to be afraid of his sin. He learns to flee from it to Christ and to accept Christ as a mighty deliverer. But a man needs a second conviction of sin; a believer must be convicted of his particular sins. The sins of an unconverted man are different from the sins of a believer. An

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unconverted man, for instance, is not ordinarily convicted of the corruption of his nature; he thinks principally about external sins—"I have sworn, been a liar, and I am on the way to hell." He is then convicted for conversion.

But the believer is in quite a different condition. His sins are far more blameable, for he has had the light and the love and the Spirit of God given to him. His sins are far deeper. He has striven to conquer them and he has grown to see that his nature is utterly corrupt. The carnal mind, the flesh within him, makes his whole state utterly wretched. When a believer is thus convicted by the Holy Spirit, his life of unbelief especially condemns him because he sees that the great guilt connected with this has kept him from receiving the full gift of God's Holy Spirit. He is brought down in shame and confusion of face. He begins to cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone. I have heard of God. I have known a great deal of Him and preached about Him, but now my eyes see Him." God comes near to him. Job, the righteous man whom God allowed to be tested, saw in himself the deep sin of self-righteousness, which he had never seen before. Until this conviction of the wrongness of our carnal state as believers comes, until we are willing to get this conviction from God—to take time

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before God to be humbled and convicted—we can never become spiritual men.

3. *Going out of the carnal state into the spiritual is only one step.* One step. Oh, that is a blessed message I bring to you—it is only one step. I know many people will refuse to admit that it is only one step. They think too little for such a mighty change. But was not conversion only one step?

So it is when a man passes from carnal to spiritual. You ask if, when I speak of a spiritual man, I am thinking of a man of spiritual maturity, a real saint, and you say, “Does that come in one day? Is there no growth in holiness?” I reply that spiritual maturity cannot come in a day. We cannot expect it. It takes time for the whole beauty of the image of Christ to be formed in a man. But I still say that it only takes one step for a man to get out of the carnal life into the spiritual life. It is when a man utterly breaks with the flesh, when he gives up the flesh into the crucifixion death of Christ, that he understands how to enter the spiritual life. When he sees that everything about his carnal life is accursed, that he cannot deliver himself from it, and thus claims the slaying power of Christ’s cross within him, then he turns to Christ and begs forgiveness. When a man does this and says, “This spiritual life prepared for

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me is the free gift of my God in Christ Jesus,” he understands how one step can bring him out of the carnal into the spiritual state.

In that spiritual life, there will still be much to learn. There will still be imperfections. Spiritual life is not perfect. But the predominant characteristic will be spiritual. When a man has given himself up to the real, living, acting, ruling power of God’s Spirit, he has discovered the right position in which he can grow. You never think of growing out of sickness into health. You may grow out of feebleness into strength, as the little babe can grow to be a strong man. But where there is disease, healing must come if there is to be a cure. There are Christians who think that they must grow out of the carnal state into the spiritual state. You never can. What could help those carnal Corinthians? To give them milk will not help them, for milk is a proof they are in the wrong state. To give them meat will not help them, for they are unfit to eat it. What they need is the knife of the surgeon. Paul said that the carnal life must be cut out. *“They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Galatians 5:24).

When a man understands what that means and accepts it in the faith of what Christ can do, then one step can bring him from carnal to spiritual. One simple act of faith in the power

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of Christ's death, one act of surrender to the fellowship of Christ's death in the Holy Spirit, can make it ours, will make it ours. It will bring deliverance from the power of our efforts.

What brought deliverance to that poor condemned sinner who was most dark and wretched in his unconverted state? He felt he could do nothing good by himself. What did he do? He saw before him the almighty Savior and he cast himself into His arms. He trusted himself to that omnipotent love and cried, "Lord, have mercy upon me." That was salvation. It was not for what he did that Christ accepted him. Believers, if any who are conscious that the carnal state predominates—if any say, "It marks me. I am a religious man, an earnest man, a friend of missions. I work for Christ in my church, but alas, temper and sin and worldliness still master my soul"—hear the Word of God.

If any come and say, "I have struggled, prayed, and wept, and it has not helped me," then you must do one other thing. You must see that the living Christ is God's provision for your holy, spiritual life. You must believe that Christ, who accepted you once at conversion, in His wonderful love, is now waiting to say that you may become a spiritual man, entirely given up to God. If you will believe that, your fear will vanish and you will say, "It can be done.

If Christ will accept and take charge, it will be done.”

4. *A man must take that step, a solemn but blessed step.* It took some of you five or ten years before you took the step of conversion. You wept and prayed for years and could not find peace until you took that step. Likewise, in the spiritual life, you may go to teacher after teacher and say, “Tell me about the spiritual life, the baptism of the Spirit, and holiness,” yet you may remain just where you were. Many of us would love to have sin taken away. Who loves to have a hasty temper? Who loves to have a proud disposition? Who loves to have a worldly heart? No one. We go to Christ to take it away, and He does not do it. We ask, “Why will He not do it? I have prayed very earnestly.” It is because you wanted Him to take away the ugly fruits while the poisonous root was to stay in you. You did not ask Him for your flesh to be nailed to His cross. You did not say that you would henceforth give up self entirely to the power of His Spirit.

There is deliverance, but not in the way we seek it. Suppose a painter has a piece of canvas on which he desired to work out some beautiful picture. Suppose that piece of canvas does not belong to him, and anyone has a right to take it and use it for any other

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purpose. Do you think the painter would put much work into that canvas? No. Yet people want Jesus Christ to give His time in taking away this temper or that other sin, though in their hearts they have not yielded themselves utterly to His command and His keeping. It cannot be. But if you will come and give your whole life into His charge, Christ Jesus is mighty to save. Christ Jesus waits to be gracious. Christ Jesus waits to fill you with His Spirit.

Encouragement for Spiritual Life

Will you not take the step? God grant that we may be led by His Spirit to a yielding up of ourselves to Him as never before. Will you not come in humble confession that the carnal life has predominated too much, has altogether marked you? Confess that you have a bitter consciousness that, with all the blessing God has bestowed, you are not yet what you want to be—a spiritual man. It is the Holy Spirit alone who, by His indwelling, can make a spiritual man. Come then and cast yourself at God's feet with this one thought: "Lord, I give myself as an empty vessel to be filled with Your Spirit."

Each one of you has seen an empty tea cup sit there, waiting to be filled with tea when the

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proper time comes. The same goes for every dish, every plate. They are clean and empty, ready to be filled. Emptied and cleansed. Oh, come, and, just as a vessel is set apart to receive what it is to contain, say to Christ that you desire, from this time forward, to be a vessel set apart to be filled with His Spirit, given up to be a spiritual man. Bow down in the deepest emptiness of soul and say, "O God, I have nothing!" Then as surely as you place yourself before Him, you have a right to say, "My God will fulfill His promise! I claim from Him the filling of the Holy Spirit to make me, not a carnal but a spiritual Christian." If you place yourself at His feet and tarry there—if you abide in that humble surrender and that childlike trust—as sure as God lives, the blessing will come.

Oh, we must bow in shame before God as we think of His whole church and see so much of the carnal prevailing. We must bow in shame before God as we think of so much of the carnal in our hearts and lives. Then let us bow in great faith in God's mercy. Deliverance is nigh; deliverance is coming; deliverance is waiting; deliverance is sure. Let us trust God will give it.