

Why are there not more Christians – living in the Spirit, winning souls, overcoming sin and walking in Christ’s resurrection life?

The answer to this deeply troubling question may be given in four distinct parts all of which interrelate. The four parts deal respectively with unresolved issues from my past that have colored my opinion of God’s goodness, the type of Bible teaching I sit under, the kind of Christians I associate with and lastly my overall appetite for God. However, before detailing the answers to why I may not be a Spirit filled Christian the fundamental issue must first be addressed: If I’m not a Spirit filled Christian what kind of a Christian am I?

And I brethren could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal...1 Cor.3:1

Am I a carnal Christian?

Have I been a born again Christian for 10, 20 or 30 years and yet I’m still a carnal Christian?

For you are yet carnal: for where there is envying, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere (unsaved) men? 1 Cor. 3:3

What is a carnal Christian? A carnal Christian may be defined as one who:

- Lives and decides things primarily by the intellect (the carnal mind, walking by sight).
- Endeavors through will power to live a godly life in conformity to the scriptures (attempting to live by the law through natural human, that is carnal, means).
- Tends to think of Christ and God’s kingdom as somewhere out in space as opposed to within the heart (God is perceived as impersonal and remote).
- In all honesty has very little confidence in the value of prayer.
- Is still prone to sin in some areas and resigned to the inevitability of sin.
- Has a diminishing enthusiasm and boldness for winning souls to Christ.
- Does not enjoy enduring peace and rest in daily fellowship with God the Father.

Every born again Christian has two natures: his old nature, the natural human or “carnal” part of him inherited from his parents, this includes the body and brain and is often referred to as the flesh, this is his lower nature. He also has a new nature, the part of Him that was made over by God when he was born again, this is his spirit or heart sometimes called the inner man or the hidden man of the heart, this is his higher nature and the place where Christ dwells in him. The carnal Christian continues to live in his lower nature, meaning his will or soul, during the course of a day, is largely ruled by his own human nature. The spiritual Christian lives primarily in his higher nature, meaning his will or soul is largely in subjection to his own spirit, the place where Christ dwells.

For to be carnally minded is death (not physical death but separation from spiritual life which is God) but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Rom. 8:6

God desires that every one of us Christians be taught of Him to live in the spirit which means to abide in Christ, the secret place of the most high, in other words the Spirit-filled Christian life. But how do I move or grow from being a carnal Christian (the equivalent of living in the wilderness) to being a spiritual Christian (the equivalent to living in the promised land)? Without God’s enablement it is impossible. God’s enabler, the only one who can enable me to successfully live the Christian life, is the Holy Spirit. However for the Holy Spirit to enable me to

continually overcome my flesh and live in the spirit He must have complete authority and control of my will and my life.

For this to happen, for God the Holy Spirit to literally rule in my life (in other words for God to be truly my God and Jesus to be truly my Lord) I must first be brought (by God) to such a place of trust and confidence in God's love, His goodness and His willingness to take full care of me far better than I could, that I am genuinely willing, without any fear or reservation, to totally surrender my will and life to Him. This humble step, this crossing of the river Jordan (the word Jordan means descending) is the key to the door that leads out of the carnal Christian life in the flesh and into the abundant life of Christ in the spirit.

**...Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? Heb. 12:9
So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you...** Rom. 8:8-9

While I, as a Christian, remain in control of my life taking all my decisions in my brain, that is my fleshly or carnal mind (which is not subject to God's rule-Rom. 8:7) then God the Holy Spirit cannot be in control. Just as a natural parent cannot be in control of a child that is un-submitted to that parent's control and an employer cannot be in control of an employee that is unyielding to the employer's control, neither can God be in control of a Christian unless the Christian voluntarily chooses to fully surrender to God.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (living as true sons under God's authority as opposed to prodigal sons who are not) Rom. 8:14
...The Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him (meaning as the great Bible teacher R.A. Torrey puts it, God gives the Holy Spirit only to those who absolutely give up their own will to God in everything). Acts 5:32

The question remains, why are there relatively few Christians who enter into and enjoy the Spirit filled life, with all of those blessings listed in part 2 of this paper? The question could also be put this way, why do so many Christians hold back from coming to a full surrender of heart and will to God, since this is the pre-requisite for a life in and under the Lordship of Christ? While parts two through four of this paper provide other key elements of the answer, part one focuses on whether there are unresolved issues from my past that have influenced my perception of God.

Part 1 – Because I have some reservations about God's goodness or I simply don't understand why some adverse things happened in the past.

Specifically if I have any reservations about God's goodness (and it may be something that I carry secretly) because of things in the past that have happened to me or to someone close to me, it will be impossible for me to absolutely surrender my life to God. For example, if I or someone dear to me has experienced one or more of the following calamities of life:

- A chronic illness
- An accident causing serious injury
- A loss of job, business or income
- A divorce or other key broken relationship
- A ruinous addiction
- Abuse
- Premature death, including suicide, of a loved one

And, following such a calamity, if, as a result of either my own interpretation of both the event and scripture or through the interpretation given to me by another, I have attributed any responsibility or blame, directly or indirectly, to God then it will be virtually impossible for me to ever trust God fully with my life. Consequently I can never enter into the happy, overcoming, intimate, fruit-bearing, Spirit-filled and resurrection life in Christ that stems from a full surrender. This is because my view of and trust in God's nature or character of love and goodness has been marred and questioned by how I have interpreted those events from my past.

Unless I allow God Himself by His word and through His Spirit to change my view and how I think about those events, replacing them with God's own view (the truth) of why those things happened the way they did – then I will never fully surrender to God and I will always be a carnal Christian not experiencing nearly all of the blessings of the Christian life. Would I be willing to consider an alternative viewpoint on those events of the past? A lot hinges on my answer.

(Jesus said) **There is none good but one, that is God...** Mat. 19:17
The Lord is good to all... Psa.145:9
... **He** (The Son of God) **has done all things well..** Mark 7:37
The thief (Satan) **comes only in order that he may steal, and may kill, and may destroy. I**
(Jesus) came that they have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance – to the full till it
overflows. John 10:10-Amp.
...**The whole world lies under the sway** (control) **of the wicked one** (Satan) 1 John 5:19

Many times we Christians, working on the false assumption that God is always in control, have attributed the works of Satan to God with devastating consequences to our relationship with God. If only we would accept what God says about who is primarily in control of events, especially those that steal, kill and destroy, here on earth, we would not be so quick to mistakenly blame God.

My people (Christians) **are destroyed for a lack of knowledge...** Hos. 4:6

For a more complete discussion of this subject please see the three related papers entitled "Oh Christian where did you learn that?", "Why do Christians keep attributing the works of Satan to God?" and "Christianity – it only works by faith (that is, trust) doesn't it?".

Part 2 – Because my Church doesn't teach and disciple believers in the Spirit filled, deeper Christian life.

The Bible truths of a deeper life in Christ are not being taught in many of our Churches. Just as there is much more to natural life than merely being born in the maternity wing of a hospital, so there is much more to spiritual life than merely receiving the forgiveness of my sins through Jesus Christ and being born again. This deeper life in Christ would include:

- The grace of ongoing forgiveness by God, for Christ's sake, when I fall, and the grace to truly from the heart forgive others in just the same way.
When I either don't receive or give forgiveness all my growth in Christ stops.
...**Your sins have hidden His** (God's) **face from you** Isa. 59:2
...**Forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.** Eph. 4:32

- God revealing to my heart that I have been bought with a price and that I'm not my own. Ignorance of this keeps me as Lord of my life not Christ.
Or do you not know...you were bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's. 1 Cor. 6:19-20
- Being enabled by God to absolutely surrender my will to God in all things.
...I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy – the kind He can accept. When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask? Rom. 12:1 (Living Bible)
For it is God who works within you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Phil. 2:13
- By His indwelling presence, the Holy Spirit taking over the government of my life and Christ becoming my Lord, as I submit to His revealed word and to His Spirit in all my choices and decisions.
Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? Acts 19:2
...The Holy Spirit is given by God to all who obey Him. Acts 5:32
As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (meaning they are living in communion with Him and under His authority as opposed to prodigal sons who are living apart from Him) Rom.8:14
- Receiving daily the spiritual bread of the word of God made alive and brought to me by the Spirit - God speaking personally to my heart through His word, as I discover how to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd.
...Give us this day our daily bread... Mat.6:11
How sweet are your words to my taste... Psa. 119:103
Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound (of Your voice)
they shall walk O lord in the light of your countenance Psa. 89:15
To day if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts Heb. 3:15
- Learning the difference between a Spirit led life and a carnal Christian life.
- Understanding that the foundational and to be desired grace of humility is the chief characteristic of a God ruled life whereas pride is the to be detested chief characteristic of a self ruled life.
...God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble Jam.4:6
- Learning the difference between eating a living word of God in order to grow in my knowledge of God, and in love, in truth, in wisdom, in Christ, versus only mentally assenting to a written or spoken scripture.
Your words were found and I did eat them... Jer. 15:16
The entrance of your words (into my heart) **gives light...** Psa119:130
With the heart man believes... Rom 10:10
But the natural man (including the natural part of the Christian) **cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God... because they are spiritually discerned** 1 Cor. 2:14
- Learning the difference between scripture as Old Covenant Law to the unsaved and carnal believer versus scripture as New Covenant Grace to the spiritual believer.
Who also has made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter (the written word as law), **but of the Spirit : for the letter kills** (separates from God) **but the**

Spirit gives life (to the written word causing it to become the living word – Jesus Christ).
2 Cor. 3:6

- Learning the difference between knowledge revealed by God to my spirit and knowledge obtained by my brain through the five physical senses.
For in the wisdom of God, the world (people) by wisdom (using sense knowledge) did not know God... 1 Cor. 1:21
I thank you O Father... because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes Mat.11:25
- Discovering that the truth (God's word) living in my heart progressively makes me free from old habits, the demands of my body, and sinful thoughts – none of which could be accomplished through will power and self-effort.
You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free John 8:32
...(Father) **Your word is truth** John17:17
- Discovering that the word of God when given to me by the Spirit is not dead but a living thing. When it is planted as seed in the soil of my heart and retained there, despite the attempts of my spiritual enemies to remove it, it will grow and produce the very nature of Christ in me.
The word of God is alive... Heb.4:12
The seed is the word of God... Luke 8:11
But the ones (seeds) that fell on good ground are those which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit... Luke 8:15
...The word of God works mightily also in you that believe 1Thes2:13
Whereby are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises (God's word) that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature 2 Pet. 1:4
- The anointing of the Holy Spirit to witness Christ to others and preach the word of God, with power and authority, God Himself supplying the words (from those seeds previously sown in my heart).
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel... Luke4:18
But the anointing which you have received from Him, ... 1John2:27
You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me... Acts 1:8
...Open your mouth wide and I will fill it Psa 81:10
- Ever growing in my ability to believe God, without doubting, for more of His will (His word) to be done on earth, in my life and in the lives of others. Such increasing faith coming as I hear more of His word with my heart as He speaks His promises (His will) to me. Faith also coming to me as one of the fruits of staying submitted to the Holy Spirit (such fruit being ripened by long exposure to the Son) and for special needs as a gift of the Holy Spirit according to His will.
So then faith comes by hearing (with my heart) and hearing by the word of God (the written word spoken to me by the Spirit) Rom10:17
But the fruit of the Spirit is...faith Gal.5:22
To another (the gift of) faith by the same Spirit,... 1Cor12:9
...According to your faith be it unto you Mat.9:29

- Praying, more and more, only believing prayers and understanding the absolute necessity for such believing prayers in order for God's will to be done in an earth still largely ruled by Satan and his kingdom of darkness. In the process learning the distinction between pro-active true Christianity and passive fatalism.

...Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them. Mar.11:24

In this manner therefore pray, Our Father....your will be done on earth (where it isn't being done) **as it is in Heaven** (where it is) Mat6:9-10

Now He (The Son of God) **could do no mighty work there.... And He marveled because of their unbelief...** Mar6:5-6
- Being taught of God: That most of what takes place in the world is not under God's control but under the influence and control of the Devil (the god of this world-2 Cor.4:4). That the devil holds people captive through thoughts which, without the power of God's living word in their hearts, people are unable to resist. That spiritual warfare consists first in bringing the enemy's thoughts directed at me into captivity to the obedience of the living word in my heart, and then through Spirit led, believing intercessory prayer, being used of God to defeat the enemy's thought stronghold on the lives of others.

...You once walked ..according to the prince of the power of the air the (demon) **spirit ...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves...** Eph.2:2-3

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices (the same Greek word "Noema" translated here as "devices" is translated as "thoughts" in the next scripture) 2Cor2:11

The weapons of our warfare.. are mighty through God...bringing every thought (Noema) **into captivity to the obedience of Christ.** 2Cor10:4-5
- Discovering what "living in Christ" really means and what "Christ living in me" means as I learn that Christianity is intended by God to be increasingly the life of Christ in me replacing my self-life.

Abide in me and I in you... John 15:4

If you abide in me and my words abide in you... John 15:7

I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me... Gal.2:20

The mystery which has been hidden from ages and generations... which is Christ in you... Col.1:26-27
- Being progressively conformed by God, by His Spirit and by His word, to the image and likeness of His Son in order to ever increasingly win souls, to make disciples, to further God's kingdom on earth, to destroy the works of the devil and to glorify the Father.

For whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son... Rom.8:29

But we all with unveiled face (a tender heart) **beholding as in a mirror** (The Bible) **the glory of the Lord** (Jesus Christ) **are being transformed into the same image from glory** (a living word of scripture in my heart) **to glory** (another living word of scripture) **even as by the Spirit of the Lord.** 2Cor.3:18

How can Christians believe these deeper truths of Christ if they do not hear them and how can they hear them if hardly anyone preaches them?

...And how shall they hear without a preacher? Rom10:14

Part 3 – Because very few Christians are actually living the Christ-life – if all my friends are carnal Christians will I not therefore also be carnal?

We do of course often learn by the example of others – if there are very few examples of men and women living in Christ and, through Christ, reigning in life, how can others learn to so live?

Lets consider for a moment if, in the natural ordinary life of humans, nobody had learned to walk but everyone only crawled around on all fours. The next generation of new children would therefore tend to believe that crawling is normal – even though there would exist in them an instinctive desire to walk – consequently most of them will not even try to walk.

Walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Gal.5:16

There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (right now) who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit Rom8:1

...No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. Psa84:11

Equally when once in a while someone came along actually walking uprightly they would be viewed with great suspicion and criticized for not conforming to the traditions of men. The tradition of “crawling” thus making the simple truth of no effect that “walking uprightly is intended for and available to everyone”. In like manner, the widespread practice in the Church of carnal Christianity (walking by sight, through sense knowledge and the reasoning faculty of the carnal mind) appears to have largely made the simple truth of walking by faith, in the spirit, of no effect. If I spend all my time with carnal Christians is there any possibility that I too will not also be a carnal Christian?

For we walk by faith, not by sight 2Cor.5:7

Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition... Mar.7:13

He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. Pro.13:20

Note: While there may not yet be many examples of men and women abiding in Christ, if we go back 125 years in the Church we find many wonderful examples, and for the most part God has preserved their teachings and testimony:- Andrew Murray, A.B. Simpson, Rees Howells, Hudson Taylor, S.D. Gordon, Dwight L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, and Hannah Whitall-Smith.

Part 4 – Because much of the Church has lost its appetite for more of God

A very limited appetite and love for God and His righteousness and His word will inevitably stem from a very small appreciation and gratitude for the enormity and price of God’s forgiveness, through Christ, of all of my sins. When my perception of my forgiveness by God is little then my love for God will be equally little. My appetite for more of God is always directly a function of how much I love Him. To the hungry soul everything about God is sweet, even His correction, but to the soul filled with things other than God, even the most attractive aspects of God are undesirable because such souls are just not hungry.

...To whom little is forgiven the same loves little. Luk.7:47

The full soul loathes a honeycomb but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet (even God’s loving correction through His word) Pro.27:7

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled Mat.5:6

Conclusion

Where there is no (fresh) revelation (of God) the people cast off restraint Pro29:18