

## MATURITY- A SOLUTION TO PETTY CONFLICT

Another concern in the church even (especially) today is the fact that many people "make a decision for Christ" and then they do not ever grow from that point.

I CORINTHIANS 3:1-4 Immaturity is a very real concern for the church. Part of our problem as Christians is that we are not being taught the whole truth regarding salvation. Sometimes new Christians are lead to believe that all that is needed is to accept Jesus as our Savior and that is all there is to the Christian life. We fail to teach that the salvation experience is an on-going process. When we are born again, we have new life in our spirit; however, we are not fully mature, spiritually. The life of a new Christian probably functions in many of the same ways that it did before being saved. As we study and learn what God has for us, then we start to change our way of thinking and acting and the spiritual truths that are revealed to us are worked out in the reality of our everyday lives. We typically find that we are a mixture of the old nature and the new nature -- the carnal and the spiritual. If we have not grown spiritually, then the old nature will dominate our thinking and we will not be able to grasp or appreciate spiritual truths. This is what Paul meant when he told them that he could not talk to them as "spiritual but as carnal."

The evidence of carnality (or the old nature) was the behavior of the people -- envying, strife, division. We are warned that we will be known by the fruit that we bear. Paul was frustrated with these people in that they were having problems being able to understand the spiritual truth about interpersonal relationships -- they needed to grow up. Paul went on to let them know that he and Apollos were not rivals but were on the same team.

I CORINTHIANS 3:5-9 Paul used the analogy of growing a garden. Say that you and a couple of other people decide to jointly grow a garden. One may run the rototiller, another may plant the seed, another would take care of the watering. Now which one was the most important partner in this garden? There is no way to say. None of it would have worked if God had not created the variety of plants that are edible and had provided for those plants to reproduce themselves and grow. You might rightly conclude that God is the silent partner in this endeavor and since it is His genius that makes it work, then He is the most important. All we provide is the labor. The same thing applies to winning people to Christ. All we can do is tell the plan of salvation to let people know what God has done for them. The essence of how we are saved was carried out for us in the atoning death of Jesus Christ and we can't claim any credit for it. All we have is the opportunity to minister the message of salvation to others; but, the salvation comes from God.

Controversy and conflict over trivial things, worrying about who gets credit for what is done, and other such things that are driving by selfish interest should not be allowed to distract us from the mission of the church to advance the cause of Christ.