**Sermon Title: The Failure of the Church in a Christ-less Culture**

**Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 3:1-4**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to realize the failure of not growing up in Christ.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 3 aspects of the failure that results in division in the Church.**

**Introduction:** The problem is immaturity! This letter as well as the 2nd letter provides biblical insight into the challenges of living like a Christian in a pagan world. The Christian faces 2 obstacles in a pagan culture, worldliness and the flesh. Worldliness is a system, a way of thinking and believing the worlds definition, measuring rod, and goals. Flesh refers to a physical body still under sin.

 Many of the Christians in the Church are immature in the truths and living out of the truths of Scripture. The root cause of strife and envy, manifested by division in the church is more than external worldly influence, there is the pressure and practice of carnality, which is an outworking/combination of pressure from worldliness combined with the leaders and peoples slavery to the flesh.

 “When we were born again spiritually and God gave us a new spirit, a new heart, God broke the back of sin “(slavery)”, crippled its ability, and paid its penalty.”

[**John MacArthur New Testament Commentary 1 Corinthians, p. 68**]

**I. The causation of immaturity is the failure resulting in the division.** **v.1**

**II. The competency of immaturity is the failure resulting in the division. vv.2-3a**

**III. The characteristics of immaturity is the failure resulting in the division. vv.3b-4**

**I. The causation of immaturity is the failure resulting in the division.** **v.1**

 A. The 1st cause is a **misunderstanding** of our own level of maturity. V.1a

 The maturing believer learns to discern life through the message of Jesus Christ and the cross. The Corinthian’s problem is not just immaturity in the faith, but that they had misunderstood their own level of maturity.

 Paul could not speak to them as people belonging to the Holy Spirit, and who the Holy Spirit possessed. They’re behavior was not reflective of their position.

 They were no longer “natural” people, but they also were not behaving like people controlled by the Holy Spirit. They were more fleshly, and reflectors of this evil age. Therefore, Paul had to, as a loving father and shepherd, treat them as people who had little to no understanding of what it means to think and live as those who belong to the new age.

 (**Romans 6**)

 **Colossians 3:1-4** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. **3** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

 **James 4:1-5** Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? **2** You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yetyou do not have because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. **4** Adulterers andadulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously "?

 B. The 2nd cause is a **deliberate** refusal to grow up. V.1b

 The carnality (control of the fallen flesh) of those who are believers was evidence of their immaturity. Believer’s really have no excuse for not maturing. Paul implies that he should have been able to write and teach them as mature people, in light of what he had already taught them, and the effectual work of Scripture. (**1 Peter 1-2**)

 **Hebrews 5:12-14** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. **13** For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. **14** But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

 **2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**II. The competency of immaturity is the failure resulting in the division. vv.2-3a**

 **1 Peter 2:1-3** Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, **2** as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

 A. The failure to pursue **Christ** over everything. (**Philippians 3:10-16**)

 B. The failure to pursue **godliness** over everything. (**2 Peter 1:3-14**)

 **1 Timothy 4:7-8** But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. **8** For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

 C. The failure to pursue **heavenly** priorities over everything.

 **Colossians 3:1-3** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. **3** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

 D. The failure to pursue **nourishment** over everything.

 **1 Timothy 4:6** If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

 E. The failure to pursue **love** over everything. (**1 Corinthians 13**)

 F. The failure to pursue **purpose** over everything. (**1 Timothy 4:11-16**)

 G. The failure to pursue **filling** over everything. (**Ephesians 18: Acts 1:8**)

**III. The characteristics of immaturity is the failure resulting in the division. vv.3b-4**

 A. Immaturity is demonstrated by **envy** among the members. V.3b-4

 This is a severe form of selfishness reflected in our attitudes.

 B. Immaturity is demonstrated by **strife** among the members.

 The attitude produces the action of strife.

 C. Immaturity is demonstrated by **divisions** among the members.

 The action is reflected in the activities of people toward one another in the church.

 Paul then states, “are you not still carnal, living like unbelievers.” The message literally “walking according to man’s wisdom, are you still not a slave, following your flesh master.” This results in divisions and contentions that are unspiritual and unbiblical. It also hinders the believer’s ability to discern what is right, and how to rightly apply what is right. Maturing people are not like this.

 Four evidences of maturity.

 1. The walk in **love**. (**Ephesians 5:1-5**)

 2. They walk in **light**. (**Ephesians 5:8-14**)

 3. They walk **carefully**. (**Ephesians 5:15-17**)

 4. They walk in the **Spirit**. (**Ephesians 5:18**)