

WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 11

If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? For those of us who call ourselves Christians this is certainly a thought-provoking question. Does my life show any evidence of what I say I believe. We've been talking a lot about what Baptists believe. Well, does my life show any evidence that I really believe all that?

I want you to see a couple of verses out of First John, which is a great book. This is what the Apostle John says in First John Chapter 2, verses 5 and 6: "By this we may know that we are in Him [speaking of Jesus], whoever says he abides in [Jesus]" - we've talked about what abiding means, connected to Jesus, being in His word, living by faith day to day - "so if we say we abide in Him then we ought to walk in the same way in which He walked." Wow! That's quite a statement, isn't it? To walk the same way that Jesus walked!

In this lesson I want all of us to think about our own lives and to assess how we are doing, Jesus being our standard. May God through the Holy Spirit convict each one of us in any area that we need to surrender control over to Him.

A CHRIST- CONTROLLED LIFE

So, what does a Christ-controlled life look like? Sometime you will hear it referred to as the Spirit-filled life. It sounds really good, but what does it look like practically speaking? I want to start out in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Do you all know anything about the Corinthian church? What kind of church was it? Where was it spiritually? They had all kinds of issues. They were a mess! You always think about the early churches having their act together. Well not this church. They had all kinds of problems and

so Paul is writing to the Corinthian church to correct some of the issues in this letter we call First Corinthians.

At the end of Chapter 2 and beginning of Chapter 3 Paul describes three types of people that are in the world and, for that matter in the church. “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:14-16). Then Paul adds this: “But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

[Question 12] Type A. The first type of person does not understand the things of the Spirit of God. This is an unbeliever. They are called the **natural** person (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Type B. The second type of person is a complete contrast to the first. They understand all the things of God. They have the mind of Christ. They are called the **spiritual** person (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). It says here: “The spiritual person judges all things...” The New American Standard Bible uses the word “appraised.” The original Greek word means to examine or to investigate. The spiritual person with the mind of Christ is able to examine whether something (an attitude, action, or relationship) is what God desires for them or not. Earlier in this same chapter Paul talks about how we as believers have the Holy Spirit living in us. The Spirit helps us to discern the truth of God’s word. This is what we are going to do now. We are going to examine ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Type C. This third of person is apparently a believer. They are in the church, but are spiritually immature. They are called people of the flesh, or a **fleshly** person (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Notice that Paul addresses his audience as “brothers.” They are Christians, but they are immature. They are babies in Christ. So that sets the stage for the next question.

[Question 13] Given the three kinds of people in the world and in the church, as defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians, I will simply refer to each as Types A, B and C. The Type A person does not understand the things of God. They are a natural person. The Type B person understands the things of God and has the mind of Christ. They are a spiritual person. The Type C person is a believer but they are spiritually immature. They are called a fleshly (or sometimes carnal) person.

So, look at the statement made and then determine whether it describes a Type A, B or C person. Circle the best choice. I’ll give you a hint. There are 12 phrases listed and there are three types of people. Each of the three types is represented four times. So then, there is an even distribution.

Here are the answers that I came up with...

Their heart “is more deceitful than all else” (Jeremiah 17:9) – Type **A** natural person.

“Dead in your trespasses and sin” (Ephesians 2:1-2) – Type **A** natural person. That was us before we got saved, right?

“Not able to receive solid food” (1 Corinthians 3:2) – We just talked about that... Type **C** fleshly person.

“Led by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:18) – Type **B** spiritual person

“Slaves to sin” (Romans 6:6) – This one is hard. It could go either way. It could be either C or A. But, based on the context of

Romans Chapter 6, it is talking about how we were before we got saved. So, it is Type **A** natural person.

“I do the very thing I do not wish to do” (Romans 7:16) – This is Paul’s struggle. He knows what he’s supposed to do, what God is telling him to do. But his flesh is weak. Paul is a believer, so this one is Type **C** fleshly person.

“Cannot please God” (Romans 8:8) – Here again it could be either A or C, but based on the context of this chapter – it is written to Christians, I say it is Type **C** fleshly person.

“Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20) – Type **B** spiritual person.

“I can do all things through Christ...” (Philippians 4:13) – Type **B** spiritual person.

“The wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36) – This verse is talking about an unbeliever. If you are a believer the wrath of God does NOT abide on you. You’ve escaped God’s wrath. So, this is Type **A** natural person.

Christ stands outside the door knocking (Revelation 3:20) – Christ is knocking on the door of the church but the church won’t let Him in. This one is Type **C** fleshly person. In the context of Revelation Chapter 3, Jesus is knocking on the door of the church in Laodicea. Sure, Jesus could knock on a sinner’s heart’s door. But that’s not the context here.

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2) – Type **B** spiritual person. They are being transformed. Their mind is being renewed daily.

First Corinthians Chapter 3, Romans Chapters 7 and 8 and Revelation Chapter 3 were all written to Christians, not to unbelievers. Notice that it is really hard to tell a Type C believer from a Type A unbeliever. They look exactly the same! They act exactly the same! Unless you know the context of these verses,

it's hard to tell the two apart, isn't it? I wanted you to struggle with this exercise to drive that point home. Those passages in the chapters I mentioned above are describing fleshly, self-centered rather than Christ-centered Christians. It was a problem in the church back then and it is still a problem in our churches today. That's what I want to address next.

There IS a solution, an alternative to living a fleshly life, what Paul described in 1 Corinthians Chapter 3. It starts by confessing our sins. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). This is a promise. Proverbs 28:13 is the Old Testament counterpart to 1 John 1:9 - "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." That's a great verse! After we are honest before God and confess our sins, we then give the throne of our life, control, to Jesus Christ, the rightful ruler, that's where it all starts!

Aren't you glad that He DOES forgive our sins? Aren't you glad that He DOES cleanse us from all unrighteousness? Well, that is God. However, don't expect people to do that, even good Christian people. They are less forgiving than God is. They are less at showing mercy. They are less at letting you off the hook in whatever it is that you did, yes, even good, godly people. Forgiveness is a trait of God Himself and I am so thankful for that. Paul describes himself as being the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Well, I am right there with Paul. I need forgiveness too. I need it on a daily basis. But, please hear me - Don't expect people to be like God because they are going to hold onto things. They're NOT going to be forgiving. But God promises that He WILL forgive us if we confess our sins to Him. He promises to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and that we will obtain mercy. Praise God!!

Contrary to the bumper sticker that reads, "Christ is my co-pilot," He should be our PILOT. He should be the one in charge of

my life, not me. We should let HIM control our lives. Like Jesus prayed in the garden: "Not my will, but Yours be done. He was being honest with God. "This is what I want, but nevertheless, YOUR will be done." That's how we should pray.

"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6). Think back to when you were first saved. You received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace you have been saved through FAITH." That's how we walk in Him. By that same faith we exercised in the first place, when He saved us. If He doesn't come through, it's not going to happen. We live our lives day by day, moment by moment the same way - by FAITH.