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LESSON 4

HOLINESS

In the Pauline Epistles the human race is divided spiritually into four classes:

The natural man. (A person who has not accepted the Lord Jesus into his life).
The babe in Christ. (A person who has accepted the Lord, but has to grow and learn about the Lord).
The carnal Christian. (A person who has been a Christian for some time, has some knowledge of the Lord's will and yet lives like a non-believer as he does not yield the controls of his life to the Lord's guidance. He lives like the world lives).
The spiritual Christian. (A person who is a Christian, seeks to yield his life to the management of the Lord, to grow in knowledge and grace. His witness is effective and evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit).

All four of these are referred to in one passage of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14-3:4) and it should be noted that they are classified according to their ability to appreciate and assimilate "the things of God" as revealed in His Word

*(1Co 2:14) But the **natural** man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

*(1Co 3:1-3) And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 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: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

*(1Co 2:11-12) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we **might know the things** that are freely given to us of God.*

THE SPIRITUAL CHRISTIAN

From the above passage alone, it is evident that the spiritual Christian stands far above the carnal Christian or the babe in Christ -- certainly above the natural man - - as far as spiritual discernment is concerned. He discerns all things, yet none can discern him, for he is spiritually above them. "For who," asks the apostle, "can understand the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?"

Through diligent, prayerful study of the Word, and with a sincere desire to obey it, the spiritual man has come to understand God and to know His Son more and more intimately, and this is evidenced through the fruit of the Spirit as well. Babes in Christ and carnal believers cannot "judge" or "discern" him, simply because they have not come to know God's mystery. But he, having grown to spiritual maturity, **quite understands them**, for he has "the mind of Christ." He is among those of whom it is written:

(Heb 5:14. *"But strong meat [solid food] belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"*)

Thus, there is a great difference between the mere child of God and the man of God. The immature child of God can digest the milk of the Word and pass that on to others, but may come far short of God's will. But of the man of God, we read:

(2 Tim. 3:16,17). *"ALL SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for, for, for, for in righteousness; THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT [COMPLETE] THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL"*

THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD

But what is this "meat," this "solid food" of the Word? What are these "deep things of God," this "wisdom," that Paul proclaimed to the spiritually mature?

Some think that meat refers to questions within questions. Consider the following readings:

1Ti 1:4 *Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.*

1Ti 6:4 *He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,*

2Ti 2:23 *But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.*

Tit 3:9-11 *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

However, the apostle gives us the answer himself when he says:

I Cor. 2:6, 7. *"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect [mature]; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught: "BUT WE SPEAK THE WISDOM OF GOD IN A MYSTERY . . . THE HIDDEN . . . WHICH GOD ORDAINED BEFORE THE WORLD UNTO OUR GLORY".*

Col 1:26-28 *"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ"*

The "wisdom" which Paul made known to mature believers, then, concerned "the mystery," the secret of God's eternal purpose and of all His good news; the most precious and exalted truth in all the Word of God.

Join us for the next lesson when we will learn more about this mystery.

***"Being saved in and through Christ is God's gift to you.
Living your life for God and to His glory is your gift to Him."***