

## Just What Do You Mean, the Carnal Mind? Part 1

Romans 8:1-8 (KJV)

<sup>1</sup> *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh**, but after the Spirit. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from **the law of sin and death**. <sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: <sup>4</sup> That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, **who walk not after the flesh**, but after the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For **they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh**; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> **For to be carnally minded is death**; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. <sup>7</sup> Because **the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be**. <sup>8</sup> **So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.**

What does it mean to be “carnally-minded”? Our passages above explain it. It means to “walk” (conduct ourselves) “after the flesh,” i.e. to “mind the things of the flesh.”

Our word “minded” in verse 6 means, “*Inclination or purpose*,” while the word “mind” in verse 5 is defined by the Strong’s Concordance as, “To *exercise the mind*, i.e. *entertain or have a sentiment or opinion*; by implication to *be* (mentally) *disposed* (more or less earnestly in a certain direction); intensive to *interest oneself* in (with concern or obedience).”

The word “carnal” is *sarx*, meaning, “*Flesh* (as *stripped* of the skin), i.e. (strictly) the *meat* of an animal (as food), or (by extension) the *body* (as opposed to the soul [or spirit], or as the symbol of what is external, or as the means of kindred), or (by implication) *human nature* (with its frailties [physical or moral] and passions), or (special) a *human being* (as such).”

Paul states that “the carnal mind is enmity against God: *for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*.” Our word “enmity” is defined as, “*Hostility*; by implication a reason for *opposition*.” Ah, a reason for opposition. And what is it the carnal mind is opposed to? Clearly, it is the law of God (Rom. 8:7). Please consider.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (KJV)

<sup>14</sup> 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.

Our word “natural” in this passage is *psychikos* and means, “*Sensitive*, i.e. *animate*,” taken from the word *psychē* which means “breath,” translated as “soul” or “life” in the New Testament. Our word “natural” is used only five other times, three as “natural” and two as “sensual.”

1 Corinthians 15:44 (KJV)

<sup>44</sup> It is sown a **natural** body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a **natural** body, and there is a spiritual body.

When we compare the idea of “natural” with “carnal,” we see that they are somewhat different. Clearly, the “natural man” is not able to receive “the things of the Spirit of God: *for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” But what is the difference between the “natural man” and the “carnally-minded”? It is the presence of *pride*.

In the “natural man,” we have the element of *ignorance*, of someone who sees the things of the Spirit of God as “foolishness” due to that ignorance. Ah, but with one who is “carnal,” we have the element of “enmity” or “hostility,” a mind or *way of thinking* that *resists* or is “against” the moral aspects of the law of God.

So is the “natural man” also carnal? Eventually, yes, for all of us start out as “natural” and are always cultured into some form of pride by our upbringing.

When we realize that “to be carnally-minded is *death*,” then we can better understand what is presented to us in the book of Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve. Despite what tradition tells us, Adam and Eve are not the parents of the human race, rather, they are *a representation*. Just as one policeman represents the entire police department, so too Adam and Eve illustrate the first generation of humankind and every generation thereafter. To be even more specific, the story of Adam and Eve represent the *inner workings* of our human existence in light of the living Word of God and His divine purpose in the earth.

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die,” again, not because Adam is the father of all living beings, but because the *nature* illustrated by Adam and Eve is the *nature* found in all of us. “As in” or “just like” Adam, *all of us die*, and this because we move from the “natural man” to the “carnal man” whenever our pride rises up against the law of God. For this reason, when God reckoned with Adam after His disobedience, Adam *accused* both God and the woman for his own resistance and rebellion to God’s commandment (Gen. 3:12). *Accusation* is an obvious component of *pride*, of refusing to own up to our own defiance and lack of faith.

I Corinthians 15:45 tells us, “The first man Adam was made a living *soul*.” As we have found, our word “soul” is *psychē* and speaks of our “natural body” (I Cor. 15:44) or expression *before we become* “carnal.” This simple understanding reveals the nature of an infant who, after born into this world, are for a time, ignorant of the divine process of God (Deut. 1:39). They are yet to be cultured into the rebellious and resistant mindset “against God” that is so clearly evident in society today.

Proverbs 16:18-19 (KJV)

<sup>18</sup> **Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.** <sup>19</sup> Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, **than to divide the spoil with the proud.**

Pictured in the story of Adam and Eve is their fall from *innocence*. And what do we mean by “innocence”? We mean their “lack of guile or corruption; purity” (Google), their “lack of experience with the world” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary online). Isn’t it true that each of us begin this way, completely ignorant of this world of form and its surroundings? Of course. Ah, but “just like” Adam (and Eve), we eventually come to a place in our childhood where we are accountable to the moral essence of God’s law as illustrated by “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9; 3:1-7). And what happens? We “fall,” just as it is pictured in our Genesis story. Like Adam, we rise up in pride and resist the nature of our Creator as exemplified by His law. Proof? Consider the “destruction” that exists across our planet, and this due to the simple fact of how highly we think of ourselves (Rom. 12:3).

Let’s take a moment to examine the tree of knowledge in our Genesis parable.

Genesis 3:5-6 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it **your eyes will be opened**, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree *was good for food*, that it

was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree **desirable to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

As our passages show, there are *three* elements that define the tree of knowledge; “good for food,” “pleasant to the eyes,” and “desirable to make one wise.” Compare these three characteristics with the spiritual meaning of *three* from Dr. Stephen E. Jones and his book, *The Biblical Meaning of Numbers from One to Forty* (emphasis mine).

### **Three (gimel) Divine Fullness, Perfection**

**Gimel** is a camel in Hebrew. *It signifies to be lifted up. Pride is its negative side; being glorified or elevated to a position of authority is its positive side.*

The number three is the number of divine fullness, completeness, or perfection. Whereas it takes two lines to fix a position by an x-y axis, it takes three to give *shape* and to enclose a geometric area—in this case, a triangle.

Because the law establishes truth on the basis of two *or three witnesses* (Deut. 19:15), the number three may be considered to be a complete witness. Two witnesses are enough to establish truth, *but three brings completeness, clarity, and shape to it.*

For this reason, there are three primary feast days in Israel: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. *It takes all three feasts to perfect a man with the fullness of the Spirit.* Each feast is an aspect of salvation for man’s three-fold nature: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23).

In Luke 13:32 Jesus said, “*Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.*”

Jesus was the Good Shepherd in death, for John 10:14, 15 says, “*I am the good Shepherd ... and I lay down My life for the sheep.*” Jesus was the Great Shepherd in resurrection, for we read in Heb. 13:20,

<sup>20</sup> **Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord.**

Finally, Jesus is the Chief Shepherd in glory, for 1 Peter 5:4 says,

<sup>4</sup> **And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.**

*So we see that three is the number indicating completeness and perfection.*

In his book, *Biblical Mathematics*, Ed F. Vallowe wrote, “The Gospel of Christ is THREE-FOLD: The death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:3-4). It saves from the past,

sanctifies for the present, and glorifies in the future. No other number in all the Bible reveals the works of the Creator more than the number three.”

As we see, three “signifies to be lifted up. *Pride is its negative side.*” Also, “two witnesses are enough to establish truth, *but three brings completeness, clarity, and shape to it.*” Finally, three speaks of “death, burial and resurrection.” No wonder there are three things to consider in the tree of knowledge.

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For **all** that *is* in the world--the **lust of the flesh**, the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.** <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

In alignment with the *three* components of the tree of knowledge, we find in John’s first letter a declaration—“Do not love the world or the things in the world.” He then defines that “all” that is in the world can be summed up in “the lust of the flesh (1; “good for food”), the lust of the eyes (2; “pleasant to the eyes”), and the *pride* of life (3; “desirable to make one wise”).” The New International Version renders “pride of life” as “the boasting of what he has and does.” So the “strong desires” (lust) of the flesh and eyes culminate in our *boasting* of the same. This, my friend, is the *nature* of the carnal mind.

Does the tree of knowledge represent all that is in the world? No, it does not. Rather, and as we have suggested, it speaks of the moral essence of God’s law which stands in direct opposition to our love for the world and the things in it. What we are seeing in the story of Adam and Eve is how each of us, in time, reach a place of resistance to the moral substance of God’s law because of our “love” for this world of form in which we dwell.

Romans 7:7-11 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* Certainly not! On the contrary, **I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."** <sup>8</sup> **But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.** <sup>9</sup> **I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.** <sup>10</sup> And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, **I found to bring death.** <sup>11</sup> **For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.**

It is here that we find an understanding of why the tree of knowledge is symbolic of the law and how it relates to our passages in I John. First, we would not have known sin without the law. Secondly, once the law becomes evident, *sin takes an opportunity and produces in us* “all manner of evil desire.” As the simple story goes, once you tell the child not to stick their hand in the fire, fully expect that they will, for it is in our *nature* to resist the very thing we are told not to do. Note how Paul tells us that he was “alive once *without the law*, but when *the commandment came* (Gen. 2:17), sin revived and I died.” Consider this treatment from *Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament* (emphasis mine).

**I was alive—once** (ἔζων ποτέ)

Referring to the time of *childlike innocence* previous to the stimulus imparted to the inactive principle of sin by the coming of the law; when the moral self-determination with respect to the law had not taken place, and the sin-principle was therefore practically dead.

**The commandment** (ἐντολῆς)

The specific injunction "thou shalt not covet." See on James 2:8; see John 13:34.

**Revived** (ἀνέζησεν)

Not *came to life*, but *lived again*. See Luke 15:24, 32. The power of sin is *originally* and *in its nature* living; but before the coming of the commandment its life is not expressed. When the commandment comes, it becomes alive again. It lies dormant, like the beast at the door (Genesis 4:7), *until the law stirs it up*.

*The tendency of prohibitory law to provoke the will to resistance is frequently recognized in the classics.* Thus, Horace: "The human race, presumptuous to endure all things, rushes on through forbidden wickedness" (Ode, i., 3, 25). Ovid: "The permitted is unpleasing; the forbidden consumes us fiercely" ("Amores," i., 19, 3). "We strive against the forbidden and ever desire what is denied" (Id., i., 4, 17). Seneca: "Parricides began with the law, and the punishment showed them the crime" ("De Clementia," i., 23). Cato, in his speech on the Oppian law; says: "It is safer that a wicked man should even never be accused than that he should be acquitted; and luxury, if it had never been meddled with, would be more tolerable than it will be now, like a wild beast, irritated by having been chained and then let loose" (Livy, xxxiv., 4).

The fact that the tree of knowledge is defined by *three* attributes speaks of *death* (1), *burial* (2), and *resurrection* (3), which is the necessary process to reach the *spiritual nature* of the law of God (Rom. 7:14). Read I Corinthians, Chapter 15, and you will find that resurrection is the *core* of the gospel of the kingdom, the "hub of the wheel" to which all other truth connects. Furthermore, the principle of resurrection is easily defined by the following.

John 12:24-26 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.** <sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his **life** (soul) loses it, and whoever hates his **life** (soul) in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Death, burial, and resurrection. Here we have clarity in this simple parable which Jesus taught. No wonder the writer of Hebrews stated that "it is *appointed* for men to die once, but after this to face judgment" (Heb. 9:27). This being true, our principle of resurrection is further enhanced by the following.

Galatians 6:7-10 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for **whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.** <sup>8</sup>

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. <sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

The principle and structure of resurrection is the *universal principle of sowing and reaping*, seedtime and harvest. All around us, nature testifies of this fact. What is sown is reaped. What is planted is returned back to us. It will not be otherwise. And what is true of those things we see is also true of those things we don't see. In the beginning, we have a "tree of knowledge." Knowledge is unseen but the acquisition of knowledge is most certainly manifest in our human existence. We are and always have been creatures of knowledge and understanding. The complexity and workings of the human mind is what sets us apart from the rest of the organic life forms on this planet.

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). What begins outward and enters the mind succeeds at changing our spirit within (Eph. 4:23), causing us to become "lifted up" and bringing "death" to our soul (Ezek. 18:4), to our *expression* toward our Maker and one another. Our "love" for the world and the things in it overrides our love for the principles of God's kingdom and our neighbors (Matt. 22:35-40). The manifestation of our carnality is easily seen.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> **Now the works of the flesh are evident**, which are: adultery (1), fornication (2), uncleanness (3), lewdness (4), <sup>20</sup> idolatry (5), sorcery (6), hatred (7), contentions (8), jealousies (9), outbursts of wrath (10), selfish ambitions (11), dissensions (12), heresies (13), <sup>21</sup> envy (14), murders (15), drunkenness (16), revelries (17), and the like (**18**); of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The "works" or "deeds" of the flesh are evident, Paul said. He then follows with *eighteen* things and warns us "that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." To put it simply, every work listed proceeds from pride whether we realize it or not. And the deeper the pride runs, the deeper we exist in the mind of form which continually manifests "death." This being true, we should understand that the Bible definition of "death" is not just the passing away of our physical body, but a *state of being* as evidenced by the "works" above (Eph. 2:1-3). This state of being is an arrogant mind supported by a haughty spirit. For this reason Paul wrote that we put off our "*former conduct*, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:22). The "old man" of which he speaks is the disobedient conduct illustrated by "the first man Adam" (Rom. 5:19; I Cor. 15:45).

It is not without significance that Paul listed *eighteen* things in our passages from Galatians. Isn't eighteen three sixes (666)? Yes, which is defined as the "mark" of the "beast" (Rev. 13:16-18). In his book, *Biblical Mathematics*, Ed Vallowe writes, "EIGHTEEN is the number that stands for BONDAGE." Consider Stephen Jones' explanation of its spiritual meaning.

## **Eighteen (yod-chet) Oppression, Bondage**

To write eighteen in Hebrew, they wrote two Hebrew letters: **yod-chet**. These signify the hand (outworking) of a fence (prison), which brings men into bondage or oppression.

Eighteen is the number of oppression or bondage. The 18<sup>th</sup> time *Abram* is mentioned is in Gen. 12:18, where his wife was in the house of Pharaoh (bondage). After *Abraham* is mentioned for the 18<sup>th</sup> time in Gen. 18:19, the Lord speaks of Sodom and Gomorrah who were in bondage to sin.

The 18<sup>th</sup> time Israel is mentioned is found in Gen. 46:8, at the beginning of their Egyptian bondage:

<sup>8</sup> **Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt...**

The 18<sup>th</sup> time Jesus is mentioned in the gospel of Luke is in Luke 5:19, where a man oppressed by paralysis was trying to come to Jesus for healing. Luke 13:16 also says,

<sup>16</sup> **And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?**

When we apply our understanding of Romans, Chapter 7, verses 7 through 11, with the spiritual meaning of *eighteen*, we will find that the “mark” of the “beast” represents the law of God which is a necessary and needful component in restricting the untamed and wild nature of our carnal being (James 3:5-12). However, though it may *restrict*, it cannot *change* this nature. That can only be done by the life-giving essence of the Spirit of Christ.

If we will be completely open and honest, the works of the flesh are, as Paul states, quite “evident” in the world around us, and the result of these works is to not inherit the kingdom of God. No, this does not mean that one is destined for eternal torment, but it does mean that one cannot know the righteousness, peace, joy, and rest that can be experienced in this life when we are truly humble before our Maker. All of the things listed in Galatians, Chapter 5, are attributes of the carnal mind, a mind fully absorbed in this world of form.