

# COUNTERFEIT CONVERSION - PART 1

## The Religion Of Fear (Legal)

Over one hundred years ago, revival swept America. Thousands of souls entered the Kingdom of God under the searching sermons of a humble servant of Christ, Charles G. Finney. It has been estimated that over half a million were converted to God as a direct result of his ministry, and that by a conservative estimate over 80% remained true to Christ to the day of their death, without backsliding or falling by the wayside.

The years have passed, and century 21 is almost born. Yet no voice has been raised strong enough to stir the church and shake the world. A wave of watery Churchianity, militant proselytism, and unintelligent “evangelicalism” threatens to be the only apparent forms of “conversion” confronting a reality-hungry generation. The church world is fast drifting into an “easy-believism” salvation that Christ would not recognize. Lest He be grieved, Who bought the Church with His blood, men who profess salvation must meet anew God’s own conditions of true conversion.

“Christian” is almost a meaningless word to the masses today. Because so many believe that they are Christians, when in fact, they are not, four of Finney’s searching sermons have been selected;

- True and False Conversion
- True Saints
- Legal Religion
- Religion of Public Opinion

They have been simplified, condensed and supplemented somewhat from other sections of his lectures and sermons, and thoroughly documented with Scripture. A certain amount of paraphrase was utilized to adapt them to today’s vocabulary.

May the Holy Spirit of Truth challenge your heart as you read! You may appreciate the solemn injunction of the apostle Paul:

“Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith... prove your own selves.” (2 Cor, 13:5)

Each section is set forth in love, so you can examine your own spiritual standing in the light of God’s Word. Many examine themselves by comparing their beliefs with others, or by trying to live up to what is set forth by some man or group. If we profess to truly follow the Lord Jesus, we will heed His words about Scripture:

- “To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them” (Is.8:20)
- “Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39)
- “For there is a way that seems right to a man, but the end of it is the way of death.” (Prov, 14:12)

These messages may shock you and shake you. They were meant to! But do not be angry or afraid to read on. It is your *life* and *eternal destiny* that is being settled by acceptance or

rejection of the Word of God. Only the dishonest fear the truth. If your faith is real, it will stand this searching examination; if it is false, God knows it and you *shall* know it, too. Do something about it before you go out into eternity. May you feel the same yearning love and compassion that moved these messages over a hundred years ago, and may you have the courage and faith to do whatever you must before the God who searches every heart.

### **The Religion Of Fear**

God's question to you is not, "What are you doing?" but, "Why are you doing it?" It is possible to be exactly like a true saint in every outward detail, but for a fundamentally different reason. Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. Men judge you by the ways and means you live out life, God looks at the reason and purpose for which you are living. Almost any means of religious service can be counterfeited by a deceived person, but unless there has been a change of heart, or *ultimate purpose*, nothing he does is true religion. He is possibly intensely religious, but still may be totally selfish. The true test of real faith is, is he or she motivated basically by hope and fear, or love?

### **The natural state of all men before true conversion is wholly selfish.**

Selfishness is supremely seeking ones own good because it is his own. There is a difference between selfishness and self-love. *Self-love*, is simply a built in desire for happiness and dread of misery. This is natural, and essential. It is not sin. But selfishness is the desire of happiness and dread of misery above the rights of all other's, including God. He who is selfish places his own care above any interests of greater value, such as the glory of God and the highest good of the universe. And every unconverted man knows that all other such men are selfish. He conducts all his dealings with others on this basis. Scripture calls selfishness *sin*, and pictures it as a wrong choice of life, or purpose; a wrong ultimate motive of the heart. (I Kings 11:9-11; 15:3; 2 Chron. 12:14; Ps.28:3; 66:18; 78:37; 95:10; Jer. 17:9-10; Ezek. 14:2-3; 18:30-32; Mt. 5:27-30; 9:4; 13:15; Mk.3:5; 7:18-23; Lk.21:34; Acts 8:21; 18-24; Rom. 2:4-6; Heb.3 :17-15)

### **A man who lives in a converted state is not supremely selfish, but loving, or benevolent.**

A true child of God does not live to please himself. Benevolence, (good-willing), is unselfishly choosing the good of others. This is God's state of mind. God *is* love. (I Jn.4:16) He unselfishly chooses the highest good of His universe. This love, or benevolence, forms the whole of His character. Everything God does is an expression of His love It sums up His every action and is the motive behind His every choice. God is purely and unselfishly loving. He does not make His creatures happy just to promote His own joy, but because He loves their happiness and chooses this for its own sake. He does feel happy Himself in bringing them joy, but He does not do it to gratify Himself. And this love is holiness. It is the only basic law God requires of men. (Mt. 22:36-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 10:25-28; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14; I Tim, 1:5; Jas.2:8-10)

A true child of God is like Him in this way. This does not mean that no one is truly converted until they are purely and perfectly as loving as God is, but that their prevailing choice of life, and supreme purpose, is benevolent. They sincerely seek the good of others for its own sake, not just to make themselves happy or escape punishment. Just as certainly as

the converted man yields obedience to God's law,

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself",

he is like God. He is benevolent, and a true Christian. ( I Jn. 4:7; I Pet. 1:16; Jude 21; Rom. 13:10; I Jn. 5:3; John 15:9-14; 17:14-26; I John 4: 16-17)

### **True conversion is an ultimate change from a state of supreme selfishness to benevolence.**

It is a change in the HEART, or ultimate purpose of life, not a mere change in the way of living. A man may change his outward actions, and yet live for the same purpose. It is the intent, or design of his actions that give them character, and not just the means used to carry out that intent or purpose. Conversion is a change in the whole life end, from serving self to serving God and others. The true Christian chooses as his goal the glory of God and the good of His Kingdom. He chooses this goal for its own sake, because he sees it as the greatest good, above even his own individual happiness at times. He is not indifferent to his own happiness, but he prefers God's glory because it is the greater good. He chooses the happiness of others according to their real importance as far as he is able to perceive it. He no longer lives for himself; he begins to live in love for God and others. This change is total and ultimate, involving the whole personality. (Matt. 6:22-24; 7:17-20; 12:33-35; Jn. 3:19-21; Rom. 6:16-18; 2 Cor. 5:17; Tit. 1:15; Js.3:10-11)

Has this *change* taken place in *your* life? As you read this, you are in one of the two classes above. The supreme end of life you have chosen is determining your own destiny. Do you know which class you belong to? Do you know if you truly love God or are just seeking His favor and aiming at heaven for your own benefit supremely?

I assume that you are perfectly sincere, and possibly even very zealous in your faith. This test will not look however, at what you do. It will not question what you believe. It will simply expose one thing for you; whether or not you are selfish or a true child of God... whether or not you meet the basic requirement of true Christian faith; to love God supremely, and your neighbor as yourself. You can check your own conduct against the following, know for certain your true character, and if necessary, be ready to change it to discover the thrill of true conversion.

### **Hope and fear - or Love?**

There are only two basic principles on which any government, human or divine is based; fear and confidence. All obedience springs from one of these two principles. In one case, people obey from hope of reward (for themselves) or fear of punishment (to themselves) and is the essence of the selfish man's life. The other class obey from love and confidence in the one in authority. Consider two children. One obeys his Dad because he trusts him. He has a faith which works by love. The other yields only an outward obedience from hope or fear, because he does not trust him.

So are the lives of the true saint and the counterfeit. The true saint has confidence or faith in God that leads him to obey, and wholly submit himself into His hands. The counterfeit, like the devil, has only a partial faith and partial submission, He believes and trembles.

(Jas. 2:19) So a person may believe that Christ came to save sinners, and on that ground may submit to be saved for his own safety, without submitting to be led and ruled by Him. His submission is only on the selfish condition that he will be happier. It is never with that unreserved trust in God's character and love that leads His true child to say, "Thy will be done." The counterfeit's faith is the religion of fear. It is the religion of law, and not of love. It is totally selfish, and totally non-Christian. It is outward only, and hypocritical. True faith is a faith of the heart and the only acceptable faith in God's eyes.

You can tell a man or woman in the religion of fear. Some of their characteristics are:

### **They serve God like taking medicine.**

The counterfeit convert obeys God, not because he loves Him, but because he hopes to get something good out of it for himself. The true child of God delights in doing God's will. When Christ and the Gospel is loved for their own sake, there is no weariness or struggle in serving. His commandments are not grievous. (I Jn. 5:3; Matt. 11:30; 23:4; Lk. 11:46) Do you enjoy Christianity or do you serve God basically only for what He can do for you? The man in the religion of fear reads the Bible and prays because he knows he should. It would not do to say you are a Christian and not read the Bible! But they do not enjoy it. They never go to prayer meetings unless it is absolutely necessary, or unless it will be of some benefit for them. When they do go, they are cold, dull, listless and lifeless, and glad when it is over. Their only enjoyment in religion is chiefly one of anticipation; they hope they will be happy in the next world, but never enjoy the service of God in this one. The true child of God already enjoys His peace; heaven has begun already in his soul. He *has* eternal life *now*, not merely the *prospect* of it. He has the very feelings of heaven in his life. He anticipates joys higher in degree only, not of a different kind, in heaven itself. He is not waiting until he dies to taste the thrill of eternal life. (John 1:12; Rev. 3:20; John 11:25-26; 14:23-27; 15:3-11; Rom. 5:1; 14:17; 18:13; 8:1-17; Mk. 12:28-34; I Jn. 3:2)

### **The do what they have to, not what they really want to.**

The counterfeit convert is moved by his convictions, not his affection. His "faith" is the religion of fear. He is driven by warnings, not drawn by the love of God. (Jn. 10:3-5; 2 Tim. 1:7; John 10:14,16,27-28; 3:29-30) He regards the law of God for fear that God will pass him by if he does not, but he does not LOVE to do what God requires in His law. He is filled with the spirit of fear, lest he make the wrong move or do the wrong thing. God is not a loving and compassionate heavenly Father to him, but a stern, exacting taskmaster. (1 Pet. 2:7; Heb. 10:7) He is more or less strict in religion according to what he knows to be right, and more or less miserable to the degree his conscience bothers him. He knows what is right, but does not have a heart to do it. The more he knows, the more miserable he becomes. (Matt. 23:23) Here is a key difference. The true saint *prefers* obedience; the counterfeit *puposes* or intends it, but usually fails to do so. He knows he should, like Paul before his conversion, (Rom.7), but fails, because his heart is not in it. (Ezk. 33:31-32; Matt.21:28-31; Lk.6:45-46)

### **A counterfeit convert has a basic motivation of fear, not love.**

He is not only afraid of hell but of punishment, judgment and disgrace in men's eyes. He still lives for himself, thinks of himself, and seeks his own happiness and safety supremely.

These fears keep him outwardly moral. He keeps up a kind of obedience that is formal, heartless, loveless and completely worthless. (Matt. 15:1-20; 23:4, 13-33; Gal.4:3-12; 8:4-6)

His happiness in religion is only his hope of heaven or reward. Most of his joys are those of anticipation, because he is not really happy doing right and loving God here and now. This is not his purpose, but the way he has chosen to try to get his own happiness. When his hope of heaven is strengthened, he enjoys religion a great deal. But the true saint is happy serving God anywhere, in anything. He is not interested in saving his own life, because he has lost it. (Mk.8:34-35; Lk. 9:23-24; 12:24-26; 14:26) He would even be happy in hell *if* he could do God's will there, for he would still be doing the things in which his happiness consists. (Ex.32:30-32; Mk,8:35; 10:45; Rom.9:3) If the duties of faith are not joy to you, and your happiness rests on the strength of your hopes, you have no true faith; it is all selfishness. (Phil.2:21:1 Tim. 3:2a, 5) This does not mean that true saints do not enjoy their hopes; but it is no great thing with them. They think very little about them. Their thoughts are taken up with God and saving others. (Matt.25:31-46; I Cor. 10:23-33; Rom. 14:5-8; Phil. 3:3-14)

### **They are more afraid of punishment than sin.**

The counterfeit keeps on sinning, because he does not really hate *sin*; only punishment for it. The true child of God is more afraid of *sin* than *punishment*. He does not ask, "If I do this, what will happen to me?", but feels, like Joseph, "How can I do this wicked thing and sin against God?" (Gen.39: 7-9; Ezek. 8:12; Job.31:33-34; Rom. 2:16-29; 2 Tim. 2:19) The counterfeit keeps committing the same sin by convincing himself that God will forgive him eventually and he can always repent of it afterwards.

Because the counterfeit lives in known sin, he likes to hear sermons on the security of the believer; on God's grace and mercy, on His long-suffering. His only trouble is that he does not realize the majority of these scriptures do not apply to him, because he is not saved at all! Proof positive of this is his love of sin more than God; he likes to be soothed along in it, not shocked out of it; comforted, not challenged; assured, not examined. His conscience bothers him so much already that he cannot stand sermons that throw further light on his true state. (John 3:19-20; 9:39-41; 12:44-48; Matt. 13:40-43)

His greatest blessings come out of hearing sermons on saints who sinned. He fondly imagines God exposes such tragic failures to set precedents for those who would follow His Son. Instead of such stories breaking their hearts, that men of God should fall so low; instead of accepting this as a message to watch and pray, to keep under the body lest they should become a castaway - they actually enjoy it! They see themselves in the saint's sin; they feel strengthened, not shocked; glad and not grieved. If their own souls can be temporarily assured, they care very little what happens to the rest of the world. They like sermons that give them a license to go on in sin. They prefer ministers who can preach with conviction on abstractions. Listen to them pray, and they basically pray for their own salvation. (Lk. 18:9-44; Jn. 9:31-34)

### **They have a spirit of GET instead of GIVE.**

True Christians enjoy giving and helping others more than being helped by others because

they love. Their hearts are set on the highest good, and their deepest, sheerest joy is to be able to do it. (Matt. 20:28; Mk. 12:42-44; Lk. 3:11; 2 Cor. 12:9-13; Heb. 12:2) Counterfeit converts are always looking for ways to get from others whatever they can. Especially is this true in daily business, if selfishness rules our conduct there with men, as sure as God rules we are selfish before Him. A man in the religion of fear finds it hard to give anything of *his* to God. He may have to, to keep his reputation, but it bothers him no end. (Lk. 6:30-35; 16:11-16 Matt. 25:41-45; I Jn. 3:16-17) The counterfeit never enjoys self-denial. If a man sets his heart on anything, he enjoys everything he saves for it and the more he saves from other things to give to this, the more he is pleased. The phony finds it hard to give to Christian work, it is easy to see that his heart is not in it. It gives him a pain in the neck to give to God. He cannot understand the joy of unselfish giving, to advance God's kingdom, because it drains resources from his own little world where he rules as king. (Deut. 15:7-11; Matt. 10:9; 13:44-46; 19:29-30; Luke 12:13-34; 16:19-25; 18:18-30)

### **Their prayers and cares for others are born out of fears for themselves.**

The counterfeit is chiefly afraid of hell himself, and when he is strongly convicted he is afraid that others may go there too. The true saint prays for the sinner because he has a sense of the evil of sin which sinners commit, the counterfeit because he has a fear of the terrors of hell. The phony prays for a sinner's safety. The Christian prays for safety *from* sin. Christians feel compassion for the sinner, but grieved anger on God's behalf for the sinner's rebellion. The man in the religion of fear feels more sorry for the sinner than for God, because he shares his sin and sympathizes with him. A counterfeit can never understand how God could allow a loved one to go to hell. They feel more for the "loved one" than for the God whose heart the rebellious "loved one" has broken. Christ's words commanding supreme love of His followers over all other earthly loves have no meaning to them. They do not supremely love Him; they love themselves, and everything connected with their own happiness. ( Matt. 6:33; 22:36-40; 10:37-39; Lk. 14:25-26)

It is not extravagant to say that the religion I have described appears to be that of a very large majority in the church. To say the least, it is to be feared that a majority of professing Christians are of this description. To say this is neither unloving nor censorious.

This religion is radically defective. There is nothing of true Christianity in it. It differs from Christianity as much as the Pharisees differed from Christ, as much as the Gospel faith differs from legal religion, as much as the faith of love differs from the religion of fear. Now, let me ask you, to which of these two classes do you belong? Is Christ the center of your life, or are you trying to fit Him in for your own happiness? God knows if your faith is the religion of fear. Why be afraid any longer? Why try to find happiness in serving yourself? Will you come, and trust Him simply as a child, to live no longer for yourself, but to live in love for God and His glory?

## COUNTERFEIT CONVERSION - PART 2

### The “Carnal Christian”

Much is said today about the “carnal Christian.” Such a one, we are told, has made Jesus “Savior” but not *Lord*. It appears by this that a man can be saved, but not surrendered to Christ; following Him, but still serving self. And it is easy to see why this idea has arisen. Preachers and personal workers are at a loss to explain the strange contradiction of a self-pleasing, self-centered person who claims the name “Christian” without bearing any resemblance to this Savior they profess to love. Yet ask them, “Do you believe in Christ? Have you accepted Him as your personal Savior?” “Oh, yes,” is the invariable answer. If these are all the basics, they are apparently in order, so another source of counsel must be sought other than conversion.

Out of a morass of uncertain Christianity, men have looked for a way to distinguish between an “effective” Christian who lives like his Lord, and the “believer” who seems no different from his pagan neighbor. The distinction has been made between making Christ *Savior* and believing Him for salvation and making Him *Lord* that He might use this person for service. This “carnal Christian” becomes a *middle stage* person. He may partly serve God and at the same time partly serve himself. His ticket to heaven is guaranteed, his discipleship is optional. All this, we trust, can be substantiated by Holy Scripture. Can it?

Just what does *God* have to say about the “carnal man”? Before examining this question, you should understand that God looks at the heart of man. Whatever you are on the outside, God looks at your heart. He knows the real reason why you live the way you do. Because of the simple fact that almost every Christian duty and feeling can be imitated or duplicated by the unsaved man, we will concentrate on God's analysis of conversion and God's verdict on this issue. It will do no good to ask, “*What* are people who call themselves Christians, doing today?”, and make these findings the criterion of true faith. Our guide must be the Bible, for on the evidence of this Holy Book, rests the final truth of each matter of faith.

Just how much like a Christian can a sinner be? The Bible answers, *exceedingly* so. It tells us that an unsaved man can be strictly moral in his outward life (Matt. 23:8); outwardly very prayerful (Mk.12:40); zealous in religion (Matt.23:15); and conscientious in doing what is expected of him. (Matt. 23:23) None of these things are necessarily the sign of a true child of God. An unsaved man may be very much like a Christian in desires; to be of some use to others, to make converts and give money for the work of religion (I Cor. 13:3; Matt.23:15; Lk. 18:12). But desires are not the measure of true faith. The sinner may hate the same things a Christian hates but for a totally different reason, and that difference brings him a totally different destiny. It is the *heart*, or the *supreme, ultimate choice* man lives for that determines whether he is a true Christians or not in God's sight. If the heart is wrong, everything else is wrong, no matter what is done outwardly. Either your heart is set on serving Christ supremely or it is set on serving yourself supremely. You are loving or you are selfish. You are living intelligently or unintelligently. You belong to God or you do not. (Matt.6:22-24; 7:17-20; 12:33-35; Jn.3:19-21; Rom.6:16-18; 2 Cor. 5:17; Tit. 1:15; Jas. 3:10-11)

## It's Hard To Tell the Phony (Sometimes)

The sinner may want to *glorify God*, and still be unsaved! The true saint does this because he *loves* Him, and wants to see Him glorified; the counterfeit, because he believes this is the way to be saved, and desires it as a means to *his* great end, *his* own benefit. The counterfeit may want to *repent*, because he is afraid if he does not he will be lost; the Christian repents because he hates sin itself, because it dishonors God. They may both *believe in Christ*; the true saint because he loves Him; the other, that he might have a hope of Heaven.

They may both feel like obeying God; the Christian, that he might be more like his Lord; the counterfeit because he wants the rewards of obedience. Desires are the same; the heart, in each case, totally different. One is saved; the other is not.

They may also agree in actual *affections* and *resolutions* towards certain things. A counterfeit may even “love,” (as far as *feelings* are concerned), such things as the Bible, prayer and witnessing, even “love” Christ and the Father - *yet still be unsaved!* *Feelings* are not the true test of faith. God sees the heart, and the essential difference is this; the true saint loves God with the unselfish love of trust and obedience, because he sees His character to be supremely excellent and lovely and he loves Him for His own sake. The counterfeit “loves” God with a feeling of “buddy-buddy” affection, because he thinks God is his particular friend that is going to make him happy forever, and why shouldn’t he love Him? (Matt.5:46) The Christian loves Christ because he has responded to His love provision for us to return to God. (I Jn. 4:19) The phony loves because he thinks God is going to save him from Hell and give him eternal life among other things, and he connects the friendship of Christ with his own selfish interests. The saint loves Him for what He *is*; the counterfeit, for what He *gives*. One seeks the Giver; the other, His gifts. One gives himself to God to *do* whatever He asks; the other comes to *get* whatever he can for himself, his own happiness and his own selfish purpose in life. (John 6:26-29; John 2:24)

Both true and false may feel badly about the low state of religion or church; both hate infidelity, injustice, and prejudice. The true saint, because it is opposed to God, to holy living, and to his Kings’ Kingdom. The counterfeit, because it injures an interest in which he is concerned, (for himself, of course), and if allowed to spread, will injure his hopes for happiness, oppose the religion he has chosen, and run contrary to his own views and opinions. (Matt.5:20) A man can even “hate” *sin* and yet not forsake it, being no more a Christian than the devil. How often an addict hates drugs because they have ruined him, but not for sins’ sake. He hates their bad effects, but loves the sin itself. Both may attend religious meetings, pray in secret, be self-denying and even be willing to suffer martyrdom for their faith. Yet, even in these, the basic motive of each may be utterly opposed. One has truly changed his direction and supreme purpose of life from living for self, to living for God. His life is moved and marked by *love*, he unselfishly *chooses* the highest good of God and the universe to the best of his knowledge. The other has merely changed his *means* of serving himself, from the secular to the religious. His life is marked and motivated by *selfishness*. He wants his own happiness above the interests of everyone in the universe, including God.

Now, if the Bible be our guide, it is clear that a man cannot truly be called a Christian when he is supremely selfish. And if the “selfish Christian” cannot be found in the Bible, as far as

God is concerned, there is no such thing. Yet it is said that the Bible teaches this, and such a person may be called a “carnal Christian”. Let us first examine the Bible signs of the carnal man, to see whether or not we may call him at least a partial Christian.

The word “carnal” comes from the Greek root “sarx” (flesh) giving “sarkikos” meaning “fleshly.” Each time the word “flesh” or “fleshly” is used in the Bible describing a moral action, it can be replaced by the word “carnal”. The two words are the same in Greek, they only differ in some English translations. Let us first of all list the signs of the carnal man as opposed to the spiritual man in Romans chapter 8:

<b>CARNAL MAN</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL MAN</b>
Condemned (Rom.8:3)	No condemnation (Rom.8:1)
Walks after the flesh	Walks not after flesh (Rom.8:4)
Under law of sin and death	Free from law of sin and death (8:2)
Minds things of flesh	Minds things of Spirit (8:5)
Carnally minded is death	Spiritually minded is life, peace (8:6)
Enmity (enemy) against God	Friend of God (8:7) cf. Jn.14:15-21, 14.
Not subject to God’s law	A subject of God’s law (Rom.13:8-14)
Cannot be subject to law (cf. Matt.12:33-35)	God’s law the rule of his life (cf. Matt. 7:13-27; I Jn.2:3-7)
Cannot please God (Rom.8:8)	Pleases God (Jn.14:21; 16:27)
In the flesh (Rom.8:9)	Not in the flesh (not carnal) (Rom. 8:1)
Out of Christ	In Christ, if Spirit indwells (Rom.8:9)
None of His (Rom.8:9)	A child of God (Rom.8:16)
Shall die (spiritual death) 8:13	Shall live (Gal.3:2-3; 5:24)

Paul lists another set of signs characterizing the carnal man in Galatians 5:16-26.

"WORKS OF THE FLESH"	actions of the CARNAL MAN
Adultery	Wrath
Fornication	*STRIFE
Uncleanness	*SEDITION
Lasciviousness	Heresies
Idolatry	*ENVYINGS
Witchcraft	Murders
Variance	Drunkenness
Emulations	AND SUCH LIKE

... “of the which I told you before, as I have also told you in *times past* that *they which do such things* shall **not inherit** the Kingdom of God.” (v.21)

\*NOTE especially these starred characteristics for later reference.

Another list of the characteristics of carnal people is given in 2 Peter 2:9-22. We are told that they are *ungodly* and are reserved for judgment (2:9). Those singled out for the worst judgment are those who have *known* the Gospel and *still* live selfishly and carnally. They “walk after the flesh” in the lust of uncleanness and despise government, (rule or authority; immediately, of a society, but ultimately of God, refusing His Lordship). (2:10)

They are self-willed and self-loving, (AMP 2:10) showing most of the signs of the people in Galatians 5:16-26: *fornication* (2:14), *uncleanness* (2:10), *lasciviousness* (2:2), *emulations* (2:18), *sedition* (2:10), *heresies* (2:1) *drunkenness and revellings* (2:13). These men are *cursed* (2:14), they have *forsaken* the right way, gone astray (2:15) slaves of *sin* (2:19). “...to whom the *mist of darkness is reserved forever*” This does not sound like heaven!

It should be reasonably evident now, that a man who claims to be a “carnal Christian” does not have a very promising future, because his life is identical with the *unsaved man*. He is a slave to the flesh, a servant of his own desires and as such a rebel against the good rule of God, righteousness, and holiness.

But it is asked, “Didn’t Paul address the Corinthian Christians as ‘carnal’ in I Cor. 3:1?” Since this is the *only* passage where the word “carnal” is used where a superficial reading might give the impression of a “selfish Christians” - *notwithstanding* the above Scriptures listed *by Paul himself* against this very idea, let us examine it in detail. If the “carnal” Chris-

tian philosophy is not taught here, it is not taught anywhere in the Bible. And if it is taught here, this passage is in direct contradiction to those already studied.

*NOTE in introduction:*

- a. Paul's audience will, of course, include the unsaved (cf. his letter to the Romans 1:7-8 and 2:1-24. Also to the Galatians (cf. Gal.1:1-5 and 3:1-5);
- b. He specifically states the criterion of those he addresses *as saints*, those *sanctified in Christ*, (set apart in Him, not following sin, living like Christ as I Jn. 4:17) (I Cor. 1:2.)

### **SETTING ANALYSIS: I Cor.2:9-16**

1. Paul came under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, not his own powers. The *purpose* of his visit, (and letter), is to combat faction, division, and false teaching not of the Holy Spirit. This implies:
  - a. That he has God's authority to tell them something from Him;
  - b. They may not like what he has to say;
  - c. No matter whether they do or not, they had better be prepared to act on his words!
2. He amplifies his purpose (showing more of Christ's glories for those that *love* Him, (I Cor.2:6-11), then says that the Spirit shows men God's right and goodness. Accordingly:
  - a. Spiritual men are taught of God what is wrong in situations (vs. 11-15);
  - b. They do *not* live in sin (v. 15; cf. I Jn. 1:5-7; 3:4-8);
  - c. God knows and shows what is right to spiritual men, who have His mind. (v.16) *however...*

This sets the atmosphere for a searching, but loving rebuke. Paul has heard of some very suspicious activities still going on in this Corinth church. Sin could only occur if:

- a. Some Corinthian Christians still thought some sins might be allowable or even justifiable through either lack of light or false teaching;
- b. Some sinners in the church were still successfully posing as true Christians.

From this, Paul says: "I, brothers, could not speak to you as *spiritual* (men) but as *carnal* (natural, fleshly, unsaved men) as babies in Christ (or; as uninstructed people in the Word of God as to what a Christian should be like). He explains further by saying the first time he spoke to them, they had so little light they hardly seemed like Christians, so he had to give them "milk" (simple, basic facts of true faith for conversion). *But*, now some have still not changed! A "baby" Christian is not partially selfish and "growing" from partial repentance and commitment to complete repentance. All true men of God have forsaken all *known* sin, and are not knowingly living in sin. A Christian "grows" by responding to moral light given and disciplining new areas as God reveals.

If they were babies, they should have learned last time. There was only one other explanation for such sin problems continuing under the light of truth he had given them:

"For you are *yet* (still must be *unsaved*) *carnal*; for whereas there is among you:

- ENVYINGS: (zelos - cf. Rom. 13:13; Jas. 3:14,15; I Cor. 13:4; but especially Gal. 5:21)
- STRIFE: (eris - cf. Rom.13:13; 2 Cor. 12:20; but especially Gal. 5:20 as above)

- DIVISIONS: (dichostasia - “a two-fold upstanding”, used only twice elsewhere in Scripture; Rom. 16:17 as “faction”, and Gal . 5:20 as *sedition* )

“...are you not *carnal*, and walk as *men*?” or “Are you not worldly-minded and behave like the unconverted” (Berk.) ( I Cor.3:3)

*Notice carefully:* Paul makes no case for a selfish Christian at all. There is no *option* here to forsake all sin; it is an absolute *necessity*. No honest Bible scholar could at all justify the salvation of a man who still lives in sin. If he does not know what he is doing is wrong, it is *not* sin. (Rom. 7:7-9; Jas. 4:17; Lk. 23:34; 12:47-48; 11:47-51; Jn. 9:41; 15:22,24) If he sins *ignorantly*, he is a baby; if he sins *knowingly*, he is a phony.

“Christian” implies being a “little-Christ” or “Christ-like”. ( I Jn. 2:6;4: 17; 3:7,3) What kind of blasphemous combination is a “*Carnal Christ-Like*?” You might as well talk about “godly sinners” or “heavenly devils”. God sees *sinners*. He sees *saints*. He does not see “sinful saints” or “saintly sinners”. What fellowship has light with darkness? We are good or bad, selfish or loving. No definition of a Christian, that allows fellowship with the sin that cost God His Son and Christ His life, comes from the Holy Spirit of God. The “carnal Christian” philosophy is all right in its place. That place is Hell. If you are living in known sin, it is time you quit. If you live a carnal life, you are not a Christian, and have no right to call yourself one. “Carnal” or otherwise.

- *Neither does the following passage, ( I Cor. 3:5-15), refer to a “selfish” Christian who has not served God on earth, makes heaven, but loses his “rewards” in the fire. Paul is not talking about *salvation*, but *ministries*. This passage is a terrible warning to a man who tries to build a ministry on his own basic salvation, (through Christ the Foundation Stone), but presents a sub-standard message. He preaches to others a salvation God cannot justify or endorse. Through carelessness or spiritual blindness, tradition or man-centered activism, he fails to faithfully present God’s conditions for new birth. He himself is saved, but all his work and ministry of sub-standard quality and presentation is *burned*. (I Cor.3: 15)*

# COUNTERFEIT CONVERSION – PART 3

## The “People-Pleasers” (Social)

*“For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43).*

This verse describes men who refused to confess that Jesus was the Christ because He was extremely unpopular with the scribes and Pharisees, leaders of Jerusalem.

These men were, of course, never saved. They chose to respect men rather than God, and as a result forfeited life. They were representatives of the third main class of religious people without true faith. We shall call them the “people-pleasers.”

No mere regard for reputation has led the people-pleaser to choose religion. This has always been too unpopular with the crowd. But where it is not generally unpopular to become a professing Christian, where it will not lessen, but increase chances of popularity with many, a complex motive operates. It is the hope of securing happiness in a future world and to increase reputation here. This is their basic motive.

Many profess conversion or religion, when on a close look it will be seen that their leading object, prized beyond anything else, is the good opinion of the crowd. Sooner than lose this, they would deny their religious stand. Their whole “faith” is based on this. You can see by a close look at their lives that they will do nothing to lose this good opinion of men. They will not face the hatred, scorn, ridicule and unpopularity from unbelievers that must come if they really gave themselves up to root sin out of the world.

How can you tell a people-pleaser? If a man professes to love God and put Him first, yet makes the praise of men his idol, how can you tell? Test your own character by these signs if you hope you do not belong in the class of counterfeit converts...

They do what Paul says: *“...measure themselves among themselves...” (II Cor. 10:12)*, and for this reason do not find true faith.

There are a vast many people who, instead of making Jesus Christ their standard and the Bible their rule of life, obviously aim at no such thing. The great question they ask is - “Do I do as much in religion, and am I as good as others in the crowd or church around me?” Their aim is to keep up a respectable religious front for others. Instead of seriously asking for themselves what the Lord and His Word requires, they look simply at the common run of professing church people and copy them. They do that which is outwardly respectable, not primarily that which is right. (*Ps. 36:1-2; Prov. 12:15; 16:2; 30:12; Eccl. 11:9; Judges 17:6; Matt. 6:1-7, 16-18*)

People pleasers never bother to raise the standards of right around them.

They are not bothered that the general standard of piety is so low in the church that a visiting early church Christian would have to backslide to be in fellowship! People-pleasers like the “present” standard, because they have conformed their religious reputation around it. If the real friend of God and man tries to wake up the church and raise the tone of faith, he seems critical and meddling to the people-pleaser. (*Matt. 25; Jer. 14:10-14; Mk. 6:1-3; Acts 5:28*)

When Jesus denounced the church leaders of His day, they said, *"He has a devil!"* He dared to say that unless a man's righteousness exceeded theirs they would not make it. (*Matt. 5:20*) A large part of today's church people have the same attitude as the scribes and Pharisees, and the same destiny. Every effort to open their eyes to make them see they are living lives so low, so worldly, so phony that God is grieved terribly, only excites ill-will from them. They forget how Jesus said His strongest words of judgment to those who had a reputation of being the most pious people of His day. It was their hypocritical spirit that roused His soul. He saw through their fake fronts of piety, called them hypocrites and thundered over their heads the terrible words, *"How can you escape the damnation of Hell!"* No wonder there is excitement when the truth is told, when so many love the praise of men more than the praise of God. They do not seem to know that the lives of so many professing Christians are almost as different from God's standards as light is from dark. (*Lev. 11:44; Ps. 24:3,4; Jer. 23:9-22; 26:1-15; Rom. 6; I Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 12:14; I Jn. 3:3-10; I Jn. 5:18*)

They often oppose men, measures, and efforts to wake the church as long as they are unpopular; but if they become popular, fall in with them.

The opposite is also true. If the work becomes *unpopular* they will turn against it. (*Matt. 3:7-10; Mk. 6:14, 17, 20, 22, 26; Lk. 13:23-27; Jn. 6:60-66; 7:10-13; Acts 6:8-13*) Let a man of God begin to wake up churches to true faith. While he *is* little known, the people-pleasers are not reluctant to speak against him. But let him go on and gain influence and they will profess to be his warmest friends. (*Lk. 6:7-9; Jn. 2:23-25*).

This class of person stands with the crowd when it condemns a man, and turns the other way when he is honored. There is only one exception. That is, when they have become so far committed to the opposition that they cannot change without disgrace. Then they will be silent, until another chance comes up for letting out the smoldering fires that are burning within them. (*Matt. 22:15, 22, 24, 46; Luke 11:27-28; Acts 5:17-33*)

They never aim at forming a public sentiment in favor of godliness.

They always follow the crowd as it is, and feeling after the tide, go that way, shrinking back from everything that goes in the face of public sentiment. (*Jer. 42:16 cf. 43:1-7; Lk. 14:25; Jn.9:18-25; Acts 24:24-27*)

People-pleasers separate God's requirements into two groups: those which are strongly enforced by public feeling and those which are not. They do the first to please men and break the rest as it suits them.

A people-pleaser is careful to stay away from sins forbidden by public opinion, but does other things not frowned on that are just as bad. He will never miss public worship - oh no! - because he could never hold a reputation for religion if he did... but neglects other things plainly required in the Word of God. When someone habitually disobeys any known law of God, the obedience he seems to have to other laws is not from a true love for God, but from selfish motives. (*Luke 16:10; I Jn. 3:3-6; Jn.14:21*) He does not, in fact, obey any command of God. (*Jas. 2:10*) Obedience to God implies an obedient state of heart, and therefore nothing is obedience that does not imply a supreme regard to God's authority.

Now, if a man's heart be right, whatever God requires, he regards of more importance than anything else. (*Matt. 6:33; 22:36-40; 10:37-39*) If he regards anything else of greater importance, *that* is his god. Whatever we supremely regard, that is our god; if it is riches, comfort or pleasure, honor or power, that is the god of our hearts. If it is Jesus, that man is a true Christian. If it is anything else, whatever his reason, it is his true god, and all his religion is selfish. He is a counterfeit convert. (*Luke 16:10-15; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 6:24; Jn. 8:34-36*)

How is it with you, friend? Do you habitually neglect any command of God because it is not sustained and enforced by public opinion? If you profess to be a true Christian, you probably do not neglect anything strongly urged by public sentiment. But how is it with others? Do you habitually practice some things acceptable among men that you know to be contrary to the law of God? If you do, write down your name; "people-pleaser". (*Luke 18:9-14*)

They are apt to sin away from home when they would not if they were with those they know.

Many a man who is outwardly very religious and respectable in his own community drops his mask at a distance and begins to act like he has always lived inside. If he is fairly sure no-one knows him there, he will sin. If he is a religious man in church, away from church company he is ready to "let his horns grow". The true Christian in love with God does not lead a double life. The things that make him happy in church are the same things that make him happy a thousand miles away from it. (*Matt. 15:8; Jer. 23:24; Titus 1:16; Titus 2:7-15; Jas. 2:9; 1 Jn. 2:3-6, 23*)

A people-pleaser also often indulges in secret sin. I am now speaking of something by which you may know yourselves. If you allow yourself any sin secretly, (when you know how to get out of it but you can "get along" without any human being knowing it), know that GOD sees it, and He has already written down your name, "hypocrite"! You are more afraid of disgrace in the eyes of men than disgrace in the eyes of God. If you loved God as you claim to, and were tempted to do such a thing, you, as a true Christian would react like Joseph: "*How can I do this wicked thing and sin against God?*" (*Gen. 39:7-9; Ezek. 8:12; Job 31:33-34; Rom. 2:16-29; 2 Tim. 2:19*)

They may not secretly sin, but secretly neglect duties that if known would bring them shame. Things like Bible study and secret prayer, for instance. They will appear very pious at church, but in the privacy of their own rooms, live different lives. How is it with you? Do you habitually and secretly omit some things, knowing how and why you should do them, and yet are careful to perform all your public duties? Need it be said that you "*love the praise of men more than the praise of God*"?

People-pleasers dread the thought of being called "fanatical".

They miss a first principle of Scripture: That all the world is wrong! The world's feelings are all against God, and every one who intends to serve God must, from the start, oppose its opinions. It is true and always has been, that "*they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions*". They shall be called "fanatical", "extreme" and the like. They always have been and always will be, as long as the world is wrong. (*Matt. 5:11-12; Jn. 15:18-25; Acts 14:22; Acts 21:27-31; 26:24-29*) But people-pleasers never go further than people's opinions. They say they "must" do this to influence such men.

Right against this, is the purpose of God's true children. Their leading aim is to reverse the world's order and turn the world upside down, to bring all men to obey God and all the opinions of men to conform to the Word of God. (*Acts 17:6; Acts 2:37-40; Luke 12:49; Matt. 3:1-3; 4:16-17; Jn. 8:44-50; 12:37-43*)

They are very intent on making friends on both sides of the line.

They always make compromises and concessions to the crowd. They try to take both sides. It has always been so for centuries, that men could make a good show of religion without ever being labeled as "holy". The standard is still so low, that a great mass of churches still try not to be set down as "reprobates" on one hand or "fanatics" on the other. They are "fashionable Christians!" Their style of religion is fashionable and popular and they generally follow the world's fashions in dress and custom. No matter what God requires, they are carefully determined not to offend His enemies. If they are ever faced with a choice between pleasing their crowd or God, they will offend God. (*Prov. 4:14; Ex. 23:24; Matt. 14:1-10; 21:23-27; Luke 12:51-53; Jn. 15:14; Rom. 12:2; Jas. 4:4*)

They will do more to gain the applause of men than the applause of Heaven.

They are more anxious to know what men think about them than about what God thinks. If such a one is a minister preaching a sermon, or a singer giving a song, they fish for compliments, more interested to know what men thought of it than what God thought of it. If an elder or church member prays or speaks in a meeting, if he is a people-pleaser, he is thinking, how he sounds to those who listen. (*Matt. 15:7-8; 23:14; Jude 16; Jas. 2:1-4*) If he makes anything like a failure, the disgrace of men cuts him ten times more than the thought that he has let God down or hindered others. (*I Cor. 7:23; Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22-23*)

Females of this kind are vastly more concerned in church with how they look in the eyes of men than how they look in God's eyes. You can see at a glance what this religion is, the moment it is held up to view. No one is at a loss to say what that man or woman's name is. It is hypocrite. They go into God's house with hearts as dark as midnight, while everything on the outside is respectable and decent. (*I Sam. 16:7; Matt. 23:5-7; Matt. 23:28; I Peter 3:3; II Cor. 5:12*)

They are often ashamed to do what they should; so much ashamed they will not do it! When a person is so much ashamed, it is plain that his reputation is his god. How many people-pleasers do you know? They are ashamed to acknowledge Jesus Christ, ashamed to reprove sin in high and low places, ashamed to speak out when Christianity is assailed! If they really loved God, how could they be? If a man really loved a girl, would he be ashamed to defend her if she was slandered? If a man's children were abused, would he be ashamed to stand up for them? Not if he loved them, (*Mk. 8:38; Joel 2:26-27; Jer. 17:13; Rom. 1:16; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:12; Phil. 1:20; Heb. 2:11; I Jn. 2:28*) The people-pleaser does not really love God. He loves himself and his reputation among others. When among church people he is very bold for the truth and makes a great show of his faith. But put him among Christ's enemies, where it would be a reproach to be called a Christian, put him to trial, and he will sell Christ out like Judas or deny Him before His enemies. (*Matt. 10:32-33; 26:47-50; Mk. 4:16-17; Luke 9:26; 12:9; John 1:20; 9:22; 12:42; Acts 3:13*)

There is a great deal more *apparent* piety in the church than *true* piety. There are many

things which sinners suppose are good which are abominable in the eyes of God. It is easy for people to take credit for people-pleasing lives and make themselves believe they are models of piety, when in fact they are only examples of hypocrisy.

But for the love of reputation and fear of disgrace, how many in the church would break out in open apostasy? All that holds them back from open sin is public opinion, fear of disgrace, and desire to gain credit for virtue. When a person is good from a regard to God's authority - whether public sentiment favor or frown upon it - that is the true faith. (*Jn. 8:28-29; Acts 5:40-42*) If otherwise, they have their reward. They do it for the sake of gaining credit in the eyes of men, and they gain it. (*Ezek. 14:6-8; John 7:3-7*) Who will agree to take the Bible for your rule and Jesus Christ for your pattern, doing what is right in all cases, whatever man may say or think? If you are not willing to take this stand, you are a stranger to the grace of God. A people-pleaser is by no means His child. If you are not resolved upon doing what is right, public sentiment or not, you love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Friend, I have been honest with you. If I did not really love you or care, I would not have risked your censure. I have told it like it is. If you mean to be a Christian you must give yourself wholly up to Christ. You cannot float along to Heaven on the waves of public sentiment. I will not pretend you can when God says you cannot. (*Luke 14:25-27; I Thess. 2:3-6*)

Do you ask, sinner, what is to become of all these professing Christians who are conformed to the world and who love the praise of men more than the praise of God? The Bible answers. They will go to hell, with you and with other hypocrites, just as certain as that the friend of the world is an enemy of God. (*Luke 6:26; 12:8-9; Matt. 7:21-23; II Tim. 2:12; I Jn. 3:15-17*)

*"Wherefore come out from among them, and be a separate people...and I will receive you, saith the Lord...and will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters" (2 Cor. 6:17-18).*

And now, will you do it? Who is on the Lord's side? Who is willing to say, *"We will no longer follow a multitude to do evil, but are determined to do the will of God in all things no matter what the world thinks or says about us" (John 12:24-26)?*

*"Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me... I RECEIVE NOT HONOUR FROM MEN... how CAN you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?" (John 5:39,41,44)*