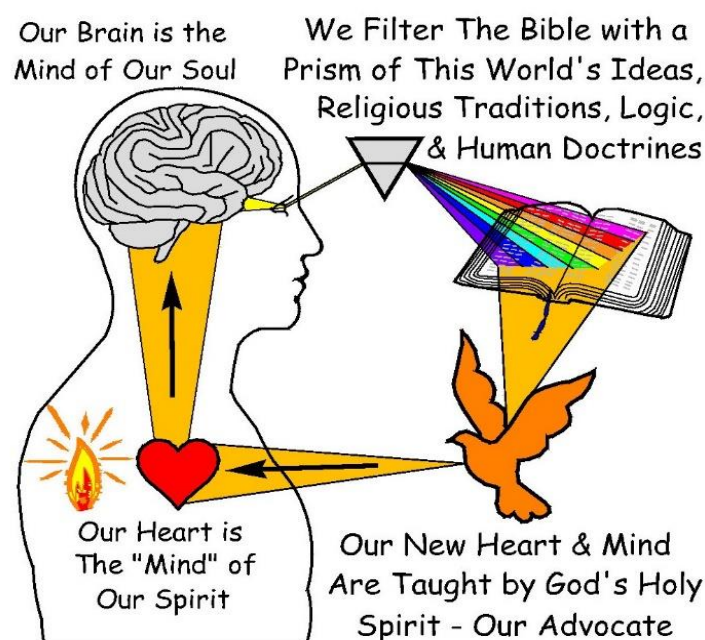


## **Ambassadors for Christ in a Divided Church** by Philip Martinson

We are warned to not be deceived by the delusions of Satan. **2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (ESV)** ***False apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.*** False doctrines, deceptions, and false teachers can lead us away from Christ. **Colossians 2:8 (ESV)** ***See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*** Surprisingly, we are also told there are to be no divisions in the church. **1 Corinthians 1:10 (LSB)** ***I exhort you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.*** Sadly, Christian history is a road map of division, disunity, and conflict. Neither Christ nor the Body of Christ (the true Church) are divided. **1 Corinthians 1:12-13 (NKJV)** ***Each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Before leaving THIS world, Christ Commanded His followers to have Love and Unity between them. John 13:34-35 (NKJV) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*** In the words of Corrie ten Boom: “The Bible does not have suggestions. It has commands.” Christ commanded His followers to have unity. With unity came an effective church, exhibiting the divine power of the Holy Spirit. **Acts 4:31-34 (NKJV)** ***They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness. The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul; neither did anyone say that the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked.*** We can verbally profess our love for Christ and God His Father, but loving Christ and His Father requires obedience. **John 14:21 (NKJV)** ***He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*** Following Christ requires loving unity with other Believers, while remaining faithful to God’s Word of Truth. Yet we are also told to avoid those who cause divisions. **Romans 16:17 (NKJV)** ***Note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. Is it even possible to follow Christ in Spirit and Truth, while maintaining unity and love in the church? 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NKJV) Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*** Only the power of Christ can balance the conflict we have with other believers (having different views on God’s truth), while showing them loving kindness. **John 15:5 (LSB)** ***Apart from Me you can do nothing.*** How do we balance obedience to God’s Truth, and unity with those having diverse beliefs? Apart from Christ, it is humanly impossible to obey both commands. **Matthew 19:26 (NIV)** ***With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.***

**1. The Cause of Church Divisions:** The Apostle Paul explained the cause of church divisions is NOT doctrinal differences; but carnality. *1 Corinthians 3:3-4 (NKJV) Where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are you not carnal?* Today we would say some are Protestant, Catholic, Fundamentalist, Calvinist, or Pentecostal, etc. Paul tells us we have a carnality meter inside, and if we profess to follow a denomination, rather than Christ, we are carnal. It is easy to follow the logic of our human minds (*the old Outer-Man*), instead of our reborn spirit (*the new Inner-Man*). We may rely on a religious system and fail to focus on our Personal and Private relationship with Christ. Believers are taught by the Living God of Israel – not man. *John 14:26 (NKJV) The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things.* Every day we have a choice to be taught by the wisdom of this world, or taught from God's Word of Truth, by God's Spirit of Truth. *1 John 2:26-27 (ESV) I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in Him.* It is easy to adopt and rely on moral behavior and religious teaching instead of a private connection with Christ. Even evangelism has turned to marketing Christ, instead of allowing the Spirit of the Living God (Yahweh), to cause conviction and a desire to repent. *John 6:44 (NKJV) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.* We are NOT transformed by human effort or religious doctrines. *John 6:45 (LSB) It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by [Yahweh – Isaiah 54:13].'* Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. It is the power of Yahweh's Spirit that enlightens, teaches, and draws us to His Kingdom as we become a temple of the Living God. *1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* We may accept religious teachings (*Outer-Man Knowledge*) and still ignore Christ's call of humility and kindness to others. *1 Corinthians 3:18-20 (NKJV) Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He catches the wise in their own craftiness; and The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.* We can desire to live a pure life and put others before ourselves; but even our good intentions can be rooted in a deceitful and wicked heart. *Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV) The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?* Our righteous acts (our **GOOD** deeds) are described as filthy garments from God's perspective! *Isaiah 64:6 (LSB) All of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.*



**2. Our Carnal Nature:** Our corrupt nature (*the old Outer-Man*) is rooted in the carnal desires of our flesh. **Genesis 6:12 (NKJV) God looked upon the earth, and *indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.*** Our carnal nature wars against our new and reborn human spirit. We are warned to follow *our Spirit* and not *our Flesh*. **Galatians 5:16-17 (NKJV) Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.** Our corrupted nature has *four categories*. **Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV) Works of the flesh are evident: *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, [1-Sexual Immorality] idolatry, sorcery, [2-Idolatry & Witchcraft] hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders [3-Selfish Ambition & Contentions] drunkenness, revelries, and the like [4-Self-Indulgence];...those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*** We are reborn in Christ, but our corrupted nature (*the old Outer-Man*) wars against our reborn Spirit (*the new Inner-Man*):

- a. **Sexual Immorality** – This first category includes sexual sin. Sadly numerous churches, in the 1970's, adapted psychology and counseling theories and assigned male pastors to council women. The fruits of this human logic destroyed ministries, families, and churches.
- b. **Idolatry & Witchcraft** – In a modern world, **witchcraft** (*sorcery & divination*) and **idolatry** (*insubordination*) seem obscure and unrelated to churches. Yet Satan's curse of evil deceives us with **witchcraft** (*to manipulate and control others*); and deceptions of **idolatry** (*to stubbornly create and hold our own image of God to follow*). **1 Samuel 15:22-23 (LSB) Has Yahweh as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination [witchcraft], and insubordination [stubbornness] is as wickedness and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, He has also rejected you.** This category of our flesh can move our corrupted desires into the satanic realm of the occult (*witchcraft = control & manipulation*) and drug addictions (*sorcery*).
- c. **Selfish Ambition & Contentions** – We may excuse our behavior as **righteous anger**. Yet these *nine carnal behaviors* come from our corrupted flesh: **hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, and murders**. These behaviors are opposite to the *nine Fruits of the Spirit* which come from the seed of Christ.
- d. **Self-Indulgence of our Inner Cravings** – This last category relates to personal discipline in controlling our physiological cravings, relating to gluttony, drunkenness, and chemical addiction. **Luke 4:4 (NKJV) It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'** Consider Esau's glutenous desire for food: **Hebrews 12:16 (NKJV) Or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.**

We cannot fix or control *our Outer-Man's* corrupt desires. Under God's Plan of Redemption, our carnal nature was crucified with Christ. **Romans 6:3-4 (NKJV) Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.** Christians are not told to modify, fix, control, counsel, or resist their flesh. We are *commanded to crucify it with Christ*! **Galatians 5:24 (NKJV) Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its**



*passions and desires.* We follow Christ in His crucifixion, death, and resurrected life.

**Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.** We are not physically crucified. However, we share in Christ's suffering as we learn to crucify or execute our carnal desires and behavior. We Reckon ourselves dead to sin in the Outer-Man of our flesh and share in Christ's crucifixion and death.

**Romans 6:11-14 (NKJV) You also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you.** Since our old nature was crucified and died with Christ, we now join Him in being reborn or resurrected into a new life. A life that is free from following our old, corrupted nature. **Romans 6:6-8 (NKJV) Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.** We can now live for our New Reborn Inner-Man Spirit. **Romans 6:9-10 (NKJV) If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.**

3. **Ambassadors for the Kingdom of God:** The same power that raised Christ from the dead is now dwelling within us. **Romans 8:11 (NKJV) If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.** As we repent and turn to Christ, God translates us from the Kingdom of this world, into the New Kingdom. God's Kingdom is unseen now but will becomes visible when Christ returns. **Colossians 1:13 (NIV) He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.** We become ambassadors of Christ's new Kingdom; experiencing the transforming power we have in Christ. The Gospel of The Kingdom is God's plan to destroy the world's evil kingdoms. Opposed to Christ is Satan, working with deceptions, distractions, and discouragement. **2 Peter 2:1 (NKJV) There will be false teachers among you, who secretly bring in destructive heresies.** We are warned to not follow human traditions over God's truth. **Mark 7:7-8 (NKJV) This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Laying aside the commandment of God, you hold to traditions of men.** Christ warned that following human traditions will Nullify the Word of God! **Mark 7:13 (NIV) You nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.** We experience Christ's power by abiding in Him as surrendered vessels, shining His light into the world. **John 15:7 (NKJV) If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.** In Christ, we learn to (1) Balance Obedience to God, with (2) Kindness and Unity towards other Believers, as we (3) Rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance in testing the spirits. **1 John 4:1 (NIV) Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.** In following Christ, we too partake in His unjust suffering and likewise learn obedience. **Hebrews 5:8 (NIV) Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered.**