

1 Corinthians 3:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos;
are ye not carnal?

Analysis

For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?—Paul reduces their complex factionalism to its essence: personality cults dividing Christ's body. The partisans likely claimed theological justification—Paul emphasized grace and freedom; Apollos brought eloquent OT exposition (Acts 18:24-28); Cephas (Peter) represented Jerusalem apostolic authority; the 'Christ party' (1:12) perhaps claimed superior spirituality. Yet all factionalism, regardless of stated rationale, is sarkikos (carnal).

The repetition 'are ye not carnal?' drives home Paul's diagnosis. Their divisions revealed not doctrinal maturity but spiritual infantility. Each faction elevated human leaders into positions reserved for Christ alone. This idolatry of personalities persists today—believers aligning with celebrity pastors, theological tribes, or denominational brands rather than centering on Christ. Paul's question implicitly answers itself: yes, such behavior is definitively carnal, betraying allegiance to the flesh rather than submission to the Spirit who unites all believers in one body (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Historical Context

In first-century Corinth, itinerant teachers (sophists) attracted followers through rhetorical prowess, creating competitive schools. The church imported this model, treating Paul, Apollos, and Peter as rival teachers rather than fellow servants. This abuse of leadership reflects a broader Corinthian problem: elevating human

wisdom, status, and power rather than embracing the 'foolishness' of the cross (1:18-25).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Do you identify more strongly with a particular pastor, author, or theological tradition than with Christ himself?
2. What 'party spirit' in your church or denomination fragments unity—loyalty to personalities, methods, or secondary doctrines?
3. How can you honor faithful teachers without creating the personality cults Paul condemns?

Interlinear Text

ὅταν	γὰρ	λέγει	τις	Ἐγὼ	μέν	εἰμι	Παύλου	ἕτερος	δέ
while	For	saith	one	I	G3303	am	of Paul	another	and
G3752	G1063	G3004	G5100	G1473		G1510	G3972	G2087	G1161

Ἐγὼ	Ἀπολλῶ	οὐχὶ	σαρκικοί	ἐστε
I	am of Apollos	ye not	carnal	are
G1473	G625	G3780	G4559	G2075

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 1:12 (References Paul): Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.