

“Brethren, Be Not Children In Mind ...”

“... yet in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men” (1 Cor. 14:20).

The exhortation on the apostle’s part that these brethren be mature in mind and action, contrasted with their being childish occurs in his other writings. The Ephesians were commanded to *“be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14)*. The Hebrews were reminded that *“when by reason of time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God and are become such as have need of milk and not of solid food. For everyone that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a babe” (Heb. 5:12)*.

The request that the Corinthians be not children in mind was an appeal that they should not be so enamored by the uniqueness of tongue speaking that they forgot the purpose of tongues and succumbed to the excitement of speaking in an unlearned language, submerged in exercising the gift for personal satisfaction and pleasure. Tongue speaking was indeed a “showy” gift and it would be easy to be so swept up in the excitement of the gift that one forgot its proper use. They were to be men in mind and understand that this gift was to prove that they had a message from God and then speak that message so that faith might be produced in the hearts of the hearers (Rom. 10:17).

Paul was not alone in using children as an illustration of what men should not be. Jesus asked, *“Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the marketplace, who call unto their fellows and say, we piped unto you and ye did not dance; we wailed and ye did not mourn” (Mt. 11:16-17)*. In essence, we suggested a “glad game” and you didn’t want to play it; we suggested a “sad game” and that did not please you either. When children get “out of sorts” nothing pleases them and sometimes their displeasure is frustrating and exasperating! I once had an uncle who as a child simply could not be pleased! One day his anger was provoked because syrup ran the wrong way on his plate! In Jesus’ day the childish behavior of His nation was that they criticized John the Baptist because of his “peculiar” ways. He came neither *“eating nor drinking.”* The Jews said, *“He has a demon.”* On the other hand Jesus was sociable, mingling with the people and His nation said, *“He is a winebibber and a glutton.”* Wisdom was justified by its works.

Conversely, some traits of children are laudable. Like newborn babes, we should long for the word that we might grow (1 Pet. 2:2). We must become

like children if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 18:3). We must be humble as children to enter God's kingdom (Mt. 18:4). Then, there is this appeal in our Corinthian text "*in malice be ye babes ...*"

We read elsewhere in this letter that we must "*quit ye like men*" (1 Cor. 16:13). He meant simply we are to act like men. To act like a man in the context of 1 Corinthians 14 meant that the Corinthians realize they were a single member in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-26). Having received a special gift (whichever of the nine it might have been), demanded that just as each member of the physical body supplies but also is supplied from other members of that same body and that what it does, it functions for the good of the whole body. The nine gifts were temporary: supplied by God to the church in order to edify and promote the well being of the body, providing its every need temporarily, until "*that which is perfect*" was come at which time temporary gifts would cease.

Every disciple should have been conscious of that truth, and in the maturity of mind (as men) used their gifts for the good of the whole body. In that way Christ would have been glorified and personal aims and interest would have been relegated (as it ought to have been) to last. In this way, they would have "*in mind*" been men.

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