Be Not Children in Understanding

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"Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:20). In context, Paul is talking about the church at Corinth's problem regarding tongue speaking. In essence, Paul says that this congregation needed to grow up. They were behaving very childishly in their arguing over tongue speaking. In their bad attitudes, they were childlike, but in understanding (and in turn, their actions and attitudes) they needed to be men. This could not be accomplished until they read and applied the words of Paul's epistle. Thankfully, studying Paul's second epistle to Corinth, we can conclude that much of the Corinthians' bad attitudes were corrected.

What about us? If Paul were to write a letter to the church at Beacon, would he write with a similar tone? Would he mention many problems that need correction? Would he be aware of any arguments or petty differences that need to be set aside? If so, he might would write, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

The key to overcoming any sinful action must first be understanding that the action is sinful in the first place! How else might we know that we need to make correction if we do not understand? Lucky for us, the Bible was written for that very purpose! "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130). "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). The Proverbs were written "to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion" (Pro. 1:2-4). Thus, verse 5 says, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."

Are children born understanding? Of course not! They must be taught the things that they need to know to get through life. Spiritually speaking, a loving father and mother must patiently impart the Biblical virtues that they too practice so that the child does not sense hypocrisy or improper motivations. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22:6). Thus, a child must MOVE PAST spiritual infancy and grow up to be a MAN or a WOMAN in the faith.

Could it be the case that there are some grown men and women, physically speaking, who are still spiritual infants? The Bible says yes. In fact, that is exactly what the congregation at Corinth as a whole was: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"

The very attitudes of division that were manifesting themselves at Corinth were evidence of the fact that the Corinthian Christians needed to grow up, spiritually speaking. And how could this be accomplished? Only through understanding! The Hebrews writer would write a very similar thought to the Hebrew Christians, who were flirting with the idea of returning to Judaism: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the

oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14, emphasis mine, TCG). May these words never be said about the members of the Beacon church of Christ!