

The Universal Problem of Carnality, 1 Cor 3:1-2: Paul's Zeugma Metaphor; Characteristics of the Sin Nature: Area of Weakness, Heb 12:1

1 Corinthians 3:1 - I, brethren [identifies the objects as believers], could not speak to you as to spiritual men [they were not in fellowship with God, filled by the Holy Spirit, or in occupation with Christ], but as to men of flesh [dative of disadvantage of σάρκινος, *sarkinos*: the sinful nature], as to infants [νήπιος, *nēpios*: infant, i.e., spiritual babies] in Christ.

v. 2 - I gave you milk to drink [γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, *gala humas epotisa*: basic doctrines], not solid food [οὐ βρώμα, *ou brōma*: advanced theology].

NOTE: In context, the verb “to give to drink” is the aorist active indicative of **ποτίζω, *potizō*** and it has two direct objects: (1) milk and (2) solid food. This is obviously a metaphor describing the inability of the carnal believer to metabolize advanced doctrines—solid food—so Paul has “fed” them on a liquid diet of basic doctrines—milk.

Additionally, verse 2 is a figure of speech which is classified by most theologians as a zeugma \züg'-ma\, but it could also be a syllepsis \sa-lep'-sas\. We analyze for the purpose of making a doctrinal point and for definitions of these terms we consult:

Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 243, 218:

Zeugma, a figure of speech by which one word refers to two others in the same sentence. Literally a ‘yoking,’ zeugma may be achieved by a verb with two objects, as in the final line of Shakespeare’s 128th sonnet:

Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

Or it may employ a verb with two subjects, as in the opening of his 55th sonnet:

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes **shall outlive** this powerful rhyme.

The term is frequently used as a synonym for syllepsis—a special kind of zeugma in which the yoking term agrees grammatically with only one of the terms to which it is applied, or refers to each in a different sense. (p. 243)

Syllepsis, a construction in which one word is applied to two other words or phrases, either ungrammatically or in two differing senses. In the first case, the verb or preposition agrees grammatically with only one of the two elements which it governs, e.g. ‘He works his work, I mine’ (Tennyson). In the second case, the word also appears only once but is applied twice in differing senses, as in Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*:

Here, thou, great Anna! whom three realms
obey,
Dost sometimes counsel **take**—and sometimes
tea (pronounced as French *thé*).

The term is frequently used interchangeably with zeugma, attempts to distinguish the two terms having foundered in confusion: some rhetoricians place the ungrammatical form under the heading of syllepsis while others allot it to zeugma. It seems preferable to keep zeugma as the more inclusive term for syntactic ‘yoking’ and to reserve syllepsis for its ungrammatical or punning varieties. (p. 218)

12. A cursory glance at 1 Corinthians 3:2 would conclude the verse to be ungrammatical since the verb “drink” may modify “milk” but not “solid food” and therefore a syllepsis.

13. But as a metaphor referring to spiritual growth it can very easily be a zeugma yoking two objects together grammatically.
14. As believers continue in spiritual growth they accumulate an ever-advancing inventory of doctrinal principles and concepts. The more they know the easier it is to understand and evaluate new information.
15. We have an idiom in English that describes this:
Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v.:
drink, 1c: to take in or receive avidly—usually used with *in* (*drank in every word of the lecture*).
16. Because of a high inventory of divine viewpoint and resultant spiritual momentum, the advancing believer is able to “drink in” the teaching of Bible doctrine.
17. However, a new believer or a recovering reversionist is unable to “drink in” advanced doctrine and must instead only be fed the “milk” of basic doctrines.
18. Here then is the principle we extract from 1 Corinthians 3:2: a believer who spends most of his time in status quo carnality is able only to “drink in” the “milk” of basic doctrine but he is unable to “drink in” the “solid food” of advanced doctrine.
19. This zeugmatic metaphor graphically illustrates the desperate condition in which the carnal believer operates. Enmeshed in facilitated behavior patterns of carnality, his ability to log meaningful time under the filling of the Holy Spirit is limited thus making spiritual growth difficult and reversion recovery becomes a prolonged fractured process.
20. But if we live by grace then two principles are evident: (1) If we grow by grace, and we do, then recovery from sin is by grace as well. If rebound works for the advancing believer, and it does, then it also works for the reversionistic believer.
21. It must be remembered that man is born into sin of two categories: (1) genetic sin that is programmed into the DNA of every cell, and (2) Adam's sin imputed to the genetically formed sinful nature.
22. In addition to these two, the sinful nature has a propensity to present temptation to the soul in several categories. These temptations originate from four major characteristics of the sin nature:
1. An area of weakness called personal sin:

Hebrews 12:1 - Since we also keep having such a great battalion of witnesses [the faith-rest heroes of Hebrews 11] supporting us, having stripped for action every impediment [laying aside all distractions to priority one of Bible study] and the sins [volitional consent to the temptations of the sinful nature's area of strength] which so easily ensnares, let us advance on the run [momentum of the double-column advance] with endurance [to press on regardless of the circumstances] in the conflict marked out for us [our duties in the Invisible War].