

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The habit of preachers today is to address their people as though they were all Christians and just need instruction...men and women are being treated as saved who never knew they were lost.” [Lloyd-Jones]

*“In my lifetime I did not care to hear that word that cut me most, and showed me my lost estate aright. I was vexed to hear my sins mentioned, and laid to my charge. I loved him best, who deceived me most; who said, Peace, peace, when there was no such thing.” (Jer. 5:30,31).
[Bunyan, John. A FEW SIGHS FROM HELL]*

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

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Take Care – Don’t Be One of These

June 16, 2024

Sermon Text: Philippians 3:17-21

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:1-23

Last time we were reminded that in God’s measure, there are only two kinds of people. Two great

divisions of all humanity – those to whom the Word of the Cross is foolishness, and those to whom it is the power of God to salvation.

but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1Co 1:23-24)

It is one or the other. Every human

being, be they young or old, rich or poor, male or female, is in one or the other category. It is the tendency of many people to imagine themselves as having one foot in the world and one in heaven. Having Christ's forgiveness and acceptance, and yet loving this world. But there is no middle ground. It is Broadway to destruction or the Narrow Way with Christ to life eternal.

And few are they who find that Narrow Way. Christ said so Himself.

This demands, then, a very sober, serious reflection in regard to our own status at this moment. These are not truths to be toyed with nor taken lightly. Nothing less than absolute certainty will do. Eternal life or eternal death. And eternity is a very, very, very long....time? No, "time" will not do, because it does not exist in eternity.

There is a category of man's own making which is a counterfeit and a deception. A kind of person who *begins, but does not finish*. The Bible says things like this many

times:

and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Mat 10:22)

Mat 24:13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Heb 3:14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

The person who is truly born again, who has therefore been made a new creation in Christ, will without fail persevere to the end. True faith, given to us as a gift from God, cannot be extinguished, though sometimes it's flame can burn rather low, like a small mustard seed.

This is not so with hypocrites. They appear to begin well, sometimes very, very well, and yet eventually they revert to the world and to the service of the devil. They never did belong to Christ. Their faith was a sham.

Mat 13:20-22 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. (22) As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

My purpose this morning is to issue a very serious warning, the same serious warning which God's Word issues to us – *that we take care NOT TO BE one of these* which we will hear described in a moment by the Apostle Paul.

Each one of us is, in this life, every single day, under attack. By the world. By our own sinful flesh. And by the devil. *Most people succumb to this attack. Most people who start out as "Christians" succumb to this attack.* And unless you call upon the Lord daily and regularly, to

save you and to make you wise about the enemy's strategies, *you will most certainly fall. You will cease to follow Christ, and you will end up being such a one as Paul describes here. Do not fancy that you will be an exception. You will not. Love for the world is your default setting as a fallen, sinful creature and unless you are made new by Christ, you may start out running the race energetically, but you will never finish it.* We are surrounded by myriads of people who are, as a result, the walking dead. People who showed such promise, but who returned to the world.

Remember Lot's Wife!

Here then is the Apostle Paul:

Php 3:17-21 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

(18) For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. (19) Their end

is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

(20) But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Consider these vital points:

- “For MANY...” – The kind of people Paul sheds many tears over, are MANY. This fatal error is by no means rare.
- “Walk as enemies of the cross of Christ” – The only way this statement makes sense is if Paul is speaking of people who heard the gospel, professed faith in Christ, started out running the race, but not only dropped out, they became enemies of Christ. These are people who we at one time believed were fellow Christians.

- Their destination – *destruction*. It is their certain destination. Hell.
- Why they left off following Christ – *because their god is their belly, their appetite, their lusts*
- They glory in their shame – They have no shame in their apostasy. They in fact glory in it.
- They have no regard for heaven. They are earthlings. They think about and love earthly things.

1. MANY - *Do not miss this: MANY of the people who responded in apparent faith to the gospel preached by Paul, have become enemies of the cross of Christ. We are naïve if we think that this will be any different in our day.*

There are many called by Christ's name who are enemies to Christ's cross, and the design and intention

of it. Their walk is a surer evidence what they are than their profession. *By their fruits you shall know them, Mat_7:20.* The apostle warns people against such, (1.) Very frequently: *I have told you often.* We so little heed the warnings given us that we have need to have them repeated. (Matthew Henry)

Called by Christ's name, either because they once professed Christ or because their profession is a counterfeit. *But take careful note of this: this thing is not uncommon. If we measure by the parable of the soils, only one in 4 seeds bore fruit.* We might well say that most people who make a profession of faith in Christ will not persevere to the end because their faith was not real.

And note this also – *the most common opponents of Christ are people who once professed faith in Him, but who then chose the world instead. Some of these, to make their deception even more cunning, remain in a visible church and continue to wear a saintly disguise.*

And this is a very grievous thing which caused Paul to weep, as it should us. How sad when we experience such people who seemed so promising to us at the start, and yet seemingly overnight went back to the world, knowing that the vast majority of such people NEVER return to Christ.

How MANY people were raised up in the church, who made a profession of faith when they were children, but as they grow and the time passes, their love is re-directed to the world.

2. Their Destination is Destruction

Such people are on Broadway and they end in Hell. Destruction, ruin, loss – that is where their road will end. It is God's kindness that He tells us these things and causes us to fear.

Luk 9:62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Are you a person who claims to

believe in Christ? Then like Lot's wife, you are ordered by the Lord Himself not to look back. Don't turn around and be like Bunyan's Character *Temporary* about whom Christian and Hopeful have this conversation:

"Well then," Christian said, "About ten years ago, did you know a man by the name of Temporary in your parts? He was a man enthusiastic about religion then."

"Know him! I certainly did! Said Hopeful. He lived in Graceless, a town about two miles from Honesty, and he lived next door to a man by the name of Turnback."

"That's right. Turnback actually lived under the same roof with him. Well, at one time that man was very much awakened spiritually. I believe at that time he had some awareness of his sins and of the wages that were due in this regard."

"I hold the same opinion," Hopeful said. "For since my house

was not more than three miles from him, he would often come to me with many tears. Truly I pitied the man and was not altogether without hope for him; but one may see, it is not every one who cries, 'Lord, Lord!' who proves to be a genuine Christian."

Christian nodded in understanding. "He once told me that he was determined to go on pilgrimage, just as we are now; but all of a sudden he grew acquainted with one Save-self, and then he became a stranger to me."

"Since we are talking about him," Hopeful said, "let us spend a little time to ask the reason for his sudden backsliding and for others like him."

"This may be very profitable, Hopeful, but I ask that you begin this time."

"Very well," Hopeful said. "In my judgment, **I see several reasons for it:** Though the consciences of such men are awakened, yet their minds are not changed. Therefore, when the power of guilt

diminishes, the very thing that provoked them to be religious ceases to have any effect. For this reason, they naturally turn to their former course again.

We see the same reaction with a dog that is sick and vomits up what he has eaten. So long as his sickness prevails, he vomits and throws up everything in his stomach. Not that he does this of a free mind (if we may say a dog has a mind), but rather because of his troubling stomach. “However, when his sickness passes and his stomach feels better, he turns around and licks up all his vomit and so what is written is true: A dog returns to its own vomit (2 Peter 2:22).

Now, I say a person may be enthusiastic about heaven, but only because they sense and fear the torments of hell. But as their sense and fear of damnation chills and cools, in the same way their desires for heaven and salvation cool also. So then it comes to pass that when their guilt and fear are gone, their desires for heaven and happiness die, and they return to

their former course in life again.

“**Another reason is this.** They have mindless fears that overwhelm them. I’m talking about fears they have of men, now. ‘For the fear of man brings a snare.’ (The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted. – Prov. 29:25) So then, though they seem to be enthusiastic for heaven so long as the threat of hell’s flames are real to them, when that terror has lessened in their way of thinking they have second thoughts. They begin to think it unwise to run after something they know little about and risk losing all. A second idea they begin to entertain is that it is not prudent to bring themselves into unavoidable and unnecessary troubles, and as a result they fall in with the world again. “The shame that attends religion also lies as a roadblock in their way. They are proud and haughty, and religion, as they see it, is low and contemptible. Therefore, when they have lost their sense of hell and the wrath to come, they return again to their former ways.

Hopeful said, “Now that I have shown you the reason for their backsliding I ask that you show me the modus of his falling away.” Hopeful gestured to Christian to continue.

“I will do so most willingly,” Christian said and started to make his points one at a time, counting them off on his fingers. “They draw most of their thoughts from the remembrance of God, death, and judgment to come. “Then they gradually neglect private duties such as personal prayer, curbing their lusts, watchfulness, sorrow for sin, and the like.

“Then they shun the company of lively and whole-hearted Christians. “After that, they grow cold to public duty, such as conscientious listening, reading of the Word, godly corporate gathering, and the like.

“They then begin to find fault or pick holes, as we say, in the lives of some of the godly, so that they may claim religion is stained based on some weaknesses they

have noticed in these believers, and they then justify putting religion behind their backs.

“Then they begin to adhere to and associate with carnal, immoral, and unrestrained men. “They give way to carnal and depraved conversations in secret, and they are glad if they can find similar practices in any who are considered reputable, for these hypocrites encourage them to be all the more bold.

“After this they begin to play with little sins openly. “And then, being hardened, they show themselves as they are. Therefore, being flung again into the gulf of misery, unless a miracle of grace prevents it, they eternally perish in their own deception.”

Bunyan, John. *Pilgrim’s Progress (Parts 1 & 2): Updated, Modern English. More than 100 Illustrations.* (Bunyan Updated Classics) (pp. 180-182). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.

Such are the people that Paul is

speaking of here in this 3rd chapter of Philippians. And we see much the same as Bunyan described regarding Temporary:

- Why they left off following Christ – *because their god is their belly, their appetite, their lusts*

This does not mean that they are food gluttons merely. When Paul says that their god is their belly, he means that indulging the sinful lusts of their own flesh becomes the thing they worship and serve. Their sin demands to be fed, and they resolve to feed it. This is their idol god which they serve.

Much which parades as Christian religion in our day is nothing more than a system designed to feed the flesh. To appeal to the sinner's lust for sin. The true worship of Christ is spiritual. Counterfeit, Christless religion is sensual, fleshly, and it draws crowds –

Joh 6:26-27 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw

signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. (27) Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

Many, many, many people who claim to be Christians today are looking for a church that will serve up bread to feed their carnal appetites. They will stay as long as the food supply is served out! But Christ directs us to Himself as the Bread of Life, as the true manna from heaven. People like Temporary have a belly-god, a lust-religion, and they will never persevere in following the real Bread of Life.

- They glory in their shame and have no regard for heaven.

Php 3:19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

One typical characteristic of a Temporary, having left off of

following Christ and returned to the world, *is that they are shameless*. They should be ashamed at their apostasy, *but they are not*. And if you have ever known such a person, you have seen this. They boast that they are free of the legalism put upon them. They are like pigs who having once been apparently cleaned, return to the mud and filth, roll around in it, and boast about it. *You would not even know them if you happen to meet them in a year or two*.

In addition, Paul says that they have no regard for heaven. They are earthlings, earth-dwellers. Their mindset is earthly, entirely of this temporary life. The world is their temple. Vanity fair is their desire and like all citizens of Vanity Fair, *they strive and work for that which is not worth having*.

MANY of them, says Paul. He warns us. MANY who started out professing Christ are now enemies of the cross. And such will we be if we are not on guard, if we do not examine ourselves honestly to see if we are really born again.

Carelessness will certainly result in that downgrade which takes so many to hell.

In contrast, says Paul, all who are genuinely in Christ are of a different mind:

Php 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Where is your real home? Are you looking for and waiting eagerly for Christ's appearance when He comes again? Are you looking to the resurrection and the New Heavens and Earth? Are you increasingly growing homesick for the home which you have been made for? Where is your heart? What and Who is your love? Can you truly and with increasing conviction say:

*This world is not my home, I'm
just passing through*