

# 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](http://www.sermonaudio.com/crc)

[www.unholycharade.com](http://www.unholycharade.com) (blog)

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## *The Natural Man Cannot Understand the Things of the Spirit of God*

*June 9, 2024*

**Sermon Text:** 1 Corinthians 2:10-16

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Corinthians 2

*“There is a time coming when all*

*skeptics will become believers just like the devils themselves, and will tremble at the visual demonstration of the truths which they have before always denied.” W.T.G. Shedd*

*“If the vision of a holy God is not our heaven, then it must be our hell.” Shedd.*

*“If you are in Christ Jesus, if you have been reconciled to God by the blood of Christ’s atonement and washed by regeneration, all is well.*

*The more you see of God, the more you desire to know Him; and the more you know of Him, the more you long to know. But if this is not your experience, then all is ill with you.”* Shedd

God in true righteousness and holiness.

What is man’s fundamental problem? Any honest, thinking person surely recognizes that something has gone terribly wrong with humankind. The world is a mess. We grow accustomed to these evils and fail to understand that something, somewhere, is very broken. We are like a person who drives a car with a flat tire or with a cylinder not firing, but instead of facing up to the problem and looking for a remedy, we just accept that brokenness and keep on driving.

Paul tells us both here in First Corinthians and in this passage from Ephesians, that the problem with man, the source of wars and crime and of really every evil in the world, *is to be found in man’s mind. In his innermost essence of who he is.* This is what is broken. Man’s heart, the source of his affections, and his mind, the spring of his thinking, is:

- Futile (without a goal, empty)

Eph 4:17-24 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. (18) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. (19) They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

(20) But that is not the way you learned Christ!— (21) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (22) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (23) and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, (24) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of

- Darkened – a fog lies over the mind so that man cannot see or understand
- Ignorant about the really vital issues of existence
- Hardened against God

When man fell in Eden, very radical and drastic things happened to him, and those things fundamentally happened in his *mind*. A central part of salvation in Christ is *the renewing of the mind*. *The creation of a new man with a mind that can understand the things of God – spiritual things of the Holy Spirit – and a heart with which this new man loves God and loves God’s truth*. That darkness is lifted in Christ so that the Christian, the new man, is no longer what he was:

Eph 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out

the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

I want to challenge every one of us. *Have YOU been made a new creation in Christ? Have YOU been born again? Are YOU no longer the person you used to be?* Let’s not lower the bar here, making these things optional. Be honest. Don’t deceive yourself. *Have you been born again?*

These are the things which the Apostle Paul wrote here in these opening chapters of First Corinthians. He emphasizes a great distinction between the only two kinds of human beings. Just two. Here, he identifies them as:

- The Natural Man
- The Spiritual Man

Listen to it once more:

1Co 2:6-16 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. (7) But we impart a

secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. (8) None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (9) But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— (10) these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (11) For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

(12) Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. (13) And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

(14) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and

he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

(15) The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. (16) “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

### The Natural Man

The natural person, the person who is in the nature and identity which he was born into this world with. The word Paul uses here is *psuchikos* and it means this:

“Pertaining to the life of the natural world and whatever belongs to it in contrast to the realm of experience whose central characteristic is *pneuma*, ie, spiritual, of the Spirit of God. A *psuchikos* man is one who merely functions bodily without being touched by the Spirit of God.” (BAG Lexicon)

Let’s talk more about what the natural man is. He is, as Paul will say later in this letter, a man from

the earth, a man of dust, in contrast to the man of heaven.

1Co 15:47-49 (47) The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. (48) As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. (49) Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Earth-dwellers. That is who natural men are. Their mind is here below. They have no eyes to see beyond this world because they do not have the eyes of faith. They have no ears to hear God's Word – the Word of the Cross is foolishness to them. Talk to them about the Word of God, about things of the Spirit of God...talk to them, if you will, about what the Bible says about their souls, about sin, about heaven and hell and eternity, and they have no capacity to hear it. And more, they are hostile to it.

I can give you an illustration which I have seen recently. When I have

been a guest on a podcast talk show, the topic is generally some current affairs subject like wokism, or gender distortions and so on. When I am asked what my opinion is on the cause of these things, I take the host and listeners to the subject of *sin*. Man in his sin. Man in rebellion against God and his desperate need for Christ. But every time that I do this, the other guests on the panel very quickly want to return to “hands-on” causes. Earthly explanations of these matters. They do not see this:

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

And so they merely look to earthly solutions – political candidates, more laws, education, economic reforms. But the real foundational root of our problem is *spiritual*. It is the sin of man which can only be remedied by Christ.

Here is a personal challenge. How is it in YOUR mind? What are the things you are focused upon? Earthly, or heavenly? Are you a man of the dust, or have you been made into a man of heaven by being born again in Christ? What are the things you primarily think about? Where is your mindset? What are the objects of your affections?

### The Spiritual Man

NOTE: “This passage of Scripture has endured a most unfortunate history of application in the church. Paul’s own point has been almost totally lost in favor of an interpretation nearly 180 degrees the opposite of his intent. Almost every form of spiritual elitism, ‘deeper life’ movement, and ‘second blessing’ doctrine has appealed to this text. To receive the Spirit according to their special expression paves the way for people to know ‘deeper truths’ about God. One special brand of this elitism surfaces among some who have pushed the possibilities of ‘faith’ to the extreme, and

regularly make a ‘special revelation’ from the Spirit their final court of appeal. Other ‘lesser’ brothers and sisters are simply living below their full privileges in Christ.

But the gift of the Spirit does not lead to special status among believers; rather, it leads to special status vis-à-vis the world. The Spirit should identify God’s people in such a way that their values and worldview are radically different from the wisdom of this age. As such they are the people of the Spirit, who stand in bold contrast to those who are merely human and do not understand the scandal of the cross. Being spiritual does not lead to elitism; it leads to a deeper understanding of God’s profound mystery – redemption through a crucified Messiah.” [Gordon Fee, New International Commentary on the NT, First Corinthians]

In contrast, Paul says that the Christian is *the spiritual man*.

1Co 2:12-13 Now we have received not the spirit of the world,



but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. (13) And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The spiritual man is the man or woman in whom the Spirit of God resides. A person whom the Spirit has re-created and taught. *It is only the spiritual man who can see and hear God's Word, who realizes God's Word is wisdom and truth.* When we open up this Bible, we are confronted with spiritual words which can only be understood as truth and wisdom by people who are spiritual.

Here again is another challenge for each of us. *What is your attitude toward God's Word? Toward your Bible? Toward hearing the preaching of God's Word?* Is it this:

Psa 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of

scoffers; (2) but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Here is a perfect illustration:

“William Pitt, one of the greatest Prime Ministers which England ever had, was a friend of William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slaves. But there was one great difference between them: Wilberforce had undergone an evangelical conversion, and had become the saint that he was; William Pitt, of course, was a nominal Christian (ie, in name only), but it did not mean anything to him.

Now, in London at that time there was a great evangelical clergyman and preacher in the Church of England called Richard Cecil, and it was the delight of Wilberforce's life to go and listen to the preaching of this man. He was also anxious that his friend Pitt should go with him. He often invited him and there was always some excuse, affairs of the State, being busy, and so on.

However, a day came when William Pitt said to Wilberforce, ‘I find I am free and that I can come with you next Sunday.’ Wilberforce was eagerly looking forward to it and was praying for his friend, praying that a shaft of light might come to him.

When Sunday morning came, they went to the service. Richard Cecil was preaching at his best, under the unction of the Spirit, and Wilberforce was lifted up to the highest heavens. He reveled and glorified in the truth, having a feast for his soul, his whole man being moved to its depths; occasionally he wondered what was happening to his friend.

However, the service ended and as they were walking out together, and even before they had got out of the vestibule, William Pitt turned to Wilberforce and said, ‘you know, I have not the slightest idea what that man has been talking about.’”

The heavenly, spiritual truth spoken by Richard Cecil meant nothing at all to Pitt; he did not

know what it was all about; he was bored by it, waiting for it to end! The other man was reveling and rejoicing. You see what makes the difference? It is the darkness! And it is a darkness that none but the Holy Spirit can take away.” [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Darkness and Light, Sermons on Ephesians]

All through the Bible we see this same dichotomy – *the natural man and the spiritual man*. Take the world in Noah’s day as an example:

Mat 24:37-39 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, (39) and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Understand? *The Word of God came to Noah, and he believed it. That same Word was rejected and ridiculed by everyone else. Why?*



*Because they were natural men.*  
God's Word was nonsense to them.

We are all in the very same position right now, are we not? *The coming of the Son of Man.* Christ is coming again. He will judge the world. Most people are on Broadway and will end in hell. But those who are spiritual, who are born of the Spirit, take these words seriously. They realize that this world is passing away. Like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, they have heard God's Word and realize that the City of Destruction and all who remain in it are going to be destroyed eternally unless by faith they get on the Ark, who is Christ. Everyone else? Well, they regard Christian as a fool, just as they regarded Noah as a fool. In contrast, here is the spiritual man – he or she heeds looks to Christ:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow  
strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.

Judged by No One

Make careful note of this verse:

1Co 2:15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

Have you ever wondered what this statement means? It is important. *The Christian, the spiritual man, is enabled by the Spirit of God to see, understand, and discern. All things are clear to him. He has been given ears to hear and eyes to see. God's Word is no longer a mystery to him. It is not we ourselves as Christians who are wise in ourselves, but it is in the Spirit opening our eyes and minds to the Word of God and it is by this Word of God which we are now enabled to understand and love, that we are given the ability to discern. His Word is our lamp.*

In contrast, says Paul, the Christian is an enigma to the natural man. The unsaved person simply cannot figure out the priorities, worldview, or thinking of the spiritual person. The natural man writes off the spiritual man as a fool. YOU, if you are born again, are a meaningless puzzle to the

earth-dweller. And this is very important for you to realize! Why?

Because – you will be discouraged and bear false shame if you don't understand this. If you are a Christian, people of this earth, the natural men, are going to judge you – *but they will not judge you, discern you, understand you, rightly*. YOU understand who they are – earth dwellers. You can rightly evaluate and discern them. You understand that they are blind and deaf and in the dark about heaven, about God's Word, about their souls and about Christ. But to them – they judge you a fool. It is because they cannot understand the things of the Spirit. Light is a threat to them – they crave the darkness, and YOU as a Christian, as a spiritual person, are light in the Lord.

1Co 2:15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.
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