

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

True repentance begins with knowledge of sin. The eyes of the repentant person are opened. He sees the length and breadth of God's holy law with distress and confusion. He sees the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. To his surprise, he discovers that he has been under a huge delusion by thinking of himself as a good person with a good heart. He learns that in reality he is wicked, guilty, corrupt, and evil in God's sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.

Ryle, J. C.. Repentance - What it Means to Repent and Why We Must Do So (pp. 3-5). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com (blog)

www.lightfordarktimes.com (blog)

Christ Reformation Church – YouTube Channel (Light for Dark Times)

Faith is Our Victory

August 18, 2024

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 2-3

Scripture Reading: 1 John 5

This morning I would like to show you from Scripture that *faith* is the only means by which we will

recognize the *wisdom of God* and reject the *wisdom of the world*. And right at the beginning, let's be certain to recognize this: *that faith is a gift from God to us. It is not something we conjure up from within ourselves.*

Now, we have been seeing in these first few chapters of 1 Corinthians this great contrast between the

wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God:

1Co 1:18-21 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” (20) Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Now, what is it that enables the Christian to recognize that God’s wisdom is indeed true wisdom, while the world’s so-called wisdom is, in fact, foolishness? The answer is, *faith*.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that

overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1Jn 5:4-5)

The Corinthians were not exercising the faith which had been given to them – they were still stuck with the world’s philosophy and the world’s measure of greatness. This caused them to be alienated from Paul because the gospel he preached and the manner in which he preached it was not “wise” by the world’s standard of greatness.

- An apostle who came to them in humility rather than in superiority and grandiose oratory
- A message of a crucified Savior who was God incarnate and who rose from the dead.

Unbelievable in the world’s measure of wisdom, you see. If the Corinthians really were born again, then it was imperative that they come to terms with the fact that *God’s wisdom is always going to be seen by the world as foolishness,*

and yet His truth had been preached to them and they needed to step out in faith and believe what, to the world, was unbelievable and despised.

Listen to the author of Hebrews on this subject:

Heb 11:1-6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (2) For by it the people of old received their commendation. (3) By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (4) By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (5) By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. **(6) And without faith it is impossible to please him, for**

whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Faith. From God. A gift. When is the last time you exercised it? Can someone look at your life and observe your faith? When is the last time someone called you a fool because you were walking in faith in God's promises? These are vital questions. *Most people who claim to be Christians are not walking in faith. They walk according to the world's wisdom, which does not require faith.*

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for – ie, unseen things promised by God. Faith is the conviction of things unseen. Faith trusts in the wisdom of God. Unbelief trusts in the wisdom of the world. You can spot a counterfeit Christian by observing the object of his faith – in this case, it is in what the world regards as “reasonable, sensible, logical, measurable, touchable.” A Mr. Worldly Wiseman will be regarded

as wise by the world, but in fact he is a fool in God's sight.

gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Luk 12:16-21 And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, (17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' (18) And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Consider Abel. Why was his sacrifice acceptable to God while his brother's was rejected? I can tell you – He offered it in faith, while Cain's offering was given according to his own wisdom.

What did Abel and Cain know? They knew quite a lot actually:

- They knew what Eden once was
- They knew all about their parents' sin and the fall and the curse
- They knew about Satan
- They knew that God was to be obeyed
- They knew what kind of sacrifice God required – a bloody offering from the life of a vicarious substitute
- They knew they were fallen, that they were sinners
- They knew that God was holy and that the wages of sin is death

Some Examples from Hebrews 11

(11:4) **By faith Abel** offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his

Now, notice carefully that the Apostle tells us that *Abel was commended as righteous, and that God declared him righteous because of his faith by which he believed God's Word and obeyed Him.* This declaration of justification was made by God accepting his gifts. Most probably God made this declaration by sending fire from heaven to consume the bloody sacrifice Abel offered. No such fire consumed Cain's offering, and thus all knew that it was rejected.

By faith, by the faith which God had given Abel, he believed God and was counted righteous. Just like we are today. Justified by faith alone in Christ alone.

Cain, on the other hand, walked according to the world's wisdom. To his own reasoning. It must have gone something like this:

- A bloody sacrifice, the killing of an animal for the offering, seems quite unreasonable.

- Fruit and vegetables and grain grown in my own fields are just as good as Abel's lamb.
- I will make an offering of my own design which is even better than Abel's
- God will see what I have done and regard me as better. I know better.

But he didn't know better. Cain was an unbeliever. He was devoid of faith. He did not believe God and therefore he was not regarded as righteous by God.

“The shedding the blood of animals could never have entered into the mind of man....All divine covenants, all merciful arrangements in reference to fallen man, have been ratified by bloody sacrifice. A propitious sacrifice.

It would appear that God's revelation was not believed by Cain, that he did not see and feel the need of propitiatory sacrifice, and that HIS religion consisted merely in an acknowledgment of a Deity as the author of the benefits he enjoyed. Abel, on the other

hand, did believe the revelation from God. He readily acknowledged himself a sinner, and expresses his penitence and his hope of forgiveness in the way of God's appointment. He brought the sacrifice God had appointed and offered it in the way in which God had appointed it to be offered. Abel, believing what God revealed, did what God had commanded. [John Brown, Geneva Commentary, Hebrews, Banner of Truth]

And then he hated his brother and murdered him.

Why did God reject Cain? Because Cain did not believe God's Word. Cain did not have nor did he exercise faith. Cain was Mr. Worldly Wiseman who claimed to have a better way to be justified.

Now, let's be ruthlessly honest with ourselves. *Am I Cain or am I Abel?* I mean, in your daily life, in the direction of your life, in your priorities, in your plans, is faith visible? Or do you base your decisions on the same things the

worldling bases his decisions? One path leads to heaven. The other ends in hell.

Let me give you an example. I knew wealthy people once who claimed to be Christians. But I never saw them make a single decision from faith. The husband's father was a wicked evil – and wealthy man. But these professing Christians would never break off from him. One of the final conversations I had with them was in regard to – just like the rich fool of Luke 15 – building bigger barns. They announced to me that their banker had told them they would be fools not to take another loan from that wicked parent. And they told me that they agreed with the banker and that is what they were going to do, even though they knew this decision would mean they would reject and desert me. And so it was. They chose as Cain chose. They chose the world's wisdom. *They did not believe that God exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.* If they did, their faith would have led them to an entirely different decision – a costly in this life.

You have heard me say many times that one of the greatest idols which so many professing Christians refuse to break from is *family*. Why? *Because they do not have faith. They are not born again. They consistently choose the world's wisdom.* “Family is at the top. She is family. He is family. Family and land – those are the important things in life. Oh, no, I can’t do that. It would alienate me from my family.” But Jesus said all of that is a lie:

Mat 10:37-39 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39) Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Understand? If you find your life in this present world, if you choose father or mother, son or daughter over Christ, you are choosing the world’s wisdom – which does not

require faith! And that way leads to hell. You must be willing to leave the City of Destruction, even if your family refuses to follow. Find your life here, and you will lose it when Christ comes. Lose your life now by walking in faith according to God’s wisdom, and you will find eternal life at the end of the road.

Let’s consider another example of this faith in action – Noah, who I mentioned last week:

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, **in reverent fear** constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Noah believed God. Noah’s faith was shown to be genuine – he *feared God*. He believed who God is. He believed God’s Word was true and He believed God would indeed bring this flood.

“An evil of such tremendous magnitude, inflicted on account of

sin, placed in a very striking light the irresistible power, the immaculate purity, the inflexible justice of God, and was fitted to fill the mind with reverence and godly fear....Noah knew if the ark was prepared, according the divine appointment, all was safe; it was equally true, that if the ark was not prepared, he and his family must perish in the general ruin.” [Ibid]

Noah’s faith enabled him to persevere in this tremendous task. Noah did all that God commanded – because of his faith:

“When we consider the size of the ark, especially when connected with the collection of the various animals, which from the history seems to have been Noah’s work – the undertaking must have been an arduous one; and when we consider the difficulties which must have arisen out of the state of feeling of the great majority of mankind, it may well be considered as one of the most extraordinary examples of difficult duty which the world has ever witnessed....Nevertheless, ‘Thus did Noah; according to all

that God commanded him, so did he.’” [Ibid]

The outcome? By faith, Noah obtained the salvation of his family. When all flesh had died, Noah remained alive and those who were with him in the ark as well.

“As it was by faith that Noah prepared the ark, so it was by faith that he obtained the salvation of his family. Had not the ark been prepared, Noah and his family could not have been saved; and had not Noah believed, the ark would not have been prepared. You see then, how the salvation of Noah’s family was the result of his faith. It was by this faith also that he became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith....Noah, by his own personal faith obtained an interest in that method of justification, in which no man can obtain a share but by believing.” [Ibid]

Now, listen carefully as John Brown brings these truths home to US –

“Faith and unbelief are the same things still today. The believer, like Noah, *has been warned by God of things not seen as yet.* WE have heard that ‘all have sinned,’ and that God cannot clear the guilty, and the wicked must be turned into hell; and we have heard also that God has set forth His Son as a propitiation through His blood, and that whosoever believes shall not perish, but have everlasting life; and by the believer seeking glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life shall be assuredly obtained.

Like Noah, the true Christian believes the divine warning; he is filled with reverential fear at the display which these truths give of the power, holiness, and justice of God; he sees that everlasting destruction is his inevitable portion unless he avails himself of the only way of escape, and that availing himself of this way, he is secure in everlasting happiness...and the salvation of his soul.

The unbeliever, devoid of faith, like the ungodly world in the days of Noah, hears the divine

testimony, but will not receive it. Hell excites no fears in him, nor does heaven excite his desires. He continues in unrepentance and disobedience, until down comes the thunderbolt. He is conveyed into the regions of hopeless punishment, and learns, too late, how criminal and dangerous it is, under the influence of an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God.” [Ibid]

The wisdom of God is foolishness to man. Why? Because he does not have this faith which is only possessed as a gift by those who have been born again. Do you? This faith is *visible. It acts. It obeys the Lord.* Listen to our Confession of Faith on this:

“By this faith a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word as the authority of God Himself, and also apprehends (recognizes) an excellency in it above all other writings and all things in the world, as it bears forth the glory of God in His attributes, the excellency of Christ in His nature and offices, and the power

and fulness of the Holy Spirit in His workings and operations, *and so is enabled to cast his soul upon the truth thus believed.*

This faith responds differently in response to the nature of each Scripture:

“...this faith yields obedience to the commands, trembles at the threatenings [as did Noah], embraces the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith have immediate relation to Christ, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.”

Do YOU have this faith? Understand carefully – Hebrews 11 will continue:

- Abraham
- David
- Moses
- Rahab
- Joseph

What was it that induced all of these and more to act and obey, and to do so with clarity – seeing the only right course of action to God’s Word is to fear Him, obey Him, and believe Him? It was this *faith by which they overcame the world.*

They believed God’s Word even though, as Paul has been telling us here in First Corinthians, that Word and their belief in it was regarded as utter foolishness and nonsense to the world. What made Moses refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter? *By faith* he decided this. Faith in what, or Whom? Faith in Christ.

“What faith did for Moses, faith can do for you; what nothing but faith could do for Moses, nothing but faith can do for you. The Hebrew Christians this Epistle of Hebrews was addressed to, were required to come out and be separate from their unbelieving countrymen.” [Ibid, Brown]

So are we.

“In abandoning Judaism, they had to commence a course of

indefinitely long and severe labor and trial to obtain the heavenly Canaan.”

So must we.

“What could enable them (and us) to persevere in making such sacrifices, to put forth such exertions, and to submit to such sufferings, to encounter such scorn and opposition, [in a world that hates Christ and all who belong to Him?”]

Faith. Obedient, reverent, trusting, faith.

If God’s Word is not believed, how can it be expected that we will forsake father, and mother, and sisters, and brothers, and houses, and lands, for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s? It cannot be. The duties and difficulties, the trials and sufferings of Christians are not unique to our time or place. NOTHING enables us to persevere, except this *faith*.

Do you have it? Have you been born again? Are you willing to follow Christ and suffer with Him,

dying to yourself? Can you name the last time standing for Christ actually cost you something? Most professing Christians have a “faith” that never costs them anything. And yet Christ says that all who are born again in Him must lose everything now to gain everything then. ONLY faith will enable us to do this.

“Christians are called on sometimes to perform duties which must appear unreasonable and absurd to an unbelieving world, and for which they themselves can assign no reason except the will of Him who has appointed them. A Christian in a heathen country (like ours today!) strictly observing the Lord’s Day, to the apparent material disadvantage of his or her worldly rewards, is a case in point. How is the Christian enabled to persevere in the performance of his duty, amid all the temptations to neglect that duty to the Lord? *Look to Moses in observing the Passover and sprinkling of the blood.*” [Ibid]

Remember all these who have gone before us. *They were people like*

us! They were not superhuman. They were shepherd boys, harlots, pagan idolaters, sexually perverse, thieves and swindlers, fishermen and greedy tax-collectors. At least one was a religious zealot eager to persecute Christ. And yet, in His mercy, the Lord saved them, re-birthed them, gave them a new heart and nature, *and granted them faith to believe His Word.* Everything they did for Him grew out of this faith. This living, unquenchable, working faith -

1Jn 5:4-5 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (5) Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Are you overcoming the world? Do you see this faith acting in you? Or are you seeking to have heaven and this world too? It can't be done. No one can serve two masters.