

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)

Do Not Even Eat with Such a Person

September 22nd, 2024

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 5

Scripture Reading: Revelation 2:12-29

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 God in true righteousness and holiness.

If you are born again through faith alone in Christ alone, then you are this *new man* whom Paul is speaking of. You are not that old self you once were. If you are, then you are not a Christian.

It is unthinkable, says Paul, that a Christian should continue to live as he or she has always lived. He says it again in his letter to the Romans:

Rom 6:13-18 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present

yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (14) For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (15) What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! (16) Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? (17) But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, (18) and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

One of the marks of a true church is what we call *church discipline*. The foundation of this discipline is this very truth – *that the Christian is not who he used to be*. And that, therefore, we must expect anyone who claims to be a Christian to

evidence the fruits of the Spirit, the signs of the new man.

But what we are seeing so very widespread in the churches today is a willful blindness, a willful refusal to practice what Christ commands

1Co 5:11-13 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. (12) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? (13) God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

This was the problem at Corinth. There was gross, open evil in the church, and that church was refusing to put it out from among them. In fact, they were bragging about how “gracious” they were. Follow along as we read the entire chapter:

1Co 5:1-13 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. (2) And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

(3) For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. (4) When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, (5) you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

(6) Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (7) Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (8) Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the

leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

(9) I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— (10) not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

(11) But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. (12) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? (13) God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

There are numbers of points here which Paul makes that will require more time than we have this morning to examine. But today, let's just scan the main points and then plan next time to move in for

a closer look. Here is the overview then –

1. There was present in the Corinthian church, a man who was guilty of open, unrepentant, shocking sexual immorality.
2. The church members were boasting about it!
3. Paul commands the church to remove this man from among their fellowship – to have nothing to do with him.
4. This expulsion from the church is described as “handing the man over to Satan.” This handing over is not only for the benefit and protection of the church, but also for encouraging repentance by the sinner.
5. Paul says that the practice of removing all leaven from one's house in preparation for the Passover celebration is an Old Testament symbol of what the church is to do

regarding this sin in their midst.

6. Paul emphasizes that he is not telling the Corinthians to separate themselves entirely from non-Christians. In fact, he says – that would be impossible.

7. Rather, it is *the person who claims to be a Christian yet lives in unrepentant sin who we are to separate from*. The church is to “judge” those in its ranks.

8. The subject of church discipline is not limited to those who are formal members on the membership roles. Many times we hear local churches claiming they have no authority to discipline people unless they are formal members. But what does Paul say – *anyone who bears the name of brother*. A professing Christian, in other words.

they are arrogant. As a result, the church increasingly looks like the world and people who are still dead in their sins are assured that they are on their way to heaven. I cannot see how it is possible for a local church to grow to huge numbers unless it is refusing to put false Christians out from its fellowship.

“...there are many [churches, ‘christians’] who adopt the Corinthians attitude almost totally, usually on the basis that ‘all are sinners, after all.’ They live in the world as those who would also be of the world, so that the distinctions between those ‘inside’ and those ‘outside’ are razor thin, if they exist at all. In such cases the church ends up judging neither those inside nor those outside....What is at stake is not simply a low view of sin; rather, it is the church itself: Will it follow Paul’s gospel with its ethical implications? Or will it continue in its present ‘spirituality,’ one that tolerates such sin and thereby destroys God’s temple in Corinth.” [Fee, p. 197]

There, then are Paul’s main points. Many churches in our day refuse to expel such people. Like Corinth,

I. The Nature of this Professing Christian's Sin

What was this man's sin? Is Paul telling us that perfectionism – sinlessness – is required by church members? We know that cannot be his meaning. Every Christian sins – BUT, no real Christian *walks in sin*. He is a new creation. It is unthinkable that a Christian would be characterized by the same life his old man once lived.

No, this evil man's sin was no small thing – and it was ongoing and he was unrepentant.

1Co 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

His sin was not only sexual immorality – it was incestuous. It was of such a shocking nature that not even the pagans in Corinth (who were known for their immorality) practiced. Even the secular courts and laws in Corinth forbade such a thing – *a man has*

his father's wife. Listen to Gordon Fee explain:

“The horror lies in the fact that there is sexual immorality among them, but they are taking no action. All of this has been reported to him. ‘In case any of you are wondering whether I might need to come with a rod in hand,’ [cf the ending of chapter 4] Paul is suggesting, ‘listen to what else has been reported to me about you.’”

It appears that this man was openly living with his stepmother sexually. That it was his stepmother rather than his mother is indicated from Paul's description of her as “his father's wife.” Apparently as we noted, even the civil laws of Corinth prohibited such evil. In our day, as evil increases more and more, I doubt that much of any type of immorality would be considered illegal. *This is all the more reason why there MUST be a visible difference between the church and the culture of the world.* More so today than ever. And yet what are we seeing? The church embracing

the world and its perversions so typically.

II. Genuine Grief Over sin – What it Looks Like

The Corinthians were not grieving that this evil was in their midst – on the contrary – they were boasting about it!

There could be a bit of a nuanced difference here as some conclude. Paul’s meaning could be something like this:

“And in spite of this incest in your midst, you continue to hold your heads high toward me as you have been doing? What right do you have to pride with this kind of thing going on and no one doing anything about it?”

Or –

“Is it [Paul’s rebuke] a direct attack on their pride as related to the sin itself?” Something like, “In Christ, through whom we have received the Spirit who has lifted us above

the mere earthly, ‘all things are lawful.’” [Fee, 201-202]

Whenever such ongoing, unrepentant sin is found among us in Christ’s church, the true, honest response is *grief*. There is no kind of self-righteous, Pharisaical joy that someone else has been “caught,” but rather great sadness. Sadness that the name of Christ has been soiled before the world. Sadness that someone who we thought was a brother or sister in the Lord is caught in sin. Sadness that we must expel him from the church.

Such grief is a kind of “mourning.” Mourning, a heart-felt grief is the godly response and Paul’s words to the entire church here indicate that a general repentance is required. Let me explain that:

We are the body of Christ. We are members of Christ and joined in the communion of the saints with one another. In this sense the entire church needs to mourn and repent when one

member sins. To ask the Lord's forgiveness as a church.

Many years ago a fairly large church I had some contact with called a new pastor. They particularly liked that he had led a large, successful building project and fund-raising at his previous church and they wanted to see the same thing happen in their church. Lots of new people. Big increase in student enrollment in their school, and so on. But within two years he was gone – ran off with the church secretary and announced that he was never called to be a pastor at all.

One of the board members visited me and asked what they should do. I showed him 1 Corinthians 5 and told him that is how they must proceed, meeting together as a church and formally handing the sinful man over for the Lord's discipline. He was surprised and said he had never heard of such a thing.

I told another board member that the entire church needed to ask the Lord's forgiveness for their pride

which had been behind calling this man in the first place. His reaction and that of the district denominational minister was anger. How could the church be in sin over this?

But they were. Just as Corinth was. They were not mourning. Instead, do you know what their new motive was now? *Damage control*. Do what we can not to lose people or have our reputation damaged. *This is the very same typical motive that we see in churches today when there is some scandal of sin*. Control and limit the damage to the institution. With no real concern for the damage done to Christ's name so that His name is blasphemed among the world.

Grief and mourning. That is the genuine, Godly response.

III. The Spiritual Nature of Church Discipline

1Co 5:3-5 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one

who did such a thing. (4) When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, (5) you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Another time, also many years ago, a man who was a member of our first church stole away another man's wife. When I heard about it, I called him and the first thing he said to me was "Well, I suppose you will want my church membership." He said he resigned and that was that – he thought.

This man evidenced himself to be a false Christian. His view of the church was a mere social club (that is the scourge in the churches here in Tillamook as well). To him, all that was going to result was for his name to be removed from the membership of the club. And very often that is the precise view held by professing Christians.

But to be "ex-communicated," to be removed and put out of the

communion of the saints, *is far, far more than that and something the unrepentant man should greatly fear.* Consider Paul's description of this church discipline:

- I have pronounced judgment upon him
- In the name of the Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh

Not just a formal erasure of membership. No. The church gathered acknowledges what the Lord's judgment is – that such a man be expelled from His church and given to Satan.

What does that mean?

NOTE: These instructions are given by Paul regarding *an unrepentant, arrogant person.* When, like King David, a Christian sins and is admonished by his church and his response is genuine, grievous, repentance and acceptance of any temporal consequences, there is the Lord's mercy and forgiveness to be found.

But here we have this arrogant, unrepentant man. What does it mean that the church delivers him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh? And that his spirit may be saved? Apparently church discipline is far more than a mere removal of a person's membership!

This is not the only place Paul mentions this:

1Ti 1:18-20 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, (19) holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, (20) among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

In the church, being within the body of Christ, there is the Lord's protection of His people. *The gates of hell shall not prevail.* But when a professing Christian refuses to repent of sin, refuses to heed the warnings of the church, the church

acts with the Lord's own authority and puts the person out of the church into the devil's realm. It is like the Prodigal going to the pig pen. "You want to live like the world? Then we will put you out into the world where you will be open to Satan's attacks and enslavement." Hopefully the outcome will be that of the Prodigal – repentance – but that outcome is not common.

Church discipline then, this putting an unrepentant person out of the communion of the saints, must never be taken lightly. It must be exercised with fear and humility, not arrogance or delight. Too often the latter has been the case and sadly there have been many times when ex-communication has been exercised wrongly against the innocent. In such a case, those guilty of this are the ones who should fear!

What can we say about a church that refuses to faithfully use this discipline when it is required?

1. Such a church does not love the Christ's people. They are unfaithful shepherds.
2. Such a church is not zealous for Christ's name in the world.
3. Such a church is sinfully refusing to obey a direct commandment of the Lord.
4. Such a church is not a true church and increasingly the fraud will become evident as the membership is filled with unregenerate people.

Next time we will plan to consider how Paul reminds us that we are to be a picture of the Passover and what biblical separation from the world looks like, lest we become libertines on the one hand, or Pharisees on the other.