

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)

The Church Has a Sacred Trust

September 8st, 2024

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 6

1 Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and

contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” (21) for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

We are *stewards*. Christ's Church, this church, we as the body of Christ, have been *entrusted* with a treasure. As the Apostle Paul tells Timothy here, this treasure must be guarded very carefully. *Guard the deposit entrusted to you.* Only by

doing this will we be faithful to the Lord. We must not swerve to the right or to the left – this treasure must be preserved in the very same form which it was in when the Lord entrusted it to us.

What is this treasure which we as Christ’s servants are to guard? It is the gospel – the very same treasure which was entrusted to Paul and which he passed on to Timothy.

2Ti 1:13-14 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (14) By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

2Ti 3:14-17 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it (15) and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof,

for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2Ti 4:1-4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (3) For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, (4) and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

This sacred trust, this “good deposit” which the Lord has entrusted us with, must not be tampered with. We must not alter it in any way, nor are we to permit anyone else to alter it. We are stewards of the Lord and He has one requirement of us – that we be found trustworthy and faithful.

We live in a time characterized by myth, by fiction and by lies. A time when people turn away from the Lord's truth and choose to hear lies which appeal to their sinful flesh – to their passions as Paul puts it. This is the very thing we see flooding into the churches today. People do not want truth – they cannot and will not endure truth. Their ears itch for lies preached from unfaithful stewards and wolves disguised as servants of Christ.

And this is what was happening in Corinth. The lure of human wisdom was threatening so that the treasure Paul had entrusted to the church there was in danger of being mixed with human philosophy and becoming no gospel at all. The Corinthians were not being faithful stewards of the pearl of great price. Listen to Paul as he continues to admonish and instruct them:

1Co 4:1-5 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (2) Moreover, it is required of

stewards that they be found faithful.

(3) But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. (4) For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

(5) Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

There are 4 major points here which we will take careful notice of now:

1. Human beings gravitate towards a false message that exalts them and diminishes God. They crave the world's wisdom and regard God's truth as foolishness.

2. The gospel is *the gospel of God*. It does not originate in man. Paul's gospel was not *Paul's gospel*. He was merely a steward entrusted with God's gospel.
3. The church must never fear man's judgment, nor must we even doubt ourselves as long as we are faithfully guarding what has been entrusted to us by the Lord.
4. A Day is coming when Christ will come to examine us, and specifically to examine whether we have been faithful stewards of His gospel treasure, or not.

I. Man Gravitates to a False Gospel – He craves it

Think of the frequency of this very thing throughout the Bible. What was happening at Corinth – a drift away from the gospel treasure toward human philosophy – happened very quickly in the churches of Galatia as well:

Gal 1:6-7 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— (7) not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

There are always wolves in wool ready to creep into the church to feed people a lie in disguise which pleases their flesh. Man is incurably religious, but he is also an incurable heretic if left to himself.

In the case of these foolish Corinthians – who regarded themselves as wise – they exalted the man rather than the treasure he delivered. Their focus was upon the preacher instead of where it should have been – on the “mysteries of God” which the Apostle delivered to them.

We have this same exact thing happening today in the churches. How often have you heard professing Christians say something like this – “Well, you

know, Paul can be rather dogmatic. I prefer John, or I prefer to read Peter. That is the thing that was going on there in Corinth. What is the error of this? *Such people are focusing on the steward rather than upon the treasure he has been entrusted with.* “I prefer this preacher.” “I prefer that one.” The focus is off target, you see. “I don’t like to listen to Lloyd-Jones. I find pastor so and so easier to listen to.”

The focus is misplaced. The real question is, *is a man being a faithful steward of Christ? Is he guarding the truth which has been entrusted to him in Scripture?*

1Co 4:1-2 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (2) Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

NOTE: “the mysteries of God.” Why does Paul use this term “mystery” for the gospel? He is emphasizing to these arrogant Corinthians what he has been telling them in these first 3 chapters

– that the wisdom of God is a mystery to the natural man. Hidden. The gospel must be revealed to man by the Holy Spirit or it will be just so much foolishness to him.

1Co 2:6-10 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.

II. The Gospel is the Gospel of God, not the product of human wisdom

“...stewards of the mysteries of God.”

Paul and his apostolic companions brought a treasure to Corinth. Where did this treasure come from and how did these apostles get it? Well, they had been appointed as servants of Christ, as *stewards entrusted with the property of their Master*. This is the same thing that Paul had to emphasize to those foolish Galatians:

Gal 1:11-12 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. (12) For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

And he will reiterate this to the Corinthians:

1Co 15:3-4 For I delivered to you as of first importance **what I also received**: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

Do you remember the steward of Gondor in the Lord of the Rings?. He was supposed to represent and serve the King in the King's absence. He was supposed to guard that which was entrusted to him. But what did he do? He exalted himself as king and served at his own pleasure, to the near destruction of Gondor.

So it is with the Pope of Rome. He claims to be the “vicar” of Christ in this world. But we know his claim is false if for no other reason than he is not a faithful steward. He does not guard that which was entrusted by Christ to His Church. The Pope and his minions long ago distorted the gospel so that it is no gospel at all and the Pope is anathema to God. His gospel is of his own creation and the reason Rome has so many millions and millions of followers is because Rome's gospel is the wisdom of man.

III. The Church must Never Fear Man's Judgment

1Co 4:3-4 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged

by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. (4) For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

Why do churches and preachers and individual professing Christians tend to distort the gospel rather than guarding the treasure entrusted to them? Well, very typically it is because they fear the judgment of man. They crave the approval of the world.

Paul and his gospel, were being judged by the Corinthians due to the influence of false teachers and philosophers on them. But Paul kept things in perspective – and so must we:

“But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.”

This is not arrogance. This is a proper perspective. It is a very small thing when human beings examine and judge us. Our fear and

desire for the approval of others can make a small thing a BIG thing, but that is a great error when we allow this to happen. So many, many pastors and church members crave the approval of man and what is the inevitable outcome of that? *Failure to guard what has been entrusted to them – they allow the gospel to be “improved” with some “slight” change.*

Let’s apply these things directly and honestly to ourselves – *what do we want? What do YOU want? What do I want? The approval of Christ, or the approval of man? It has been my experience in the 3 churches I have been the pastor of that there are always people who claim to be Christians but whose real goal is to gain and maintain the approval of man – to be popular with the world. This church is no exception.* Are YOU a trustworthy steward of Christ, unashamed to stand for the truth of the gospel? Anyone who craves the world’s approval is not following Christ – they are not born again.

And do not fail to see what else Paul says in this regard – “...in

fact, I do not even judge myself.”
What does he mean? Aren't we supposed to examine ourselves?

He explains in verse 4. Look at it again:

1Co 4:4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

To Paul's own knowledge, he has been a faithful steward of Christ by preaching that which was delivered to him, and doing so faithfully. But ultimately *it is not man's judgment, mine or others, that matters*. It is the judgment of the Lord that matters. He is the one we serve and it is to Him that we will give account of our stewardship.

Mat 24:45-51 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? (46) Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. (47) Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

(48) But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ (49) and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, (50) the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know (51) and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“I do not even judge myself.” In the end, it is not even ME who declares me to be a faithful steward. It is Christ. And there is another side to this fact: *We may judge ourselves to be unfaithful, to be poor steward of Christ, because we may not see big results. We look at some other church or pastors and we make the serious error of comparing ourselves with ourselves – with them, with man. We come to an erroneous conclusion. If we are being faithful and guarding the trust entrusted to us, then that is what the Lord requires.*

IV. Wait for the Lord's Judgment and Look for His Praise

1Co 4:5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

To understand this verse, we need to take a look at a key phrase in verse 6 -

1Co 4:6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, **that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

So, Paul is not telling us that we are not to examine ourselves or that we are not to examine a preacher, for instance, in order to see if he is a faithful steward or not. *But what we must be certain of is that this judging we do is through what is*

written. Going beyond that, claiming we can bring to light things hidden in darkness, that we can see into the purposes of the heart...that is what the Corinthians were doing in regard to Paul. They were not judging him according to what was written. They were going beyond that and claiming to do what only the Lord can.

So, what is “what is written?” That is an easy question to answer.

1Co 1:19 **For it is written**, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

1Co 1:31 so that, **as it is written**, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1Co 2:9 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”—

1Co 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. **For it is**

written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,”

You see it plainly. We are to judge, examine, evaluate *by the written Word of God*. We are to be like those Bereans:

Act 17:10-11 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. (11) Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

You might prefer Apollos’ style to Paul’s. Or Peter’s over Apollos’. But what matters is *what is written*.

If we are judging if a person is a faithful steward of Christ, or if a church is a faithful steward of Christ, or a preacher...then we greatly err and are guilty of arrogance if we examine by anything but the written Word of God. If we go beyond what is

written, we will inevitably reject the genuine and embrace the false.

Let’s bring this very pointedly home to us as we conclude.

Most typically today professing Christians are exceeding what is written as they judge and evaluate preachers and churches and teachings which claim to be stewards of Christ. They go beyond Scripture by judging by outward appearances and by their own feelings:

- The size of something – of a church, of buildings, of finances
- The personality or charisma (or lack of it) of the man
- How they “felt” when, for instance, in a church service
- The personal, outward appearance of a person

When we do this, we are exceeding what is written. We are judging and evaluating by criteria which are nowhere to be found in the Bible. We are being arrogant and boastful,

claiming to have an ability to see what only the Lord can – and will.

Judging by what is beyond the Scriptures, by criteria which the Lord does endorse, will lead us back to Rome, just as the people of Jesus' day were led to embrace the Pharisees. They fell for white-washed tombs when they should have been comparing what the Pharisees taught with the light of the Scriptures.