

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

## *You Must be Born Again!*

*“I am a Christian solely and entirely because of the grace of God and not because of anything that I have thought or said or done. He brought me to know that I was dead, ‘dead in trespasses and sins’, a slave to the world, and the flesh, and the devil, that in me ‘dwelleth no good thing’, and that I was under the wrath of God and heading for eternal punishment.*

*He brought me to see that the real cause of all my troubles and ills, and that of all men, was an evil and fallen nature which hated God and loved sin. My trouble was not only that I did things that were wrong, but that I myself was wrong at the very center of my being.”*

[Martyn Lloyd-Jones testimony to Iain Murray, p. 64, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The First Forty Years, 1899-1939, Banner of Truth*]

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

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

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## *The Communion of the Saints*

*May 4th, 2025*

**Sermon Text:** 1 Cor 12:27

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

The biblical doctrine to which we are going to give our attention this

morning is an absolutely vital one for every Christian to know, to believe, and to practice. It is the doctrine of Christ’s church, and specifically what is typically called the *communion of the saints*. Why is this so important for us to know? Because this communion, this fellowship, is something that is true of every real Christian. Of everyone who is truly born again. Therefore this truth, applied to

*ourselves and this church, is a test by which we can know if we are born again or not, and if this church is a true church or not.* What IS the true church? What does it look like? Where is it? These questions and more are answered in God's Word in the teaching about this subject, the communion of the saints.

Let me introduce this doctrine first of all by simply reading some of the many Scriptures which teach this truth:

Romans 12:3-5 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. (4) For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, (5) so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 3:17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, (21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (22) In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his

neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Colossians 2:18-19 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, (19) and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

1 Peter 2:4-5 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

You see this then? Over and over again God's Word puts this truth before us:

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears

much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Through several different images, the Lord teaches us the same truth. He is the Vine, He is the Temple, He is the Head. We are the branches, living stones of the Temple, members of the body of which Christ is the Head.

What then is this telling us about Christ's true church? Listen to Herman Hoeksema, a pastor who lived from 1886-1965. He began his pastoral ministry in the Christian Reformed Church (having immigrated from the Netherlands in 1904) and was a founder of the Protestant Reformed Church where he served as a pastor and theological professor. He was pastor of the large First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. I am reading here from his two volume edition of *Reformed Dogmatics*, under the heading of *The Gathering of the Church*.

“The church is gathered by the Son of God, through His Spirit and Word, from the beginning of the

world to the very end. Through that gathering the church becomes the assembly (ekklesia) of the true believers and their seed in the world. (NOTE: As a Presbyterian, Hoeksema held that the children of believers were in the covenant, though not necessarily regenerate).

We believe a holy, catholic church, the body of Christ, the communion of saints. Conceived in its entirety, this church includes all the redeemed, sanctified, and glorified elect. It exists at present only in the counsel of God, but is gathered in time out of the whole human race, from every nation, tongue, and tribe, from the beginning of the world to the end.

The holy, catholic (universal) church is gathered always. In every generation the church exists, the body of Christ is gathered and becomes visible on earth. The end of the world cannot come until the very last member of the body of Christ – as God determines and foreknows that body in His divine, eternal plan – has been born and gathered into the communion of saints. The Temple of God must be

finished. This completed church consists of the fullness of Israel and the fullness of the Gentiles gathered into one flock under one Shepherd (Romans 11:25; John 10:16).

This gathering of the church in every generation and from every nation is the great wonderwork of God in history. It is not too much to say that it is more marvelous than the work of creation. It lies beyond the scope of our power and comprehension. Exactly for that reason, through its gathering, God reveals himself as God, as the absolute Lord. This is also true of his work of creation; in creation God calls the things that are not (Rom. 4:17).

But consider now his work of gathering the holy, catholic church out of the whole human race. In gathering the church he builds his house out of wholly unfit material; the human race, out of which the church is gathered, is guilty and damnable; but the church is the communion of the justified, the eternally righteous. The human race lies under the wrath of God,

but the church is the object of his love and favor. The human race is polluted and defiled; but the church is holy, undefiled, without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27). The human race stands in enmity against God, refuses to glorify him and to give him thanks; but the church is a royal priesthood, consecrated to God, offering up spiritual sacrifices of praise and glory to the God of her salvation (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

The human race lies in the midst of death; but the church is the living body of Christ, filled with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3). Yet the one is gathered out of the other. It is only through the wonder of grace that God builds his church. It is the work of calling light out of darkness, righteousness out of corruption, heaven out of hell. It is the resurrection of the dead.

**We can understand, then, how utterly impossible it is for man to have a share in the gathering of the church, for him to cooperate with God in building his holy temple, and how ridiculous—as well as sinfully absurd and**

**preposterous—it is to conceive of the church as something that comes into existence by the will and through the effort of man. We might as well present the work of creation as being the product of the cooperation between God and man, as to give any credit to man for the work of gathering the church of Christ out of the whole human race.**

**The church is not a human society that comes into existence by the free will and choice of the members, which society we may join or refuse to join.** It is not a school of philosophy, the disciples and adherents of which follow the teachings of a great thinker. It is not to be compared to a religious movement, such as Mohammedanism or Confucianism, initiated by some mighty personality or religious fanatic who died long ago, but whose followers are still inspired by his precepts and example.

**It is the living body of the living Christ, the Son of God in the flesh, who died and rose again and who himself gathers his**

**church and builds the house of God.**

**The church is not the work of men who join the church. It is not the product of preachers who persuade men to become church members. It is not the result of the combined efforts of God and man.**

It is the wonderwork of grace, which God alone accomplishes through Jesus Christ our Lord by his Spirit and word.

Through the divine calling the church is gathered out of and separated from the whole human race as the communion of saints.

The Greek word that scripture uses to denote the church is ἐκκλησία, the gathering of those who are called out. **The holy scriptures throughout teach that the church comes into being through the calling of God by his Spirit and word.**

Concerning the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the prophet declares, “When Israel was a child,

then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1). Through Isaiah the Lord proclaims to Israel:

“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine . . . Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” (Isa. 43:1, 5–7).

“Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away” (Isa. 41:9).

Picturing Judah as a child born of heathen parents, cast out into the open field, and cared for by none, the word of God through Ezekiel

declares, “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live” (Ezek. 16:6).

In the New Testament this divine calling is always emphasized. In the epistles of Paul the church is addressed as the communion of those who are called to be saints (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2). Inseparably uniting the church of the old and new dispensations, the apostle Paul writes, Even us, whom [God] hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles[.] As he saith also in Isaiah, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God (Rom. 9:24–26).

To the church of Corinth the apostle Paul writes, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

Paul marvels that the Galatians are so soon removed from him who called them into the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6). And he writes to the Thessalonians that God called them by the gospel “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14).

The church is gathered out of the world through the divine calling:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17).

“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5:14), for “the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

Christ must gather all his sheep, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles. When he calls, “they shall hear [his] voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Therefore, through the divine calling the

church is gathered out of the whole human race.

This divine calling, whereby the church is gathered out of the world, takes place through Jesus Christ the Lord. Always God speaks through the Son. Also in creation we hear the voice of the Son of God. However, in that word of God as it comes to us through creation and providence there is no hope, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven over all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Through that word the holy, catholic church could never be called out of the world. God calls his church only through the word of God in Christ. Christ is the Son of God in the flesh, who revealed the Father (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22), who died for the sins of his people, who was raised for their justification (Rom. 4:25), who merited for his church all the blessings of salvation, who is exalted at the right hand of God, who has received the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33), and through whose word and Spirit God gathers his church out of the corrupt human race. The Son of God in the flesh,

**the Lord Jesus Christ, speaks the word of the divine calling whereby the church is gathered out of the world.** It is the mighty word of salvation whereby the church is called out of darkness into light (1 Pet. 2:9), *out of the natural fellowship of the sinful human race into the communion of saints, into the fellowship of his body.*

The Son of God by his Spirit and word gathers his own church out of the whole human race.

This divine calling comes through the preaching of the gospel. The gospel is not the preacher's, but Christ's. It is his word. He revealed it. He is its contents. He speaks it. This does not change when he delivers the content of that gospel in the holy scriptures or when the preacher of the gospel speaks it. Without his own Spirit and word those scriptures and those preachers are powerless. The work of gathering his church never becomes dependent on man. Even when the Lord commissions and calls prophets, apostles, and evangelists to proclaim his word,



or when he gives unto his church pastors and teachers, through whom the church preaches the gospel to all nations, the

Hoeksema, Herman. Reformed Dogmatics (Volume 2) . Reformed Free Publishing Association. Kindle Edition.

Now, what does all of this mean for us? First, it means that IF I am a Christian, IF I have been born again and made a new creation in Christ, THEN I am a member of the body, the Church. I am in living fellowship with Christ the Head, and I am in living fellowship with the other members of the body. It also means that if I am not born again, I may be a member of a local church according to that church's membership structure, but I am not a member of the true Church.

This doctrine also means that a "church" which is the product of man's efforts is not the true Church. It is a mere human society with no more of Christ's presence than a local civic club.

Further, this doctrine of the Church means that all true believers *are in the communion of the saints*. In other words, real Christians have this koinonia fellowship, this sharing in the lives of one another and with Christ. It is why John could write things like this:

1 John 2:9-11 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. (10) Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. (11) But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 4:20-21 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. (21) And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

And we can be sure of this – *the brother of whom John is speaking is not a sibling who happens to be born to the same parents as myself. No. John means my brother in Christ.* And I suggest to you that this truth and the doctrine of the communion of the saints exposes many if not most professing Christians as being counterfeits.

Why? Because Christ calls His church out of the ends of the earth. He calls His sheep and they know Him and recognize His voice. And they know one another because they are the communion of the saints, members of the same body, living stones in the same Temple, branches joined to the same Vine.

I challenge each of us then – in fact it is God’s own Word that challenges us - *are we in this communion of the saints? Are we members of the true body of Christ? Or do we regard this church and one another as just another kind of man-made society which I can choose to be a member of or not?*

Do I see the people of this church as my brothers and sisters in the family of God? Or are they just people who I cross paths with a few times a month?

I was talking to a widow recently who made a very accurate observation in this matter. Recently widowed, she said that the lives of most professing Christians are full already. Full of activities, full of family things, full of hobbies, full of careers and school and on and on and on. So that she is experiencing loneliness. Now, she makes a very good point – *if we are real Christians, if we are born again and thus joined to Christ in a living union and thereby joined to the people of God in Him, then there WILL be this communion of the saints. Christ produces it. We, like the Lord Jesus, will say:*

Matthew 12:46-50 While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. (48) But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my

brothers?” (49) And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! (50) For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Do you see it? Do you understand? I am intentionally, by God’s own Word and I hope by His Spirit, putting all of us on the spot this morning. Can you say, honestly, as you look around yourself in this local church, *Here are my mother and my brothers. Those who do the will of God are my brothers and sisters and mother and father.* Do you love the brethren? Are you joined to Christ and to His body?

I put this challenge to you all because I do not want a single person in this local church to be deceived and end in hell. MANY are headed there, traveling down Broadway that leads to the pit.

Over the years we have seen many, many people who claimed to be Christians, leave this church. Why? We know the answer. It is this:

1 John 2:18-19 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

They were not in the communion of the saints. They were not living stones, members of the Body, branches on the Vine. This doctrine of the communion of the saints is a sure test of the genuineness or the delusion of our claim to know Christ. And I can think of no subject that is of more crucial importance than this very question today. Do you know Christ? Are you joined to Him? Has He truly called you into His Body? Or are you, is anyone listening to this this morning, deceived by a lie?

May the Lord by His Word and Spirit open our eyes to these things and show us if we know Him or

not. Ask Him. Ask Him to show you.

Jude 1:24-25 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, (25) to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.