

Christ Reformation Church

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God's Word to a Hesitating Church

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (7:1)

“The Judgment Seat of Christ”

October 12, 2014

Sermon Text: 2 Cor 5:10

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor 5:1-21

Introduction-

2 Corinthians 5:1-11 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our

heavenly dwelling, (3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. (4) For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5) He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (6) So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. **(9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is**

known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

This doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ has always been a perplexing one to me. We know that for the Christian –

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And –

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet here we have the Apostle calling upon us to aim to please Christ because we are going to stand before Him one day and judgment rendered about our deeds in this life, whether good or evil. How is this all to be reconciled?

And you see the importance of this. It directly affects our thinking about the Lord and about how He regards us. Even as a Christian, my life is no example of perfection by any means. I still sin. Am I going to be reprimanded and shamed before the universe when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ? “Jeff, you will recall that time when you....well, here, let’s put it right up here on the screen where everyone can see what you did.” How

can I pray “come quickly, Lord Jesus” wholeheartedly if I know I am going to be exposed, admonished, and rebuked for every sin I ever committed? At the same time, I want to be faithful to Scripture and I have no desire to turn the gospel and grace into some kind of free pass that permits me to sin all I want and never have to worry about it. Paul’s words here surely have some intent to correct that kind of notion in anyone’s mind, do they not?

Fundamentally, the issue then before us is this question: “Who specifically is the Apostle Paul addressing in verse 10?

- Christians
- The unsaved
- Or, all human beings, including those who have made a profession of Christ

At first look, it would seem that Paul is surely writing to Christians alone. After all, this epistle is to the church at Corinth, right? And verses 6-8 are most certainly addressed to Christians. However, a closer look at the context of verses surrounding verse 10 might cause us to re-think this:

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (18) All this is from God, who through

Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (21) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

You see the same kind of thing in fact back in verse 11-

2 Corinthians 5:11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

So right here in the midst of a letter addressed to the Christian church at Corinth, Paul is calling upon those very people to be reconciled to God! Listen to him once more in the opening of the next chapter –

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2) For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you,

and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Therefore, it is my conclusion that Paul is applying the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ to ALL human beings. Christians, the unsaved, and perhaps in particular here we might say, to the unsaved who claim to be Christians but who in fact are not. Listen to Simon Kistemaker on this:

"When Paul writes 'all of us,' is he referring to all people? The New Testament teaches that everyone must appear before the judgment seat of God or Christ (see Acts 10:42, 17:31; Rom 14:10; 2 Tim 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5). But here the Greek construction shows that he addresses the Corinthian Christians and presumably his opponents in that church. No one is exempt from being summoned to appear in court, for the word that Paul uses is 'must.'; the command to stand trial has a divine origin, for God through Christ issues the summons. The accused must answer to God (Rom 14:10) and will receive the verdict from Christ.

Each individual appears in court and hears the verdict based on one's conduct on earth. When the Lord returns (1 Cor 4:5), all works, whether good or bad, will be revealed. At that

time He assigns recompense to each individual for deeds performed through the instrumentality of the body while one is on earth. Jesus says, 'Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Rev 22:12).'"

Paul is not teaching a doctrine of earning one's salvation by doing good works. God accepts us not because of works that in themselves are stained by sin, but because of the meritorious work of Jesus Christ." [New Testament Commentary]

The context is important here. The reason Paul is writing to the church at Corinth is because there was trouble there. Paul has had to defend his apostleship and his ministry against enemies who were trying to mislead the believers there and were causing them to withhold themselves from Paul and from the gospel-

2 Corinthians 6:11-12 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. (12) You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.

2 Corinthians 11:12-15 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the

same terms as we do. (13) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

The judgment seat of Christ will be a fearful event for all who are enemies of Christ, including and even especially so for those who have put on a "Christian" façade, convincing others that they are such eminent and holy saints. But Jesus sees right through it and that Day will reveal who they really are. In contrast, that Day will be a glorious Day for Christ's people and is one which we can look forward to eagerly. Christ Himself has told us how it is going to go down:

Matthew 25:31-46 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

(34) Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' (40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

(41) "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' (44) Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry

or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' (45) Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' (46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

And you also have it here:

Matthew 7:17-23 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. (18) A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. (19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (21) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

So, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" is GOOD news for the Christian, and serves as

still another motivation for us to live our lives now in a manner pleasing to Christ. No genuine Christian will take this as license to sin all the more because "grace covers it all." No. Love for Christ is our motivation and love strives to please.

Here is perhaps still another image of what that Day will be like for the Christian –

Zechariah 3:1-4 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. (2) And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" (3) Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. (4) And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments."

This robe is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that covers our sin, silencing the accusations of the enemy.

Consider then in this light verses such as the following:

Matthew 12:32-37 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. (33) "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. (34) You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (35) The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. (36) I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, (37) for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Jude 1:14-21 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, (15) to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way,

and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (16) These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. (17) But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (18) They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." (19) It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. (20) But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, (21) keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were

in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. (14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Conclusions

What shall we say in light of all this? The Bible in all truth and certainty declares that all human beings in every place and in every time of human history will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. They will be summoned there – they ARE summoned there. YOU have been served with that divine subpoena. And each one of us will find there a pronouncement of judgment from Christ the Judge of the living and the dead. That verdict will be –

- Righteous (reward)
- Guilty (condemnation)

It will be “depart from me into everlasting darkness” or “enter into your reward.” It will not be a mixture of the two. In fact, I would recommend to you that the wicked will hear *not one word* of commendation from the Lord, and that the righteous will hear *not one word of condemnation* from Him. It will be the Day when Christ’s

people are vindicated and validated right in the presence of their enemies. It will be the fulfillment of the 23rd Psalm –

Psalms 23:4-6 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (6) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

You see, there are ONLY two categories of human beings in God's sight. Only two –

- Righteous
- Unrighteous

Right here this morning in this place, there are only two kinds of people. It looks like there are many other types: men, women, adults, children, and if we were in most places besides Tillamook I could also add a listing of various races and nationalities. But in God's accounting, there are only two kinds of people:

- Those who are in Christ
- Those who are not in Christ

The most vital thing in a person's life on this earth, this life "in the body" as Paul puts it, is to seek the Lord until He is found. It is to call out to Him to show us mercy in Christ, so that by faith alone in Christ alone Christ's righteousness is credited to us and our sins to Him. This is the real issue of life in this present world that is passing away.

You all know that I work most every day with Christians, mostly women and a few men, who are victims or survivors of domestic abuse. This abuse is no mere "marital incompatibility" of some kind in which two personalities simply cannot co-exist in the same house. No, this abuse I speak of and work to expose is in ways one of the purest and most deceiving kinds of evil. It hides in our churches. Just as Scripture warns us, it creeps in among us under the façade and disguise of saintliness. It is a wolf in wool, an emissary of Satan masquerading as an angel of light and son of righteousness. It is a person who has *a profound sense of entitlement to power and control and who has no remorse about using whatever tactics – emotional, psychological, spiritual, and physical – are necessary to gain and maintain that power and control.*

And Christians just like some/many/most of you and just like I

used to be *are enabling this evil among us*. How? How can this be? There are many reasons:

- The abuser is a master of disguise
- The abuser is a real con artist who can appear very, very convincing in his saintly mask
- Most Christians, remarkably, are really quite uneducated and, well, ignorant about the very nature of evil. We have no real excuse for this because the Bible teaches us and warns us about evil among us so often. But somehow, it is just too unpleasant of a subject for us.

But let me close by suggesting to you what I am sure is the most powerful factor contributing to the wicked, counterfeit abuser “Christian’s” ability to hide among us all the while working his evil on his family and spreading his wicked leaven among us. It is simply this:

The Christian church today carelessly and really arrogantly misapplies the grace of the gospel and permits professing Christians to walk in sin OR we embrace an atmosphere of legalistic works-righteousness. Libertinism and Legalism. Both distortions of the gospel provide an abuser friendly environment where evil can comfortably hide. Most of our

churches therefore are too large. There are too many people in the pews. There are people who should not be among us. They are hidden reefs causing us to stumble. But we have created spiritual hot tubs in which wickedness is very comfortable. Your church needs to be a place where the light of Christ is so evident that darkness flees from it. Your church must be a place where only two kinds of people are drawn – those who love Christ and want to worship Him, and those who Christ had brought under conviction and is drawing them to himself.

Recently I asked a friend who is a survivor of horrific abuse and who, like most all the abuse victims I work with, was treated horribly by her church when she reported the abuse and asked for help – I asked her “what should I tell these people in Indiana? I mean, I only have a brief time with them. What can I tell them that would do the most to prevent them and their church from treating an abuse victim like your church treated you?”

[By the way, let me just explain. Most always, a pastor (and I was one of them), church elders, and church members will end up siding with the abuser against the victim. The abuser will dupe them. Many churches have actually ex-communicated victims who have been horribly and horrifically

treated for decades, because they chose to leave their abuser. For many evangelicals you see, man was made for marriage, not marriage for man. Abusers will end up being affirmed. They will remain as members in good standing. Some I know of are even pastors themselves or church officers while the victim is put outside the camp. Where, by the way, she ultimately finds Jesus!]

What can I tell them? This friend said this:

I'd preach on how you must be born again. That 'living the Christian lifestyle' is no different in the eyes of Almighty God than living the Buddhist lifestyle or living the Muslim lifestyle.

That the difference between Christianity and all other religions is this-- rebirth, just as Jesus told the man in John 3. Trying harder, giving up worldly stuff and substituting religious activity, music and other fluff is meaningless if they are still dead in trespasses and sin. Going to church every Sunday while their heart is hard will get them called on the carpet by Almighty God for being a bunch of white-washed tombs full of deadmen's bones.

And I would tell them-- that, by their fruits you shall know them. If their lives are full of lying, envy, hatred,

murderous thoughts, lust, greed, etc, then they are not born again no matter who they listen to on the radio. A born again believer and follower of Jesus Christ is characterized by a life spilling over with love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness and self control. They do not have to try harder-- fruit grows up from the root and is nurtured by connection to the vine, which is Christ Himself. They love righteousness and hate evil. If they slip, they have an Advocate with the Father. If they live in a hog wallow, they are dead in trespasses and sin.

Each man and woman must examine themselves before God. Fruits are not forced-- they grow naturally and freely. So if their life is characterized by the works of the flesh, they must examine their hearts before God and seek His face. No pastor can say the magic words and pronounce them 'saved.' If they have never sought the face of God, repented of their sin and spent time alone in the throne room of the Creator of the universe, then it is time to get busy.

Someday, each man and woman will stand before God and give an account, whether his works are good or evil. Dadgum better to find out now than later :)

That's what she would have preached because that is what she has come to

see as the ultimate antidote to evil
hiding and working among Christ's
people. So I told her I would tell you,
and I have.