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Tillamook, Oregon

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TULIP – The Fundamentals of the Faith by which we are Saved

December 5, 2021

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor 4

One of our friends who spent years going through the motions of church, quite confident she was a Christian and therefore certainly in good standing with God, suggested recently that we put together a sermon series presenting the basics, the fundamentals of the Christian faith by which we are saved. She made this suggestion because she is convinced, as am I, that there are many, many people in the very same condition that she was in – deceived and still dead in their sins.

I want to take the time then and pause in our series on Hosea, and do what she suggests. Essentially, we will be presenting this:

brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, (2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. (3) 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,

I would remind you of the gospel by which you are being saved, *if you hold fast to the word preached*. We do not want anyone to continue another day in a vain, empty belief that is not saving faith at all. These are matters of first importance apart from which no one will see the Lord.

Now, there are a number of ways we could go about presenting the vital, fundamental doctrines of the gospel. We could, for instance, use what are typically called the “solas” as our topic headings:

- Sola scriptura – Scripture alone

1Co 15:1-4 Now I would remind you,

- Sola Fide – faith alone
- Sola gratia – grace alone
- Sola Christus – Christ alone
- Sola deo Gloria – to God alone be the glory

- Total (radical) Depravity
- Unconditional Election
- Limited (definite) Atonement
- Irresistible Grace
- Perseverance of the Saints

These 5 doctrines were formulated in the Protestant Reformation to differentiate Protestantism from Roman Catholicism. Rome denies every single one of the points and has even pronounced “anathema” anyone who holds to them.

Why is it vitally important for us all, including those who really do know the Lord, to review these things? Peter said that review is vital:

For our purposes however I have decided to use the other well-known five points – commonly called the Five Points of Calvinism – even though John Calvin did not formulate them and give them this title. These five points clarify for us what the Bible teaches regarding:

2Pe 1:12-13 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. (13) I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder,

- Why do we need Christ?
- Upon Whom Does Salvation Depend?
- What was accomplished at the Cross?
- Can the sinner reject God’s call to salvation? (An invitation or a command?)
- Are good works necessary to stay saved?

And so did Jude:

Jud 1:3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

You probably recognize that these are the five points which are commonly referred to by the acronym, TULIP –

We battle with a very cunning and deceptive enemy. His goal is always, always, always to lead us away from Christ and embrace a false god of some kind – an idol.

2Co 11:3-4 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning,

your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (4) For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Another Jesus. Another spirit. Another gospel. Think about that very, very carefully. The chief idol being worshipped today in churches is *a false Jesus*, and the spirit driving all this is not the Holy Spirit at all, nor is the gospel preached there the real gospel. Where does it all come from? The devil – the serpent who deceived Eve.

Did you know that the Bible teaches us over and over again that idolatry has its origin in demons? If you want to think about something sobering and frightening, you don't need to go watch a horror movie. This is real. Demons are actively promoting a false Jesus, a false Christianity – and they are doing it primarily among people who think they are Christians.

Psa 106:32-38 They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, (33) for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips. (34) They did not

destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, (35) but they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. (36) **They served their idols, which became a snare to them. (37) They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons;** (38) they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.

Lev 17:5-7 This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. (6) And the priest shall throw the blood on the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting and burn the fat for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. (7) **So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore.** This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.

Deu 32:16-17 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. (17) **They sacrificed to demons that were no gods,** to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.

1Co 10:19-22 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? (20) **No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. (21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (22) Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?**

Rev 9:20-21 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands **nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, (21) nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.**

When Paul warns us that we battle against spiritual forces in high places, he was dead serious. When Peter said that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, he was dead serious. This is real. The devil and his demon hordes are very much at work and over the years you can be sure that so many of the attacks and battles we have faced here were initiated by the demonic realm. We like to be level-headed and clear-thinking. We don't want to be people

who see a demon behind every tree – but I have no doubt that there are demons behind a whole lot more trees than we tend to think.

And here is truth to hold onto – *idolatry always, always, always is promoted and energized by the devil. Idols always have demons behind them.* To worship a false god is to worship the devil. It is quite logical and devilish – Satan from the beginning has always wanted man's worship. "I will be like the Most High."

Therefore, if we go wrong – if we are led wrong:

1Co 12:2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.

-- If we are led wrongly so that we worship a false Jesus, follow a false spirit, and embrace a false gospel, we are idolaters and duped by the enemy. Furthermore, all who worship idols progressively become like those idols. An ironic and fitting judgment is brought upon them so that they become like their false gods – blind, deaf, and ultimately, dead so that they can no longer hear Christ's voice. You see it here:

2Th 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all

power and false signs and wonders, (10) and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (11) Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, (12) in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

I want to read the following excerpt to you which I took from G.K. Beale's book *We Become What we Worship: A Biblical theology of Idolatry*. It shows us a very clear example of how false gods and their worship are introduced by the enemy into churches today and this should cause us to understand why we must be frequently reminded of the truths by which we are saved.

Worldliness is whatever any culture does to make sin seem normal and righteousness to be strange. When we imbibe the Zeitgeist (the spirit of the age) of worldliness, then we feel strange trying to think Christianly and to act according to the Bible's mandates. That is, when we think the world's thoughts after it and do not think God's thoughts after him, we will not be motivated to do the things that God wants us to do, but we will only feel comfortable acting in a manner that fits into the world's way of doing things.

This is why Christians who cease going to church begin to feel more and more comfortable in the world and less and less comfortable in the church. For the same reason, this is why regular attendance at church is so important. At church we worship by hearing God's Word, praising God, praying, partaking of the Lord's Supper and fellowshiping, all of which encourages believers and convinces them that they indeed are the ones who are normal and that the world is strange before God's eyes.

Believers need to encourage one another that, from the biblical perspective, it is normal for God's people to reflect Christ and his behavior and not the world's.

Idolatry in church life. Similarly, some churches in the evangelical tradition are so seeker-friendly and oriented toward making unbelievers feel comfortable that the service resembles something more like what we would encounter in the world cultural forms of entertainment than the pattern of worship that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 14:20-25, where unbelievers come under conviction of their sin. To the extent that churches are committed more to the world than to God's pattern of worship, they become idolatrous.

On the other hand, there are churches that are not guilty of worldliness, but have traditions that, while not necessarily unbiblical or sinful in themselves, selves, become idolatrous. This is seen when churches divide over whether or not people are holding to these traditions or when these traditions take precedence over clear teachings of God's Word. We have seen in the Gospels that such traditions can become idols when they are held to be more authoritative than God's Word. Such idolatry can be subtle, since the church may not deny the truth of Scripture but effectively ignores it in the life and practice of the church.

In this respect, David Wells has, again, targeted **two idolatrous traditions** that he found in part of the evangelical Christian culture of the latter part of the twentieth century, as a result of examining Leadership magazine, a highly successful journal designed for the clergy that was launched by Christianity Today in 1980.

What is it that their marketing surveys show clergy most want to know, and how should those matters be treated? Between 1980 and 1988, 80 percent of the journal's material was devoted to the personal crises, perplexities, and challenges encountered by the clergy, and 13

percent of the material was concerned with techniques for managing the church.

Since this is an evangelical publication, **it is quite stunning to observe that less than 1 percent of the material made any clear reference to Scripture, still less to any idea that is theological...** The articles are single-minded in their devotion to the wisdom that **psychology** and **business management** offer and apparently as equally single-minded in their skepticism concerning what Scripture and theology offer for addressing the practical crises of pastoral life.

Even when the subjects being discussed were temptation, sexuality, church discipline, church structure, and preaching-subjects about which Scripture has much to say- the the authors of the articles in Leadership thought that it would be better to look elsewhere for help in their pastoral tasks!

Confession has vanished from the pages of this journal, and reflection has never even intruded. What remains of theology, therefore, is only the search for wisdom, and this is now pursued through the professionalization of the pastoral calling. The yearning for wisdom is thus transformed into a yearning **to look more like a skilled**

lawyer, psychologist, or business executive than an ordained minister of the gospel, marching to the beat of the transcendent Drummer.

Robert Bellah has noted that these two types- the psychologist and the manager- model the essential interests of twentieth-century culture. **Both types are this worldly, both are centered on the autonomous individual, both are driven by pragmatic interests, and both are hostile to the old moral order.** They are, in fact, the same character in many ways, for both seek to define life by the control they exercise over it, the one with respect to the inner world and the other with respect to the outer world. This is what we admire. And Leadership reflects this admiration, attempting to sanctify it with a clerical calling.

Thus when the church seeks to solve its problems primarily by appeal to business management and psychology rather than first resorting to Scripture, the sphere of general revelation has become the focus, and the Bible, God's special revelation, moves to the periphery and is understood through the lens of general revelation, which is just the opposite of what Scripture says should be the case. This amounts to substituting traditions-which otherwise legitimately may be of some help in

supplementing or fleshing out Scripture- in the place of God's Word.

This is just what Jesus castigates the Jewish leaders of his time for doing: "neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men" and "invalidating the word of God by your traditions which you have handed down" (Mk 7:8, 13).

Recall that these traditions were not necessarily bad in themselves (e.g., see Mt 23:1-26), but when they supplanted God's Word as the central focus of theology and practice, **they became idolatrous.** In the Gospels, those committed to tradition and not God's Word became as spiritually dead as the tradition to which they were devoted. It is no different today, though the precise traditions have changed.

G. K. Beale. *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Kindle Locations 3433-3466). Kindle Edition.

Understand? There is far more to these errors than mere differences of opinion, people seeing things another way, but in fact – hey – we are all Christians, all on the same path, and really there is nothing to get all worried or keyed up about.

But you see, there is much to be concerned about and those who are not concerned are destined to be led down that idol path in the company of demons which ends in total darkness, with no ability left to hear Christ's voice.

Do you believe this? Do you believe that the troubles we have faced and do face in serving Christ, in gathering together in this church, in preaching and teaching God's Word – *do you believe that the opposition that rises up against it all is more than old Joe over there getting his nose out of joint over the length of the sermon or young Jack sitting in the pew complaining he is bored?*

Jas 3:14-16 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. (15) This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

Satan is a liar. He has been from the beginning and he still is. If we are going to stand against his schemes, then we had better get a firm hold on God's truth, and there is no better place to begin than with a careful review of Christ and Him crucified, honestly

praying for the Lord to show us whether we know Him or not.

We will plan next time then to deal with the question – *why do we need Christ?* Why do we need a Savior? The answer is found in the "T" of TULIP – *and you were dead in your trespasses and sins.*