

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Christ Never Abandons His Own

June 14, 2015

Sermon Text: Hebrews 13:5-6

Scripture Reading: Deut 31

Introduction-

One of the greatest fears every human being experiences is the fear of *abandonment*. The more helpless or weak a person is, the greater that fear. Children for example are haunted by it, and as people grow older it tends to return. We think of children left on doorsteps or elderly people left alone in some run down home.

And even in middle age, as self-reliant as we might think ourselves, we can find ourselves abandoned. Friends walk away. A spouse leaves. And sometimes there is no malice in it – as we grow older our loved ones and friends die. The end result – we are alone.

Being abandoned or the fear of abandonment is part of living in a fallen world and it is something we all have to face. It isn't just the pain of being left alone, it often includes a sense of betrayal by people who we thought were committed to us and loved us.

Christ's people have experienced abandonment very often. Here are some examples from Scripture-

2 Timothy 4:10 For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

2 Timothy 4:14-16 Alexander the coppermith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. (15) Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. (16) At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!

Christ Himself experienced it – think of His disciples abandoning Him upon His arrest.

And then it is the very next verse which leads us to the theme we want to consider this morning:

2 Timothy 4:17-18 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. (18) The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

But...the Lord stood by me...

Forsaken is a common synonym in Scripture for “abandoned” – notice Paul’s source of comfort here in his suffering:

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

Listen to this promise, which is really our remedy for overcoming the fear of abandonment:

Hebrews 13:5-6 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, **"I will never leave you nor forsake you."** (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

It is impossible for Christ to abandon His people. It can never happen. Never.

The Lord is truth. He cannot lie, and He has covenanted/promised His people that He will always be with them –

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age."

Let’s consider a number of places in Scripture which teach us this important truth.

Genesis 28:15-16 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. **For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.**" (16) Then Jacob awoke from his

sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."

Deuteronomy 31:6-7 Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. **He will not leave you or forsake you.**" (7) Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it.

NOTE: As we read these, notice the connection between the Lord being with us and 1) victory over enemies, and 2) Fearlessness.

Joshua 1:5-6 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. **I will not leave you or forsake you.** (6) Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

1 Samuel 12:22 **For the LORD will not forsake his people**, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself.

Then one of the greatest images in Scripture of Christ our Good Shepherd:

Psalms 23:1-6 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (3) He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (4) **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.**

"for you are with me." There it is. At the heart of abandonment, you see, is *fear*. Abandonment is something we *fear*. But Christ's unfailing presence is the remedy of that fear. And not only is His presence simply *presence*, but the Lord being *with us* denotes that He is FOR us against our enemies, fighting for us, delivering us, providing for us.

Consider for instance these things in the very *names* for the Holy Spirit –

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Helper. Comforter. Counselor. Quite the opposite of abandonment. We saw the same connection with His presence in those Hebrews verses:

Hebrews 13:5-6 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will **never leave you** nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my **helper**; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

The Psalms are filled with references to the Lord being our help/helper:

Psalms 54:3-5 For strangers have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life; they do not set God before themselves. Selah (4) Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life. (5) He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them.

All of this is connected to the truth that the Lord is *with us* and will never abandon us.

Notice in contrast the false shepherd abandons the sheep:

John 10:12-13 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, **sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees**, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. (13) He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I remember when our children were 3 and 4 years old and we were moving from the Portland area to Montana. Verla's parents were seeing us off and when they left to go back home and we headed out to the truck to start the drive to our new home, the kids started to cry and we asked them what was wrong. Kenny said "we won't get to see grandpa and grandma anymore." Of course we told him no, that wasn't the case. He would still get to see them. But isn't it interesting that even very, very young children fear being left, being abandoned.

Listen to even more promises about the Lord's faithful presence with us:

Psalms 37:25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not

seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

Isaiah 41:10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

John 14:16-23 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, (17) even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (18) **"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.** (19) Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. (20) In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (21) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (22) Judas (not Iscariot) said to

him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" (23) Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, **and we will come to him and make our home with him.**

He Temples With Us

Now these Scriptures should be bringing back to your mind that great theme of the Bible, *the temple of the Lord*. Remember? Not only does the Lord never forsake or abandon us, *it is His very desire and plan to live with us in intimate Father/child relationship.*

Leviticus 26:11-12 I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. (12) And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

Zechariah 2:10-11 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. (11) And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. (2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. (4) He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

2 Corinthians 6:16-18 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome

you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

From Eden fallen to Eden restored the Lord has been working and moving to dwell with us. He does not abandon His people, but quite the opposite – He moves heaven and earth to be with them. Christ the Son came into this world as the temple of God among us, and after He ascended back to the Father He came to us again, *dwelling with us and in us in the Person of the Spirit*. Now we move closer and closer to Him until one Day we will see Him face to face.

Psalms 27:1-5 Of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (2) When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. (3) Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. (4) One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. (5) For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will

conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

A Sobering Truth – Eternal Abandonment

Now, lest anyone misunderstand, these promises of the Lord are *for His people*. For those who love Him and know Him. They are not universal promises to all humanity. *The Lord does not dwell with the wicked and one Day He will completely abandon them for all eternity.*

In part at least, hell is that original darkness and chaos that existed before the Spirit of the Lord moved in creation. It is an absence of the Lord and of every form of good. It is existence without the presence of the Lord, existence in complete abandonment by the Lord. An ultimate “giving over” of the wicked to their evil desire to have “no God!”

Psalms 14:1 To the choirmaster. Of David. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

We see even today this world descending into more and more darkness and chaos as men reject the Lord and He withdraws His restraining

presence. In a sense, though only in part, we are seeing “hell on earth.”

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."

THERE is the ultimate abandonment, the one that man should fear. It will be the fate of every person who lives their life as if God did not exist, refusing to acknowledge Him and give Him thanks, rejecting His Son as the only Redeemer from sin. Let me suggest to you that no one has ever experienced total abandonment of God while they lived their lives on this earth. Here even the most evil of evil men still

experience some of the good things of God –

Acts 14:15-17 "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. (16) In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. (17) Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

But at the Day of Judgment, the wicked will be so abandoned, so fully will God's presence be withdrawn, that they will never again experience even the smallest good thing – all good things come down from the Father of Lights – but He will not be with them. They will be in utter and complete darkness, given the very thing they demanded – *no God!*

If anyone here is dealing with these things carelessly – then beware and be warned. No God, no light, no comforting presence, no good thing, ever again for all eternity. To enter into judgment without Christ only has one outcome.

And for the righteous, well, the real good is yet to come and it will never end. We have this certainty and this confidence that cannot be shaken –

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Ultimately then for the believer, there is nothing to fear.