

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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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)

*“Life in the New Eden”*

**November 9, 2014**

**Sermon Text:** 2 Cor 5:17-21

**Scripture Reading:** Revelation 21

**Introduction-**

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for

their sake died and was raised. (16) From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

(17) 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.

Much of the Corinthians' problem, as with ours, is that they were still seeing things "according to the flesh." According to the flesh. According to the mindset of the natural man. According to the thinking of this present, temporary, perishing world. This is why, as you will recall, they were rejecting Paul and embracing the false teachers and "newcomers" among them. They were all turned around about power, greatness, glory, and how these things operate in this world versus in the kingdom of God (the new creation).

As we saw last time, this error will inevitably lead us into accepting a false gospel, a false Christ, and emissaries of the devil. Sanctification is a renewing of our minds by the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word so that we think and see and hear as the Lord does. So that we operate increasingly as the new creations we are in Christ.

Listen again –

2 Corinthians 5:14-16 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (16) From now on, therefore, we regard

no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

In Christ, we died. We died with Him. The Spirit of Christ so joined us to Christ so that when Christ died, we died. And when Christ was raised, we were raised. We were raised to a NEW life, a new realm, a new creation in which things are radically different. In this new creation, people do not live for themselves. They live for Christ. And living for Christ in a fallen world means persevering in faith and obedience to Him even in times of great suffering and sacrifice. That is the path Christ followed and it is the path His people follow.

Therefore it must not surprise these Corinthians that Paul was detested, reviled, persecuted, accused – that he was weak. Look at Christ! See Him and how He came into this world, gave Himself, was hated by the world, and died. Then look for *Him* in people like Paul or these false teachers. Whom do you see Him in? Where do you see Him? You see Him where people, in His name, have ceased to live for themselves and are now living for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

THIS is how we "regard" people now. According to the eyes and ears and mind of the Spirit of Christ.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

When we do think “according to the flesh,” that is, according to the thinking and ways of this world and of the mindset that we used to be dominated by, we will make all kinds of grievous mistakes. Last time you remember we talked about how this is the fundamental way that local churches like this one end up being controlled and misled by self-serving, false teachers who put on an outward façade that the flesh thinks is surely “godly.”

2 Corinthians 4:6-11 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (7) But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (8) 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; (10) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be

manifested in our bodies. (11) For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

“From now on we regard no one according to the flesh.” Not even Christ! Because “according to the flesh” (according to the world’s mind), Christ was a huge failure and He remains a failure. He is still mocked and derided today wherever His true church exists. ANY MANIFESTATION OF “CHRIST” THAT IS POPULAR WITH THE WORLD IS NECESSARILY NOT CHRIST.

Let’s pin this down even more clearly  
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*To regard Christ according to the Spirit (rather than according to the flesh) is to see His Person and His work from God’s perspective. Power in weakness. Greatness and glory in lowliness. Last being first. And to regard one another according to the Spirit is to see Christ’s person and work in them. It is to evaluate and consider one another as members of the new creation that we are. It is to think according to the Spirit in terms of Christ’s new creation kingdom.*

*In contrast, to regard someone according to the flesh is to look at*

*them and evaluate them as the world does. Last being last. Weak being foolish and worthless. First being first. When we regard others according to the flesh, we invite Satan's emissaries into Christ's church and exalt them, all the while rejecting the real sheep and the true shepherd.*

And WHY do we regard one another according to the Spirit? Because, listen once more –

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”*

New creation. A new order. When Christ came into this world, a new Eden was begun:

John 1:1-14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (6) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. (7) He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. (8) He was not the light, but

came to bear witness about the light. (9) The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. (10) He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. (11) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (12) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (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.

Hear all of the Genesis 1 language here? In the beginning. Light shining in the darkness. Christ enacted a new Eden – the inauguration of it at least, though not yet the full consummation. He came into this world to make all things new. At His death and resurrection, the New World began. Call it the kingdom of God if you will.

Matthew 12:28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is

at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark 4:30-32 And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? (31) It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, (32) yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

And this is what Paul is talking about here in verse 17. Right now at this moment if you are in Christ, YOU are a new creation not only on your way to the New heavens and earth but really already in it. For the Christian, the old order, the old world, the old person they used to be, is dead.

Therefore, in Christ's church – WE must see things and evaluate people and think like – NEW CREATION people! The Corinthians hadn't gotten this yet and this is the source of their trouble.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. (2) I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, (3) for you

are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? (4) For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

And the same here –

1 Corinthians 11:17-22 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. (18) For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, (19) for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. (20) When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. (21) For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. (22) What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

So largely the Scripture is what? These epistles that teach us, what are they fundamentally? *They are kingdom living, new creation life*

*instruction manuals!* They tell us who we are, what kingdom we are now in in Christ, and how we must now live –

Ephesians 4:17-32 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. (18) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. (19) They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (20) But that is not the way you learned Christ!-- (21) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (22) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (23) and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, (24) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (25) Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (26) Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (27) and give no opportunity to the devil. (28) Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work

with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (29) Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (32) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Because THIS IS HOW IT IS IN THE NEW CREATION! Listen to this familiar account in light of the New Creation –

Luke 10:38-42 Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. (39) And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. (40) But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." (41) But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many

things, (42) but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Martha was seeing things according to the flesh. Jesus was a guest in their home who needed to be fed. Mary chose the "good portion" because she saw Christ according to the Spirit and realized that HE would feed them!

Seeing with the eyes Christ has given us – by our spiritual sight and through our spiritual understanding – will radically change our priorities, our values, how we view others, what real wealth and power and greatness truly are... A local church that is judging according to the flesh will be very, very different than one that sees according to the Spirit.

Luke 12:15-21 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (16) And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, (17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' (18) And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) And I will say to my soul,

Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Fleshly eyes regard circumstances in an earthly, temporal grid – build more barns! But regarding people and circumstances and ourselves according to the Spirit will put an entirely new spin on things. Suddenly the "great" and mighty church with all its glitz and glamour turns out to be foolishness.

Revelation 2:8-11 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. (9) "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (10) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (11) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who

conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

...compared to-

Revelation 3:14-17 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. (15) "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! (16) So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (17) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Reconciliation. To put back into agreement and relationship. The first creation was pronounced "very good" by the Lord. Before sin entered, Eden and mankind were a reflection of God, working for His glory. Sin of course changed all of that. It was and remains God's purpose in Christ to set Eden all right once more. We are His creation and workmanship. It is all from Him – His doing.

Do you begin to see how vital all this is for us to get hold of if we are going to really understand God's Word? Think "new creation" constantly as you read the Scriptures.

And this is what the Christian ministry is all about. The great commission of the Church is a ministry of *reconciliation*. It is announcing to the world and showing the world that Christ is God's means of the old perishing creation being put right with God. How is it possible? How can this be? How can God "not count trespasses against the world?" Here is the answer –

### **All This is God's Doing**

Listen to vss 18-19 once more-

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 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

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 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.



A very central part of salvation in Christ is being “reconciled” to God. The sinner is estranged from God. Hostile to God. Living in death and darkness. Unable to please God. But the good news of Christ is that there is a way, all of God’s doing, to be put back into harmony with God. To be set right with Him. To have a heart that loves Him instead of hating Him. Paul says that Christ has appointed him as an ambassador, and the message he is commanded to announce is, *be reconciled to God.*

It is all possible because Christ the sinless and Holy One was *made to be sin (by God)* in our behalf. The ultimate sin offering. At the same time, Christ’s perfect righteousness becomes ours. A kind of double transfer, you see. Christ the righteous one is made to be sin; ME the sinful one is made to be righteous! And at the same time, in all of this, God remains just AND the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In all of this then, Paul is exhorting the Corinthians, and us, to get hold of all of these truths. Reconciliation with God is more than justification before Him. It is being in agreement with Him. It is seeing things as He sees them. To the degree that we still regard things according to the flesh, we our

out of step with God. Be reconciled to God and to the New Creation!

Christian, put off the old man and put on Christ! Be who you are. Take off those old flesh spectacles and put on the lenses of the Spirit. You will find yourself seeing things in a whole new way.

Philippians 3:7-11 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- (10) that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.