

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Romans 6:11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

“Who is a Christian?”

Jan 4, 2015

Sermon Text: Assorted

Scripture Reading: Romans 6

Introduction-

Many things are described today with the adjective “Christian.”

- Christian music
- Christian schools
- Christian books

These would be *things* that are characterized by some kind of agreement with Christian truth. *But only a human being can be called a Christian.* Nothing is more important for a person as we begin this new year

of 2015 than to know who a Christian is, and if they themselves are a Christian. These are the things we will be considering this morning. Sometimes it is good, when making a new beginning such as starting a new year, to be brought back to the very basics. The fundamentals.

Another reason this is such an important topic is because, as you well know, one of the enemy’s common tactics is to confuse Christ’s people and mislead them by sending false sheep our way. That is what was going on at Corinth as we have been seeing in 2 Corinthians. And we have found this to be a vital topic when it comes to dealing with the evil of abusers who so often claim to be Christians. We spend much of our time on the blog showing people that the habitually wicked simply cannot belong to Christ. This is very, very freeing for a Christian to understand. And yet there are many professing Christian ministries today who are claiming that a Christian can in fact walk in evil and be defined by a wicked and evil mentality in his very essence.

Alright then, who is a Christian? What things are true of a child of God and what things are not true? What has happened to a sinner who is now a saint in Christ? Just a bit of thought on these questions will make it obvious to you that quite a book could be written and still not cover all of the answers.

A Christian is a Person Who Has Died and Been Raised

We have already hear this from Romans 6. A Christian is someone who has, by faith alone, been so united with Christ that they died with Christ, were buried with Christ, and has been resurrected with Christ.

Romans 6:3-4 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (4) We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

And we have seen the thing in our study of 2 Corinthians-

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

It is what Jesus told Nicodemus –

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

“The stony heart can never be softened; it has to be changed.”
(Lloyd-Jones)

A Christian then is a person who is now someone who is not the same person they were when they entered this world. A Christian is a work of God. A new creation. This fact underlies all the rest of the qualities we are going to be considering this morning.

We are not made right before God by some degree of reformation of who we are in Adam. Nor by re-fashioning the clay of which we are made. No, the very nature of the clay must be completely altered, so that even our new resurrection bodies we shall receive are not said to be “of the dust.” A Christian is a new creature, a new being. A Christian is a person with a new heart. A Christian is a person who has been put to death in Christ and brought out of the grave with an entirely new identity, a person with a heavenly citizenship, not of this world.

Ephesians 2:1-6 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Do you see? These are the things that God's own Word tells us are true of *every* single Christian. And in contrast, it is necessarily true that a person who has not been born again and raised up as a new creation in Christ, is not a Christian. Such a person is still dead in trespasses and sins, following the road of this present world, thinking like this present world, following Satan, an object of the wrath of God. No matter how much spiritual "makeup" a person might put on, regardless of how many "holy clothes" he dresses in, nothing has changed. He is dead in his sins.

A Christian is a Person Who is Blessed by God, And Cursed by the World

Listen now to our Lord's words in the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, known as The Beatitudes and hear Him describe those whom He blesses:

Matthew 5:2-11 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: (3) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (4) "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (5) "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. (6) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (7) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (8) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (9) "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (10) "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11) "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

That is quite a list! And keep in mind that as the Lord pronounces His blessings on His people, as they are described here, He also pronounces His curse upon the wicked, excluding

them from His kingdom. Specifically, the wicked are identified as those who persecute the righteous simply because they are righteous (ie, Cain). They revile (that is verbal abuse) and persecute, and notice: *utter all kinds of evil against Christ's people – why? Because of Christ. Because they hate Christ.* We must all be very attuned to this matter of false accusations from the wicked. Do you see the thing? *The wicked “utter all kinds of evil against Christ's people.”* Falsely. This means then that as we all serve Christ in this church, we can expect that we are going to hear evil, false, accusations made against us and against our brothers in Christ. Expect it. Watch for it. This is actually a quality of the experience of a true Christian in this world. False, evil accusations. If the world speaks well of us and we are popular and well-liked by the world...that means something is very much amiss.

A Christian is BLESSED by God:

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

A Christian is a Person Who is Led by the Holy Spirit

Now, here is still another thing that is true of every Christian with no exception. In ways, this quality explains these other qualities we are looking at. Listen –

Romans 8:1-14 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (3) For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, **who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** (5) For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, **but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.** (6) For to set the mind on the flesh is death, **but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.** (7) For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. (8) Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. **(9) You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of**

God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. (10) But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (12) So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **(13) For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (14) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.**

Now, I am just going to focus on the last two verses of this great section, but you may want to consider it all more carefully this week. A Christian is a person in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. And this indwelling Spirit is ACTIVE. Specifically, He is LEADING the Christian. Leading us to what? *To put to death the deeds of the body.* This is the invariable dynamic that is at work in every Christian without exception. You see it even more clearly in verse 14 – If this leading isn't happening, then the person is not a son of God.

Now, let me give you some hard-learned insight here that we dare not be ignorant of. Those of you who were at the women's study last Wednesday heard our guest mention this very thing. If we as parents do not call evil, evil and if we cover for the evildoer, telling our children that "he is really a good person" when they, with their own observations and senses "feel" something is wrong/sinful/evil, then we are in fact *quenching the Spirit of God* in children who are Christians. We should not even do this with ANY child, Christian or not, but at minimum we will be guilty of teaching them to ignore this leading of the Spirit in them, and that is disastrous.

People who have learned about evil the hard way will tell you that, as a Christian, they "sensed" something was not right. But, because they had been taught that "feelings" are not to be trusted, they squelched what turned out to be the Spirit of God leading them. Think about it carefully. If the Holy Spirit is in us, and if we are Christians then He most certainly is, then the HOLY Spirit is going to react against UN-holiness (evil). He does so in regard to our own flesh and leads us, by His enabling, to say NO to the lusts of that sinful flesh, so why would we not think that He will do the same when evil comes at us from outside ourselves, or when we are in its presence?

Someone posted this wisdom on our blog last week. It was something like this: We teach our children to be polite and obedient and respectful to those in authority – parents, teachers, elders, and so on. This is normal. BUT all of that changes radically and those rules don't apply when the child is in danger. Then they are to "forget" those rules and do just the opposite: disobey, scream and yell and knock things over if in a store and don't worry about being polite or respectful.

Well, the same thing applies to our understanding of the leading of the Holy Spirit. There will be times that the Spirit is leading us to be quiet and respectful and obedient, but we must also understand that when – such as when we are in the presence of evil – the Spirit is going to be leading us to some very, very different behaviors and attitudes and we must be trained to realize this.

Notice this example:

John 2:14-17 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. (15) And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their

tables. (16) And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." (17) His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Spirit of Christ is very capable of *making the Christian weird in the eyes of others*. Think of the OT prophets. You might call it very rude for a person to stand up in a church service and start shouting "that is a lie!" and normally it would indeed be rude and just some ploy for narcissistic attention. BUT look what the Spirit of God impelled Jesus to do in church!

So a Christian is led by the Spirit and this leading is always against the world, the flesh, and the devil. ALWAYS. The thing will be foolishness to the world, but we must be trained to understand when the Spirit is leading us and we dare not disregard Him and quench Him.

Ezekiel 4:1-13 "And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem. (2) And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a mound against it. Set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. (3) And you,

take an iron griddle, and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel. (4) "Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. (5) For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. (6) And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year. (7) And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city. (8) And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege. (9) "And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer, and put them into a single vessel and make your bread from them. During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it. (10) And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day;

from day to day you shall eat it. (11) And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin; from day to day you shall drink. (12) And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung." (13) And the LORD said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them."

Pretty weird, right? And yet led by the Spirit of God.

A Christian then is a person who *is not conformed to this world because the Holy Spirit will never, ever lead us to such a conformity.*

A Christian is a Person Who Loves His Brother

Christ teaches each one of His people to love, and particularly to love Him and His people. Once more, this is without exception, so much so that if it is no true then we can be quite certain the person is not saved. Here we have it –

1 Thessalonians 4:9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,

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 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

Pretty clear, right? As we go into this new year, be prepared. You are going to hear from all kinds of supposed “Christian” sources that this is not true. That a person can hate their brother (or wife) and STILL be assured they are a Christian, and you will be told that you must assume they are a Christian. God’s Word is our anchor. It just isn’t so.

Well, on and on we could go:

A Christian is a Person Who Does Not Love this World

A Christian is a Person Who Denies Himself to Follow Christ

A Christian is a Person Who Loves God’s Truth and Hates the Lie

But let’s end with this one:

A Christian is a Person whose sins are forgiven and whose eternal home is the New Heavens and New Earth

One more year begins. WE are all one year older than we were last New Year’s, and one of these years is going to be our last before we depart this present life and world. It could be this year for any of us. As we grow in Christ, our longing for that home will grow as well.

Have you heard yourself described this morning? Not to perfection, but are these indispensable characteristics of a Christian increasingly evident in you? If they are, then be assured, you are going to see these things:

Revelation 22:1-7 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (2) through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (3) No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will

be in it, and his servants will worship him. (4) They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (5) And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. (6) And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place." (7) "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."