

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)

***“The Day of the Lord as Our
Great Hope (continued)”***

June 22, 2014

Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 1

Scripture Reading:

Introduction-

The coming Day of the Lord Jesus Christ is a vital doctrine that must be kept ever before each one of us. It is certain. It is certain! That Day is coming when he will come, take us to be with Him, effect the resurrection of the just and the unjust, render perfect

justice to both the oppressed and the oppressor, cast the wicked into the Lake of Fire forever their eternal death, and one final time say “Let there be Light” as the New Heavens and New Earth are once and for all established.

You are going to be there. I am going to be there. *We are going to see the wicked one final time.* Those who have departed this life in rebellion and rejection of Christ – we will see them one more time in their resurrected bodies, every secret of their heart, every careless word from their mouth – open and exposed for all the universe to see. We will see them bow their knee to Christ, and we will hear them confess that He is Lord. They will confess with their lips that He is just and that their sentence is righteous. And then they will be gone forever.

You are going to be there. That Day is marching toward us when Christ comes with His mighty angels in flaming fire (those are the words of Scripture, not mine) to gather His people to Himself and to send the wicked into outer darkness. Which of

these two companies do you belong to?

The doctrine of the Day of the Lord should direct our every thought and action. It is the Christian's great hope. You see it applied here in the following quote from C.H. Spurgeon as he told his congregation of the Day when Christ would come and render judgment to the oppressive rich classes of England who so sorely used the poor:

“Spurgeon recognized the poverty of the lower classes of London and sought to put it into theological context in his preaching. As a matter of covenant faithfulness Spurgeon believed that “God has never suffered his people to starve.” The meeting of temporal needs as promised under the old covenant “is as true under the new covenant as under the old.” The one that feeds insects as well as the prowling lion will not permit his “home-borne ones, those who are nearest his heart, to perish for lack of nutriment.” As he surveyed the congregation he recognized that some “have been brought so low by poverty and affliction that you are qualified to speak.” They had experienced “an empty cupboard with an empty stomach” and wondered where their supplies would come from. He knew that others compounded that difficulty with the reality that they were

“houseless and homeless.”²¹ In ways almost miraculous, through a series of providences, God has provided for these so that they can say that his covenant never fails. God's faithfulness never diminished, however, the necessity for observation of need and compassionate action on the part of his people. London was a particularly ripe place for the exercise of such graces. Systems that contributed to this grinding poverty must be challenged. Spurgeon made social comment on both the pollution and the repression of London and England generally through unconscionable industry. In 1856 Spurgeon spoke to the weavers of Spitalfields and used their plight to make a point in a sermon entitled “Songs in the Night.” He looked to a time when “the sweet Sun of righteousness will arise with healing beneath his wings, that the oppressed shall be righted, that despoticisms shall be cut down, that liberty shall be established, that peace shall be made lasting, and that the glorious liberty of the gospel of God shall be extended throughout the known world.” One of the wrongs that would be righted and the oppressed that would be set free would be that group of weavers who “are generally ground down within an inch of their lives.” Their masters, Spurgeon wryly surmised, must intend that their bread should be very sweet on the supposition that “the nearer the

ground the sweeter the grass,” because none had to get their sustenance nearer the ground than those poor weavers. Spurgeon referred to a study from the House of Commons that reported the average wages of this group was seven to eight shillings a week. Their work, of course, was on “expensive articles, which my friends the ladies are wearing now, and which they buy as cheaply as possible.” But surely, Spurgeon proposed, “they do not know that they are made with the blood and bones and marrow of the Spitalfields weavers, who, many of them, work for less than man ought to have to subsist upon.”

With the massive gathering at the Fast Day sermon in 1857, Spurgeon refused to miss the opportunity to talk about the “class sins” of England, particular the “sins of the rich.” Workers’ wages fall far below their value to their masters and cannot provide a living for the families dependent on them. The factory or the business is like a cauldron and every type of worker may be thrown in. “Put them in: heap the fire, boil the cauldron; stir them up; never mind their cries. The hire of the labourers kept back may go up to heaven: it does not matter, the millions of gold are safe . The law of demand and supply is with us, and who is he that would interfere.” Would anyone step forward to dare prevent the grinding of the faces of the poor? The

seamstress, the tailor, and the artisan all are owned by their lords and masters, are they not? But they shall get the ear of God and his rod shall certainly fall.”

Nettles, Tom (2013-08-22). Living by Revealed Truth (Kindle Locations 3286-3292). Christian Focus Publications. Kindle Edition.

Before we consider some further aspects of the Day of the Lord Jesus, let’s remind ourselves of the theme that Paul really opens 2 Corinthians with and which the Corinthians (like us) desperately needed to learn:

The kingdom of God is radically different than this world’s mindset. What is great and mighty in this world is nothing in God’s measure. The world’s wisdom is foolishness in God’s reckoning, and His wisdom is foolishness to the world. In God’s kingdom, he who is least is the greatest, he who dies now is the one who will live, riches in this world are poverty before God. He who is last will be first, and he who serves and gives of himself will be the one who is rewarded on that Day.

The Corinthians foolishly missed all of this and were duped into following after the false apostles and a false gospel, while reject the real Apostle – Paul. So he writes to set them back in

the way of the truth, opening with an accounting of his own suffering and weakness here in chapter 1. Paul's letters are almost all characterized with this theme of power in weakness, greatness in humility. Here is an example from 1 Thessalonians. Notice also the recurring theme of Paul's honest, straightforwardness, and truth in his ministry which we have heard in speak of here in 2 Cor 1 in those terms of "yes" and "no." There must be no duplicity, equivocation, deceptive speech and self-seeking flattery in the Christian ministry:

1Th 2:1-8 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. (2) But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. (3) For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, (4) but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. (5) For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness. (6) Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made

demands as apostles of Christ. (7) But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. (8) So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

See it? Don't miss it. *A genuine minister and servant of Jesus Christ is one who suffers and is shamefully treated, who continues to speak God's truth boldly anyway, and who does not use deceptive devices and corruptions of God's Word to gain self-glory.*

We miss the obvious. Do you have a solid hold on this? Let me say it again: any true minister of Christ, any genuine Christian, any real church IS going to:

1. Cause trouble and division like the riot at Ephesus;
2. Be persecuted and hated, not popular;
3. Speak the truth of God plainly without holding back, whether men like it or not.

Now let me ask you this sobering question: *is that the kind of minister and ministry and church that most professing Christians are seeking today when, for example, they are looking for a pastor or planning to*

plant a new church? The answer is obvious: no! Why? The only reason can be that they intentionally reject the plain truth of God's Word.

If you are going to stand for Christ and follow Him faithfully until that Day, then you must get hold of these truths. Otherwise when the persecution and hatred and accusations start, you are going to be thrown into confusion and you will be a plump, juicy, target for the enemy to pick off. Listen to it:

1Pe 4:12-18 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. (13) But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (14) If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. (16) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (17) For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (18) And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what

will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

1Jn 3:12-13 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. (13) Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

See it? Don't be *surprised*. That means there is a danger that when this persecution and hatred come, we will be *surprised*. *Taken off guard*. *Confused*. The enemy will gladly tell us that the fault for all this trouble lies with US! Christ caused lots of trouble! Was it His fault? Was He wrong? What would Jesus' ministry today look like? What DOES it look like? What SHOULD it look like? Let me plainly say that it will look much, much different than what most professing Christians want it to look like.

The Day of the Lord Jesus

Paul has mentioned then this doctrine of the Day of the Lord Jesus in connection with his urging of the Corinthians to open themselves up to him and the gospel. Christ's people should be proud of one another now, united together joyfully, of one mind and spirit, and evidence that unity on the Day when Christ comes. We must

have confidence in one another. We must trust one another and not permit wicked counterfeits to harm that trust. We must know that we are real. Not perfect, but genuine, honest followers of Christ joined to Him and to one another by the Holy Spirit. There is no place in Christ's church for the practiced, habitual, deceiving hypocrite playing at a religious façade for personal gain.

Let's consider then the events of the Day of the Lord which the Lord Jesus Christ and all the Prophets and Apostles so often set before us in Scripture.

The Second Coming of Christ

“While the Scriptures represent great events in the history of the individual Christian, like death, and great events in the history of the church, like the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem as comings of Christ for deliverance or judgment, they also declare that these partial and typical comings shall be concluded by a final, triumphant return of Christ, to punish the wicked and to complete the salvation of His people.”
[Systematic Theology, A.H. Strong]

Mat 24:30-33 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the

Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (31) And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (32) "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. (33) So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

In the history of this creation, Christ has come to deliver His people and to judge the wicked, but never yet in final and complete measure in which “every eye shall see Him” (Rev 1:7). He came, for example, in the judgment of the Flood in Noah's day and Peter reminds us that the flood was a type, a picture of the Great Flood of Christ's Day that is to come that will usher in the end of this present and last age of this world. It will be the Day of finality – of final judgment for the wicked, and of finality of salvation for the righteous.

A.H. Strong, as do most conservative Systematic Theology texts, summarizes some fundamental truths of the Day of the Lord, the second coming of Christ.

1. The nature of this coming. It is outward and visible, not merely some inward, spiritual, unseen event. In other words, it is real. The visible return of Christ is seen in Scriptures such as:

Act 1:9-11 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (10) And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, (11) and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Rom 8:20-23 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. (23) And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

We consider the nature of His FIRST coming – born into this real world as a real baby, living as a real Man. This same One who ascended into heaven is going to come forth from heaven:

1Th 4:14-18 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.

What was the nature of Christ's resurrection? REAL. He could be touched. He bore marks on His body. He was seen and heard and He ate food. He was recognized. It is this very same kind of resurrection He promises us, and He, the firstfruits of this resurrection will come to raise us up in the same way.

2. The Time of His Coming

We could of course spend much time on this question, because it relates to all of the different theories on the timing of Christ's return to the millennium, the nature of the millennium, the great tribulation, Christ's dealings with the Jews, and many other such topics. Christ made it plain that no one knows the time of His great Day, but that we must all live in readiness for it. He IS coming:

3. The Resurrection

On that Day, when Christ comes again visibly for all the world to see, He is going to resurrect every human being who ever lived – the righteous first, and then the wicked (See Revelation 20:5-6).

Here is the Apostle Paul's description of the first resurrection (that of believers):

1Co 15:49-58 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (50) I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51) Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling

of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (53) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (54) When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (55) "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

And again, listen to Paul in 1 Thes 4 once more and you see the order – believers are raised first, before the wicked:

1Th 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have

fallen asleep. (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Listen to Strong once more as he summarizes it for us:

“While the Scriptures describe the impartation of new life to the soul in regeneration as a spiritual resurrection (ie, born again), they also declare that, at the second coming of Christ, there shall be a resurrection of the body, and a reunion of the body to the world from which, during the intermediate state, it has been separated. Both the just and the unjust shall have part in the resurrection. [Understand this then: EVERYONE will exist forever *really, bodily, actually!*]. To the just, it shall be a resurrection unto life; and the body shall be a body like Christ’s – a body fitted for the uses of the

sanctified spirit. To the unjust, it shall be a resurrection unto condemnation; and analogy would seem to indicate that, here also, the outward form will fitly represent the state of the soul – being corrupt and deformed as is the soul which inhabits it. [ie, their body will reflect the real appearance of the person]. Those who are alive at the time of Christ’s coming shall receive spiritual bodies without passing through death.”

Why bodies? Because we are going to live in a New Creation that is just as real as the first one! Because this has always been, and remains, God’s plan – to dwell among His people in a perfect, sinless creation. Human beings were created in perfection. What was that perfection? Body and spirit. Scripture knows NOTHING of a “naked” (disembodied) spirit as somehow the most perfect mode of existence for God’s creatures:

2Co 5:1-5 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.

I labor this point because this is a great stumbling block to so many Christians. Heaven is not a realm of “spirit.” That is not our destination. The New Earth is!

Notice then that the Day of the Lord with the resurrection of the righteous, once again, is a joyous event for Christ’s people. It is our hope! It is the full completion of our salvation. It is our life!

And once more, in regard to the wicked on that Day, not one will escape the righteous judgment of God.

While the Scriptures represent all punishment of individual transgressors and all manifestations of God’s vindictory justice in the history of nations as acts or processes of judgment, they also tell us that these temporal judgments are only partial and imperfect, and that they are therefore to be concluded with a final and complete vindication of God’s righteousness. This will be accomplished by making known to the universe the characters of all men, and by awarding to them corresponding destinies...The crime that is hidden

and triumphant here, and the goodness that is here in this life maligned and oppressed, must be brought to light and fitly recompensed.

The object (goal) of the final judgment is not the ascertainment, but the manifestation of character and the assignment of outward condition corresponding to it. The true condition of all men is already fully known by God. The Last Day will only be ‘the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.’

In that Day, the law of memory will serve its final purpose. ‘Son, remember!’ (Luke 16:25). Memory will embrace all the events of one’s past life, will embrace all of them at one moment, and will embrace them continually. Memory is a process of self-registry. As every business house keeps a copy of all letters sent or orders issued, so every man retains in memory the record of his sins. God’s chemistry is able to revive the ink that was thought to have been erased....Like a plague the memory will break out, and with a fever’s strength, the conscience will prey upon it. Perhaps the Judge will sit silent as the judgment of self-revelation and self-condemnation is effected.

In that Day, a man’s real character will be revealed. Upon the walls of our most private apartments, where we

think the eye of intrusion is altogether shut out, and our retirement can never be profaned, there exist the vestiges of all of our acts. There, in that Day, in their changing yet unerring characters, stand forever recorded vows unfulfilled, promises unkept, all of which made a permanent blight upon a man's character.

Single acts and words will be brought forth into judgment only as indications of the moral condition of the soul. God will awaken the consciences of the lost, and lead them to pass judgment upon themselves. Each lost soul can say as Byron's Manfred said to the fiend that tortured his closing hour, 'I have not been your dupe, nor am I your prey, but I was my own destroyer.'" [Summarized from A.H. Strong, Systematic Theology]

The grounds of this final judgment are two 1) The Law of God, or 2) The grace of God in Christ Jesus. The Law as always perfectly effects its purpose of condemnation of the wicked. Grace in Jesus Christ is our only and certain hope in that Day. For all who know Jesus Christ as their perfect Savior and righteousness, the great and terrible Day of the Lord is going to be the most wonderful Day in all history. It is our hope. It is what we long for. It is the culmination of our salvation, and it is the beginning of our eternal life.

Act 17:30-31 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, (31) because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

The Judge, as it turns out, is Someone we know! In fact, He is our Friend. If you are in Christ, that Day will go well with you. And as long as we are in this life, we should do our best to please Him in all we do so that He might be glorified in us even more, on that Day.