

# 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)

### *“God's Guarantee to Us”*

July 13, 2014

**Sermon Text:** 2 Cor 1:18-22

**Scripture Reading:** 1 John 3

#### **Introduction-**

2 Corinthians 1:18-24 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. (19) For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. (20) For all the promises of God

find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. (21) And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, (22) and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (23) But I call God to witness against me--it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. (24) Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

#### **Review**

You will remember that these Corinthians, in their own arrogance and through the influence of people who disliked the Apostle Paul, were withholding themselves from him and his gospel. These critics were working quite hard to grasp at any detail they could pervert to turn the Corinthian believers against Paul. One of those criticisms was based upon the fact that Paul had originally planned to visit Corinth at a certain time, but then decided to change his plans. He did it

for the Corinthians own good – he wanted them to repent of some things he had admonished them for earlier before he came so that he would not have to experience another “painful visit” (see 2:1ff).

In rebutting these charges, Paul affirms that the nature of his ministry for Christ is one of truth. His “yes” means yes, and his “no” means no. He says that this MUST be the case because Jesus Christ is YES. That is to say,

How do we KNOW we are prepared to meet the Lord on that Day? That is to say, how can we be assured that we are indeed in Christ, justified before God – *now*, so that when we die we will be present with the Lord, and that when our bodies are resurrected it will be in the first resurrection:

Revelation 20:5-6 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

We must not for a moment think that the Roman error of “praying for the dead” is true. It is entirely false. The

Bible knows nothing of a “second chance” after death.

Now, let me appeal to your reason for a moment. Our reasoning is not to be our ultimate authority of course, but we are nevertheless rational creatures with reasonable minds. So let me submit this question to your reason:

*Does it not seem reasonable that God, having decreed to save us in eternity past, having sent His Son to the Cross for that redemption, would also have included in this salvation a means whereby we might KNOW that He has saved us?*

I hope that your answer to that question is “yes!” And the Bible in fact confirms this:

1 John 2:3-5 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (4) Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, (5) but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

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 2:20-21 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. (21) I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

1 John 2:27-29 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie--just as it has taught you, abide in him. (28) And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. (29) If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

1 John 3:2-10 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (3) And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (4) Everyone

who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. (5) You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. (6) No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. (7) Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. (8) Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (9) No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. (10) By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

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.

1 John 5:12-13 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

(13) I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

Ok? John answers our question plainly and repeatedly. The Christian *can* know he or she IS a Christian. And what John and the Apostle Paul and really the whole New Testament (and the Old Testament) is that *the Holy Spirit given us by God, dwelling in us, is central in this entire matter of how we can know we are truly in Christ.* This is what we want to spend the rest of our time this morning considering.

### Assurance and the Spirit

Notice what Paul says here in 2 Cor 1:18ff once more:

2 Corinthians 1:18-24 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. (19) For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. (20) For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. (21) And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, (22) and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a

guarantee. (23) But I call God to witness against me--it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. (24) Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

When Paul says "God has anointed us" he is referring to the Holy Spirit having been given to us. You see this in 1 John-

1 John 2:20 But you have been **anointed** by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

1 John 2:27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie--just as it has taught you, abide in him.

1 John 3:21-24 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; (22) and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (23) And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. (24) Whoever keeps his commandments abides in

God, and God in him. **And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.**

1 John 4:13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, **because he has given us of his Spirit.**



In the Old Testament, when God chose a person to serve Him in a special way – such as being King – the man was *anointed* and that was a symbol of God giving him and equipping him with the Spirit of God. You can study that whole subject in depth in the Bible. But this is why the New Testament speaks of the Spirit in the Christian as the *anointing*. No oil here. The real thing. (EVERY Christian, by the way, is *anointed*. It is not correct to speak of a particular Christian as being *anointed* as if they possess the Spirit in some manner other Christians do not (of course there is a difference and variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. See 1 Cor 12).

We KNOW that Christ is in us by *the Spirit whom He has given us*. And you see this in the New Testament – that Christians can and should KNOW that the Spirit has been given to them. You see that assumption right here in 2 Cor 1 –

2 Corinthians 1:22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a **guarantee**.

Now let's think through this. If God has given His Spirit to us *as a guarantee*, then it is necessarily true that the Christian CAN know the Spirit has been given to him! Otherwise, what sense of guarantee would there be? None. We will talk in a moment about *what* the Spirit is the guarantee OF, but for now just consider this one point –

*A guarantee is given to guarantee. To give the recipient a confidence that some PROMISE will definitely be carried out. If the recipient is not aware he has received that guarantee, the very purpose of the guarantee would not be fulfilled – assurance.*



Therefore, we know that we can KNOW that the Holy Spirit is in us. But do you know *how* we know it? We will deal with that question in a moment, but first let's be sure we know *what it is that is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit being given us*. Here it is –

Ephesians 1:13-14 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

See it? The Holy Spirit is given to us as the guarantee of our *inheritance until we acquire possession of it*. So our inheritance is what? It is all that God has promised us in Christ:

- The resurrection
- The New Heavens and New Earth
- Eternal Life
- Forgiveness of sins
- Being in His presence face to face

And more.

We have it in part now, but the consummation of the full inheritance has not yet happened. The Holy Spirit

in us guarantees us that the inheritance is ours and that nothing can keep us from coming into it. Remember back in Galatians? –

Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

### The Seal of the Spirit

You also notice that Paul uses the work “sealed” and “seal.” God has sealed us. God has put His seal upon us. That seal of ownership is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit seals us, marks us, as God's own, as a member of the true Israel (as the seal of circumcision marked the Jew as a member of the nation Israel in the OT).



You see then that Paul *assumes* that the Christians he wrote to *knew* that God had given them the Spirit. For example:

Galatians 3:1-2 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?



It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. (2) Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

And I don't think that we can chalk this knowledge up to the fact that they had spoken in tongues and had a kind of fire on them when the Spirit came. If THOSE are the means by which a Christian knows the Spirit has been given, then either no one today really knows, OR we have all been off base and should be seeking to speak in tongues and perform miracles and so on. Which, of course, some Christians do. But we do not accept those things as being the fundamental way the Christian can know the Spirit has been given to them by God.

But you see, Paul assumed that these Galatians knew full well they had received the Spirit. They knew. How did they know?

### **How Can We Know?**

Let me cite a number of Scriptures that answer this question.

**First**, one of the most important OT passages concerning the Holy Spirit being given to the people of God in the New Covenant is this:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. (33) But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

What do we see here? The Holy Spirit "writes" God's Law on our hearts. That is to say, He regenerates our hearts. We are born again. Now look carefully – *what is the result of this law on the heart action?* EVERY Christian KNOWS the Lord. I think this is very closely connected with what Paul says in Galatians-

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

You see the very same thing over in Romans -

Romans 5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Romans 8:1-2 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.

This is to say that the Holy Spirit effects a radical change in our relationship with God. A change that we feel. Before, we were under His condemnation, relating to Him through the Law which only could condemn. We met God at Mt. Sinai and it rumbled and threatened us. But when the Holy Spirit is given us and He regenerates us, our relationship with

God changes to one of a son and a loving Father. So that you have this new sense that God loves you. Not because of the old lie that so many people tell themselves no matter how wicked they are, but a REAL sense of knowing God as Father and knowing His love for us. ONLY the presence of the Spirit can effect that.

**Second**, this new birth, this writing of the law of God upon our hearts, along with the residency of the Spirit in us, result in EVERY Christian knowing God's Law and loving it. That is really what this "knowing" in Jeremiah is all about. To know God is to love Him. To know His Law is to love it. This is why John, in his first Epistle says over and over again (as we have already read) that a Christian obeys God's commandments. Perfectly? No. But out of a heart that loves God, loves His Word, and desires to obey.

So, you see this in action in Romans 8-

Romans 8:4-14 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.

Galatians 5:16-18 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (17) For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Romans 8:12-14 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.

You see it here then. The Spirit effects a total change in our attitude to God. No longer hostile. Now our life is characterized by this “walking according to the Spirit.” A habitual, regular, characteristic life (not perfect) of being led by the Holy Spirit and us yielding to that leading. Notice that verse 11 reminds us that the presence of the Spirit in us is a guarantee that God is going to raise our bodies from the grave.

**Third**, the presence of the Spirit in us is revealed by the battle described in Galatians 5 and Romans 8-

Being a Christian does not mean you do not battle temptation. In fact, when the Spirit renews us and moves in, the battle begins! Do you see within yourself this conflict in which sin rises up and demands its desires and at that very moment another power jumps up with an entirely different desire, so that we say NO! to sin and put to death that action of our flesh? That battle simply does not exist in an unregenerate person.

**Fourth**, you have the Spirit *working faith* in us.

Romans 8:23-25 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. (24) For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? (25) But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

We have been considering the Day of the Lord Jesus. Well, where the Spirit is there is this new eagerness to see Him come, and a HOPE based upon FAITH that He is coming. A patient waiting for Christ that colors our entire mentality and life. The eyes of faith, you see.

And there is another aspect to this faith that the Holy Spirit works in us – *prayer*. You remember? Prayer is the language of faith-

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (27) And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

This is why J.C. Ryle said “show me a man who does not pray and I will show you a man who is not a Christian.” Very true. The Holy Spirit urges us on to prayer.

**Fifth**, the Spirit in us makes God’s wisdom wise in our sight, when it used to be foolishness to us. Here is Paul stating this in 1 Corinthians-

1 Corinthians 2:9-14 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"-- (10) these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (11) For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. (13) And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (14) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them

because they are spiritually discerned.

New Heavens and New Earth where Christ will dwell with us face to face.

What is your response to God's Word? What do you think when you read it, when you hear it preached and taught? Has there been a radical change in your worldview? That is to say, do you love the world's wisdom and think that the philosophies of the man on the street are quite reasonable? Or have you come to see the foolishness of it all, and are you drawn more and more to God's wisdom as He has revealed it to us in His Word?

### **Conclusion**

So there it is. There is even more in Scripture, I am sure, to show us how we can know that the Spirit has been given to us and that therefore we are sealed and marked as God's own with a certain inheritance. But any one of these evidences is enough to assure us that the Spirit is in us and we are in Christ.

Do not be careless about considering these things. If the Spirit of Christ is not in you, you are not an heir and if you depart this life in that condition you will perish in hell. Test yourselves. Examine yourselves. But if you pass the test, then be assured – one day you WILL enter into Christ's presence and we WILL see you in the