

Christ Reformation Church

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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 Perilous Danger of Hypocrisy – the Path of the Reprobate”

October 26, 2014

Sermon Text: Psalm 115

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 44:6-20

Introduction-

Hebrews 12:14-17 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (15) See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs

up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; (16) that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. (17) For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

This morning I want to speak to you about a very sobering topic which everyone who professes Christ must be warned about. Let's state the thesis this way:

“If a person persists in walking the path of hypocrisy long enough, if a person who professes Christ is in fact professing a lie, following a “Christ” of his or her own imagination, that person (like Esau) will end as a reprobate, their eternal destiny sealed, and repentance no longer possible for them.”

Next week I plan to take you back into 2 Cor 5 and show you how those Corinthians were warned of these things by Paul. They were fashioning a

Christ of their own making as they were being deceived by the agents of Satan who had come among them:

2 Corinthians 5:16 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.

How many professing Christians today actually regard Christ “according to the flesh”? As a mere man, you see. As someone like themselves. As someone who is, an idol created by themselves. How many apply human standards of “greatness” to Christ and though they honor Him with their lips, in fact their hearts are far from Him because they do not want a Savior who is meek, lowly, suffering, dying to self, and who calls them to the very same path?

“If we embrace the world’s concepts of greatness, of power, of glory, then we will necessarily reject the Jesus of the Bible. We may talk about Him, use His name, etc., but in fact we will fashion a Jesus who is much easier to follow.”

And all of this is directly related to the dangerous error Paul warns the Corinthians about – *judging by outward appearance.*

That is what we will consider next time. But this morning I want to speak to you and warn you about the perilous path of the hypocrite.

Psalms 115:1-8 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness! (2) Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" (3) Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. (4) Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. (5) They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. (6) They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. (7) They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. **(8) Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.**

This past weekend as you know I was in Indianapolis for a conference on domestic violence in the church. When we deal with this subject, we necessarily deal with *hypocrites*. With people who wear a façade and masquerade as Christians when in fact they are children of the devil. They honor Christ with their lips, with their outward actions, with their

mannerisms and glances. But their heart is far, far from Him.

The abuser is defined as:

A person who has a profound sense of entitlement to the possession of power and control over others and who feels fully justified in using whatever tactics are necessary to achieve and maintain that power and control.

In essence, the abuser is a person who declares – “I will be like the Most High.” He or she sees himself as deity, as God.

And these kinds of people wear disguises. They creep in among us. They are wolves in wool. They are enemies and they are in local churches often in positions of authority, successfully deceiving others into believing that they are eminent saints. All the while they spew their evil upon their spouse and children behind the scenes. They bully others in the workplace.

Now, as I said, when we deal with the “Christian” abuser (who is no Christian at all), we are necessarily dealing with this matter of hypocrisy. The subject is brought to our minds and we must consider it.

But the abuser is not the only kind of person who travels the path of

hypocrisy. In some ways, for a time, all of us have been guilty of wearing a pious mask, behind which we hide our sin. But Christ will never permit His true people to keep wearing that mask. He effects repentance in us and strips the mask away, showing us our sin, and impelling us to turn from it.

The hypocrites I want us to focus on this morning however are not possessed of and led by the Spirit of Christ. They are not, therefore, Christians. Furthermore, if they continue to travel the highway of hypocrisy far enough and long enough, they will come to a sign that we might say reads –

And their destination? Hell. Some have already reached that no-return point, as Esau did.

I trust no one here is traveling such a path, but I am bound as your pastor to warn you against it, and to equip you to recognize it and warn others who may be headed down Broadway approaching the “no-return” point.

Psalm 115 – Worship Them, Become Them

Listen once more to this sobering truth about those who create a false god, the very thing the “Christian” hypocrite does -

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Here the Psalmist is pleading with God to act for His glory against His enemies. He calls upon his own people to place their entire trust in the Lord –

“Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases.”

In contrast, consider the false gods of their enemies:

- Their very substance is of this creation – silver and gold. Created materials are their essence.

- They are fashioned by man’s own hands. The “creator” is created by the creature! Idols are, therefore, inferior to man!
- Idol gods cannot communicate with us
- Idol gods cannot see us or our condition
- Idol gods lack the capacity to smell the stench of evil or the aroma of righteousness, as can the living and true God
- They cannot act because they have no ability to act. No hands, no feet. *False gods must be served and cared for by man.*
- They are incapable of emotion or of sympathy or anger.

Now, here is the punchline – *Those who make them become like them. Those who trust in them, become like them. This is an inviolable principle – if you have created or are worshipping a false “Christ,” then you are in process of becoming like that false god. You are becoming blind to the glory of Christ and deaf to His Word. When the gospel, when the Word of God is proclaimed to the hypocrite, it eventually becomes the same as preaching to a man-made, dead statue. Once that happens, there is no U-turn of repentance possible.*

Listen to it in Isaiah -

Isaiah 6 – The Gospel as Judgment to the Reprobate

Isaiah 6:1-10 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. (2) Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (3) And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (4) And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. (5) And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (6) Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. (7) And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." (8) And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." (9) And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not

perceive.' (10) Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

What would it be to come to a point at which the good news of the gospel becomes a ministry of condemnation to you? Here is Isaiah – don't miss it – sent out to preach, and here is the message he is commissioned with:

"Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive."

His mission is to preach this message and thereby by means of the Spirit of God *harden* the hearts of the people, render them deaf and blind so that they cannot understand, cannot hear, cannot repent and be saved.

Why? Because they had persisted in creating and worshipping idols –

Isaiah 29:9-16 Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink! (10) **For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your**

heads (the seers). (11) And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." (12) And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read." (13) And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, (14) therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden." (15) Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?" (16) You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

This is the hypocrite you see. This is the person who has passed the "no return" point on the road of hypocrisy. What has he done? He has "drawn near" to the Lord with his *mouth*, but in fact his heart clings to a false god of his own making. Thus the Word of the Lord becomes gibberish to him and a message of condemnation that effects even more hardening of his heart. All because in his wickedness, such a person regard the Potter as the clay. The thing made (the creature) insisting that it is the Creator, and not God.

Now remember, *these people to whom the Lord is sending Isaiah with this ministry of condemnation, hardening, and blinding, are the covenant people of God! They are "religious" people who make the claim to be the Lord's chosen, yet they reject Him and embrace false gods. Therefore this sin of hypocrisy is effected within the visible church!* This path is one which, in order to travel, requires an outward display of "Christian" religion. There are, therefore, people in local Christian churches who are growing harder and harder to the gospel every time they hear it proclaimed. Every time they whip off some Scripture to impress someone. While the abuser is not the only class of person who fits this mold, he certainly is a prime example.

Are you playing a game and calling it Christianity? Are you putting on a show but in fact your heart affections are not for Christ at all, but for this world and for yourself? Then you are on a perilous path which eventually will take you to that NO U-TURN point. And all that will happen to you here each week, or every time you pick up your Bible for some self-serving purpose, is that God's powerful Word will harden you even more against Christ, make you more deaf to His Word and more blind to His truth.

Remember what Paul said earlier in 2 Corinthians about the gospel –

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and **among those who are perishing, (16) to one a fragrance from death to death,** to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

Hebrews 6:4-6

Listen now to what I believe is this very same theme described by the Apostle to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 6:4-8 For **it is impossible,** in the case of those who have once been enlightened,

who have tasted the heavenly gift,
and have shared in the Holy Spirit,

(5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,

(6) and then have fallen away, **to restore them again to repentance,** since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

(7) For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. (8) **But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.**

What do we do in the church, in this church – with people who evidence this very kind of evil? The kind of person who oppresses others and has done so for many, many years without repentance and who at the same time wears this façade of godliness? What do we do with a person who has been in our midst in the church, who has heard the regular preaching and teaching of God's Word in truth, who has partaken of the Lord's Table and

has made a profession of Christ in baptism, who knows the gospel is true, that Christ is the Son of God and died on the cross for our redemption – yet all he produces is a crop of thorns and thistles and misery to others?

While we do not know with certainty when a person is reprobate – ie, if they have actually reached that no U-turn point on the road of hypocrisy – we can and in fact must treat them as such. They are not to be among us. There is nothing more to be done for them. The Holy Spirit has actually done a work in them to the point of showing them the glory of Christ, yet they trample Him.

Notice once again that this sin described here in Hebrews *can only be committed by someone in the visible church who claims to be a Christian!* Therefore it behooves us to be aware of this rather common evil, to not be duped by it, and to put it out from among us. AND to be certain that WE are not traveling that same path.

1 John 5 – Someone to not Pray for

Here is still another Scripture that I conclude is addressing the very same evil –

1 John 5:16-18 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life--to those who

commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. (17) All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. (18) We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

This has a background in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 7:8-16 "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. (9) Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, (10) and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'--only to go on doing all these abominations? (11) Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD. (12) Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. (13) And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not

answer, (14) therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. (15) And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim. (16) "As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you.

Jeremiah 11:11-15 Therefore, thus says the LORD, Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them. (12) Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they make offerings, but they cannot save them in the time of their trouble. (13) For your gods have become as many as your cities, O Judah, and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to make offerings to Baal. (14) "Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. (15) What right has my beloved in my house, when she has done many vile deeds? Can

even sacrificial flesh avert your doom? Can you then exult?

Jeremiah 14:10-12 Thus says the LORD concerning this people: "They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins." (11) The LORD said to me: "Do not pray for the welfare of this people. (12) Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence."

See it? Here are people who have tasted of the heavenly gift. People who claim that they belong to the Lord. People who praise Him with their lips. But they do not obey Him. They do not love Him. And behind the scenes they worship idols and work their evil on others. Over and over the Lord had warned them and called them to repentance, but they rejected His calls. They have reached the no U-turn marker in the highway of hypocrisy. And God tells Jeremiah not to pray for them. This is the kind of person 1 John is speaking of.

Conclusion

While the Lord is longsuffering, His patience is not infinite. God does judge the wicked and there is a time when He withdraws from them and lets them go to their destruction. He removes His Spirit and they are left in their own darkness. The blackest darkness is that which awaits those who have received, and rejected, the greatest light.

Matthew 11:20-24 Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. (21) "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (22) But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. (23) And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. (24) But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

Therefore WE must not act in an ungodly manner by denying these truths. The Lord *can* save anyone, but He *does not*. We must not claim that Christ welcomes everyone into His church to be

among His sheep. He does not. There are people who are not to be among us, and they are evidenced by lips that "honor" Christ but a heart that does not love and obey Christ. Such people who have persisted over time in this hypocrisy evidence themselves to be travelers on the road to hell. They are the hidden reefs who cause others to stumble, and they must not be allowed to continue in their façade.

May the Lord reveal each one of us to ourselves as to who we really are and protect His church from evil.