

**RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND - Knowing How the Life of God Gets Inside - Part nineteen - Teaching #2186**

**Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, 6:30 p.m.**

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**IT TAKES A LOCAL CONGREGATION TO RENEW YOUR MIND**

Last week we considered two of three truths regarding the ongoing renewal of the mind. **First**, authentic worship isn't possible until there is a deep understanding of biblical truth about the mercy of God - **"I appeal to you therefore by the *mercies of God...*"**(Romans 12:1). And **second**, the call of the spirit to worship is fundamentally a **corporate** call, not an **individual** call.

Let me pick up today with a text we started considering last Sunday:

**1 Corinthians 3:9-17 - "For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.[10] According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.[16] Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."**

Take special note again of verses 16-17 - **“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.**

What we saw was many *misread* those verses because they're almost always quoted without the context of the surrounding entire chapter. People most commonly take Paul to mean that we - you and I - *individually* - are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And certainly the Bible *does* teach that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers - Romans 8:9 - **“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.”**

But that is *not* what Paul is talking about in **1 Corinthians 3:16-17**. What isn't as easily spotted in English is every time Paul says **“you”** in those two verses it is *plural*, not *singular*. In other words the **“you”** Paul is referring to is that *congregation* at Corinth, not the *individuals* in it. Paul says that the *corporate congregation* at the city of Corinth is a temple of the Holy Spirit in a way that none of the people is *individually*.

So there is a ***communal necessity*** in the renewal of the mind. It's not just ***thinking right*** (though it certainly begins with and includes that), but it's ***relating right*** and ***submitting right*** and ***forgiving right***. All of which is to say, it is the beginning of spiritual dementia to beg off the regular, sometimes unexciting, discipline of meeting with the rest of the local congregation as you prepare for heaven.

Stay with me for a bit longer. Some things should start to come together. These verses explain why, in the New Testament, to be separated from the rest of the congregation wasn't just an ***inconvenience***. It was ***accelerated destruction***.

We can now begin to see the logic of difficult verses like **1 Corinthians 5:1-5** - "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. [2] And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? **Let him who has done this be removed from among you.**[3] For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. [4] When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, [5] **you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh**, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."

There are many things we could study in this passage but there is one truth that is too important to miss. What we today would call an ***unchurched Christian***, Paul would call being ***“turned over to Satan.”*** By ***removing*** this immoral man from the local congregation they were ***turning him over to Satan***. And take note - it wasn't just this man's immorality that was turning him over to Satan. No. It was being cut off from the local church that was ***“turning him over to Satan.”*** That's the clear wording of the text.

But why? Why is this automatically so? A person could be separated from the church and still pray. He could still read his or her Bible once the Scriptures had been broadly circulated. He or she could stream worship from Hill Song or listen to the coolest podcasts. He could even confess his sin. How can it be true that separation from the church is deliverance to Satan?

Could this sinner not repent without the rest of the congregation at Corinth? He might. But I'm telling you it's not very likely. Because, as we have already seen from the teaching of many passages in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit doesn't sustain faith ***apart*** from attachment to the congregation.

Whether by choice or by force, when we separate from the community of faith, we separate ourselves from particular dimensions of the Holy Spirit's work. ***Please pay attention to this. This is the New Testament teaching on the importance of the church - this church - whatever local church you're a member of - to the sustaining of faith and eternal life.***

I wonder how much we actually see this. ***It takes a church to renew the mind!*** There is no such thing as solo Christianity. There is no such thing as ***personal salvation***, if by personal you mean apart from attachment to a local church body. ***Separate yourself from the church and you separate yourself from Christ.*** Or, as our text from **1 Peter 2** stated, if you are not part of the ***"people"*** you are still ***"without mercy."*** Those are the only two possibilities:

**1 Peter 2:9-10** - ***"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."***

Becoming **a people** and **receiving mercy** are part and parcel of the same action. This is the whole point Paul makes in **1 Corinthians 12** with his description of the individuals described as **parts of the one body or the congregation**. Body parts **don't survive** apart from the body. How well does an eye see plucked out of its socket? How about an ear cut off from the side of the head? The point we're meant to remember is **the parts are useless if taken alone**. That's because body parts were never designed to function separately - **1 Corinthians 12:21** - "**The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'**"

"But Pastor Don, God is present everywhere. Jesus even told the woman at the well that worship wouldn't be tied to Jerusalem and the Temple anymore." That's right. He did. Worship was moving into realms far beyond the Jewish nation and Jewish law and worship. But Jesus **wasn't** saying, as is so often heard today, that **everything we do is worship**.

Listen, they knew long ago, all through the Old Testament, that God was present everywhere. But why did God **say** the tabernacle and then the Temple was the place where He dwelt? It wasn't in their homes. Their homes never filled up with smoke as the glory of the Lord fell into them. No. It was the **corporate** places of worship where God revealed Himself in special ways as people **came together** to worship Him. **What point was God trying to make in all of this?**

“O, I just worship God wherever I am, Pastor Don. Sometimes I’m on the golf course or on a fishing trip and I am just overwhelmed with the greatness and goodness of God in nature.” That’s good. The heavens declare the glory of God. But by itself this isn’t **worship**. That experience is called **inspiration** and people frequently confuse it with worship.

What happens in worship is I **set aside time to respond** to God’s goodness and faithfulness to me all week long - six days of tasting of God’s great goodness - of seeing the heavens declaring the glory of God - that I just have to take the Lord’s Day to **share and proclaim all that I’ve received from Him with the rest of the saints**. That’s another dimension of worship altogether.

We just **say** everything we do is worship because we’ve learned that it is a spiritual sounding way to **not** sacrifice one day a week to **specifically** devote to the Lord. And God’s not fooled. And now we’re in a position to see **why** God has located His renewing power especially in a local congregation of ordinary believers.

We studied two points last week. Today we come to the third:

- 3) **ONLY THE BODY, WORSHIPING TOGETHER SUPPLIES AN ADEQUATE WITNESS TO THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THIS WORLD**

There is meant to be one place on earth where love reigns. There is meant to be one place on earth where we can say, “See the difference Jesus makes. He breaks down all the walls. He makes enemies friends. He fills our lives with encouragement and self-sacrifice for others. You may not believe it right now, but I’ll show it to you. Come over to Cedarview Community Church on Sunday morning at 10 and Sunday night at 5:30 and you will see what heaven will be like. Let me show you the Kingdom of God beginning right now!”

Do we lose sight of this? Have we forgotten this awesome responsibility? Do we need this reminder that we’re not just a **group** or a **club**? We’re called to **reveal** and **bear witness** to the supernatural in-breaking of God’s kingdom grace and rule.

And here’s the point. **No solitary Christian can bear that kind of witness in this world.** It only happens when you’re with the church. When the church comes together and Christ’s Spirit works in His special **corporate** way two things should happen:



- a) ***We have a window for seeing what is really in our own hearts in a way personal prayer and Bible study will never reveal.*** God will make sure that you get just enough mistreatment in the local church that you can see the responses your unredeemed heart is capable of when pushed far enough.

**1 John 4:7-11 - “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. [8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. [9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”**

Only the church gives you this self-test. Mark it down. If I don't show love, especially to my fellow Christians, it is safe to assume that I am not a Christian at all - **“Anyone who does not love** (and John is talking here about loving our brothers and sisters in Christ) **does not know God, because God is love”(8).**

- b) ***Our love for believers is to be so forgiving and merciful and total that it is the sign to unbelievers that we are children of God - John 13:35 - "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."***

Individually, I can tell the world what I **believe**. But that is not a complete Christian witness. The church is to be the one place on earth where we show the world how what we believe **works**.

Consider this. We've often heard it said that there will be no evangelism in heaven. In heaven everyone will be saved. So if you're going to reach the lost, we do it now, or we do it never. Reaching the lost is the one thing you won't be able to do in heaven.

We are told evangelism is the one thing we won't do in heaven. It's kind-of true, but not quite. Sure enough, this is the only time to reach the lost. But this is also the only time you can do something else for the Lord. This is the only place where you can forgive your enemies. You will have no enemies in heaven. You will either love them passionately or they will be eternally lost in hell. But you will have no enemies around the throne of God.

That means **this** is the only time and the only place where you can prove the mercy of God dwells in your heart by forgiving your enemies. This is the only place you can do for your enemies what God has done for you. You are saved today **only** because Father God is an enemy loving and enemy forgiving God. And you are most like Him when you do what He does. The opposite is you are most like Satan when you refuse to do this.

Could it be that people all around the church are waiting to see the love of God dwelling in our hearts? Could it be that all our religious mumbo jumbo is empty noise until the world sees the same kind of forgiving, enemy loving love that we **say** marks our heavenly Father?

Hear afresh the corporate call to a renewed mind. It's more than just saying your prayers. It's your family **identity**. Remember, there is no such thing as a Christian without the church. Attach your life to the church like your soul depends on it, because it does.