

Series Slide

In the first century, a new theology developed right alongside Christianity.

It was called Gnosticism and it followed around Christianity like a parasite.

Here's the way the Gnostics told the story of the world.

The world we live in is an inferior and evil place. In fact, anything and everything that is material is evil. If you can touch it...it's bad.

Because, Gnostics believed the world was created by an inferior and evil god.

The Gnostics believed that there is a perfect god...somewhere...way out there...in some sublime immaterial place in the great beyond. But that God didn't create the world. He created lesser gods that created lesser gods... until you got down to the god that created the earth. And by the time you got to that god- he was such a klutz- that he sort of created this mistake of a world- that really messed up evil god created earth and all that you can touch.

Gnosticism trained people to think of the body as not really a part of you. You were just a soul in a messed up body. A spirit inside of a flesh machine.

So, for the gnostics- the body was an evil unruly piece of matter that the soul had to struggle with in order to bring it under control and manage it. Goal of salvation was to escape from the material world- to leave it behind and ascend back to the spiritual realm. A popular pun at the time was that the body (soma) is a tomb (sema).

Now- don't worry- we humans can get to that sublime spiritual place- where we don't have to deal with these pesky bodies anymore. It's a "heaven" of sorts- and the way to do it is through a particular kind of Knowledge.

It's called the "divine spark". Gnostics believed that you need to look deep inside yourself...and somewhere, down in there...is something divine. something connected to that highest and purest God. That "divine Spark" is your true self.

You can also look in the world around you for this secret knowledge. Sort of like divine life-hacks. The Greek word for knowledge is "Gnosis" (that's why

we call them 'Gnostics'). If we can find the hidden spiritual knowledge within ourselves and within the world, we'll escape the evil physical world.

So, in Gnosticism...there is no "sin". There's only ignorance. Only some piece of divine information you don't yet have yet. Only some life hack you haven't discovered yet.

Slide Note: (Next header + 3 slides show up one at a time, but all end up on the same slide together)

3 Tenets of Gnosticism

1) I have a Divine Spark inside me!

- Since I have the potential to locate the divine within me...and become a god myself...
- That means I become the chief authority in my own life. The lead actor in my own personal cosmic drama... and i spend a lot of time focused on finding that spark...and then letting it out.

2) Inferior World, Inferior God

- If the world is the shoddy work of a messed up god, then he's the source of my problems, not the source of salvation. Salvation is found by going around him. He's at best the clueless dumb Dad in the 90s sitcom and at worst actively trying to hide truth from us. Additionally, this means that anything physical or material in my life isn't really important. Including- my body. Its something to be discarded or ignored. Who cares about what I do with my body...or the earth... all that material stuff is evil.

3) Flee Order and Authority

- If I believe an evil or incompetent god created the earth, then any semblance of order he set up is a barrier to us finding the secret knowledge or divine spark that will help us escape this world.
- That means physical definitions of who I am, like male or female...or authority figures, like Mother and Father...or even commitments to people, like community or family...all these are barriers to be overcome, not good limits to be submitted to.
- Submitting to external authority and structure keeps you from finding your true self. In fact, with Gnostics, its as close as you come to sin.

Title Slide- "Everybody, Flee Your Body- Gnosticism's Back: Why Matter Matters to Jesus "- 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 35-49

Today is the last message in this short series of messages where we have been thinking about the way we think. Specifically, looking at prevalent cultural ideas and comparing them to the way Jesus thinks- the mind of Christ. All in preparation for the year long trek we are going to begin next week- where we look at Sex, Gender and Spiritual Renewal. A reminder- this is not something I will preach about every week, rather- once every 4-6 weeks...because I want to give us all time to think about it, talk about it, and process it with one another.

The Bible, unlike the Gnosticism...teaches that the physical is good. That it is not some spirit inside us that is pure, but we are trapped in an evil shell- rather that all of us, including the physical was created good- and all of us is broken by our sin- yet- all of us- every finger and toe and eyelash- is Redeemable. In fact, when the Scripture talks about resurrection- its not some inner spiritual being floating up to a sublime spiritual dwelling... its bodily, physical. Jesus makes all of us brand new.

See, Gnosticism is not a dead ancient theology. This split between the physical and spritual is alive and well. In fact, its what a good number of professing Xians actually practice.

Does this sounds familiar?

"This world is so messed up! How can God be good if he has wronged me like this! I'm done with religious institutions. I'm spiritual, but not religious. I'm skeptical of all any authority that is trying to stop me from being the real authentic me by telling me about sin. Jesus really wants me to find my true self and NOT be ashamed of what I find. He wants me to let everyone know that I am beautiful and divine.

Gnosticism is alive and well. But Jesus offers something much better.

1 Cor 15:20-28; 35-49

20 But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. 22 For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

23 But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at his coming, those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when

he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he abolishes all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be abolished is death. 27 For God has put everything under his feet. Now when it says "everything" is put under him, it is obvious that he who puts everything under him is the exception. 28 When everything is subject to Christ, then the Son himself will also be subject to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

35 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have when they come? " 36 You fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And as for what you sow — you are not sowing the body that will be, but only a seed, perhaps of wheat or another grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he wants, and to each of the seeds its own body. 39 Not all flesh is the same flesh; there is one flesh for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is different from that of the earthly ones. 41 There is a splendor of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars; in fact, one star differs from another star in splendor. 42 So it is with the resurrection of the dead: Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; 43 sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; 44 sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written, the first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, then the spiritual.

47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 Like the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; like the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Transition: Most of us didn't wake up one morning and say, "You know what, I think I'll be a Gnostic." We sort of fell into some of these beliefs accidentally.

Today, from this passage in 1 Corinthians, and the storyline of the whole Bible- I want to show you a better way.

1) God unites the physical & spiritual. Evil separates it.

- One of the foundational beliefs of Gnosticism, is that there is something secret and special behind all the ordinary and evil in creation. And its my job to find it.
- So, it's the evil physical that sort of has the GOOD REAL ME imprisoned.
- Now today's version, (we'll call it Neo-Gnosticism), takes that a step further. We don't just see the physical as evil, we see the mundane, the boring, the ordinary circumstances of life as holding us back from being TRULY ME!
- Right? Ever heard of somebody say, "I've been working this 9 to 5 job just entering data. Its not important. Its not me. I need to go on a road trip, I need to travel. I need to go skydiving. I need to break out of this ordinary routine...and really get in touch with my true self. How about the novel Eat Pray Love?
- That's neo-gnosticism.
- Underneath that belief is this idea that when I really dig down to the core of who I am...I'm basically good. I'm someone everyone should appreciate.
- What the world needs...is me...the divine spark in me to be liberated and expressed to everyone around me. I need to let myself out into this evil world.
- The Bible, of course, tells a different story.
- The story of "us" from the Bible is that God created Physical matter and called it "good". A good God, created a good world. it was the sin of humanity that broke the physical world. Its not the physical material stuff of the world that's evil and corrupted us...its us that did the corrupting. When I dig deep down into the core of who I am...I don't find someone that needs to be expressed...I find someone that needs to be crucified. Killed.
- I find a murderer. I find an adulterer. I find a traitor.
- And by page 5 of the Bible, We've had a husband and a wife blame each other, a man murder his brother, a man devalue women and then kill a kid in cold blood and sing a song about it.
- See, it wasn't the frogs and the trees and the rocks that messed things up. God didn't regret making the world because he

realized how boring the sunrise got to be after doing the same thing over and over again.

- It was that humans decided they needed to EXPRESS themselves that broke the world.

Jeremiah 17:9

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote that the human heart is deceitful...and sick. The Hebrew idea of "heart" is referring to the desire...the will of humanity. In other words, we don't have some pure, divine spark inside of us that is corrupted by the physical- rather, we have a broken and sick spirit that wrecks what we do with our bodies.

Matthew 15:10-11

As the religious leaders of Jesus' day concentrated on making sure that didn't eat anything ceremonially impure that would defile their clean inner spirit...Jesus said that had it exactly backwards. Its your corrupt spirit that breaks the physical. Its what comes out of you, not what you put in that defiles.

1 Tim 4:3-5

Or look what Paul writes to Timothy.

He calls it "demonic teaching" to forbid marriage and demand absitence from foods on the basis that they contain physical pleasure that will corrupt the good spiritual. Rather, he points to the goodness of Creation because it was all created by a Good God. If you remember our teaching through Ecclesiastes- this was a major point made by that philospher- "Enjoy creation and give thanks to God for it."

John 1:1-2

Of course, don't forget the incarnation. John writes that Jesus is the Word. Who was with God the Father in the beginning. And creation came into being through him.

John 1:14

Then, surprisingly to all those Gnostics in the 1st century- He put on flesh. The GOOD and Perfect creator dwelled in his creation. And that didn't make him evil or bad. In fact- in his human form- he was full of grace and truth. Still very much God.

Back to 1)

So lets put this altogether now.

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At our core, we aren't divine beauty that needs to be expressed into evil physical matter.

- No, we are a sinful people who broke God's good world, and our only hope is if God EXPRESSES his love and goodness to CHANGE US. And then, after he's changed us so we can't mess up his good creation anymore...he can put the physical world back together again.

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- Paul puts this together nicely for us in 3 verses in...

Romans 8:19-21

- **For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to futility — not willingly, but because of him who subjected it — in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children.**

- He says its not the humans who need to find the divine spark deep within themselves who are tapping their feet waiting for the physical creation to get better..
- ...no, it's the physical creation that's waiting for God to change us.
- That's waiting for the ugly murderous, adulterous, children of God to be changed...then FINALLY, God can make all creation whole again.

- And, that's where 1 Cor 15 comes in.

1 Cor 15:21-22

- Paul looks back at the first pages of the Bible and says, "You know how Adam messed the whole thing up? And it broke everything. You know how Adam looked deep inside himself, expressed his "inner person" and now all of us are evil and sinful...and death came to everything?"
- Well, now, that Jesus has been crucified and resurrected...just like we all died with Adam's choice to express himself...
- Now we can be made alive....healed...changed...because God in Christ has expressed himself into creation.

· **V 35**

- Then Paul says, "I bet you want to know what it looks like...when God makes us fully and finally alive?" I bet you want to see what the redemption of the children of God looks like?
- And he gives this remarkable PHYSICAL picture.

· **V 37-38**

- He compares our resurrection to a seed.
- In other words he says, "The body you have now, the one broken by the sin of Adam and your own sin...its going to die."
- But, for those who are hidden in Christ...its just a seed.
- And it will go into the ground...and spring forth something totally and completely different...yet...still the same.
- Let me explain.
- There's a big difference between a mighty oak tree, and the seed that grows into a mighty oak tree, right?
- One is small and seemingly insignificant. The other is large, beautiful and can support an ecosystem of bugs and birds and humans hanging in hammocks.
- So, is that oak tree, still that seed that was planted 100 years ago?
- In one sense, yes. Everything that Oak Tree is came out of that seed.
- In another sense, no. That seed is totally different.
- Its mysterious isn't it?
- But, for that seed to grow into the mighty oak, it has to be affected from the outside, right?
- Without the soil, without Rain and Sun from the heavens...it doesn't sprout. It doesn't grow. What that seed is by itself...is not enough.

· **V 42-43**

- So Paul says because of sin, and the way our sin broke everything, we were sown in corruption, but our Oak Tree will be incorrupt. Our Oak Tree will be different than our seed because it will be glorious, not dishonorable, it will be powerful, instead of weak.

- The idea, is that God is going to resurrect our personal bodies. And we will be physically raised. Like, the body I have now...will be the body I have when Jesus comes back and raises me from the dead...but it will also be completely different. Better.
- And I suppose we could speculate a thousand ways that might play out...but honestly, we just don't know. The point is this.
- In Christ, we can expect our bodies, our physical bodies to resurrect. And we can expect to still be ...well... us. Me.
- Our resurrection is Physical, and its personal.
- But I HAVE TO BE CHANGED.

Back to 1)

- The world doesn't need me to express my "divine inner me" to be healed.
- NO, I need to receive God expressing himself in Christ.
- The Gnostic is confronted with this truth.
- The Resurrection means that the physical creation is not the problem.
- I am the problem.
- My sin is the problem.
- And I need the Son of God to shine on my life, If I'm to become the Oak Tree he created me to be.
- That takes incredible humility doesn't it.
- It flies in the face of the self-esteem movement, doesn't it.
- It eliminates entitlement.
- But without admitting that I am a corrupt seed that can't make myself into a beautiful tree...
- ...without humility...I have no hope.
- IN fact, Suggesting that I need to change...is to say, well, who you are deep down is not really what the world needs.
- What the world needs...what creation is groaning for...is for God to make you someone different.
- The world doesn't need me to find myself on a trip around the world.
- The world needs me to die to myself, and be made new in Christ.
- That's humbling. But its incredibly hopeful.

Transition: Remember, the Divine Spark mentality of Gnosticism isn't just a condemnation of the material world...its also a rejection of God as an authority....and all the structures that he set up in the world as good.

But the testimony of Scripture is that our hope actually comes through humbly submitting ourselves to God's authority. The one who made us.

2) A healed creation is one that humbly submits to Christ.

- In a 3rd century sermon, the church Father, Origen noted that the Apostles Creed- that we recite every week here- doesn't say we believe in the "resurrection of bodies". It says, the Resurrection of THE body.
- He says this highlights the fact that the Bible is concerned as much or MORE with the church being raised up TOGETHER...as it is with individuals being resurrected.
- Let me show you.
- In the book of Ezekiel, God shows the prophet a vision of these dry bones in a valley. And all of a sudden, the bones start to rattle around, and they all get tendons and muscle and skin all over them. But, Ezekiel writes...there was not breath in them.
- Now, think back to Genesis 2.
- When God made Adam.
- He created him...and then God blew his breath, his wind, his spirit...into Adam. And the physical came to life.
- So, then as a throw back to Genesis 2, God says to Ezekiel
- **Ezekiel 37:9-10**
- Prophecy to the breath. Tell the breath to enter them.
- And the wind or spirit...RUACH blows...
- And they come alive together...as an army.
- And here is the explanation of that vision.
- **Ezekiel 37:11-14**
- **11 Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Look how they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished; we are cut off.' 12 Therefore, prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Lord God says: I am going to open your graves and bring**

you up from them, my people, and lead you into the land of Israel. 13 You will know that I am the Lord, my people, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. 14 I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I am the Lord. I have spoken, and I will do it. This is the declaration of the Lord.' "

- It's a picture of the resurrection of God's people.
- It's a prophecy, not only of Israel...but of the church.

Back to 2)

- See, we mostly think about resurrection as individuals.
- What will "heaven" be like for me?
- Will I be bored?
- Eternity is a long time!

- We think, "I wonder what my body will look like? I hope I can get rid of these love handles. I hope that mole on my shoulder is gone. I wonder if I'll be able to dunk a basketball."

- We start thinking of heaven like an eternal game of golf where every shot I hit is a hole in one.

- But is that really what resurrection is about?
- No.

- The Scripture says we are bricks of the temple that together HOUSE the Holy Spirit...the Holy Breath of God.
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- We are the BODY of Christ.

- Think about that for a second.
- Christ...is our head.
- We are his body.

- If you were a head...on a shelf.
- Wouldn't you eagerly anticipate getting a body?

- Well, Jesus is excited about our resurrection...Hebrews calls it the "joy set before him"...

- He's excited about it because it is the final joining together of the BODY of CHRIST...with JESUS our HEAD.
- Its not just the resurrection of bodies...
- It's the resurrection of THE BODY.

· **1 Cor 15:23-25**

- In this passage, Paul is saying that in the Resurrection, everything that was upset by our sinful rebellion will be set in the proper order.
- That Christ will be the head, and all authorities and rulers that tried to take his place...all the false gods we served...will be abolished.
- The right ruler, the true king, the real head...will be place atop his Body.
- And Jesus will present the world that he put back together in his death and resurrection and second coming...he will present that kingdom to his Father...a beautiful act of loving submission from the Son of God to the God the Father.

· **1 Cor 15:28**

- That's what's going on in v 28
- Jesus, in this incredibly beautiful act of the continuation of his loving humility...is submitting himself to the Father.

Hope comes through humility.

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· **15:25-27**

- Paul says that God has put everything under Jesus' feet...and then Jesus, the son, gives it all back to God the Father.

Back to 2)

- Here's what that means for us.
- It means that I'm not the head.
- It means that the biggest thing in the universe to celebrate is not whether or not I get rid of excess fat in heaven.
- Its not even simply whether a disease I have is cured...or whether I can travel extensively in NH-NE.

- No. In the Resurrection, I am beautifully and humbly submitting to the authority of Christ. I am one of the body. I am a soldier in the army. A brick in the beautiful temple of the Holy Spirit.
- I'm not the lead. I'm not the head.
- I have a King, Jesus. He reigns. And I count it the most glorious underserved grace in the world....that I get to be a part of his BODY, HIS FAMILY, HIS KINGDOM.
- And, New Creation, the resurrection is not going to isolate you from others. That is, quite literally, hell.
- Instead, its going to be communal. Parts of a body are always touching, right?
- Bricks in a wall are ever leaning on each other.
- In New Creation, we, the body of Christ will be beautifully and wonderfully submitted to Jesus...together.
- See how this confronts that Neo-gnosticism?
- The "Everybody worship my divine spark!" is replaced by "Everybody worship the Creator"
- And I don't see ALL authority, ALL power and order as necessarily bad or evil.
- Because when God makes all things new...there will absolutely be authority and order and submission.
- And this totally confronts the idea that I am the center piece of the universe.
- When God resurrects us...I am being raised WITH OTHERS.
- There is an I- a me- a personal resurrection. But there is even more so an US. And even more than that...there is Christ our head, our King.
- There is great hope in humility.

Transition: Now, the most beautiful part of 1 Cor 15...is also the most confusing...so let me explain it like this...

3) We can move forward to New Life, because Jesus moved backward to Death.

- **1 Cor 15:44**
- Ok. I know this sounds like its dissing the physical...but its not.

- It says Natural...not Physical
- In other words. Paul is saying that we start like Adam did. Natural. We end up like Jesus. Who is, BTW, still human. In the Resurrection, Jesus doesn't turn into a spirit...you will be able to touch Jesus, Hug Jesus in New Creation.
- So this is not, Say goodbye to the physical.
- Its say hello to perfection.
Think about it like this. The Spiritual here is not the opposite of physical- its what we are powered by in the resurrection.
For example- if I say my car has a gasoline engine- I don't mean that my engine is made of gasoline- i mean its POWERED by gasoline.

Likewise here- Paul is saying that when Jesus heals us, when he brings creation back together- that we will be totally powered by his Spirit...just like Jesus.

· **1 Cor 15:45-46**

- Paul compares Adam, the first man, with Jesus...and he says that Adam was ALIVE...but JESUS...is a life giving Spirit.
- You know what that means?
- It means that what Adam couldn't do, Jesus did.
- Adam received the breath of life from God, but then he extinguished it with his sin.
- He passed on death to humanity.
- But Jesus, the source of that spirit..that breath... he didn't TAKE LIFE from us...he overflowed. He gave it back.
- And listen, that's what you become...not later, but now.
- As Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, you must be born again... he told him that if you believe and follow Jesus...that you are Born of the spirit.
- That doesn't mean you cease to be your physical self.
- No, it means that life begins to flow out of you.
- Though your outer self is wasting away, your inner self...that broken sinful ugly part of you...that you thought was a divine spark...its changed now.

- Scripture says that because Jesus gives us his Holy Spirit now as a guarantee of the full physical resurrection that's coming...we now are PARTAKERS in the divine nature.
- We don't become gods....but God lives within us.
- And he overflows out of us...in love...not for ourselves.. but for others.
- He brings us under submission to Jesus the King...and he makes us holy...attractive to others.
- He makes us sacrificial...like our King Jesus.
- Unlike Adam who brought death, the Spirit of Christ makes us like him...we have this treasure in jars of clay to share with our neighbors

· **1 Cor 15:49**

- That's what Paul means when he says we are like the man of heaven.
- **There is a progression for us**
- **From seed, to tree.**
- **From dead, to alive.**
- **From expressing ourselves, to testifying to Christ.**
- **From Look at my Divine Spark, to Worship my Divine Savior.**
- **From What can I get from you, to LET ME GIVE TO YOU.**
- It's a beautiful and wonderful progression
- Forward from death to life.
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- But to get us there, Jesus went backwards.
- He went from only Divine God...
- And he descended, put on flesh. But he didn't stop there.
- He became sin. So we could become his righteousness.

· **Phil 2:5-11**

- **Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,**
- **6who, existing in the form of God,**
- **did not consider equality with God**
- **as something to be exploited.**
- **7Instead he emptied himself**
- **by assuming the form of a servant,**

· **taking on the likeness of humanity.**
· **And when he had come as a man**
· **8he humbled himself by becoming obedient**
· **to the point of death —**
· **even to death on a cross.**
· **9For this reason God highly exalted him**
· **and gave him the name**
· **that is above every name,**
· **10so that at the name of Jesus**
· **every knee will bow —**
· **in heaven and on earth**
· **and under the earth —**
· **11and every tongue will confess**
· **that Jesus Christ is Lord,**
· **to the glory of God the Father.**

- Jesus is the First Fruits of the resurrection...yes...but to get there..he had to STEP DOWN into our mess.
- Gnosticism says God is distant. Unreachable.
- But Jesus is the perfect God who descended into our mess. The broken physical world...he came to us.
- THE ONE WHO DIDN'T NEED TO CHANGE, AND THE ONE WHO IS THE HEAD...CHANGED AND BECAME THE LEAST.
- So we could participate in New Creation.
- Praise God.