



The E-Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Winona, Mississippi

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Aug. 4, 9:00 a.m.

Ann Claire Blakely reports on her mission trip to Africa.

Jenni Brown reports on her Oxford University tutorial on C. S. Lewis.

Aug. 6, 1:00 p.m.

Presbytery meets in Delhi, La. and will examine Ryan in the last two areas prior to ordination.

Aug. 11, 9:00 a.m.

Ryan preaches at the Winona Community "Friends of Immanuel" Service held at the old Episcopal Church building.

Aug. 11, 4:00 p.m.

Ryan's installation and ordination service; the ladies are providing a reception following the service.

Sept. 21, 5:00 p.m.

Please join us for a church picnic at the Manse. We will also celebrate Mrs. Barnett's birthday.

From the Pastor's Pen...

This Tuesday some of your elders and I will go to the quarterly stated meeting of Mississippi Valley Presbytery. This meeting consists of all of the Teaching Elders in our presbytery as well as Ruling Elders commissioned from all of the churches in our presbytery; each congregation is entitled to at least two depending on size.

Presbytery is the regional governing body of our denomination. As Presbyterians, we believe that God in His word has not only told us *how* we are to be saved, but also given us the framework for *how* His church is to be governed.

The biblical basis for a pres-

bytery comes from Acts 15. As you know, in that episode there was a controversy that arose and congregations from throughout the Church sent representatives to sort out the matter. Paul in Acts 20 meets with the elders from the Presbytery of Ephesus on his way back to Jerusalem. Presbyteries played an important role in the church very early in her history.

Today, our presbyteries have the vital role of ensuring sound doctrine is taught and pastoral care is exercised within each of the congregations in the presbytery. Presbyteries review the "minutes" of session meetings, approve

ministers, license preachers, and have care for the training of minister candidates.

One of the beauties of this system of church government is that the "whole is in the parts and the parts are in the whole." That means that while presbytery is a "higher court" than session, presbytery is made up simply of representatives of all the sessions within its bounds.

Since we are all sinners, we need to hold each other accountable. In Presbyterianism there is always a large number of elders to oversee the actions of the church to guard the purity and peace of Christ's Church.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

Last week we noted that the purpose and meaning of life is to glorify and enjoy God. When we are not seeking to do that, life becomes empty and vain and we seek to fill it with all the wrong things. This week we look at WSC 2:

Q: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A: *The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.*

Having considered **what** our purpose in life is, the Catechism's next question tells us **how** we are to do

that. As Christians, we must go to the only source of true knowledge to discover the way in which we go about bringing glory to God and enjoying Him. This question and answer reminds us that the **only** way that we can learn how to do this is revealed by God in His Word.

This is an incredibly important and fundamental principle for living biblically and faithfully. In order to serve God, we must do so in accordance with His word.

This means that we must accept God's word as *sufficient* to teach us all we need to know about Him as well as

is *authoritative* for living out all of life.

In practice this means that anything that we do in worship or for spiritual growth must come from a direct command in God's word. We are sinful people and can come up with all sorts of *wrong* ways to try to worship, serve, and glorify God in ways that seem right to us.

If you desire to please God, enjoy God, and if you want to fulfill the purpose for which you were created, you must start by knowing the Scripture and seeking God speaking by His Spirit in His word.

> 2Tim 3.16, Eph 2.2 1Jn 1.4

Sunday School: Exodus

In Sunday School these past several weeks we have been looking at the book of Exodus. Exodus is the history of God saving His people from slavery in Egypt and making them a nation. For 400 years the Hebrews have been toiling for their Egyptian overlords, and God in His mercy saw their affliction and sent a redeemer: Moses.

Sunday we studied Exod. 5:1-21 in which Moses first appears before Pharaoh to demand that the great and powerful king of Egypt allow the Hebrews to worship and serve God in the wilderness. As you know, Pharaoh refused and added to their workload.

This is a big letdown for Moses, Aaron, and the whole church of God. God had promised to liberate His people, but what they see right then is that their burdens are instead made all the heavier. In response, the leaders of the Hebrews plead with Pharaoh to be kind to them and see that they are good servants.

The great tragedy of our study last week was how quickly Israel had forgotten the promises of God that He would indeed save them from their slavery and bring them out of Egypt. When things got worse they no longer trusted in God's Word, but the concerns and cares of earthly trouble drowned out God and His

promise of Redemption, and Israel looked to Pharaoh for deliverance rather than the Lord God.

How easy it is to forget God's word when things get difficult! We saw recently in the sermons how Naomi's sorrow was made much worse because she didn't know the Word of God.

Use these two episodes in the history of the church to teach you the value of knowing and living by the Word of God. When you put your trust in what God says about Himself and about His plan and purposes in history, you will be able to stand in the evil day and the day of temptation.

Sunday's Sermon Snapshot

As we considered Ruth 2:4-23 last Lord's Day, one of the things we saw was the generosity of Boaz to Ruth. Boaz went above and beyond what the Law of God required in terms of caring for widows, orphans, and other poor people.

The unbeliever, the unconverted person, who does not have faith in Christ sees God's Law merely as unjust restrictions on his or her pleasures. For the non-Christian, the Law of God is an accuser and condemns him or her as one who is worthy of God's wrath and condemnation.

For the Christian, however, the "curse of the law" has been borne by Christ on His cross, and so the believer is able to use God's Law to reveal sin in his life and struggle against sin and his need of forgiveness.

But the Law serves another purpose for Christians; it teaches us how God wants us to live. Boaz had come to understand that God's Law was not simply a list of arbitrary "thou shalt nots," but as something that reveals God's character.

As Christians, we are blessed to be able to see – like Boaz – the gift that God's rules are. Even though we struggle with obedience often, the Law of God serves as our guide and teacher to show us the way to live.

The Ten Commandments, which will consider at length later in Sunday



School, provide an excellent summary of God's Law.

For Boaz, God's Law was a tool in his hand to show God's grace, kindness, and generosity to Ruth (and Naomi too). As the Spirit of God works in the heart of a person, he or

she learns to say with the psalmist, "how I love your law," because that person has come to know that through the Law he sees sin in himself, and it teaches him how to live in a way that is pleasing to God.

It is important to understand that the believer never trusts in his or her own obedience of God's law as a way to justify himself or herself before God; that is the mistake the Jews made. Instead, the Law is a friend that shows what is pleasing to the God who has saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Confederate Army Chaplain R. L. Dabney wrote, "*The believer justified in Christ does not, indeed, look to the law for his redeeming merit; but he receives it as his guide to the obedience of faith and love.*" And so we see a superb example of this in Boaz, who knew God's Law and was pleased to serve and provide for Ruth and Naomi.

Christ our Saviour perfectly obeyed the Law on our behalf, and He gives us His Spirit now to enable us more and more to obey.