



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

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FRIDAY, SEPT. 13, 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sept 15, 4 p.m.

An informal Sunday Night Study at the Pastor's home. We will be discussing the book *In Christ Alone* by Sinclair Ferguson.

Sept. 18, 5 p.m.

Prayer meeting and Bible Study resumes at FPCW in the Pastor's Study.

Sept. 21, 4 p.m.

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



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From the Pastor's Pen...

On Sunday night we had a great turnout for our evening study. We had more than a dozen folks join us for fellowship and a brief look at Ephesians 2:1-10 as we introduced our book for this Fall, *In Christ Alone*.

One of the reasons I believe that this book will be good for us to study is that it is a basic summary of what it **means to be a Christian** as well as **what the Bible teaches us about God and the Christian life**.

In these times, even churches are looking to add to Christianity and give people - I know this sounds crazy - something in addition to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was in college, there was a lady who gave the Sunday "sermon" on the topic of her store in town that sold goods handmade by folks in Eastern Europe. We were encouraged to buy from the store because it enabled the

craftsmen to feed their families. I am fairly certain that was the last time I attended that congregation. For that congregation, "micro-finance" was more important than Christ.

One of the problems in our day is that people are searching to add something to Christianity beyond Christ. People have become bored with God and with His word.

In our book, Sinclair Ferguson takes us through the Scriptures to help us consider the riches of Christ and the glorious gift that life in Christ is for God's people.

Ferguson shows us that knowing and understanding Christ as our God, our King, and our elder-Brother is the joyous pursuit of the Christian pilgrimage. But, as he does so he will give us categories, ideas, and words to convey the truth about Christ to our friends and neighbors.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

We considered here last week that God is almighty, that he has *decreed* everything that happens in this world. The inevitable current of history, therefore, is moving toward God's glory.

This week we consider WSC 8, which deals with the way in which God accomplishes His will and purposes:

Q8. *How doth God execute his decrees?*

A. God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

This statement is basically declaring that God governs the world in its miraculous creation (Gen 1-2) as wells through the ordinary and everyday events.

God is so powerful and mighty that He is actually able to bring His plans to pass. Many of us make plans, but anyone who has been on a family vacation knows that all plans are subject to immediate frustration!

Yet God's plans, His decrees, always happen, and happen the way He wants them to.

We will look at God's work of Creation next week, so for this week let's look at what we mean by "providence."

Providence means - basically - that God controls everything that happens. When we affirm this question we are declaring our dearly-held belief that God is active in history and in our own lives.

Some believe that God, while He created all things, is not involved in the day-to-day activities of His creatures. This view was particularly popular during the 18th and 19th Centuries among social elites in America and Europe.

God's people, throughout history, however have rejoiced over the fact that God is involved in everything that happens, both ordering and governing them. Chief among God's activities is His planning the redemption of His people through the blood-sacrifice of His Son.

This truth should be a great comfort for God's people.

Wednesday Night Prayer and Bible Study

On Wednesday nights at FPC, we are going through the Apostles Creed together phrase by phrase. This week we looked at two seemingly innocuous articles: God is *Father* and God is *Almighty*.

These two statements are often misunderstood and misrepresented in our day. For one, since the 19th Century some have asserted the “universal Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.”

While it is true that God is indeed Father to all Creation, His fatherhood does not necessarily bring with it favor and blessing. **More often, God’s universal fatherhood brings judgment and condemnation to the wicked.** Because God is the Father of all, He has the right to judge all His creatures.

We who have come to Christ, know God not simply as our *creator*, but as our adopted Father. Because we who have looked to Christ have union with Christ and God sees us in Christ and is making us to be more and more like Christ, we can approach the Father as beloved children. **God’s fatherhood is a great comfort to His people and a cause for fear in His enemies.**

We also looked at what we mean when we say that God is *almighty*. God’s almighty power, as we considered in our Catechism Meditation, means that he controls everything that happens. **“God is either Lord of all or He is not lord at all.”**

This has particular application to the salvation of sinners. Oftentimes, you will hear folks say things like, “I made a decision to follow Jesus,” or “I surrendered my life to Christ.” **And those are true statements, because God’s almighty power does not mean that we His creatures do not make real and true decisions.**

What God’s almighty power does mean, however, is that God is sovereign over even the salvation of sinners. When a person “decides” to follow Christ or “surrenders” to Jesus, he does so because God the Holy Spirit has already worked in his heart and will to show him his need of salvation and his sinfulness before God.

Without the Holy Spirit’s intervention, not a single sinner would turn from his way to be saved. God is - and must be - sovereign over every aspect of life, especially salvation.

Sermon Snapshot: “Abandoned by God”

This past Lord’s Day we began our brief study of Psalm 22. The psalm was written by David 1000 years before the time when the Lord Jesus Christ walked on the earth. David wrote this lament during one of the many horrific trials that he endured during his life.

David was pursued as an outlaw by the mad King Saul, whom he had served faithfully. Later in life, when he became king, David was pursued by his own son and nearly lost the kingdom. In one of those times, or perhaps another trying occasion, David wrote our psalm.

In the psalm, David laments the fact that God, who had been such a faithful helper in the past, seems to have abandoned David to his own resources and circumstances. In the past, God had faithfully supported, rescued, and saved David, but on the occasion of this psalm it seemed as though God was not intervening on David’s behalf and death seemed close at hand.

For whatever situation David originally wrote those words, God was with him and soon came to his aid to give him victory over his enemies. The words of the psalm were prophetic of the suffering of Christ.

Only in Jesus Christ do we see the fullness of what it means for someone who knew God’s presence to be truly abandoned and forsaken from God’s help. To David, as he fled his enemies and watched them close

in around him it may have seemed as though God had abandoned and given him over to his foes, but God had not truly left him at all.

Christ on the cross, however, was not only stripped of the dignity due to His deity, He was truly cut off from the loving support and presence of His Almighty Father in Heaven.

Throughout His earthly ministry, and particularly so in the time leading up to the crucifixion, Jesus spent much time in prayer and private worship of His Father. His Father faithfully supported, affirmed, and encouraged him continually.

But it was different as Jesus hung upon the cross. That comforting presence, the support, the voice that affirmed, “this is my son with whom I am well pleased” that came from His loving Father were all gone. During those hours, Christ knew only the righteous wrath of the Father.

For God to deliver His people, there had to be a payment for sin. God does not clear the guilty, He does not deal with sin by “sweeping it under the carpet;” God punishes sin. In order that you could be saved, God placed all the sin of His people upon His Son and scourged Him for it. For God to receive you as righteous He had to make His beloved Son a sinner and punish Him for it. We will see a little bit of the depth of that punishment as we solemnly consider Psalm 22 together.

