



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, OCT. 11, 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Oct. 27, 4:00 p.m.
Joint Reformation Sunday evening worship at FPCW with the Vaiden congregations. Phil McRae will preach.

Oct. 30, 5:30 p.m.
The Vaiden churches have invited us to a Reformation Eve cookout. Please RSVP to Ryan.

Nov. 17, 6:00 p.m.
Community Thanksgiving Service at Haven UMC on Campbell Street. Ryan will preach.



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From the Pastor's Pen...

How do you please God? That is a very important question for Christians! It has been answered various ways by various parties within Christendom.

During the Byzantine era, some answered by saying you must give up all pleasure, join a monastery, and lead an ascetic lifestyle.

The Roman Catholic Church during the time prior to the Reformation said that you could donate money to the church to erect statues and images to please God.

We can see both of these ideas today in the broader church, but neither of these is faithful to the Bible's teaching on what pleases God.

God is not pleased by people living an ascetic lifestyle; he gave us the world to enjoy it. God is not pleased when we erect statues and images to him, in fact he forbids it explicitly in His holy Word (remember the Golden Calf?).

The Biblical answer for what pleases God can be found in places such as Micah 6:8 or Rom. 12:2. We could summarize what pleases God as doing "good works" in faith, doing what God commands us to do in his word.

God is not pleased when we do something that is not commanded in His Word in an attempt to bring Him honor. If you want to honor, glorify, and please God our Saviour, search His Word and do what you find there:

Be gathered with His people to worship Him on the Lord's Day, love your neighbor, deal justly with your employees, and so on.

When you consider what God's word requires of us, it sure would be a lot easier just to write a check and build something, wouldn't it? Instead, God's word's continually drives us to see our need for His grace even as we try to please Him in gratitude for that grace.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

Last week, we considered God's sovereign control and government over everything that happens, this is the doctrine of providence.

This week we look at God's special relationship with mankind that He entered into at the beginning of creation.

Q12. What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the estate wherein he was created?

A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.

Every time God deals with mankind, He does so within the context of a covenant. A covenant is a binding agreement mutually obligating two parties. We are familiar with covenants in various settings today: in marriage among neighbors, in business, etc. These covenants govern relations between parties.

When God imposes a covenant, He does so as Sovereign Lord. This catechism question considers the first covenant God made with man, the Covenant of Life (sometimes called the "Covenant of Works").

In this Covenant, Adam was given innumerable privileges (fellowship with God, dominion over the garden, satisfying work to do, plentiful food, etc) to enjoy.

Adam's obligation within the Covenant of Works was to obey God's commands fully, specifically to refrain from eating from one tree in the Garden. God's obligation in the covenant was to faithfully bless Adam with eternal life if he kept his end of the covenant.

As you know, Adam this broke this covenant with God in the Garden. Because of his rebellion and unfaithfulness, Adam brought death upon himself and upon all who came after him. Not only did Adam bring physical death to mankind, but spiritual death as well.

God offered Adam life, but he chose death.

Obedience and the Kingship of Christ

Last week, we looked at the liberty that we as Christians have in the Lord Jesus Christ. We said that Presbyterians have affirmed that there is no obligation for Christians to obey commands that are **contrary to** or **in addition to** God's word.

If that is true, then the converse is also true; we are obligated to obey His commands. It seems obvious, but so many in the church think that because they have "freedom in Christ" they are free to sin.

As the Apostle Paul wrote many of his letters, in which he so beautifully expounds the gospel of free-grace, he consistently guards against that view.

Consider what Paul writes in Rom. 6:15-16 as he has just said the Christian is not under the Law, but under grace:

"Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?"



Someone (perhaps a Corinthian, for that matter) might take the truths of the gospel that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and not through works of the Law so that no one may boast and then determine he can go out do what he likes.

Paul teaches that as Christians, not only are we required to obey God's moral commands, but we are under greater obligation to do so than our Hebrew ancestors. We, unlike the Hebrew Church, have Christ's spirit poured out upon us without measure to conform us to Christ's image.

The Jews of old had God's Spirit working in them, but not to the degree that we now have under the New Testament.

Our freedom in Christ is not only from man-made laws, but also to delight in obeying God's laws. We cannot do this perfectly in this life, but God's Spirit enables us to

daily die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

This kind of life, the Christian life, requires much prayer and struggle, looking to Christ for grace to help in time of need from Him who is at the throne of God.

Sermon Snapshot: "One Troubled Church"

As we begin our series in First Corinthians it's helpful to consider the history and the context of the people to whom Paul is writing. As we better understand the issues that Paul was dealing with, it will prepare us to comprehend what he writes, which will be to our benefit!

One of the major problems in Corinth was, simply put, bad theology. These people had encountered and been converted through the preaching of the gospel, but they had not been diligent to grow in the knowledge of God.

This lack of knowledge bore bitter fruit especially in two large areas. First, the church at Corinth misunderstood the very nature of "true spirituality." Second, they did not understand how to live as God's people in an ungodly world. Paul, throughout his letter, comes back again and again to those two themes.

Their lack of biblical understanding in these areas had profound consequences in their church life and Christian living. That is one of the reasons II Peter 1:8 tells us we must be continually increasing in our knowledge of God.

One of the issues this created was that the church was rife with disunity and one-upmanship. The various factions in the church lived as though they were the true followers of Christ and all the others were second-rate.

Another area was in their toleration of sexual immorality. Corinth, you recall, was a city known, even famous, for its debauchery. Out of this culture of lasciviousness, God had called many into His church. Yet though they had been converted, they were reluctant to turn their backs on their former lifestyles and tolerated immorality in themselves and others within the church.

Paul will also have to address their own pride. Corinth was a great city, a proud city filled with proud people. Likewise, the church in Corinth was so proud of itself for becoming so spiritual, which is a dangerous place to be!

The church there was so proud of its spirituality, the people thought that they had entered into the fullness of the blessings of the Kingdom in the "here and now."

But of course, they had not. It's easy to think you've entered the fullness of the Kingdom of God when you have such great wealth like the Corinthians had.

With such troubles, it's a wonder these people are considered still a church at all. Yet, God considered them so. God had not given up on them, instead He inspired the Apostle Paul to write to them to correct their sins and errors and call them to repentance. In spite of their sluggishness, God had not closed off his mercy to them.

