



# FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, JAN. 24, 2014

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Jan. 26, 10 a.m.**

Last Sunday to nominate deacons

**Feb. 9, 9:00 a.m.**

Ryan preaches at the monthly Community Service

## From the Pastor's Pen...

Now that the hullabaloo over Phil Robertson's remarks on homosexuality has settled somewhat, we can reflect on that "cultural moment" with greater insight.

What Phil Robertson said was true and is the teaching of the Scripture: homosexuality is a sin and an offense to God and nature. That fact is offensive to American culture in the 21st Century.

It shouldn't surprise us that the culture around us hates what we believe - and often hates us for it. Jesus Christ, after all, warned us that the world would hate His disciples:

*"If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me,*

*they will also persecute you."* John 15:19-20

Since the gospel that we proclaim and cling to for our hope is so offensive to the worldlings, we must be wise in the way we convey its teachings.

As such, Jesus said that Christians must be "wise as serpents and gentle as doves" (Matt. 10:16), and of course Robertson was neither.

When we as God's people talk about the gospel and sin, perhaps we should not begin with the sins of "those people," but our own and how God in Christ has redeemed us from our sin and forgiven us.

It's easy to condemn "gay people" because they're "not like us." But they are like us: they are sinners who need the saving power of the gospel, just as much as this repentant glutton needs it. The gospel is for all sinners, not just those with "respectable sins."

## Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

Last week the catechism discussed that Christ is our prophet, priest, and king as our redeemer and messiah. This week we look at the first of those offices.

Q24. *How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?*

**A. Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.**

A prophet is someone who speaks God's word, who reveals God's word to men. Because of our sinfulness we can't have a relationship with God apart from the Word of God. Even though all nature proclaims God's existence, we can't be saved simply by studying nature.

In the Old Testament, sometimes the prophets would predict future events, but the primary purpose of the prophet was to declare the will of God to God's people. His

chief duty was to show the people what God required of them and how they failed to meet that standard and call the people to repent and seek God's grace.

Christ represents the ultimate fulfillment of all the prophets throughout the Scripture. It is Jesus Christ, and no other, who speaks the way of salvation. Christ came and called to Himself all who are "weary and heavy laden" to find in Him the rest that God offers.

Christ speaks to His people through the Bible. All of the Scripture is the word of Christ. His Spirit working in and through the Bible calls us to faith in Himself.

The catechism beautifully points out here that it is Christ Himself who reveals to us God's will for our salvation. The credit for salvation cannot go to the preacher or the missionary who spoke the gospel; all credit in salvation goes to God alone. To all His people, Christ shows God's saving grace.



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# The Means of Gospel Mortification

This past Lord's Day evening, some of us traveled down to FPC Kosciusko for their Bible Conference at which the esteemed Baptist pastor from Wales Geoff Thomas was preaching. His topic for the weekend was "Killing Sin."

As Christians, we are commanded to be killing (or *mortifying*) sin in our lives so that day-by-day we look more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of rooting out and defeating sin in one's life is never easy (and it is impossible apart from the saving work of the Holy Spirit), yet it is the calling of every Christian.

Thomas gave us five aids, five tips, five exhortations to resist and root out the "remaining corruption" that can so easily entangle us even as Christians.

## 1. Keep your heart filled with gospel-motives.

One of the reasons so many of us succumb to sin and temptation even as Christians is because our obedience is not founded in the **love of Christ**, but simply in the **Law of God**.

We are prone to consider God's commands simply as "Do" or "Do Not," but as Christians the key to Godly living is not knowing the Ten Commandments backwards and forwards, but knowing the love of Christ better. Do you know Christ's love, is it real to you? Is it the Love of Christ that motivates you in your Christian life? That is the only way to defeat sin.

## 2. Keep your conscience sensitive to guilt and danger of the sin that (easily) besets you.

Even as Christians we often forget that sin is our enemy. So, we are prone to "make peace" with sin instead of war. Sin - whether it is gluttony or gossip or lying or adultery or murder - is a grave offense to God and a great danger to us. We must watch out for those particular sins to which we are prone, which we find desirable and remember how God sees them.

## 3. Avoid the Occasions of Sin

This one makes such sense, doesn't it: if you are a glutton, don't eat at Golden Corral; if you're an alcoholic, don't keep a liquor cabinet! In many ways, half the battle against sin is simply avoiding temptation.

## 4. Strike at the First Rising of Temptation

Sin's first attack is never very strong; it often first comes with a casual and inquisitive excuse. But we must understand that every sin is to doubt of the truth of the Bible. When sin and temptation first to lure you away, that is when you strike with God's word.

## 5. Look constantly to Christ for Killing Sin

You can't resist temptation simply because you are well-mannered. Sin and temptation are resisted because a person is so focused on his or her union with the living Saviour who loved him, loved her that he bled and died to be the Redeemer of God's elect.

## Sermon Snapshot: "Self-Deception, Self-Deprecation"

Last Lord's Day as we resumed our study in I Corinthians with 3:18-23. Paul is concluding the first phase of his argument. He has given a number of corrections to the Corinthian Christians in this first portion of the letter. The fundamental issue with the Corinthians may well be that they are simply "not spiritual" people (3:1-2), which of course is seen in many areas of their congregational life and conduct.

One of the results of their lack of spirituality was that they had **deceived themselves about their maturity and wisdom**. The Corinthians thought that they understood the gospel and Christianity and, as a result of their supposed understanding, they had more or less written off Paul as not worthwhile.

The problem, as we saw, was that they had deceived themselves. They had taken some of the spiritual truths of the gospel and mixed them with the current fashions and trends of cosmopolitan Corinth.

The Corinthian Christians, as Paul wrote, weren't much to be considered by Corinthian standards (1:26), but with the additional insight of the gospel mixed with the wisdom of Corinth, and thought they had it all together (Isn't it amazing how someone who can't do anything else sometimes makes it big peddling spirituality?).

Paul, however, didn't fit into their model, so they didn't pay much attention to him or the fundamentals of the message he preached.

Because they Corinthians had deceived themselves into thinking they were something, they were in danger of losing everything, losing the gospel itself.

**The antidote to this kind of self-deception is a Christ-centered, self-deprecating spirit.** The kind of people the Apostle is calling the Corinthians to be is one that recognizes just how unworthy they are of God's grace and of Paul's ministry to them.

The proper response to God's grace is never "YES! I've got it all together now!" but rather, "Hallelujah, what a Saviour!" The Christian's "self-deprecation" is, very importantly, Christ-centered.

Many people in our day have a "feigned humility" about themselves. Dickens satirizes such folks with the ever so "umble" Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield*. Feigned humility is always aimed at getting ahead rather than anything else.

Christ-centered humility, self-deprecation flows from a knowledge of God's mercy and drinking deeply from His grace, and that is what Christ through His apostle was calling the Corinthians and is calling us to have