



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, FEB. 7, 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Feb. 9, 9:00 a.m.

Ryan preaches at the monthly Community Service (Sunday School will not meet this week)

Feb. 10, 6:00 p.m.

Stated Session Meeting

Mar. 2, 11:00 a.m.

Congregational Meeting to elect Deacons

From the Pastor's Pen...

Ann and I want to thank you for sharing our excitement over the newest addition to our family. Psa. 127 expresses the joy God gives through children.

What a privilege it will be to nurture a child and teach him or her the blessings of God's Covenant of Grace. Please join Ann and me in praying for our baby that he or she will not only be born healthy, but embrace the Lord Jesus Christ at an early age as Saviour and Lord. Our only hope in life and death is God's faithfulness to His covenant.

It is simply amazing to live in a time in which we can get such an early glimpse of our little child. When we went to the gynecologist, at 11 weeks and two days, we not only were able to see the baby, but also hear the heart beating!



God speaks to us in his Word about what He is doing in the womb. In Psa. 139, the psalmist marvels at how God "knits" and forms each us in the womb of our mothers.

Even more strikingly is what Jeremiah reveals to us in Jer. 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." God in His infinite and eternal wisdom already knows everything about our baby, just as He knows everything about each of us.

Over the past few years, we've known a number of couples who struggled and sorrowed through infertility and adoption. Yet in all these things, in life and in death and everything in between, God knows the end from the beginning, and that is the greatest comfort of all.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

For the last few weeks we've been considering the offices of Christ as our redeemer. So far we've considered Christ as our priest and our prophet. This week we'll look at Christ as our King:

Q26. *How doth Christ execute the office of a king?*

A. Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

The Kingship of Christ has been anticipated by the people of God since the earliest days. The first prophecy of Christ's kingship occurs in Gen. 49:10 in which Jacob states, "the scepter shall not depart from Judah..."

The Kingship of Christ was one of the greatest and dearest comforts to the early church. In Acts 4 as the church endures injustice and persecution, it is to the kingship of Christ that they appeal for strength.

The Catechism highlights a number of aspects of Christ's kingly reign. The first of which is His subduing us to Himself. Those of us who have been Christians a long time often forget that we were at one time God's enemies and rebels against him.

In order for us to know the blessings of God in Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ first had to bring our own sinful hearts into submission and rescue us from Satan's dominion.

Another aspect of Christ's kingship is His present rule over His people by His word and Spirit. It's important to realize that you cannot have Jesus Christ as your Saviour if you do not have Him as your Lord. Some people, sadly, operate as if they can be a Christian but do not need to obey any of the King's commands.

Christ's kingship is seen in His people as they turn from sins and submit to His laws and reign, to seek His kingdom first of all.



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The Authority of Scripture

This Lord's Day morning at 9:00, I've been invited to give the sermon at the monthly "Friends of Immanuel" community service.

We will look together at II Tim. 3:10-17 and what the Apostle Paul says about the Bible. For the past couple of centuries, the authority of the Bible has come under attack by unbelievers inside and outside of the church.

If you have ever watched a religious program on the History Channel you've no doubt heard the theologians discuss why the Bible's record and books are unreliable.

Mainline denominations in the last century contrived all manner of reasons why much of the New Testament was not actually written by the Apostles, but written at a later time. As such, they claim, it does not convey God's authoritative, transcendent, and unchanging truth, but is simply the words of sinful men influenced by their culture and traditions long after the death of Christ.

Such a view of the Bible allows people to disregard any teaching that does not suit their presuppositions, politics, or preferences. **But as Christians we cannot embrace such a view, since either all of the Bible is true and divinely authored or none of the Bible is.**

In fact, contrary to what is taught in many circles of mainline religion, the NT was all written by AD 110 (within 80 years of Christ's death) and much of it was written within 30 years of his death. The Apostolic Fa-

thers who wrote between 95-110 cite all of the books of the NT that we now have.

By AD 397, there was a need for the church to codify which books were divinely inspired since many false documents had been circulating for generations. **It's important to realize that the church did not create the Scripture; the church simply recognized the Scripture distinct from the writings of men that were also circulating.**

Since its inception, the church viewed certain writings as divinely inspired Scripture and other writings as simply pious advice or even "another gospel" (Gal. 1:7). When the church gathered to recognize the books of the New Testament they had three criteria to help them discern what God had inspired:

1. Analogy of Faith. The church fathers understood that God is the Author of the Scripture, so any writing that was not consistent with the teaching of the Apostles and the rest of the Scripture could not be inspired.

2. Use in Public Worship. Only books that had been universally recognized and accepted by the Church for generations could be considered Scripture.

3. Apostolic Connection. Only books with a close connection to one of the Apostles could be considered authoritative. This, obviously, limited the Scripture to those writings within a generation of Christ's death.

Sermon Snapshot: "Not go beyond what is written"

This past Lord's Day we were in the middle section of I Cor. 4, verses 6-13. One of the things that is causing grief for the Apostle Paul and trouble for the Corinthian Christians is that they had gone "beyond what is written." The Scripture, the Bible was not preeminent in teaching the Corinthians how to live.

Instead, the standard of right and wrong in the Corinthian church was unduly influenced by the standards in Corinth as a whole. "Ethics" is the study of morals, of right and wrong. The Corinthian church had largely adopted the *ethics* of Corinth rather than conforming and submitting to the ethical standards of the Bible.

Every society has its own ethical standards and throughout history most societies have had, *broadly speaking*, rather similar standards of right and wrong. As Christians, we do not simply adopt the society's standard, but abide by God's transcendent standard of ethics as He reveals in the Bible.

Christians are not free to say "I believe such and such is wrong" unless the Bible clearly teaches that "such and such" is sinful either by explicit command or implication of a command.

For example, there may be common sense and prudential reasons not to do something (e.g. sky diving),

but a Christian is not free to issue a universal judgment that the activity is sinful unless the Bible says so. Such a principle is called "Christian Liberty."

The Corinthians, however, had gone to the other extreme, to *license*. They had strayed from God's word and ignored its ethical teachings entirely. As we will see in coming weeks, their factionalism and discord was the *least* serious of their problems.

One great theologian described the Christian life as a 'narrow path' (Matt. 7). And indeed it is; on the one side of the path is the precipice of "**Legalism**" and on the other side is the precipice of "**License**."

There is a great misconception about what legalism actually is; the Christian seeks to obey God's Law because doing so pleases God. **Legalism is adding to God's word requirements or standards for fellowship beyond what God requires** (e.g. don't drink, don't eat meat, etc.). It is not legalism to obey God's Law.

License (from where we get the word *licentious*), by contrast, is to throw off the standards of God's word and live as you please (since grace abounds, right?).

Paul is seeking in I Corinthians to help Christians not only understand the gospel, but live it out the way of the cross, the narrow way.