



FIRST PRESS

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 29

FRIDAY, FEB. 28, 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Mar. 2, 11:00 a.m.

Congregational Meeting

Mar. 2, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Night Study at the Manse.

Mar. 3, 5:30 p.m.

WIC Meeting

Mar 23, 10 a.m.

Installation and Ordination of the Diaconate. Lunch to follow.

From the Pastor's Pen...

This Lord's Day after our morning worship service we will have a congregational meeting and elect the men who will serve on the Diaconate for the next two years.

Deacons and diaconal work are a vital part of the church's existence. Deacons are called by Christ to emulate Him and His care for the physical needs of His people. Christ expresses that call not through *Urim* and *Thummim*, but through a congregational vote.

As such, every member of this congregation has the duty and responsibility to review the biblical qualifications for Deacons as they are found in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3. God no longer needs to govern His church by immediate special revelation as He did under the Old Testament because we have the complete Scripture.

Christ has told us who He calls as Deacons

by listing those qualifications in the Scripture. The qualifications are very high since the Deacons have such a difficult and weighty task and because of this, not every man in a congregation is called as a church officer.

The men whom Christ calls as deacons are the men who most clearly look like the Lord Jesus Christ. The men whom Christ calls as deacons are the ones you would want to help and serve you in your time of need because they are the most like Christ among us.

Take some time this weekend to read the Scriptures where God explains who is qualified to serve as a Deacon and pray for Christ to reveal to you whom *He* has called to serve us in this office.

It is so important that we all prayerfully seek the Lord's face on this matter because - as in everything - we will be called to give account.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

For the past several months (and 28 Catechism questions) we have been looking at *who* God is and the way of salvation that He reveals in the Scripture.

In WSC 29 the Catechism begins to address *how* we can come to know God and the Redeemer He offers:

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

This Catechism question makes clear to us that all the persons of the Trinity are active in the whole work of redemption. A number of weeks ago we considered the Trinity and, as this question makes clear, the Trinity is essential to our salvation.

Christ has accomplished our redemption by His humiliation on our behalf, and now in

His exaltation He with the Father pours out His Holy Spirit who applies that redemption to us.

Without God working on our behalf we could never be saved or have any kind of fruitful relationship with Him. Christianity is not simply getting people the right knowledge and information so that they can "make the right decision," but rather it is about God intervening according to His sovereign mercy to save a sinner.

Because God is sovereign over every part of salvation, we can be confident in prayer for the salvation of the lost. If salvation depended on the willingness of a sinner to accept his sinfulness, no one would come.

Instead, salvation comes because the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's redemption to rebels and haters of God. This truth should make us bold to pray for the salvation of those who are dead in trespasses and sins.



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Cheap vs. Free Forgiveness

What is the difference between “cheap” and “free”? Free and cheap are not necessarily the same thing at all. Free, of course, entails that something did not cost you anything.

Cheap, by contrast, means that something did indeed cost you. When something is cheap, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it didn’t cost you a lot. You may have paid a lot of money for something only to find out that it was “Made in China” and quickly breaks. Something that is “cheap” often doesn’t have a lasting endurance.

God’s forgiveness and grace to us in Christ are free, but were purchased by the death of Christ on the cross in our place. His death satisfies all the demands of God’s justice for the punishment of our sins. His life satisfies all the demands of God’s law for our righteousness. In Christ, we are accepted before God.

There is nothing that we can do to earn or warrant this salvation, grace, and forgiveness. When we become Christians we truly repent of our sins and turn to Christ by faith. As Christians, we will become more and more like the Christ who died for us on Calvary.

There is another kind of forgiveness that is peddled about by religious entrepreneurs. This is not a free forgiveness, but a cheap one. Martin Luther began the Reformation because such a “cheap” forgiveness was being peddled by the Church of Rome.

Johann Tetzel was selling “indulgences” which guaranteed official papal pardon for sins once committed or yet to be committed by the bearer or his designee.

The pardons peddled by the papal representative promised forgiveness to those who could afford them. Such forgiveness is nonetheless cheap because it is founded in something *you* have done and not the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on your behalf.

The practice of offering cheap forgiveness continues today. It is a forgiveness that is offered regardless of one’s commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual peddlers offer forgiveness and pardon of all kinds to those who show no real interest in God’s Kingship.

This is a very dangerous place to be. People will often give off airs of spirituality and piety to cover up the fact that they live an immoral life dominated by sex or greed or gluttony or gossip.

The devil wants to convince people that “God forgives everybody...no matter what.” Such a forgiveness is very cheap and of course ineffective. Such a forgiveness does not take into account the humiliation and anguish of the Saviour on the cross.

Christ did not die so that we could continue to sin. Christ died to free His people from their sins. The free grace of God not only saves us from the wrath of God that is coming into the world because of sin, but transforms us into the image of Christ.

The person who has truly been forgiven by God does not go on sinning, but grieves for his or her sin and turns from and struggles against sin every day. The Christian knows well the cost of salvation and gratefully seeks to live a life of new obedience.

Sermon Snapshot: “Redemptive Discipline”

Last Lord’s Day as we considered together the first five verses of I Corinthians 5 and we saw Paul’s righteous outrage and rebuke against the Corinthian church. Paul commands them that they must remove the immoral man from among them.

This Lord’s Day we saw Paul explain *why* the man is to be, as we call it, “excommunicated.” Excommunication is viewed with a great deal of scorn by people these days, but people these days are a lot more judgmental than they were in prior eras.

Moderns, even those who describe themselves as Christians, often dismiss the very thought that someone would be “put out” of the church or removed from the church because of that person’s sin. But this attitude reveals a lack of knowledge of God’s word as well as a contempt for the teachings of God’s word. It is a very perilous position to hold indeed!

One of Paul’s chief purposes in removing the man from the church at Corinth is the hope he will see the eternal danger from continuing in his sinful behavior. His removal from the visible church of God is simply bring-

ing his church status to correspond to his lifestyle. A person who openly flaunts the Kingship of Christ has no stake in the Church of which Christ is King.

He is to be turned over to Satan’s domain with the hope and prayer that he will be brought to true repentance and faith. That is the marvelous thing about God’s sovereignty: it extends even over the devil. Though the man be outside of the influences of the church, He is not outside of God’s power who can and does use Satan’s schemes for His own righteous purposes.

By giving this man over to Satan and expelling him from the church, the church is clearly communicating in that he truly has no part in Christ and no hope in God as long he continues in his licentious lifestyle.

Even in such a state, it is possible that he would come to true saving faith and true repentance of sin. Previously, he gave lip service to being a Christian, all the while feeding his sexual cravings. Now the man sees where such a lifestyle leads: separation from God. Hopefully, he will see his folly and turn to Christ before it is too late.