



# FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2014

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Apr. 12, 2:00 p.m.**

Ladies tea to honor Krista Homer, the fiancée of Taylor Blakely.

**Apr. 13, 4:00 p.m.**

Sunday Night Study @ the Manse; we will discuss Ch. 4 of *Man Asks, God Answers*, "What is the purpose of prayer and evangelism?"

**Apr. 20, 8:00 a.m.**

Deacons' Breakfast for the Congregation.

**Apr. 20, 9:00 a.m.**

Morning Worship (note the time change).



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## From the Pastor's Pen...

Next Lord's Day, April 20, we will make a slight change from our normal schedule. The deacons will serve breakfast starting around 8:00 a.m., and at 9:00 a.m. we will have our worship service as we give thanks, remember, and proclaim Christ's Resurrection from the dead.

As Presbyterians, following the practice of the early church, we gather on the First Day of the Week to mark the finished work of Christ and rejoice because - as His resurrection shows - the Christian need not fear the grave, for Christ has conquered both sin and death.

Very quickly after Christ's ascension, the early church transitioned from meeting on Saturday to meeting on Sunday, the Lord's Day. The Apostles and the Early Church understood the centrality of the resurrection to Christian worship and piety and structured everything around a weekly memorial of Christ's resurrection.

Beginning in the early 20th Century some Pres-

byterians succumbed to societal pressure and began taking part in Easter as well as other liturgical holidays and seasons foreign to the Bible and the practice of Christ's Apostles.

As a result of this, some seasons and Lord's Days are accounted more special than others by some. One of the tragic results of this is that there are many who call themselves Christians, but who only attend church on "special" days.

This is particularly problematic since many churches serve the Lord's Supper on Easter to people who may only worship but once or twice a year. Paul warns strongly against such an unworthy taking of the Lord's Supper, that it brings condemnation from God. To better guard the Lord's Table and save people from communing in an unworthy manner, the Session has decided not to order the Lord's Table to be set before us this Easter. Instead, we will follow the Southern Presbyterian practice of quarterly communion.

## Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

We are in the midst of a section of the *Catechism* that deals particularly with the application of our redemption.

Q. 32. *What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?*

**A. They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.**

Last week we looked at what effectual calling is, and this week we consider the blessings that come to those whom Christ calls. Christ's calling upon a person is not something that simply has benefits in eternity only, but real benefits and blessing in this life.

We'll look at each one of these blessings more closely in subsequent weeks, but let's briefly consider them now.

The first of those blessings is *Justification*. The work of God's Spirit on and in the sin-

ner's heart and mind that allows him to turn to God in repentance and faith brings with it justification by God; God declares a sinner who has come to Christ to be "not guilty."

The second benefit from effectual calling is to be *adopted* into God's family. God does not simply acquit his people of their sin, but makes them members of His and Christ's family, which of course brings manifold privileges.

Third, the catechism speaks of *sanctification*. This is particularly applicable to this life, the here-and-now. Because of Christ's call in the Christian's life, the Spirit's work on and in that person's heart and mind, a Christian *slowly* but *assuredly* becomes more like Christ. He or she desires to be in worship with God's people, studying God's word, loving God's people, and caring for God's creation.

Additionally, there are other benefits that the Catechism will outline later, but for now consider these three blessings.

# Who is Invited to the Lord's Table?

The short answer to that query is, *sinners*. The Lord's Table is given for sinners as a covenant meal to remember and proclaim Christ's death in their place. In the Lord's Supper, "worthy receivers" are spiritually nourished for their growth in grace (cf. WSC 96).

But there again, only those who "worthily partake" in the Lord's Supper receive a blessing. So then who exactly is worthy to come to the Lord's Table?

Paul in I Corinthians 11 makes it clear that there is a right and a wrong way to observe and take part in the Lord's Supper. As you can imagine from our brief study of First Corinthians so far, the Corinthians were observing communion the *wrong* way.

As Paul makes clear in I Cor. 11, the Lord's Supper is given by Christ *for the church*. The church is Christ's Kingdom and exists for the gathering and perfecting of the saints; that is, the church exists for repentant sinners, for people who are not yet perfect and who still need *perfecting*. So the Lord's Supper is precisely *not* for people who think they are perfect and have everything together already. Paul solemnly counsels that "**whoever east this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord**" (I Cor. 11:27).

As such, the Lord's Supper is only for those who are members in good standing of an evangelical church where the gospel of Christ is preached. It is not for those who are under some kind of prohibitive church discipline or who living in *open* and *unrepentant* sin.

Paul is *not* saying that the Lord's Table is only open to those who have become Christians and sorted everything out, but rather it is for those who are *continually repenting* of their sin and sins.

But how do you know if you are living in or regularly committing some sin? Sin is very pernicious and often hides from our consciences. For that reason, Paul writes in the next verse (11:28), "**Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**" As you come to the Lord's Table, it is foolish simply to presume that you are worthy to come simply because you took a church membership vow at some point in your life. Rather, the Apostle commands us all to be regularly examining ourselves.

The *Shorter Catechism* provides us some help in areas and ways that we should reflect on as we prepare to come. Before coming to the Lord's Table, Christians should "**examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience...**" (WSC 97).

In short, in the days leading up to a communion season the Christian ought to look at his or her own life and search for the signs of grace, the fruit of the Spirit, and see areas in which he or she needs to repent and bring under Christ's lordship. The Lord's Supper serves as a reminder that all our sins are forgiven and that Christ will come again for those who love Him and continually seek His mercy and grace.

## Sermon Snapshot: "Do You Not Know?"

This past Lord's Day, we encountered some of the most difficult words of the Apostle Paul to date. Paul issues very severe warnings to the Corinthians that their lifestyle is not becoming of the people of God.

Again in I Cor. 6:7-11 (and ten times in the book over all), Paul rebukes them by asking "Do you not know," indicating that they *should* know, but are living as though they are ignorant of these basic truths of Christianity.

In our passage last week, Paul is laying out in no uncertain terms that Christians are called out and to be distinct *from* the world. Thus, Christians are not to have the same lifestyles as the worldlings.

Paul lists some very serious and deep rooted sins (sexual immorality, adultery, homosexuality, greed, etc.). These are sins that define the lives of unbelievers and Paul says that Christians should not be engaging in these practices, because they have been liberated from them.

This is what the world, society, and secularism cannot and does not understand about the gospel: **the gospel changes people**. Paul can say to the homosexual in Corinth, the alcoholic in Corinth, to the greedy scrooge

in Corinth, to the foul-mouthed gossip in Corinth, "turn from your sin and serve the living God," and fully expect that if he or she is a Christian, that person will repent, turn from sin, and endeavor after new obedience.

This is because Christ has not only made atonement for sins and brought forgiveness, but by His Spirit has transformed the heart and mind of all His people. As such, the person who was *enslaved* to sin is enabled to reject that sin, abandon it, and follow Christ.

Of course, this not easy; old habits of the old man die hard. Yet because of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, through prayer, fasting, scripture reading, and accountability, the sinner can live a life of new obedience.

This is one reason Christ saves His people to the church. He calls us out of the world and brings us to His church so that we can support each other in our struggle against sin. It is incredibly difficult to give up a sin that was so dear and defining, and yet because of the death of Christ in our place, it is possible. That is where Paul left us last week: pondering the blood of Christ which He in love poured out for sinners.