



# FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2014

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**May 4, 9:35 a.m.**

Called Meeting of the Session

**May 4, 4:00 p.m..**

Sunday Night Study

@ the Manse; we will discuss Ch. 6 of *Man Asks, God Answers*, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

**May 6, 9:30 a.m.**

Presbytery meets at Pinehaven PCA in Clinton, MS

**May 7, 5:15 p.m.**

Wednesday Night Bible Study: "What Do Presbyterians Believe?"



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## From the Pastor's Pen...

This summer we are going to take a pause in our study of I Corinthians to consider some more fundamental questions and issues related to "What is the gospel and why does it matter?"

To help us prepare for our Summer Sermon Series, in May we will be spending three weeks looking at John 3:1-21 and Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Ruling Council; he was a well-respected Bible scholar and devout man. He comes to Jesus by night because he thinks he has Jesus and the gospel fairly well all figured out.

As Jesus makes clear from the very beginning of their chat, Nicodemus understands nothing about Jesus or the gospel He proclaims. We'll be looking at three themes in John 3 this month:

**1. The Necessity of the New Birth.** Jesus asserts that the gospel is not simply about the right knowledge or being part of the right group; it is a supernatural, spiritual transformation.

**2. The Necessity of the Atonement.** Nicodemus thought that he was doing well by keeping the Law and was an all around moral guy, but Jesus will make clear, all our sins must be punished by the shedding of blood.

**3. The Necessity of Faith.** Nicodemus trusted in his own lineage and heritage to put him in a right relationship with God. But Jesus declares that the first thing about a relationship with God is looking away from yourself and "what you done" and looking to what God provides.

Please worship with us this coming month and come hear what the Saviour has to say to us all.



## Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

We have been looking at a section of the Catechism that addresses the benefits of God's calling a sinner out of darkness into His most glorious light. Last week we looked at justification, and this week we'll consider adoption:

Q. 34. *What is adoption?*

**A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God.**

With the close of WWII in Europe, the German nation was at peace with the United States. People who were once enemies stopped shooting at each other and began working side by side for the common good of the world and mankind.

In the gospel, God takes us who were His enemies and reconciles us to Himself, He makes peace with us through the death of His son in our place. The wrath of God which was due to us for our own sins was poured out

upon Christ and we become citizens of the Kingdom of God.

In the gospel, God did not simply make peace with us and make us citizens of His kingdom, He adopted us as His sons. What a glorious privilege, to be welcomed into the household as a son by one's former enemy.

As God's sons, we have various privileges. One of which is to know His fatherly love. As a father cares for His children, so God cares for us. Flowing from that is another privilege, that of prayer. While the unbeliever may think "happy thoughts" in a time of crisis or concern, the Christian may take up the matter with the King and seek the King's help and blessing.

The greatest privilege we have in our adoption is as "heirs and joint heirs with Christ." This means that on the Day of Judgment, those of us who are, *in Christ*, the sons of God will enter into the joy of our inheritance: everlasting fellowship with and enjoyment of God.

# The Three Uses of God's Law

In Sunday School we have begun a new series, this one looking at the Ten Commandments as they are found in Exodus 20. As we saw last week in introducing the Law of God, God had saved His people from bondage in Egypt and has gathered them to worship Him at Mount Sinai. There He gives them His Law to teach them how to live as His people. God did not give His Law so that Israel would *become* His people, He gave it because they *already were* His chosen people. **The Law always follows the gospel, it doesn't make us worthy of it.**

Over the last couple of centuries, some theologians have argued that God's Law given in the Old Testament was simply for the Jews. They claim that now that Christ has come and brought in grace, we no longer need to obey God's Law. This misses the point that grace was always active under the Old and New Testaments.

The vast majority of Christians (including the Apostles), however, have believed and taught that the Law of God is a vital and essential part of Christian living and piety. The Ten Commandments cover every aspect of human moral activity and ethics. In short, the Apostles taught, if you reject God's Law you reject Him as Saviour. God's Law is not contrary to the gospel; it teaches us how to live under God's grace as His redeemed people and shows us our continued need to repent.

Contrary to those who argued that God's Law has no abiding significance since the coming of Christ, the Reformed Theologians of the 16th Century articulated three "uses" of the Law. God's Law:

**1. Restrains Sin in Society.** The Law of God presents God's objective standards of justice and promises punishment to all who break it. In many cases, the fear of punishment is enough to restrain lawlessness.

**2. Gives Knowledge of Sin.** The Law of God also functions like a mirror, it shows us our dirtiness and filth and our need of cleansing. God's law reveals the standard God has set for life, and makes it plain that we don't meet that standard. No one can be saved by works of the Law; God's

Law pushes a person to the brink of despairing for one's own goodness, so that he or she is driven to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy as the only hope.

**3. Teaches the Christian How to Live;** it is the Christian's guide for growing in holiness. If you want to be more Christ-like, where should you look? The Law of God, of course, since that was the standard by which Christ lived. God's Law shows us as His people how to live lives that are pleasing to Him.

I hope that you will be able to join us for Sunday school as together we study to be more like the Saviour and seek to grow in grace and holiness.



## Sermon Snapshot: "Flee from Sexual Immorality"

This past Lord's Day we closed out Paul's brief discourse on the sexual immorality that was rampant and widely tolerated in the Corinthian church. As we went along, we saw Paul's response to many of the slogans and maxims that Corinthians used to explain and justify their illicit activities. In 1 Cor. 6:18-20, Paul finally gives us a slogan of his own: "Flee from sexual immorality!" This is a timely maxim for our own lives and society.

With few exceptions, modern society affirms nearly every kind of sexual immorality. This is tragic not only because of what it says about the state of moral and ethical decay indicated by such affirmation, but particularly because it congratulates people in their sexual sins.

The gospel calls people out of sinful lifestyles to turn from them and embrace the mercy of God offered in Jesus Christ. Society responds to the call of repentance by accusing Christians of being "anti-love," archaic, and bigoted. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Paul writes to Corinthians, mired in all manner of sexual sin, and calls them to embrace the love of God and abandon their infatuation with and gratification of sinful

desires. Paul closes by commanding that in the moment of temptation, they must flee! His advice holds true for all kinds of temptation, not just in sexual sins. The only way to resist temptation is to flee; one can't simply resolve not to be tempted or resolve not to yield. Last Sunday, we looked at three ways to flee temptation:

**1. Consider your identity in Christ.** Paul has been reminding us that if we are Christians, we are united to Christ body and soul. Apart from Christ we are nothing and we can do nothing apart from Christ. Is it fitting for a Christian to do what you are being tempted to do?

**2. Consider your love for Christ.** The Devil is a very patient foe; he will wait for you to lower your guard and then try to entice you with your love for some sinful activity. Combat him by calling to mind how much you love Christ, how much more satisfying Christ is than whatever it is that you are being tempted to do or think.

**3. Consider Christ's love for You.** Christ's love is what nourishes your own love for Him. It was Christ's love that caused Him to die for a sinner such as you when you were powerless to save yourself.