



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, MAY 16, 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 18, 10 a.m.

Lunch following the worship service.

May 18, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Night Study:

Man Asks, God Answers Chapter 7, "What Happens to Babies Who Die?"

May 20, 5:15 p.m.

Wednesday Night Bible Study, **What Do Presbyterians believe?**

May 25, 9:00 a.m.

Visiting Missionary Speaking in Sunday School.

From the Pastor's Pen...

One of the joys of being saved to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is participating in His body and hearing about and taking part in the work that Christ is doing throughout the world.

One of the problems with the Hebrews of the Old Testament is that they had little concern or desire to see the nations around them come to worship God. God had chosen Israel to be a "light to the nations," calling the nations out of the darkness of pagan idol worship to know God's gracious love and blessing.

Throughout the Bible, God makes clear that His people are to be continually calling all nations to worship God (e.g. Psalm 96 "Sing to the Lord all the earth...Declare his glory among the nations..."). God does not want us to have a

"provincial" view of Him and His Church, one that is confined to our own community or country; our desire should be for people from the ends of the earth come to worship God.

Next Lord's Day, May 25, for Sunday School we will have as our guests Aaron, Rachel, and Ford Halbert. They are preparing to go to Honduras to plant churches and proclaim the unfathomable riches of God in Christ Jesus.



For those of us who know God's grace in Christ, our greatest desire is for others to come and be saved from their sins by hearing of Him. "But how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?"

Please come and hear from the Halberts and their calling to preach Christ in Honduras.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

For the past several weeks, we've been looking at the benefits of God's calling and particularly justification, adoption, and sanctification. This week we look at several other benefits to Christians in this life because of salvation. Often we don't realize - and neglect to thank God for - the many benefits we enjoy now because of His saving grace and love:

Q36. *What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?*

A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

We could spend the rest of our days meditating on the truths of this one sentence answer! Let's note a few things briefly:

First, in this life, we can be assured of God's

love. So many go through life just wanting to be loved, searching for someone to love them and doing anything to be loved. The Christian can stop this rat race to rest in God's love alone.

Second, the Christian can enjoy peace of conscience knowing that Christ has *satisfied* the penalty of *all, every one of* his or her sins.

Third, those whom God has called can have joy in His Spirit. This is an abiding and lasting joy not contingent upon our circumstances.

Fourth, the Christian grows in grace. If you are a Christian, you are never going to be satisfied in this life with your holiness, love for God, or sanctification, but the Scripture encourages us with the promise of increasing grace.

Finally, we who are Christians are promised that we cannot fall away from grace, that God's grace cannot fail, and that we shall surely be brought into God's eternal rest with all His chosen and blood-bought saints.

Do you know these benefits in your own life?



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The Second Commandment

Last Lord's Day and this coming Lord's Day we are looking together at the Second Command of the *Decalogue*, the Ten Commandments in Sunday school. Last week we looked at what God commands us in the Second Command and this week we are going to be considering the reasons that God gives to obey this command particularly.

You will recall that the First Commandment requires that we worship God, the true God alone and no other gods beside Him or in addition to Him.

The Second Commandment requires that we worship the right God in the right way. God cares very deeply about *the way in which* we worship Him. It is not enough that we worship God, we must worship Him the right way, and the Second Commandment makes that very clear.

In summary, the Second Commandment teaches us that **God tells us how we are to worship Him, and particularly that images are to have no place whatsoever in Christian worship, piety, devotion, or spirituality.** God forbids us to come to him through any created thing or use anything that we have made to help us feel closer to Him.

Instead of images and icons, God has given us His word so that we can know Him better, remember Him, love Him more, and have richer communion with Him. It is a great insult to God for us to come to Him another way.

It is very easy to break this commandment because growth in grace is such a difficult part of the Christian life. It is much easier to have a picture or a statue to create emotions within us than to be faithfully studying God's Word. The thing is, however, all images of God are false, but God's word is *always* true and that is one reason that God forbids us from using images to feel closer to him or worship Him. **God wants us to know Him better, not**

some piece of canvas, clay, or plastic. The only way we can know Him better is by communing with Him through and by His holy word.

This, like all of the commands, is a difficult one to keep because it concerns our hearts. Fundamentally, a thing is just a thing; it has

no power. the problem, the sin is when we give a created thing power, or think that God is pleased because we wear or build some created thing, or start to have emotional attachments and desires about created things in worship or devotion. When we do those things, we are breaking this command and damaging our relationship with God.

The purpose of our study in the Ten Commandments is one to show us how God's people are to live but also to show us our great and continued need of Christ and His grace. All of us need to repent and turn from our cherished sins to the Lord Jesus Christ every single day.



Sermon Snapshot: "Atonement for Sin Necessary"

This past Lord's Day we looked at John 3:9-17. In this middle section of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus he explains the great peril of mankind because of sin. Nicodemus, as we've noted a number of times, was a religious person, a good person in the eyes of the community. Nicodemus believed that God would accept him because of how diligently he practiced his religion, of his love for country, and faithfulness to God.

Jesus established last week that nationality and race have nothing to do with a person's acceptance before God, and thus New Birth is necessary.

This past week, Jesus explained the desperate need of mankind for a sacrifice for sin. Mankind was utterly defiled, even the "good" people like Nicodemus are cut off from God because of their sinfulness.

To meet the need of our race, God sent His only Son to offer up the sacrifice for sin that mankind could not offer because of sin. The righteous Son of God became man and died in the place of sinful man Jesus illustrates this point

from the Old Testament in Numbers 21 when poisonous snakes infested the camp of Israel on their way to the Promised Land. All people of the camp were dying because of the poison. There was nothing anyone could do. There was no "Rooster Cogburn" to carry them through the night to get medical care; there was no cure. The people cried out to God and He provided a cure: looking at an bronze serpent like the ones that had bitten them. **Nothing more than looking to what God had provided for them and trusting in God's word of promise by faith.**

With Christ on the cross, God made Him to be an emblem of the very thing that had condemned mankind to die: sin. **Christ became sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God.**

Every last one of us stands condemned in our own sin and for our own sin. But God has provided the only way of salvation: faith in His Son's work on our behalf. This is a difficult concept for anyone to grasp because it means that we in ourselves are not good enough for God, but we must look to Him to make us right.

