



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Aug. 3, 9 a.m.

Sunday School in the Pastor's Study: "The Ninth Commandment"

Aug. 3, 10 a.m.

Morning Worship: Luke 15:11-24, "Two Lost Sons (Part I)" and the Lord's Supper Observed

Aug. 5, 9:00 a.m.

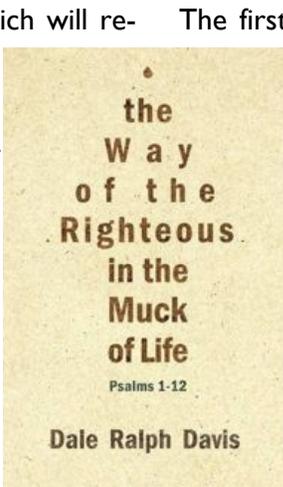
Presbytery meets at FPC Kosciusko

From the Pastor's Pen...

The Session met for its quarterly meeting times we are down in the "muck" of sorrow, and, among other things, approved the curriculum for the Sunday Night Study which will resume, God willing, the first Lord's Day after Labor Day (Sept. 7). This fall we'll be reading together *The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life* by Dr. Dale Ralph Davis.

Davis was pastor at Woodland PCA in Hattiesburg, MS for quite some time before he retired. He is one of the most gifted teachers of our time.

In this book, we will get to consider together the first twelve psalms. John Calvin called the Psalter "an anatomy of all parts of the soul," because they trace and reflect on the full gambit of human emotions: from soaring heights to, as the title of the book suggests, the



trouble, and disappointment. The first twelve psalms articulate basic, fundamental, and essential principles for living a godly life. The issues faced by the psalmist are very similar to the ones that we face: he lived in a world surrounded by wickedness in which people hate God, he was subjected to hostility from people around him, he was an object of gossip and ridicule.

In the face of such hardship and heartache, the psalmist finds his hope and comfort in the truth of the living God and the blessings of the Messiah.

This book by Ralph Davis will help us to understand the Bible more deeply and apply it to our own lives for our growth in grace.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

The Catechism gives a rather brief introduction to the Decalogue in questions 39-44 to prepare us for the study of God's Moral Law.

Q42. *What is the sum of the ten commandments?*

A. The sum of the ten commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus was asked one day what was the "greatest commandment" by someone seeking to trip him up. Jesus simply explains both the two greatest commandments as well as how they serve as a summary of God's whole Moral Law: love for God and love for neighbor.

Love is not simply an action, is it? It is a disposition of one's heart toward another. In articulating the Greatest Commandment and summary of the Law this way, God has made it clear that obedience and salvation are not sim-

ply a matter of "doing." Many - hopefully most of us - obey the law regarding taxes every year, but very few of us love sending off piles of money to Washington. Few of us send off that money out of some great love and satisfaction for the services we receive from the Government, and the IRS doesn't care whether you like the government or not so long as they get their money, you can generally assume that the IRS will not bother you.

God, however, is not like that at all. Obedience to God is not simply a matter of performing the right things, but doing so out of love and an all-consuming love for Him. After all, everything God does to, for, or brings upon His people is motivated by His love for them.

These two great commandments help us to know whether what we are doing is right or wrong by asking, "Am I obeying God's Law and am I doing this out of love for God and love for my neighbor?"



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The Lord's Table

We come again this Lord's Day to the Table of Christ to take part in the supper that He gave His church to "proclaim His death until He comes." As we considered the last time we came to the Lord's Table, it is only for sinners who come having been saved by grace through faith in repentance of their sins. Although the Table is for sinners, Paul warns us about coming unworthily and without self-examination, coming in ignorance of what we are doing, and/or without a knowledge of Christ. Consider these Catechism questions as you prepare for worship:

Q168. What is the Lord's supper?

A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament of the New Testament wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with the other, as members of the same mystical body.

Q170. How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's supper feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein?

A. As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally [i.e., physically] present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements

themselves are to their outward senses; so they that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal and carnal, but in a spiritual manner; yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.

These two questions and answers remind us of the mystical nature of the Lord's Table. We do not receive any benefit except by faith through the Holy Spirit of God. Many think that they get a benefit regardless of their state of mind or soul, but the Scripture testifies (1 Cor. 11) that it is only for those who commune with Christ by faith.

Q171. How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?

A. They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

The Lord's Table is no slight matter and requires our preparation because the blessings we receive by faith are no slight matter either! Don't miss any of the blessings that Christ offers simply because you are too busy or too tired.

Sermon Snapshot: "Be Good?"

All through this summer we've been looking closely at two questions: "What is the gospel" and "Why does it matter." The texts we've considered hopefully are giving more clarity on what it means to be a Christian. Sunday we considered Gal. 3:10-14 in which Paul contrasts two systems for attaining life. In the first, Paul says there is life promised to everyone who does, who keeps God's Law.

Most of us have probably seen the 1982 movie *ET*. Do you recall ET's first words: "Bee...goood?" That is the way most people figure they attain and ensure divine blessing: by being good. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that God will receive and bless anyone who lives a good life, a life that is obedient to His Law. **The one who is good and keeps the Law has no need of grace and forgiveness from God.**

The second system, by contrast, Paul articulates is founded entirely upon the grace and forgiveness of God and offered only to those who are *not* good people, who have not obeyed God's Law. **The second system involves faith in God's promises regarding the work of Christ and turning from sin and pride in one's own achievements.**



These systems are mutually exclusive. One cannot be saved both through faith and by being good. Either you are a good person OR you are saved by grace. The Christian recognizes that he or she is not good and is utterly hopeless without God's mercy. The non-Christian assumes that a person goes to heaven because he or she is good.

To date, there has only been one person who has been good, who has kept the Law, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though Christ kept the Law, he did not come to take the blessings of obedience that he earned, instead he took the damnation that was due to sinners so that the blessings he earned could go to sinners who turn to Him by faith in the promises of the gospel to those who repent.

The great tragedy is that so many people refuse to turn from their own works to the work and goodness of Christ. Instead, people want to trust in the fact that they have been good, rather than recognize the folly of their ways and seek mercy from God. Because of Christ's sacrifice, God is so ready to receive and forgive and show mercy to sinners who see their need for His grace. Do you know your need?