



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, SEPT. 5, 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sept. 7, 9 a.m.

Sunday School in the Pastor's Study: Exodus 25, "The Tabernacle"

Sept. 7, 10 a.m.

Morning Worship: Romans 5:12-21, "Reconciled through Christ"

Sept. 7, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Night Study Resumes @ FPCW

Sept. 10, 5:15 pm

Midweek Bible Study, "What Do Presbyterians Believe: *Christ the Mediator*"



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From the Pastor's Pen . . .

I received an email today from an acquaintance; it was one of those emails that makes the rounds, I'm sure I'd seen it before. The subject line was "The Best Sermons Are Lived, Not Preached." When I saw the subject line I just rolled my eyes, but of course I couldn't help but open it. Inside was a collection of a dozen or so moralistic anecdotes with life lessons (the kind of stuff that concludes an episode of *Duck Dynasty* on A&E or *Wishbone* on PBS).

As I read the email, my heart sank for the sender. I know where he attends church, and it is a mainline congregation where the gospel is not central and the Bible is not believed. On the Lord's Day when they gather, I expect what they get from their pulpiteer is a message about how to be a better person and an encouragement to try harder at being a better person.

As such, it makes sense that someone whose religious services consist of exhortations aimed

at moral improvement void of any real Bible or Spiritual power would think that indeed the "Best Sermons Are Lived, Not Preached." But the tragedy of it all is that such a sentiment is entirely unbiblical and at odds with what the Bible says about Christianity and salvation!

Christ, through the Holy Spirit, says at I Cor. 1:21 that He has chosen to bring salvation not through observing moralistic life lessons but "through the folly of what we **preach** to save those who believe." And again in Rom. 10:14 Paul longs for more men to **preach** the gospel, "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"

Christianity is not simply about learning valuable life lessons and being a good person, **it is about knowing Christ** who came to die for sinners and to bring redeemed sinners into relationship with God.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

As the Shorter Catechism expounds the Ten Commandments it typically describes the meaning of commands in two ways: what each command requires of us and what each command forbids.

Q46. *What is required in the first commandment?*

A46. The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly.

A number of times in the Bible the prophets exhort God's people to give God "the glory due His name" (e.g. I Chron. 16:29, Psa. 29:2, Psa. 96:8). This command is calling us to do just that.

In the multicultural society in which we live, in which Jesus lived, and in which the Hebrews of old lived there is and was a great deal of opposition to the truth that the God of the Bible is the one and only God. This command is multicultural and highly offensive today just as it was when it was originally given or in the time of

Christ and the Apostles.

Not only does this command require us to acknowledge the truth, the fact that there is but one living and true God and He is revealed through Bible, but it also requires us to worship Him. Worship is not an optional thing that we can do if we want or find it convenient; worship is what God created His creatures to do!

On the Lord's Day when Christians gather together, we are obeying this command. We bring praise and adoration to the God who made us and who sustains the whole universe by the Word of His power. Any rational creature could not help but to worship this God.

The problem with mankind, however, is that we are no longer rational. Sin has corrupted us so that we tend to not worship God as He is due, but rebel against Him, and deny Him. To save us from our sin, God sent Christ to redeem. As such we not only worship God as our Creator but also our Redeemer.

Adam and Christ: Two Representatives for Mankind

This Lord's Day we are in Romans 5:12-21 in which the Apostle Paul explains to us how indeed we can be made righteous, forgiven and accepted by God because of Christ's work on our behalf. After all, on the outside, **what difference does it make if some Jew in Palestine died 2000 years ago at the hands of an occupation government on the order of some petty bureaucrat worried about losing his job?** Many Jews die and have died in Palestine, many people die on account of bureaucratic expediency and their deaths accomplish nil.

Paul will explain that Adam, the first man, served as a representative for mankind. In Adam, all mankind would either be blessed (because of his obedience) or cursed (because of his disobedience). Sin entered the world through the first man, Adam and spread to all Adam's natural descendents.

Adam, as you know, sinned and brought death, illness, misery, and ultimately alienation from God upon the human race. Adam, however, was not the *only* representative for mankind, he was simply a type (Rom. 5:14) or a foreshadowing of One who would come later.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to be the "Second Adam" and succeed where Adam failed. Christ's obedience would earn blessing for all those who are united to Him by faith and reconciled to God through His death.

Christ's work is effective and received by God because He came as the "opposite" of Adam. Adam's

one sin ruptured our relationship with God and Christ's perfect obedience and righteousness restores that relationship by God's grace.

As such, no one can claim that being represented by Adam is unfair, since God freely offers salvation by grace from the curse of sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam was a fine representative for mankind; in the garden he knew none of the effects of or limitations from the Fall that we know now and that plague our intellect, reasoning, and dispositions. In spite of all his qualifications, Adam still failed. To ensure that mankind would not be utterly lost, God planned to send His Son to make a way for man to return to God.

Christ's mission and representative work on our behalf was much more difficult than Adam's original task. Adam had to obey God perfectly in a lush garden filled with delicious food. Adam served God in a world that was completely at peace with mankind; there were no weeds or frustrations. Christ worked and lived in a world under a curse; he knew hunger, exhaustion, and disappointment, and yet He did not fail us.

Christ assumed all the terms of the original obligation that Adam failed to meet, including becoming man. Christ met them and then endured the penalty that was owed to those who failed to meet them. We ought to praise God that He became man so that Christ could be our elder brother and save us by His work for us.

Sermon Snapshot: "Reconciliation and Relationship"

Last Lord's Day we began a three-part series in Romans 5 and 6 looking at how Paul deals with the questions of "What is the gospel?" and "Why does it matter?" In Romans 5:6-11 Paul focuses on the reconciliation we now enjoy with God because of Christ's coming and work on our behalf.

Paul first reminds us of the kind of God love that God showed us in Christ. God did not send His beloved Son to die for good people or righteous people; God did not save on the basis of what people would do or bring to Him. God saved us from sin through Christ only on the basis of His grace and kindness. Such a salvation and kindness would have been enough to bring Him praise and glory for all eternity, but our redemption doesn't end there.

Christ also brings us into a friendly relationship with God. Oftentimes Christians tend to focus on the fact that they have been saved from sin and made to inherit eternal life, but don't consider the other benefits that Christ brings to the Redeemed that come through a relationship with God the Father through Christ.

Have you considered the riches that are yours through a relationship with God through Christ? Many, sadly, do not; they think that Christianity is simply an identity, being dunked in water, signing a pledge card, the place they grew up, or the place that they will be buried. Such a small view of Christianity and the church offers no eternal comfort because it is not founded upon Christ, but rather centered on the individual.

We should all examine ourselves to consider the health of our relationship with God through Christ. Many deceive themselves into thinking they are Christians simply by virtue of church membership or baptism, but have no fellowship with God.

The first thing of the Christian life is of course repenting of sin and seeking God's grace through Christ by faith. The one who is saved into a relationship with Christ will be growing in grace, searching the Scripture to know more of God, desiring to worship God with His people. All these are signs of a healthy relationship with God through Christ. Where they are not present is cause for serious concern and need for repentance.

