



First Presbyterian Church

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~July 2009~

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The Hebermehls would like to thank everyone who helped make our 50th anniversary party a lovely celebration. Special thanks go to the Hospitality Committee, and to all the folks who brought the many cards and the big stack of foods for Helping Hands. We will cherish the plaque, which was a delightful surprise. We love you all!

Virginia and Hal Hebermehl

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE
First Presbyterian Church Newsletter

July

Borger, Texas

2009

Pastor's Pen

July 2009

Well, it's time for fireworks and celebrations. The excitement and grandeur of our Independence Day with all the events and fun.

But, there is one more acknowledgement and celebration that may not be on everyone's July 2009 calendar. In fact it may not cause much excitement at all. So get ready for

CALVIN JUBILEE

The celebration of the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth (July 8, 1509) is here! And what a fun time it will be. Here is what Joseph D. Small, Director, Theology, Worship, Education, PC(USA) had to say about Calvin and our Reformed heritage:

Many Presbyterians greet the news that 2009 will mark the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth with a yawn, a roll of the eyes, or even a derisive snort. Why are we so dismissive of our forebear in the Reformed tradition?

Lutherans adore Martin Luther. Methodist hearts are strangely warmed by John Wesley. Anglicans even have a sardonic fondness for Henry VIII. But Presbyterians are uncertain about John Calvin and his legacy. Calvin is not a Reformed idol. John Calvin would have been pleased by our reluctance to revere him. He did not want to be idolized by future generations. In order to discourage veneration, he specified that he be buried in Geneva's common cemetery in an unmarked grave. Contemporary visitors to Geneva may stumble upon Rue Calvin, but his house no longer stands, and no one even knows where it was.

We need not put Calvin on a pedestal in order to appreciate the ways in which his perspectives on Christian faith and life have shaped Reformed churches throughout the world, and continue to shape our church today.

At the conclusion of his admiring biography of Calvin, Theodore Beza, his successor in Geneva, wrote, "Since it has pleased God that Calvin should continue to speak to us through his writings, which are so scholarly and full of godliness, it is up to future generations to go on listening to him ..." [1](#) Future generations have continued to listen, not passively, but with a lively engagement that sometimes learns from Calvin, sometimes argues with him, and sometimes discovers that contemporary questions and answers are revised by their contact with his questions and answers.

As the Calvin Jubilee approaches, we can recall some of the ways his thinking has shaped the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including our understanding of the importance of education for children, youth, and adults.

Calvin placed the highest value on education in the church. He thought, "doubly fools" those "who do not deign to learn, because they think they are wise enough." [2](#) Thus, Calvin established schools for Geneva's children and youth, and he taught Scripture and theology daily. His understanding of Christian education was not confined to the classroom, however, or limited to the most talented students. Many poor ignorant people today, he wrote, "though ignorant and unskilled in the use of language, make known Christ more faithfully than all the theologians ... with their lofty speculations." [3](#)

Scripture was central to Calvin's understanding of Christian education. We may mistakenly think of Institutes of the Christian Religion as a scholastic work of systematic theology, but Calvin saw as its purpose, "to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word, in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling." [4](#) Calvin's teaching and writing shared a thorough, lively engagement with Scripture as God's present, living word to the church.

John Calvin did not view the Bible as a collection of facts to be learned or propositions to be mastered. In one of his delightful images, he likens Scripture to a pair of eyeglasses: "Just as eyes, when dimmed with age or weakness or by some other defect, unless aided by spectacles, discern nothing distinctly; so such is our feebleness, unless Scripture guides us in seeking God, we are immediately confused." [5](#) We study the Bible, not for its own sake, but because Scripture helps us to see God truthfully, ourselves honestly, and God's Way in the world clearly.

God's new way in the world was central to Calvin's teaching. He did not see matters of social and economic life as footnotes to the gospel or addenda to the nature of the church, but integral to knowledge and service of God who is Creator and Redeemer of all of life. He would have been puzzled by the contemporary distinction between compassion and justice. Any separation of theology and ethics would have been foreign to his comprehensive thinking about Christian faith and life.

Calvin's central concerns with Scripture and God's Way in all of life inform the educational materials of Congregational Ministries Publishing. We Believe, our central Presbyterian curriculum, is in the spirit of Calvin's continuing reform of the church. That is one reason why our attention to Calvin's Jubilee year is not an antiquarian endeavor or an exercise in hagiography. Instead, it is a chance to focus on the ways he continues to help in probing the depths of our faith and faithfulness.

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,



Georgia

CARING FOR EACH OTHER

The greatest commandment of our Lord and our faith is to "Love your neighbor as yourself." In response to this we have come to the conclusion that we need to be more intentional in our caring for each other at First Presbyterian Church and so we have convened a new Congregational Care Committee. Committee members are Hazel Howard, Leah Buckland, C.J. Nelson, and Jerry Pool. They will be checking on members whom we haven't seen in a while, anyone who is homebound, and those who are ill. This doesn't mean that the rest of us will not be providing care, it simply means that we are going to try to be a bit more organized about it. If you know of anyone who is in need, please don't hesitate to contact Georgia, Amanda, or one of the committee members.

God's blessings for all.

Notes from the Music Department

Yep! Summer is here and it is hot outside!! However, the outside of our church building (yard and flower beds) look just wonderful! Many thanks to Jerry Pool, Larry Nelson, Larry Larsen, Don Thompson, Toni Pool and anyone else who works on the outside of our church building.

There will be no choir practice for July. We will have quite a few members out in July so the choir will be rather small. I have prepared several easy anthems for small numbers as most of our members will be traveling during July.

Closing response for July will be "God be With You 'Til We Meet Again". I think most of us know this and should be able to sing by memory.

I have received many favorable comments regarding the singing of "Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this Place". This was Georgia's suggestion that we do this so thank her for this. I personally think that it helps to start our worship hour with reverence. I hope to continue this idea with the possibility of a new song beginning in September. I would, however, like to keep using the "Surely ..." for the present.

I would like to thank you again all for your prayers and concerns for my husband. He is finished with his radiation treatments. He is to go back to the Cancer Center in July for a follow up and we hope to receive a clean bill of health then. He is almost back to normal and continues to get stronger every day. I just wish I had half of his energy. Thank you all for your love.

We continue to hold Aleyene Watkins, Scott Glenn, Mary Botkin, and Jim & Bobbie Farrell in our prayers and thoughts. We are very blessed that Jim Farrell received a good report from the surgeon in Boston. He is back home now and looks just wonderful. We will continue to pray for healing and peace as they move through life's journey. We also hold all past and present choir members in our hearts. We miss you all.

May the Good Lord watch between you and me while we are absent one from the other!

Pat Petty and Choir

JULY CONGREGATIONAL POTLUCK AND PARTY

We're having a party for Amanda and Eric on Sunday, July 19th following worship. We will have a potluck dinner for all. Please bring your favorite dish and join us in celebration of the marriage of Amanda and Eric. If you have questions please contact Phyllis Harmony.

THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM

The Five Points of Calvinism are easily remembered by the acrostic TULIP. This system of theology was reaffirmed by the [Synod of Dordt](#) in 1619 as the doctrine of salvation contained in the Holy Scriptures. The system was at that time formulated into "five points" in answer to the unscriptural five points submitted by the Arminians to the Church of Holland in 1610.

I

Total Depravity (Total Inability)

Total Depravity is probably the most misunderstood tenet of Calvinism. When Calvinists speak of humans as "totally depraved," they are making an extensive, rather than an intensive statement. The effect of the fall upon man is that sin has extended to every part of his personality -- his thinking, his emotions, and his will. Not necessarily that he is *intensely* sinful, but that sin has *extended* to his entire being.

The unregenerate (unsaved) man is dead in his sins (Romans 5:12). Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the natural man is blind and deaf to the message of the gospel (Mark 4:11f). This is why Total Depravity has also been called "Total Inability." The man without a knowledge of God will never come to this knowledge without God's making him alive through Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5).

U

Unconditional Election

Unconditional Election is the doctrine which states that God chose those whom he was pleased to bring to a knowledge of himself, not based upon any merit shown by the object of his grace and not based upon his looking forward to discover who would "accept" the offer of the gospel. God has elected, based solely upon the counsel of his own will, some for glory and others for damnation (Romans 9:15,21). He has done this act before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:4-8).

This doctrine does not rule out, however, man's responsibility to believe in the redeeming work of God the Son (John 3:16-18). Scripture presents a tension between God's sovereignty in salvation, and man's responsibility to believe which it does not try to resolve. Both are true -- to deny man's responsibility is to affirm an unbiblical hyper-Calvinism; to deny God's sovereignty is to affirm an unbiblical Arminianism.

The elect are saved unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). Thus, though good works will never bridge the gulf between man and God that was formed in the Fall, good works are a result of God's saving grace. This is what Peter means when he admonishes the Christian reader to make his "calling" and "election" sure (2 Peter 1:10). Bearing the fruit of good works is an indication that God has sown seeds of grace in fertile soil.

L

Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)

Limited Atonement is a doctrine offered in answer to the question, "for whose sins did Christ atone?" The Bible teaches that Christ died for those whom God gave him to save (John 17:9). Christ died, indeed, for many people, but not all (Matthew 26:28). Specifically, Christ died for the invisible Church -- the sum total of all those who would ever rightly bear the name "Christian" (Ephesians 5:25).

This doctrine often finds many objections, mostly from those who think that Limited Atonement does damage to evangelism. We have already seen that Christ will not lose any that the father has given to him (John 6:37). Christ's death was not a death of potential atonement for all people. Believing that Jesus' death was a potential, symbolic atonement for anyone who might possibly, in the future, accept him trivializes Christ's act of atonement. Christ died to atone for specific sins of specific sinners. Christ died to make holy the church. He did not atone for all men, because obviously all men are not saved. Evangelism is actually lifted up in this doctrine, for the evangelist may tell his congregation that Christ died for sinners, and that he will not lose any of those for whom he died!

I

Irresistible Grace

The result of God's Irresistible Grace is the certain response by the elect to the inward call of the Holy Spirit, when the outward call is given by the evangelist or minister of the Word of God. Christ, himself, teaches that all whom God has elected will come to a knowledge of him (John 6:37). Men come to Christ in salvation when the Father calls them (John 6:44), and the very Spirit of God leads God's beloved to repentance (Romans 8:14). What a comfort it is to know that the gospel of Christ will penetrate our hard, sinful hearts and wondrously save us through the gracious inward call of the Holy Spirit (I Peter 5:10)!

P

Perseverance of the Saints

Perseverance of the Saints is a doctrine which states that the saints (those whom God has saved) will remain in God's hand until they are glorified and brought to abide with him in heaven. Romans 8:28-39 makes it clear that when a person truly has been regenerated by God, he will remain in God's stead. The work of sanctification which God has brought about in his elect will continue until it reaches its fulfillment in eternal life (Phil. 1:6). Christ assures the elect that he will not lose them and that they will be glorified at the "last day" (John 6:39). The Calvinist stands upon the Word of God and trusts in Christ's promise that he will perfectly fulfill the will of the Father in saving all the elect.

ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.