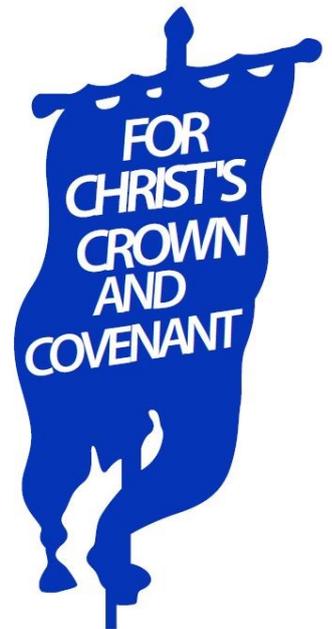


STORNOWAY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO
THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS
(1 TIMOTHY 1:15)

September 2019 Newsletter



WELCOME

LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

It is my intention, Lord willing, to begin two new series of sermons this month. On Sabbath mornings we will look at the book of Ezra. This Old Testament book can easily be neglected, yet it tells the story of God's sovereign dealings with his people to revive them. At our evening services, we will continue with the life of Elijah, which will give us an insight into some of the hardships and difficulties of Christian experience. Finally, on Thursdays we will begin a short series on the theme of sanctification. When we realise that God's will for us is that we might be conformed to the image of His Son, we must take it seriously. But how are we to be sanctified? Lord willing, we will learn or be reminded of His method.

I am thankful for your prayers for me as your minister. I commend you for your attentiveness to the Word of God, and would exhort you, as much as you are able, to be regularly in worship and under the preached Word.

Every blessing,

Stephen

NEWS & EVENTS

NEW MEMBER

The session were delighted to welcome Calum Macleod into membership at the recent Communion weekend.

STUDENTS RETURN TO SEMINARY

This month sees the return of our two theological students to seminary; Ian Gillies studying at the RPTS in Pittsburgh and Sylvester Konteh studying via distance learning in Gambia. Please remember both Ian and Sylvester in prayer, as they begin their second year of studies.



Sylvester Konteh

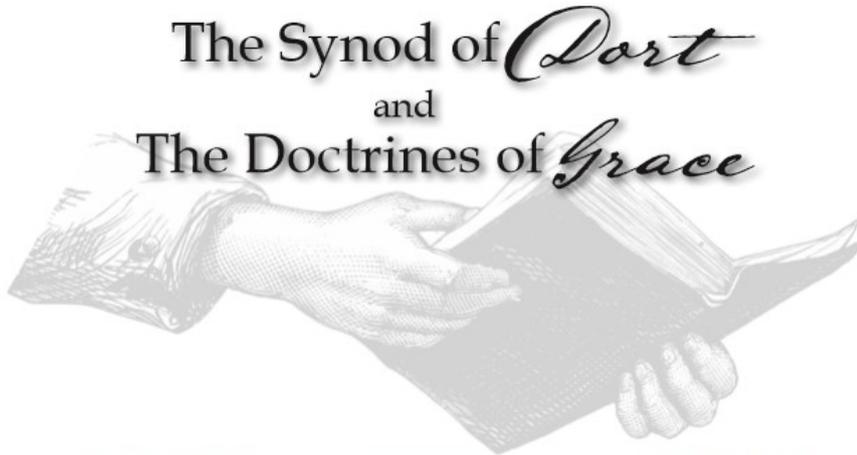


Ian Gillies

The Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in America are holding, what looks to be an interesting conference this month. Hopefully the recordings will be available in due course.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
THE WESTMINSTER CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 13-14, 2019

The Synod of *Dort*
and
The Doctrines of *Grace*



DR. DAVID G. WHITLA
Professor of Church History
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary



REV. THOMAS G. REID, JR.
Librarian
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary



DR. RICHARD C. GAMBLE
Professor of Systematic Theology
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary



PROF. KEITH A. EVANS
Professor of Biblical Counseling
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary



DR. C. J. WILLIAMS
Professor of Old Testament Studies
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary



DR. BARRY J. YORK
President
Professor of Pastoral Theology and Homiletics
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

The Westminster Conference

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

- 6:00pm Registration
- 6:50pm Opening Remarks - Mr. Mark Sampson
- 7:00pm **Dr. David G. Whitla** - *Four Centuries Ago*
An Historical Survey of the Synod of Dort
- 7:30pm **Rev. Thomas G. Reid, Jr.** - *The First Main Point of Doctrine*
Divine Election and Reprobation
- 8:30pm **Dr. Richard C. Gamble** - *The Second Main Point of Doctrine*
Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through It

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

- 9:00am **Prof. Keith A. Evans** - *The Third Main Point of Doctrine*
Human Corruption
- 10:00am **Dr. C. J. Williams** - *The Fourth Main Point of Doctrine*
Conversion to God and the Way It Occurs
- 11:00am **Dr. Barry J. York** - *The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine*
The Perseverance of the Saints

Sessions are followed by Q&A time and breaks for fellowship and book exhibits.

Conference Location: Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 7418 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15208.

Questions? Details are available at rpts.edu/events, or contact Kim Backensto at kbackens@rpts.edu or 412-731-6000.

Registration: \$30 per person registered through August 13 (\$45 for registrations after August 13). For registration and payment information, please go to <http://s.rpts.edu/WestConf>.

The **Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals** will supply the Westminister Conference Anthology from 2004-2018 to all attendees and a copy of the book *Saved by Grace* by Richard Phillips to the first 20 paid registrants.

Crown and Covenant will provide a copy of the book, *Book of Books*, edited by Dr. John H. White, to all pre-registered attendees.

*Book exhibits open during all breaks.

GLEANINGS BY BILL LUCAS

A LOVELY EMBLEM (PSALM 52)

"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God."

Evil men are like thorns and briars. They may also grow "like a green bay tree," assuming a momentary form of greatness, only to be "soon cut down." David, in all humility, and conscious of his union with God, put himself in a different category. "I am like a green olive tree." God had changed him. His spiritual roots were fixed in the One who said: "From me is thy fruit found." His spiritual resources were all derived from God alone.

The olive tree, naturally speaking, yielded three distinct blessings to man. It provided oil for the lamp; its fruits were nourishing and wholesome; and it had healing properties which often alleviated pain. What a true emblem of God's child this is! Because the oil of grace is in his soul he is, as Christ said of Himself, "a light in the world." With God's Word and life in his heart he can nourish the hungry soul. And by his sympathy and prayers he can bring comfort to those who mourn.

We have known some of Christ's poor ones who, after an hour of Christian fellowship, would remark: "My soul is the better for being in your company." This is what the Lord expects of each and all of us. "Let your light so shine before men." "Feed my lambs," "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." God's people are meant to communicate to one another the blessings they receive from Him. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul."

To bear fruit, we must maintain our communion with Him. We must remain in that spiritual environment which is congenial to our spiritual growth. "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God." Our secret exercises at the throne of grace, our worship in our families or in the public means of grace, are God's house of earth. There, under the dew of His presence, our "branches shall spread," and our "beauty shall be as the olive tree."

Murdoch Campbell (From Grace to Glory)

HEIR OF ALL THINGS

Joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17)

The boundless realms of His Father's universe are Christ's by prescriptive right. As "heir of all things," He is the sole proprietor of the vast creation of God, and He has admitted us to claim the whole as ours, by virtue of that deed of joint-heir-ship which the Lord hath ratified with His chosen people. The golden streets of paradise, the pearly gates, the river of life, the transcendent bliss, and the unutterable glory, are, by our blessed Lord, made over to us for our everlasting possession. All that He has He shares with His people.

CHS

THE PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL

O blessed Lord, be the physician of my soul. Forgive its sins and heal its diseases. Lighten my heart with the knowledge of your truth, and grant me grace to pass through the remainder of this day, and of my whole life, to your honour.

F B Meyer

GOD'S PLAN IS SURE

It is God Himself who gives us life, and the body in which we live it; and if He has done that we can draw this deduction, that His purpose with respect to us will be fulfilled. God never leaves unfinished any work He has begun ... And therefore we come back to this, that there is a plan for every life in the mind of God.

We must never regard our lives in this world as accidental. No. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Christ said one day to His timorous and frightened disciples. And we need to say that to ourselves. We can be certain that God has a plan and purpose for our lives, and it will be carried out. So we must never be anxious about our life and about its sustenance and its support.

We must not be anxious if we find ourselves in a storm at sea, or in an airplane, and things seem to be going wrong, or if in a railway train we suddenly remember that there was an accident on that line the previous week. That sort of thing is abolished if we really get this right view about life itself and the body as gifts of God. They are from Him and are given by Him. He does not just start a process like that and then allow it to continue anyhow, somehow. No; once He starts it He keeps it going.

God who decreed all things at the beginning is carrying them out; and God's purpose for mankind and God's purpose for the individual are certain and always sure.

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount)

THE DEVIL'S EXPERTISE

...for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11)

The world is Satan's bait. He seldom throws out a naked hook. Let murder, fraud, lying or idolatry be presented in their undisguised turpitude, and only few people of good education and correct morals will be taken in by him. But he conceals the hook in a goodly bait, and like a skilful angler, he knows how to use the temptation best suited to our palate ... For one he has a golden bait; for another pleasure; for a third, worldly fame and honours.

And his line is thrown out everywhere -- in our place of business, in our families, in our studies, at our tables, and on our pillows.

Arthur Jackson, A Homiletic Encyclopedia

(The devil) has an apple for Eve, a grape for Noah, a change of raiment for Gehazi, a bag for Judas. He can dish out his meat for all palates.

William Jenkyn

THE MAKING OF A MARTYR

I have often thought that the best Christians are found in the worst of times. And I have thought again, that one reason why we are no better, is that God purges us no more (John 15). I know these things are against the grain of the flesh, but they are not against the graces of the Spirit. Noah and Lot, who so holy as they, in the day of their afflictions? Noah and Lot, who so idle as they in the day of their prosperity?

John Bunyan, Advice to Sufferers

WHAT IS THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH? –PART SEVEN

The Reformed Presbyterian Church stands “For Christ’s Crown and Covenant.” We have examined the historical covenants in question and observed that the Reformed Presbyterian Church has long maintained both their ongoing relevance and obligation through the years. The question remaining is how do we apply these principles today? What is the most consistent Covenanter response to the challenges of the 21st Century? A principled Covenanter must not merely be someone aware of our history yet does nothing about it. I suggest a four-stranded approach.



1. FERVENT PRAYER

There will only be a return to the Lord in church and nation if God Himself reforms and revives His people, and therefore we need to be a praying people. We must pray penitently for our breach of covenant, but also hopefully and expectantly that the gracious God would fulfil His promises. “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6)

2. FAITHFUL PREACHING

The vast majority of society has no thought of God, never mind the Covenants to Him which we are breaking. The people must be informed through soul-searching, evangelical preaching. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

It is simplistic to think that a straightforward Gospel message is enough, perhaps sprinkled with some theological teaching. There must be a faithful preaching of the whole council of God, including all the doctrines of Scripture. Since oaths and vows and the doctrine of the civil magistrate are part of the system of doctrine in the Westminster Standards (a reflection of the fact that these doctrines are first in the Scriptures), a robust political theory is part of the remit of the pulpit. Of course, it should not become overwhelming, but rather one doctrine among many. Unless there is preaching on these things how will there be a turning back to the Lord?

“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: ‘Hear the words of this covenant and do them.’” (Jeremiah 11:6)

3. POLITICAL DISSENT WHEN NECESSARY

As Covenanters we recognise that political involvement is important and that nations have a duty to confess Christ. But there are areas where the privilege of political activity may involve a compromise of our principles, particularly an undermining of the Covenants we have made. I would suggest that in these areas, the best response is a principled political dissent. I do not mean a disinterestedness in politics, a retreat and hide mentality, or an attitude that we are too holy to meddle in these affairs. Rather political dissent involves a sacrifice of a right, e.g. voting, for the sake of higher principle, e.g. the honour of Christ.

6

Some take the view that Christians should always vote for the lesser of two evils, but by so doing a Christian actively votes for wickedness, even if less sinful than the alternative. We should only vote for Christian candidates who fear the Lord. But the candidate’s individual merits (or his party’s manifesto) are not the only factors when voting. The parliamentary system as a whole should be examined. When this is done carefully, it becomes apparent that political dissent is the most consistent action to the Covenanter position. Why is that the case?

While the United Kingdom does not have a written Constitution, it does have a series of acts of Parliament and conventions that have evolved through the years. Of importance to our discussion is the Bill of Rights (1689), adopted after the “Glorious Revolution.” We ought to remember that Scotland, England, and Ireland were, by merit of signing the Covenants in 1638 and 1643, constitutionally obliged to further the ends of the Reformed cause ecclesiastically and civilly. Just because the Covenants were later burned publicly, outlawed during the Persecution, and (intentionally) forgotten at the Revolution does not remove their propriety. The Covenants had been part of the Law and Order of the Kirk and the most important constitutional document of the State. Regrettably, a nation that had submitted to Christ its King, legally sought to dethrone Him and has thus continued in its rebellion to the present day.

At the Revolution Settlement, the Covenants were scandalously omitted from the Constitution of both the newly established Church of Scotland and State, and so, with a heavy heart, the Covenanters (later the Reformed Presbyterian Church) dissented. The sacrifice of the martyrs for the Crown rights of Christ has since been reinterpreted to have been for “civil liberty,” and so the pages of that era of the history book were closed without learning its lessons. Vows are weighty, solemn, and binding. Where they are broken or where circumstances require us to break them the only course open to us is to dissent so that we do not become complicit in the sin.

What circumstances would compel us to break our vows? There is a complex connection between the voter and the current (Covenant-breaking) constitution. The relationship between MP and voter is one of representation. We vote for the MP to take decisions in Parliament in our place. In order for him to do that, under the current British Constitution, he must take an Oath of Allegiance to the Queen. Allegiance to the Crown is not inherently wrong, but there is something about our current system that muddies the waters. Unfortunately, the monarch has taken an Oath of Coronation, which not only stands in sharp opposition to the Solemn League and Covenant but rather requires the breaking of it. How can we (through our representative) pledge allegiance to what goes against Christ?

Let’s look at one part of the Oath of Coronation: *“Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law? Will you maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England? And will you preserve unto the Bishops and Clergy of England, and to the Churches there committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?”*

The Oath demands maintaining “the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law.” This sounds like wonderful language until we realise that the form of religion established by law is one that has rescinded the legal pledges taken before God which is a breaking of the third commandment. It is a religion (established by law) which is inferior to an earlier legal establishment of religion and could only take its place by the violent overthrow of the truth. Furthermore, the Oath enjoins the Queen to “maintain and preserve inviolably” elements of the Church of England that no Presbyterian ever could wish to be preserved, and indeed many Covenanters died rather than accept. This Oath compels the Crown to maintain an Erastian, semi-Roman Catholic institution. The Covenants on the other hand call for rulers to do all in their power to reform the Church of England, that it be both Reformed and Presbyterian.

An MP taking an Oath of Allegiance pledges, *“I... swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, her heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God.”* The allegiance here is to her as Head of State which office she only holds on the basis of her Oath of Coronation. The allegiance sworn is one that aids and abets the Sovereign in making legislation that forsakes the Covenants.

We must remember that members of the Scottish Parliament at the Second Reformation swore the National Covenant and were not permitted to sit unless they did. Today, MPs swear an Oath of Allegiance and are not permitted to sit unless they do. It is not simply that we miss the old ways and think they were better. Rather, if we analyse the situation, we see that the contemporary Oath goes against the former Covenants by allegiance to the

Queen (and thus her Oath of Coronation) and by a recognition of a British Constitution which has rescinded the Covenants.

I could not take the Oath of Allegiance and therefore I dare not ask a representative to take it in my stead. Therefore, I do not vote for those who would take an Oath built on the ruins of the Covenants, but rather spoil my vote to show my dissent. I would dearly love to vote as politics interests me. I bear no hatred towards my country (nor its Queen) but seek its welfare. However, since a legitimate vow “binds to performance, although to a man’s own hurt” (WCF 22.4), there seems to be no way to vote consistent with the Covenanter principles.

It may all sound quite confusing. Indeed! Is it just academic theory? No! If it were just an assessment of history no longer pertinent it would be one thing. We are discussing something of serious weight to the welfare of today’s society, since, as we saw last time, there is a descending obligation of responsibility to us. Since the covenants are still binding, it is worth contemplating how we uphold them.

4—WITNESS-BEARING

The previous point shows a negative application of our principles: political dissent so that we do not further the treachery of our land. But it is not enough to know what not to do; we must also think of what we may positively do to turn around the situation. We should positively put our case to those in authority over us. How many think-tanks and lobby groups there are around Westminster and Holyrood that have such influence on governmental policy. It is clear that some groups, such as the LGBT lobby, have great resources at their disposal and thus have a disproportional influence on policy.

Reformed Presbyterians should see that we have the answer to our political dilemma. We have a great treasure, doctrines which have been entrusted to us by our forefathers, yet forgotten to society through the years. We should take pains to call our MPs and MSPs to account.

In 1661, Rev. James Guthrie became one of the first of the martyrs to die for adherence to Christ and Covenant. He was sentenced to be hanged for this faith. Guthrie’s last words, addressed to all who witnessed his execution, are worthy of note, “The Covenants! The Covenants! They shall yet be Scotland's reviving.”

Rev. Stephen McCollum

NOTHING BUILT FOR THE GLORY OF
man will survive God's scrutiny.
BUT WHAT IS DONE FOR HIS GLORY
will endure forever.

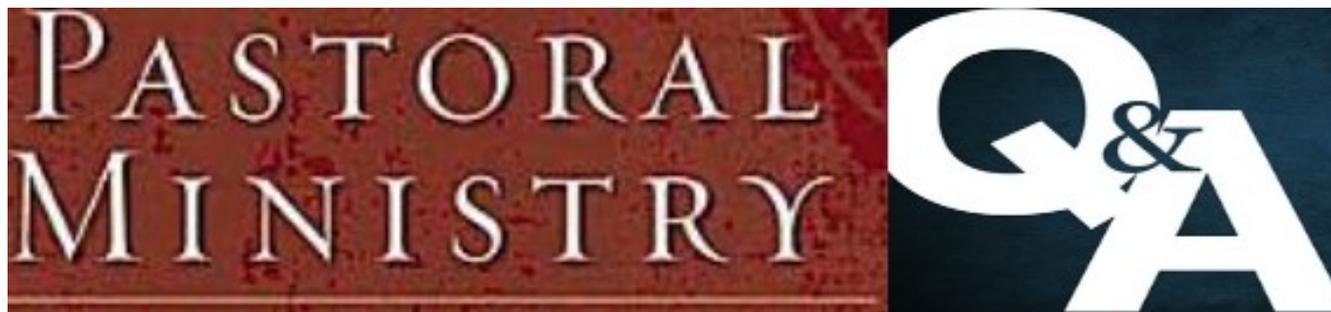
R.C. SPROUL



**THE GOSPEL IS OPEN TO ALL;
THE MOST RESPECTABLE
SINNER HAS NO MORE CLAIM
ON IT THAN THE WORST.**

MARTYN LLOYD-JONES





A couple of months ago a young man considering pastoral ministry sent me (and several others) a list of excellent and searching questions about ministry. I thought the answers might provide useful insights for others thinking about Christian ministry, as well as a window into the life and soul of a Pastor for church members.

1. What is the most difficult or challenging thing about being a pastor?

The most difficult/challenging thing about being a Pastor is probably the fact that I am doing a difficult task (ministering the Word of God accurately and clearly, pastoring and counselling in a wide range of settings involving all kinds of people and problems) for which I will be judged more strictly, which requires not just technical abilities (in language, intellectual understanding, creativity, etc.) but above all *godliness*. In other words I can't snap at my wife or children in the morning and then go off to work effectively, in a way that might be possible in another kind of work. I need to keep a conscience void of offence before God and man in order to do this job.

2. What has surprised you the most about being a pastor?

The depths of sin and hypocrisy in my own heart - how I can fall prey to temptation even while engaged in the holiest of work, even while preaching a sermon. I suppose I've been surprised by the sins of others too, which as a Pastor I have been made aware of in a way that I wouldn't have been otherwise. And yet I've seen people at their best as well - it's surprising (though it shouldn't be) to see how people cope with the most difficult of circumstances by the grace of God.

3. What thing do you know now that you wish you knew when you first became a pastor?

I wish I had known how quickly the years would fly past, that every week counts, that I need to redeem the time, that there is never going to be a large chunk of empty time when I can read that book and so it's better to get on with it as soon as possible!

4. Knowing how essential and vital bible reading and prayer are, aside from these two—what other things do you do to keep motivated and encouraged?

The fellowship of like-minded men in the ministry is a great encouragement: good pastors' conferences are oases, especially where I can hear preaching live that will feed and water my own soul. Reading good Christian books for pleasure and not for work. Listening to good preaching online is the next best thing to hearing it live in a worship service. My wife is my best encourager, giving honest feedback lovingly.

5. Considering Paul's explanation to Timothy of the biblical character traits of a truly gifted and called minister—what would you wish to elaborate or “add to” (you know what I mean) that list?

I'm always struck by how the qualifications for the elder have to do with *character* rather than gifts primarily. Not that gifts are irrelevant, but graces matter even more. And once you're in the ministry you realise how true this is. Robert Murray M'Cheyne said 'My people's greatest need is my personal holiness.' The longer I've gone on in the ministry the more I've appreciated this axiom. It relates to what I said on question 1 - the heart of the ministry is bound up in the heart of the minister.

6. Also considering this list—what trait does Paul mention that you would say is chief above all or absolutely essential?

What I said in q5 notwithstanding, the one quality that sets apart a man for the ministry is his ability to teach. All the other qualities are to be true of all Christian men. A minister must exemplify them in a blameless way (not perfectly, but without anything in his life that obviously disqualifies him on these counts), but this one is the exceptional one for the gospel minister. So I suppose if you're looking for something that sets a man apart from other godly Christian men, it's this one. But all are essential—if a man doesn't display them all to a high degree then he can't be an elder.

7. What frustrates you the most about being a pastor? And what do you think you could change or do to eliminate that frustration?

I am frustrated by people who join the church, who take solemn membership vows, and yet seem to have little interest in keeping those vows. Of course we all sin, we all fall short of our vows, but I get frustrated by those who are shocked and offended when I ask them to do what they have already bound themselves to do—to uphold some aspect of the church's teaching, or to submit to the leaders of the church even though they don't agree with what they have decided. Why did they join a Reformed church if their convictions aren't really Reformed? What did they think they were getting?! Perhaps my frustration is starting to show...! I try to remind myself that sanctification is a continual process, that Christians don't all grow at the same rate, that some true believers are immature and need to be encouraged. I also try to make as clear as possible to prospective members of the church what it is they are signing up to when they join a Reformed church!

8. What do you find the most fulfilling and joyful about being a pastor?

As another Pastor put it long ago, 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.' (3Jn 4). To see the members of the church responding in a godly way to the preaching of the word, to their afflictions, witnessing to their non-Christian friends, loving the brethren, delighting in the truth, bearing one another's burdens, forgiving one another and all of that - it makes all the agonies and heartaches worthwhile! And to see people converted through your ministry is a wonderful blessing and privilege. To see Christ saving, comforting, strengthening and teaching his sheep through my clumsy efforts is a wonderful experience.

9. What excites you? What gets you pumped up and motivated in the daily fulfilment of your ministry?

The knowledge that Christ is ministering to his people through me - my stumbling sermons, my counselling, my visiting - is a great motivator! Also the joy of sitting at the desk to study in depth the Word of God, to read the best of what the Spirit has taught the Church down through the ages, and then to pass it on to others - it's such a blessing to my own soul, never mind anyone else's!

10. What frightens you the most in the daily fulfilment of your ministry?

The knowledge that those who teach will be judged more strictly (Jas 3.1) and that I keep watch over the souls of the members of my church as one who will give an account (Hb 13.17) - that the King and Head of the Church is watching all I do and say, and my motives and desires that lie behind those words and actions. The thought of the Minister as a watchman who must give a clear warning to the lost is also a fearful one.

11. What are some common pitfalls or mistakes you have seen in other men, or even experienced yourself, you would most wish for men starting out to avoid?

I was warned not to spend all my time reading for sermon preparation, but to read widely across a range of theological topics. I fell into the trap of spending too long mining the text and commentaries and dictionaries. While it has certainly sharpened my exegetical skills, it was to the detriment of my general theological knowledge, and it's harder to find time to read in later years, especially if you have more pastoral work to do in a larger congregation.

I haven't prayed enough. I understand the vital primacy of prayer. I know Zech 4.6 by heart, but I don't pray as if I really believed it. I have worked very hard at my sermons and public ministry, but I haven't worked hard at

the ministerial task of prayer (Ac 6.4). Who knows how much more blessing my labours might have known if I had prayed more?

12. What one piece of advice would you give to men starting out?

'Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.' (Pr 4.23) I think this is profoundly true for pastoral ministry.

Rev. Warren Peel, Trinity RPC, County Antrim (Gentlereformation.com)

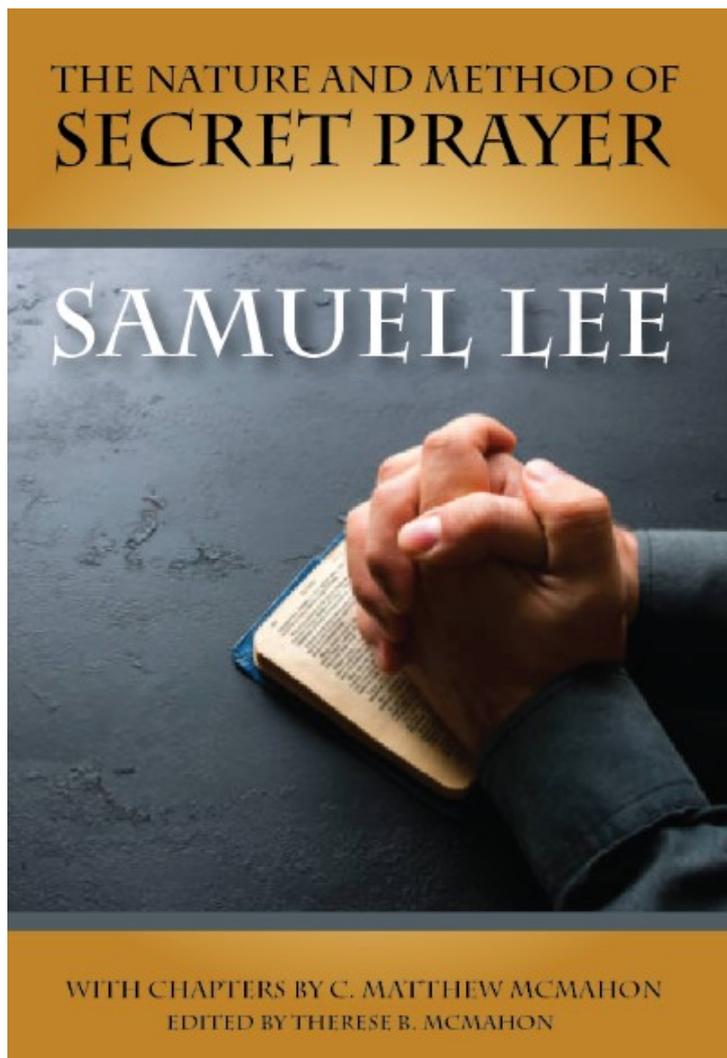
PURITAN PUBLICATIONS

What is “secret prayer?” What is its nature and how should it be accomplished by all serious Christians? Samuel Lee explains! Samuel Lee (1625-1691) was a learned puritan divine and preacher who ministered in both England and New England.

What is prayer? And what is the difference between prayer and secret prayer? What is the best method for secret prayer according to Scripture for the Christian? Lee expounds Matthew 6:6 in a most able and helpful manner to show the Christian what God expects in secret prayer, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

Lee covers the duty of secret prayer, managing secret prayer, various important directions for secret prayer, how one knows when their prayers are answered, how to discern if one has prayed well in order to gain the most profit from secret prayer, a number of questions on prayer both generally and specifically, and a final application of how prayer can be made most rewarding to the Christian overall.

www.puritanpublications.com



On Living the Christian Life in Real Time

THERE IS NO SAINT WITHOUT A PAST, NO SINNER WITHOUT
a future. – Augustine (354-430)



Dear Children

This month we are going back to the alphabet texts and look at texts for J K L.

J. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me .

Do you know who said these words and to whom he said them? Look up Mark chapter 10 and verses 46 – 52 and you will find the answers. Do you think he was in earnest when he said these words? Of course he was. He couldn't be silenced. The more they tried to stop him the louder he cried out for mercy. Do you think he knew to whom he was calling? He most certainly did and he also knew that Jesus was able to answer him. He believed it with all his heart. Jesus acknowledged his faith and answered his prayer. Do you feel **your** need for mercy? I'm sure you know who is the One who will have mercy on you but do you truly believe that He is able and willing to have mercy on your soul and save you from your sins? I pray that you will cry to Him like blind Bartimaeus did and that you will receive the same answer as he did. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." These words were said to another person who cried out for mercy. Look up Acts chapter 16 and verses 25-34 and you will find out who that person was.

K. Keep my commandments and live.

This command is from the Book of Proverbs chapter 7 and verse 2. Do you know who wrote this book? Look up chapter 1 and you will find out. The writer of this book tells us over and over again how important it is to keep God's commandments. The Bible is full of God's commandments but you have a summary of them in the Ten Commandments. Make sure you memorise these but also make sure you read the Scriptures where you will find out more about them and also about their relevance to your everyday lives. The writer of Proverbs says that if you keep them you will live and Jesus Himself said the same to the lawyer in Luke chapter 10: "Do this and you shall live." The Scriptures also teach us that we are sinners who cannot keep God's law perfectly and Question 82 in the Shorter Catechism, states: "No mere man since the Fall is able in this life to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed." Although that is true, God still requires us to keep His law. Our constant failure to do so is used by God to convince us that we are sinners in need of salvation and so lead us to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. He alone can give us grace (or help) to live lives in accordance with His law. If you put your trust in Him, His perfect obedience will become yours. From then on God will accept you as if you had kept His commandments perfectly. Isn't that amazing? What a gracious God and a wonderful Saviour we have! Keeping God's commands, though imperfectly, while resting on the obedience of Jesus Christ, will help you to live an orderly, peaceable and fulfilled life and protect you from many mistakes which you might otherwise live to regret.

L. Love not the world nor the things that are in the world.

In these words from 1 John chapter 2 and verse 15 the Apostle John is telling us to beware of loving the world or the things of the world more than God or the things of God. The world has many attractions and pleasures which are harmful to us if we choose them, follow them and spend our time on them. They are like the thorns in the parable of the sower which prevent us from paying heed to God and His Word and which also help us to forget why we are in this world. Do you know the first question in the Shorter Catechism and its answer? We are to glorify God and it is only by so doing that we will enjoy Him forever.

My prayer for each one of you is that these verses from Scripture will make you think as to what it is that God is saying to you and that He will give you the wisdom to obey them.

May God bless you. With love, Granny M