

THE SALTSHAKER

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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Membership Vow #5

By Rev. Sean McCann

Our final membership promise contains two words that are hard to understand, and even harder to apply. In the fifth vow we promise to *submit* and *study*, concepts that we are rather unfamiliar with in our daily lives. Both ideas convey the reality that not only are we sinners in the sight of God, but that we are part of a church full of sinners in the sight of God. The discipline of the church would not be necessary if we were free from sin, and there would be no need to pursue peace and purity if we could all live together in perfect, sinless harmony. The fact is, if our church is to be a hospital for the sin-sick and sorrowing, then we need this promise to guide us in how we live together. Let's consider the two terms in order.

Submit to the Government and Discipline of the Church

We understand from Scripture that Jesus Christ is the King and Head of the church. We further understand that "It belongs to His Majesty from His throne of glory to rule and teach the Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of men; thus mediately exercising His own authority and enforcing His own laws, unto the edification and establishment of His Kingdom" (BCO Preface). Jesus has given to his church officers who lead, rule, and serve as stewards, and to them he has entrusted the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19). To these elders is given the sober charge to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3).

And just as the elders have a sober charge in the government of the church, so, too, do members: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17). Good elders lead the church with the mind and Spirit of Christ. They make decisions for

the good of the flock, not for themselves. They advocate for the least of the members and refuse to play politics with the powerful and influential. They give of themselves that the sheep might grow and flourish in Christ. And according to this verse, it is to your disadvantage to cause them to groan in their care of you!

What does it mean to obey and submit to your leaders in the church? It means to honor them in your speech, just as we are called to honor all Christians in our speech (1 Timothy 5:17). It means to respect their decisions, even when we disagree. It means to consider their way of life and imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7). It means to follow their lead as they aim to humbly apply the steps and censures of church discipline (Matthew 18:15ff, 1 Corinthians 5:2ff, Galatians 6:1). Ligon Duncan summarizes this idea of submission: "A glad and willing respect for the elders, and a joyful acknowledgment and embrace of their spiritual leadership as the appointed shepherds of this flock." Remember: while submission to any earthly authority is hard and goes against the rebellious desires of the flesh, our earthly authorities are ordained by God for our good, and submission to them is the humble path of godliness.

Study the Purity and Peace of the Church

This next word always trips people up: "study." We think of schoolbooks and exams, of long nights and bleary-eyed mornings — a miserable time of our lives! Let me set you at ease: there are no exams as part of church membership, but we do have high call to a different type of studying. The best synonym here for study is *pursue*: we are called to pursue both the purity and peace of the church. The Confession of Faith speaks of churches as: "more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them." (WCF 20.4). This means

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May – June

Upcoming Events

For more information about any of these events, refer to our website (www.covenantreformed.net), or the church office (828-253-6578; office@covenantreformed.net).

The Lord's Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

Morning Worship:

May 5, 19

June 2, 16

Evening Worship:

June 30

Shepherding Groups:

May 5 following morning worship

Youth:

May 4, Youth vs. Adults Kickball, Weaver Park
 4:00–6:00 pm

Summer Church Picnic:

June 19 5:00 pm, Silver-Line Park

Women's Summer Book Discussion:

June 1, 29, July 27
 10:00–11:00 pm, Fellowship Hall

Weekly Events

Sunday:

Sunday School	9:30 am	
Morning Worship	10:45 am	
Evening Worship	6:00 pm	Except for 1st Sundays

Wednesday Evenings:

Supper	6:00 pm
Bible Study/Prayer	6:45 pm

Breaks during Summer Beginning May 29

Bible Study

For Men:

Men's Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
ROMEOS	7:30 am	Every Thursday
(Retired Old Men Eating Out) at Cornerstone Restaurant		
Norm Bomer's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

For Women:

Gail Albee's Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
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there is a true and pure doctrine, true and pure ordinances (i.e., word and sacrament), and true and pure worship. No church is perfect, for even “the purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error” (WCF 20.5). So, while the church will never be completely pure, as members we promote and pursue the church’s purity in how we live in obedience to God’s word, in how we promote and cherish true teaching and doctrine, and in how we embrace forms of worship that are true to God’s word.

Secondly, we pursue the peace of the church. Jesus said, “blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9), and we can add: blessed is the church full of peacemakers! God has unified us as his body with Christ as our head and he calls us to “bear with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). This means we pursue reconciliation when a brother or sister has something against us (Matthew 5:23). It means that we forgive our brother seventy-seven times when he sins against us (Matthew 18:22). It means that we refuse to major on minors, we refuse to strain gnats, and we refuse to sow seeds of division. It means that if our brother sins against us, we go to him alone in hopes that he listens, and we gain our brother (Matthew 18:15). We do not bottle up our anger until it explodes, we do not gossip about the one who sinned against us until their reputation is destroyed, and we do not go to them with the full weight of church

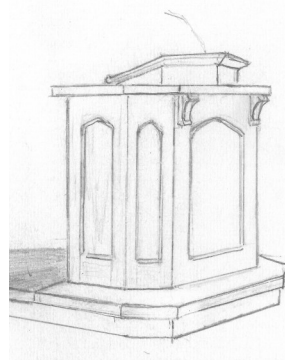
discipline until their faith is crushed. By pursuing peace with one another, we pursue the peace of the church.

I appreciate how this final question introduces an area of tension we often feel in the church between pursuing peace on one side versus purity on the other. Most of us are most inclined one way or the other. Maybe you have a godly zeal for the purity of the church’s doctrine and worship and you are eager to confront any impurity you perceive, no matter how big or small. If that is you, remember how Christ deals patiently with you on the long road of sanctification. Or maybe you are on the other extreme: you hate confrontation and are willing to live-and-let-live no matter how big the issue. If that is you, remember how Christ purged the temple and directed his righteous anger against those who would make his house of prayer a den of robbers.

Too often our pursuit of peace can be set at odds with the pursuit of purity, but this must not be allowed. Christ is the pure and unadulterated Son of God and savior of sinners, and he is the Prince of Peace who brings peace to the world. To rightly pursue peace and purity is to pursue Christ in all his fullness and trust him to work his good purposes in the life and ministry of the church. The church is full of sinners, among whom I am foremost, so we joyful submit to the God-ordained leaders in the church as we pursue her purity and peace.

The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Jim Curtis



Better—this is the word which encapsulates the book of Hebrews, our Sunday evening sermon series. This is its dominant theme and underlying structure. *Better*. The best way I have found to remember this is to think of it this way: Reading Hebrews is *better* than any other use of my time.

This also works for you, because as you read Hebrews you will see just how applicable it is to your circumstances. You long for *better*: a better job, a better paycheck, a better prayer life, a better elected official, a better meal, a better life for your children, a better doctor to treat you, and on and on it goes. We have endless recommendations to others, too. *No, don’t bother with Chipotle; Moe’s Southwest is better!* (It’s true...)

Hebrews satisfies your longing for better by presenting to you the *best*: Jesus Christ. In our longing for something *better*, we resemble the child whose attention bounces from new object to new object with breakneck speed. Hebrews slows us down and makes us wrestle with hard facts and seemingly esoteric truths. The pastor of Hebrews challenges us to consider more than just the immediate, eye-catching glitz of Jesus. His desire is to ensure we are the seed planted in good soil, that we may not shoot up with zeal like the seed on the rock.

So he pushes our limits. *Who* is Jesus better than? *Why* is Jesus better than them? And ultimately, *why should you care?*

Time does not permit me to get into it all here, but suffice it to say the pastor’s answers are more than compelling—they’re *true*. Jesus is *better* than all the Old Testament types and shadows, because he fulfills all of what it means to be a prophet, priest, and king. Jesus is *better* than the Temple, the Levitical High Priests, and the sacrificial system. And Jesus is *better* than all these for more than the fact that he gets us out of the harsh exactness of the ceremonial law. His superiority, his *better-ness*, lies most centrally in his effectiveness. He is *better* because he actually can and will bring about the change he speaks of to us.

So while you are out there hunting for *better*, take some time to read Hebrews. Indeed, take some time to come and hear it preached. I can promise it is a *better* use of your time than anything else.

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
May 5	Isaiah 28–29	
May 12	Isaiah 30	Hebrews 8:7-13
May 19	Isaiah 31-32	Hebrews 9:1-14
May 26	Isaiah 33	Hebrews 9:15-28
June 2	Isaiah 34-35	
June 9	Isaiah 36-37	Hebrews 10:1-4
June 16	Isaiah 38-39	Hebrews 10:5-18
June 23	Isaiah 40:1-11	Hebrews 10:19-25
June 30	Isaiah 40:12-31	Hebrews 10:26-39

Internship Reflections

By Mr. Wilson Goins

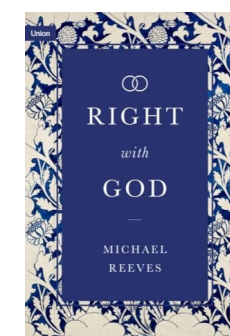
I can remember sitting in orientation my first year at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and hearing every professor articulate the same point, which was, “The church and the pastors that you spend your seminary years with will undoubtedly shape your ministry.” In hearing those words, I genuinely could think of no other church than Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church. Not because it is a perfect church, but because of its caring shepherds, the encouraging flock, and the seriousness with which it takes the duty of word and sacrament handed down from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank the Lord regularly that He has provided such an environment for me to prepare for pastoral ministry.

Over the past two years, and a little bit before then also, I have had the privilege of getting a full glimpse of the gospel ministry and really being engaged in every aspect of it. I have seen what a long day’s work for a pastor looks like, the countless hours pored over the word of God in sermon preparation, intentional prayers for the people, and every up and down in between. No doubt, the work of ministry is a trying work. The Apostle Paul calls ministers soldiers of Jesus because this calling is true spiritual warfare, but it is a spiritual battle which is highly rewarding. To get to see God work up close and personal is one of these joyous rewards. The youth group of CRPC is one of these places I have found delight to see God at work in the past two years. As Job says, we know “the mere edges” of God’s ways, but to know even an edge is a tremendous gift. Over these years I have been able to watch the youth group grow more and more tightly knit, increasingly become more interested in studying the word of God, how it transforms our lives, and the way we view the world around us. Not only this, but I have found such delight in how this church has spurred me on to grow in godliness, and to test my gifts for the ministry. To have that support has been indescribably comforting.

As with anything, the best way to sharpen one’s gifts is to actually exercise them. This is something I do not take for granted as internships like the one I have taken part in do not grow on trees. I am so grateful for every opportunity I have had to preach the word from the Psalms, Hosea, Proverbs, and Hebrews, to teach the word almost every Lord’s Day and Wednesday night to our youth, to lead in worship, and to learn so much under Pastors Sean and Jim, alongside David. There are just so many tiny details concerning preaching and teaching, administration, worship, and shepherding that I have gained here which I will carry with me as long as I live. I am thankful for every moment of life and ministry at CRPC, and I will never forget that this is the place which by God’s grace has trained me for what I pray is a lifetime of service to Christ in gospel ministry. As Merry Chandler and I step into this next season, we earnestly desire your prayers for our growing family! We will never forget all that this church has done for us.

Book Review

By Mr. David Livernois



I was standing in a long but advancing line with several people in front of me waiting my turn to step up to the counter. “What are you reading?” came a voice from behind. I turned around to the woman who had asked the question, and announced the title of the book as I held it out showing her the cover. “Is it any good?” she asked. I entertained reinterpreting her question by responding out loud, “being right with God? and

answering, “absolutely!” then proceeding to ask if she believed she was right with God. Instead, I simply answered that, so far it was a good read (I had only begun reading the book when I got in line and had just finished chapter three when the question was asked). Half way through the fourth chapter, I reached the front of the line. As I did, I turned around and handed the woman the book in my hands, encouraging her to read it, then, once she was finished, to share it with someone else. Maybe she had never encountered the term “justification” before in a theological sense, or maybe she heard it faithfully preached every Sunday. Either way, a fresh, concise treatment of justification in Christ is something all of us can benefit from, and Right with God offers just that.

At only 54 pages divided into eight chapters, Michael Reeves, president and professor of theology at Union School of Theology in Bridgend and Oxford, United Kingdom, presents the biblical doctrine of justification in both a faithful and accessible way. With scripture as his foundation, Reeves draws on church history old and new, recounting stories from a few notable Christians throughout the centuries to explain what it means to stand justified before God. He also shares anecdotally some of his own experience in coming to understand and embrace what it means to stand and live as one who is right with God. Helpfully, he addresses some of the misconceptions about this doctrine, explaining what justification by faith alone doesn’t mean, examining, for example, the vitally important and often debated relationship between faith and works.

Like Reeves other works (see for example, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*; *The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation*; and *Rejoicing in Christ*—one of my personal favorites), *Right with God* is an excellent book written in an inviting and elucidating style. I am thankful to have read it, and gladly recommend it. It serves as an excellent primer for anyone wanting to further understand what it means to be right with God, and with its warm pastoral tone, it would serve equally as well as an evangelistic tool to be shared with someone who may not be. I encourage you to grab a copy and read it for your own edification, then, prayerfully give it to someone else for theirs. It’s one of our free resources on our book table, so it will only cost you the time, and perhaps the courage. *Tolle Lege!*