



M Grace Messenger

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

122 Walnut Street
Madison, AL 35758
256-837-8821

GBC HOMEPAGES

<http://www.gracemadison-al.com>
<http://sermonaudio.com/gbcmadisonal>

"Preaching the free grace of God which brings a change of lifestyles, masters and destinies."

DEAN OLIVE, Pastor

— December 2012 Issue —

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" 1 Peter 4:10



NURSERY SCHEDULE

December

02 Kristin Scarborough and Lori Hewlett
09 Vicki Johnson and Melanie Myatt
16 Jenny and Peter Lovassy
23 Troy and Jessica Moseley
30 Jon and Tanya Amis

January

06 Vickie Johnson and Amber Solan
13 Pat and Kristy Hines
20 Kevin and Sara Smith
27 Kristin Scarbrough and Lori Hewlett

CHURCH CLEANING

December - Moseleys

Thank you to All who helped clean our church building this year.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2012

Budgeted expenditures (ytd)	\$202,074.01
Actual on-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$208,334.43
Actual off-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 4,867.25
General Fund offerings (ytd)	\$151,184.84
Designated Missions (ytd)	\$ 14,101.00
Love offerings (ytd)	\$ 2,795.00
Total offerings (ytd)	\$168,080.84
October Love offerings	\$ 0.00
October General Fund offerings	\$ 12,147.36
October Designated Missions	\$ 1,343.00
Building Fund balance	\$ 89,707.43
Missions Fund balance	\$ 16,987.96
General Fund balance	\$ 70,525.57

Remembering the Birth of Christ 2012



We will be joining our friends at Providence Presbyterian Church again for a Christmas Service and Meal on Sunday, December 23.



The Christmas Dinner will be served at 5 PM. The ladies of Providence Presbyterian are providing the main course and we have been asked to bring the desserts.



The Christmas Service will follow the meal at approximately 6 PM. The service will consist of Christmas hymns and a message by Pastor Olive.

Everyone is encouraged to attend and participate in the time of fellowship and worship.



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

NORMAL SUNDAY SERVICES

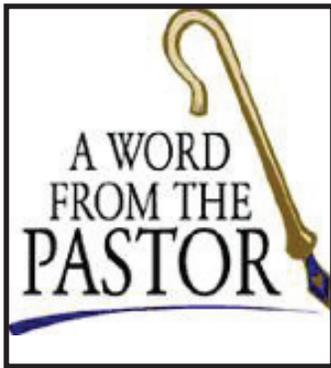
Morning Worship 9:30 AM
Sunday School 11:00 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Bible Study and Prayer Meeting
7:00 PM

FIRST SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning Worship 9:30 AM
Sunday School 11:00 AM
Dinner at the Church 12:00 Noon
Afternoon Service 1:30 PM
(No Evening Service)



The God-Man

Athanasius and Arius are two names that stand out in the history of Christianity. They were opponents in debate over the Person of Christ in the 3rd Century.

Athanasius (AD 300-373) argued that Jesus Christ was both God and man. He declared that

Jesus was one person with two natures. He was very God of very God and very man of very man. He wrote, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man... perfect God, and perfect man... who although he be God and man: yet he is not two, but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the manhood into God."

Arius (AD 260-336), on the other hand, argued that Jesus Christ was a created being, a high order of angels, who came to earth as a man, a really good man and better than all others, but still, just a man. He denied the deity of Jesus. Arius said, "...the Son has a beginning, but... God is without beginning... [the Son] is of the non-existent... He is neither part of God, nor of any essential being."

Christians believe that Athanasius rightly interpreted the Scriptures. He is regarded as a champion of orthodox Christology in the early church. Jehovah Witnesses and other cults follow the teaching of Arius, but he was a heretic, the promoter of soul-damning doctrine.

Both positions cannot be right. Either Athanasius was right or Arius was right. One of them is wrong, dreadfully and terribly wrong. The gospel of salvation rests on a right belief of the person of Christ.

The gospel collapses if either the divinity or humanity of Christ is lost. John Blanchard is right in saying, "The Bible gives resounding emphasis..., making it crystal clear that Jesus of Nazareth is both fully God and fully man, and that both His divine and human natures, united in one person, are absolutely essential to the gospel and therefore, to man's salvation."

John 1:1 clearly affirms the deity of Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And John 1:14 clearly affirms the humanity of Christ, that the eternal Son, one with the Father, became man. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

The interpretation of verses 1 and 14 in the first chapter of John's Gospel is simple, but the theology is complex. When John wrote, "And the Word became flesh," he meant that God became a man. "The Word was God" and "the Word became flesh." J. I. Packer comments, "It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie."

How true that is! Who can fathom it? Who can comprehend it? God became man. Nothing in the Bible is as mind-boggling as the Incarnation. "The Word became flesh." This simple statement contains one of the deepest mysteries of human thought. "The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets... The Christmas message rests on the staggering fact that the child in the manger was—God... The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby" (Packer).

John doesn't explain how the Word became flesh; he just says that he did. Matthew and Luke, however, answer how in their Gospel accounts. The Lord was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit who came upon her and overshadowed her, thus bringing about the birth of the holy child who was called the Son of God (Lk 1:35; Mt 1:21-22). The result was a person who was and is both divine and human.

The baby born at Bethlehem was the God-Man. Let us never forget it. This is a truth we must confess. Believing in Christ is not just trusting him to save us but trusting him as he is revealed in the Scriptures! Confessing Christ means acknowledging that he is who he claimed to be and who is what Scripture declares him to be. That means acknowledging that he is one person with two natures, one divine and the other human.

The four simple words of John 1:14, "the Word became flesh," give us the most concise statement of the incarnation. Yet the mystery of the Incarnation that is set forth is unfathomable. We see in the manger of Bethlehem, in the words of Charles Wesley: *Our God contracted to a span/Incomprehensibly made man.*

While we cannot fully comprehend this mystery, we can bow down in worship and adoration. The Word of God took flesh "for us and for our salvation" (Nicene Creed). It was necessary for our salvation for the Word to become a man. "He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17).

John Bunyan said that the Son "took our flesh, that our sin, with its effects, might by him be condemned and overcome." The law could do us no good; it condemned us. But Jesus, by becoming man, could do us good by condemning sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). And thus he became flesh.

The Word had to be God because it is God that we sinned against and only God could provide a sacrifice of infinite value to pay for all our sins. But he also had to be man, a real, genuine man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, in order to bear our sins as a substitute.

None other but Jesus met the criteria. Forgiveness rests on having a substitute acceptable to God. In the man Christ, we have exactly such a Savior! The reason why he took flesh was in order to be our Savior! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

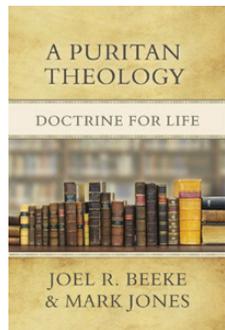
BOOK REVIEW



A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life

by Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones

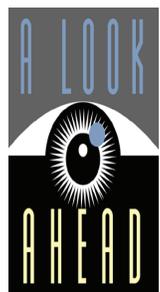
Reformation Heritage Press, 2012, pp. 1200



A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life offers a groundbreaking treatment of the Puritans' teaching on most major Reformed doctrines, particularly those doctrines in which the Puritans made significant contributions. Since the late 1950s, nearly 150 Puritan authors and 700 Puritan titles have been reprinted and catalogued by Joel Beeke and Randall Pederson in their 2006 collection of mini-biographies and book reviews, titled, *Meet the Puritans*. However, no work, until

now, has gathered together the threads of their teaching into a unified tapestry of systematic theology.

A Puritan Theology attempts to do that. The book addresses Puritan teachings on fifty areas of doctrine. The book explores Puritan teachings on biblical interpretation, God, predestination, providence, angels, sin, the covenants, the gospel, Christ, preparation for conversion, regeneration, coming to Christ, justification, adoption, church government, the Sabbath, preaching, baptism, heaven, hell, and many other topics. It ends with eight chapters that explore Puritan "theology in practice." Some chapters highlight the work of a specific theologian such as William Perkins, William Ames, John Owen, Stephen Charnock, or Thomas Goodwin on a specific topic. Other chapters survey various authors on a particular subject. The goal of *A Puritan Theology* is to increase knowledge in the mind and godliness in the soul. It was written for theologians, historians, pastors, and educated laymen who seek to learn more about Puritan theology.



DECEMBER 9 – Darren Thole, from Providence Presbyterian Church, will be preaching in the morning worship service, and Dana Crowell will be preaching in the evening (pastor Olive will be preaching in England on the 9th and 16th of December).

DECEMBER 16 – Don Currin will be preaching morning and afternoon. Note that there will be no evening service. Treat this as a first Sunday. The menu for Sunday lunch is soup and sandwiches.

DECEMBER 23 – We will be joining our friends at Providence Presbyterian Church for a Christmas meal and service. The main meal will be provided by them and we will bring the desserts. The meal begins at 5:00 PM and at 6:00 PM, Pastor Olive will be preaching in the worship service.

DECEMBER 30 – Worship service at 9:30 AM and 6:00 PM but no Sunday School.

JANUARY 6 – Worship service at 9:30 AM and 1:00 PM with Brunch between the services; no Sunday School. We will be observing the Lord's Supper in the afternoon service.

FEBRUARY 3 – Annual Church Business Meeting in the afternoon at 1:30 PM.

MARCH 22-24 – Spring Bible Conference with Dr. Sam Waldron.

We Believe

The 1689 Confession of Faith

CHAPTER 21

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE



1. Christ has purchased for all believers a liberty inherent in the gospel. It comprises freedom from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation that follows upon guilt, from the wrath of God, and from the severity and curse of God's law. It also includes deliverance from this present evil world, and from all such things as bondage to Satan, sin's domination, the hurtfulness of afflictions, the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave, and eternal damnation. Furthermore, it includes free access to God and the yielding of obedience to Him, not, as it were, with the fear of a slave for his master, but with a childlike love and readiness. All these blessings were more or less enjoyed by believers in Old Testament days, but under New Testament conditions Christian liberty becomes more extensive. It includes freedom from the burdens imposed by the ceremonial law to which the Jewish church was subjected, greater boldness in approaching to the throne of grace, and a larger measure of the free Spirit of God than was normally granted to saints in the pre-Christian era.

Luke 1:73-75; John 7:38, 39; Acts 26:18; Rom. 8:3, 15, 28; 1 Cor. 15:54-57; Gal. 1:4; 3:9, 13, 14; 2 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 10:19-21; 1 John 4:18

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience. He has set it free from all obligation to receive or obey any such doctrines or demands of men as are in any respect in opposition to His Word or not contained in it. Indeed, to believe and obey such doctrines and demands is tantamount to a betrayal of true liberty of conscience. It is against all reason, and nothing less than the destruction of liberty of conscience, when men demand of their fellows an implicit faith, in other words, an absolute and blind obedience.

Matt. 15:9; Acts 4:19, 29; Rom. 14:4; 1 Cor. 3:5; 7:23; 2 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:20, 22, 23; Jas. 4:12

3. To practice any sin, or harbor sin's evil desires, on a pretense of enjoying Christian liberty, perverts the main purpose of gospel grace, and imperils those guilty of such an offense, for thereby they destroy the very purpose of Christian liberty, namely, that the Lord's people, 'being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all their days.'

Luke 1:74,75; Rom. 6:1-2; Gal. 5:13; 2 Pet. 2:18, 21



John Owen

"Steadfastness in believing doth not exclude all temptations from without. When we say a tree is firmly rooted, we do not say the wind never blows upon it."

What is the Chief End of God?

James M. Renihan

While watching television the other evening, I came across what I can only call a Christmas Spectacular presented by a well-known evangelical megachurch in San Diego. It was a very impressive production indeed. At the center of the platform was a "Living Christmas Tree," that is, a set of choir risers made to resemble the shape of a fir tree, staffed on eight or nine levels by singers in altar-boy type robes. In front of this massive structure, two highly skilled singers, a man and a woman, performed several powerful numbers, often accompanied by a dance troupe of men and women, or, at times, a children's choir. The production values were excellent, both in terms of the staging, the talent, and the television presentation—Hollywood or Las Vegas could not have done better.

The finale was especially impressive. A swinging rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus was presented by the assembled company. A choir processed up the aisles, while the dancers (who had quickly donned white robes—though they were unfastened in the front) surrounded the Christmas tree. The two lead singers took center stage in the midst of the dancers, and everyone was swinging and swaying to the jazzy beat. The choir and dancers sang the various parts of the (upbeat) Hallelujah Chorus while the soloists improvised several inspirational slogans, inserting them into the rendition at diverse places. As the song reached its climax, balloons were released from the ceiling, over the heads of the audience, and fireworks exploded from the stage. A rousing good time was had by all of the participants.

I should mention that there was an attempt at a spoken message, just before the finale. A man stood up—I do not know who he was—and addressed the audience. He stated that

the theme of the evening was this: "He [meaning God] did it all for you." All of the singing and dancing was simply a celebration of the fact that Christmas was a demonstration of God's great purpose, namely, that men and women, boys and girls, might have a good and enjoyable life here and forever. The speaker (I cannot call him a preacher, for he did not preach) took about five minutes to explain his point, and then told his listeners that God was waiting for them to call upon Him so that He could have a relationship with them... As he concluded, the lights went out and in a moment the finale began. It was breathtaking.

But as I viewed this spectacular, I was grieved in my heart. The longer that I watched, the more that I realized that this production was exactly the opposite of everything that I understand the Gospel of the Scriptures to be. It all culminated in the brief time of sharing towards the end. I realized that if the speaker had written the Shorter Catechism, the first question would have been phrased like this: "Q. What is the chief end of God? A. God's chief end is to glorify you and to enjoy you forever." In an engaging style, this man had indicated that the Gospel was ultimately man-centered. It is not that God is an offended and wrathful Deity who requires propitiation as a result of humanity's blasphemies, but rather that He exists waiting expectantly for us so that He can satisfy our needs in this life...

I was reminded of Paul's words about the foolishness of preaching. From a human perspective, there is no doubt that the approach used in this performance must have an enormous popular appeal. People are willing to attend these productions. They are comfortable. They are tremendously entertaining. And they require nothing of the audience

beyond observation. All that one must do is sit back and enjoy the sumptuous blend of color, motion and sound. But what do they have to do with preaching the Gospel? Is this evangelism as we find it in the Bible?

I have sometimes walked away from the pulpit after preaching knowing exactly what Paul was describing when he called preaching "foolishness." I have wondered why God would choose such a method, especially in a culture that seemingly cannot concentrate on any subject for more than five minutes. Yet that is what He has done, and that is the method we must pursue. It is the bold declaration of the Word of God, the offensive Cross of Christ, the thunderings of the Law of God, the balm of the Gospel by appointed men that God has promised to bless. It is not the stage but the pulpit that must be at the center of our evangelism.

... These types of productions ought to make us stand up and, with more vigor than ever before, do what God has called us to do—preach the gospel to men and women. There is one advantage to the old way—God has promised to bless it. Relying on the Holy Spirit, let us resist the trends around us and declare boldly that men and women are lost, wicked, evil, and condemned. Let us tell them that they are God's enemies. And above all, let us tell them about Christ. Let us preach His active and passive obedience. Let us proclaim his love and mercy and kindness. Let us call sinners to bow down and kiss the Son.

It was good for me to watch this show. It deepened my commitment to do God's work in God's way—preaching the Gospel. I prefer the Shorter Catechism as it is: we exist for God's glory and not vice versa.