

Hope of Christ Presbyterian Church

Inquirers' Class

Question 1: Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God **justly deserving His displeasure and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?**

IDOLATRY **And Modern Society**

Idolatry is one of the main themes of the Bible.

Idolatry as the story of the Bible. The entire story of the Bible can be seen as a struggle between true faith and idolatry.

Idolatry and the Old Testament

Gen.1:26-28:

Rom.1:21-25: "They exchanged the glory of the immortal God...and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator."

The Law against Idols

Exod.20:4:

Deut.4:12-19:

The great sin of the Mosaic period is the making of a golden calf (Exod.32)

Exodus 23.32,33:

Just like in Romans 1, God does not envision any "third" option. We will either worship the uncreated God, or we will worship some created thing (an idol). There is no possibility of our worshipping nothing. We will "worship and serve" (Rom.1:25) something. Whatever we worship we serve, for it "snares" us. Therefore every human personality, every human community, and every human thought-form will be based on some ultimate concern or some ultimate allegiance to something.

The Polemic against Idols.

The prophets, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, leveled an enormous polemic against the worship of idols. Some of the key elements in their teaching:

1. First, an idol is empty, nothing, powerless.

Isaiah 2:8;

Jeremiah 1:16;

Is.44:10-13

Isaiah 41:6,7

Isaiah 40:20

Is.41:22-24

Idols, then, contrast with the true God, who makes us in his image, who is not a reflection of our experience but one who shows himself through authoritative self-revelation. He is the only true God, the Lord of heaven and earth.

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2. Second, (paradoxically) an idol is all and only about getting power.

Idolatry is so often associated by the prophets with social injustice. Why?

Amos 2:6-8:

Idols, then contrast with the true God, who saves us completely by grace. Idols are manipulated by religion and performance, while God can only be responded to by repentance--a loss of power. While idolatry is the attempt to manipulate God to obtain power and security/salvation for oneself or one's group, the gospel is that we are saved by sheer grace, and thus we surrender ourselves in grateful love and become willing, sacrificial servants of everyone. We now become agents in God's kingdom which comes full of justice and mercy to all who are suffering.

3. Third, an idol is a spiritually dangerous power which saps you of all power.

Isaiah 44:9,18

Isaiah 44:20

Jeremiah 2:25

Isaiah 44:17

Jeremiah 2:28

Ezekiel 14:1-11

The New Testament and Idolatry

If 'idolatry' is the characteristic and summary Old Testament word for our drift from God, then 'lust' [inordinate desires], is the characteristic and summary New Testament word for that same drift.

Galatians 5:16ff

Ephesians 2:3

Ephesians 4:22;

I Peter 2:11

I Peter 4:2

I John 2:16

James 1:14ff,

Ephesians 5:5

Colossians 3:5.

The sin under every sin.

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The Ten Commandments begin with two commandments against idolatry. Then comes commandments three to ten. Why this order? It is because the fundamental problem is always idolatry. In other words, **we never break commandments 3-10 without first breaking 1-2.**

All people sin in general because we are sinners, but why do we sin in any particular instance? Any sin is rooted in the inordinate lust for something which comes because we are trusting in that thing rather than in Christ for our righteousness or salvation. Therefore, in sin we are always 'forgetting' what God has done for us in Christ and instead are being moved by some idol. Luther says that to fail to believe God accepts us fully in Christ and to look to something else is a failure to keep the first commandment--love God with all the heart. Thus beneath any particular sin is the general sin of rejecting Christ-salvation and indulging in self-salvation.

Belgic Confession Chapter 24

"We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true that his justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore, it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man; for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith which is called in Scripture a 'faith working through love,' which excites man to the practice of those works which God has commanded in His Word....We would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be continually vexed if they relied not on the merits of our Savior."

Point: Unless we believe the gospel, we will be driven in all we do--whether obeying or disobeying--by pride ("self-love") or fear ("of damnation") because we are serving God idolatrously. We are manipulating him for power with our good-works. Apart from 'grateful remembering' of the gospel, all good works are done then for sinful motives. Mere moral effort, may restrain the heart, but does not truly change the heart. Moral effort merely 'jury rigs' the evil of the heart to produce moral behavior, out of self-interest. It is only a matter of time before such a thin tissue collapses.

This means then, that idolatry is always the reason we ever do anything wrong. Why do we ever lie, or fail to love or keep promises or live unselfishly? Of course, the general answer is "because we are weak and sinful", but the specific answer is always that there is something besides Jesus Christ that you feel you must have to be happy, something that is more important to your heart than God, something that is spinning out a delusional field and enslaving the heart through inordinate desires. So the secret to change is always to identify the idols of the heart.

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Question 2: Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

The Gospel

Good News for the religious and the irreligious

The religious: John 3

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." ³Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

The setting 3.1

Why did Nicodemus come to meet with Jesus?

The conversation 3.2-15

Why did Jesus respond the way he did?

The Summary 3.16-21

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The irreligious: John 4

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him.

The setting 4.1-6

The Conversation 4.7-26

The Summary 4.28-30

By believing God, taking Him at His word, we are counted as righteous, or justified. How did God accomplish that justification or making us right before Him? (**Romans 5.6-11**)

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Question 3: Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

What in the world does that mean?!

One thing it means is, "Are you living like a son/daughter of God or like an orphan?"

Orphans vs. Sons (Galatians 4.4-7, 15:

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.... What has happened to all your joy?")

- A. The Galatian problem is still with us ("You started so well, what has happened?")
 - 1. The need to believe the gospel (3.1,2)
 - 2. The temptation to move beyond the gospel (3.3)

- B. The issue of orphans vs. sons/daughters
 - 1. The gift of adoption
 - a. a work of the Son
 - b. a work of the Spirit
 - c. the status of Sonship
 - 2. The "enigma of orphan"

The Law and the Gospel

- A. What the law can do
 - 1. Romans 3.19, 20b; 5.20; 7.7-12
 - 2. Galatians 3.19, 24
 - 3. Psalm 19.7-11

- B. What the law can't do
 - 1. Romans 3.20a; 4.14; 8.3, 4
 - 2. Galatians 2.15, 16, 21; 3.10, 11; 3.21b, 25

- C. The way of the Spirit
 - 1. Galatians 2.14; 5.16, 22ff
 - 2. Philippians 3.1-10

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The Cross Chart

- A. Two pictures of discipleship or sanctification
 - 1. the ladder
 - 2. "holiness vs. flesh"
- B. Problems
 - 1. inadequate view of the flesh
 - 2. inadequate view of God's work in salvation
- C. A better picture
 - 1. the cross chart
 - a. combination of slow small steps and great leaps
 - b. not a silver bullet
 - c. turn from self as source
 - d. cross is the only remedy
 - e. new motive/new dependence

The Feel of Faith. What Does Holiness Look Like?

Galatians 5.6 : "The only thing that counts is faith working through love."

- 1. The Pattern of change (Galatians 3.3-5)
- 2. The Process of faith
 - a. sin feels good, normal, enjoyable, easy, natural, right, obvious and clear, necessary for life.
 - b. The first steps of faith feel like death, hard to see, work, odd, awkward, unclear, hypocritical, unnatural, lonely, panic, uncertainty
- 3. The size of repentance
- 4. The cost of forgiveness
- 5. The weapons of mass destruction
 - a. Word
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Baptism
 - d. Communion

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Question 4: Do you promise to support Hope of Christ Presbyterian Church in her worship and work to the best of your ability?

What does it mean to be a part of the Body of Christ?

I Corinthians 12.12, 13, 27: "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.... Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

I Peter 2.4, 5: "As you come to Him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Hebrews 13.15, 16: "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

Why is the Church referred to as the Body? What pictures does that bring to your mind?

What are the two pictures of the church Peter uses? Do they seem related?

What are the "sacrifices" that please God according to the Hebrews passage?

Romans 12.1, 2: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Salvation is a gift of God's grace. It is not earned. It is not deserved. All the good works in the world could never cover your sin and put you in good standing with God. That's not the reason you should participate in the life of a local church—to earn God's favor.

That said however, there is something radically wrong with a "Christianity" that has little or no use for the church, or that does not issue in good works. Those who have truly received God's free gift of life in Christ have a debt of gratitude to live for Him. Christ called the church His bride. Paul calls the church Christ's Body. Not the building or organization, but the people of God. Christians ought therefore to take a real interest in living for Christ in the context of being one part of a Body.

As we discussed in earlier, the only real requirement for being a part of Christ's Church is a clear profession of faith in Jesus Christ. But those who have put their faith in Christ will give evidence in several ways. According to the following passages, list some evidences of faith: **John 15.5-8; John 13.34, 35; I Peter 4.10, 11; I Corinthians 12.4-7; Matthew 5.13.**

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Just think SALT

-S- Servant's Heart

John 13.13-17; Philippians 2.4-11

What are some things Christ had the right to cling to?

What are some things we cling to?

-A- Availabilty (NOT ability)

I Corinthians 12.1-31

Every gift you have has been placed in you for two reasons

1. _____ God

2. _____ others

Acts 4.32-5.5

-L- Level of Involvement

Involvement includes not only those areas where you connect for your own growth, but also those areas where you connect for the growth of others.

Worship (who is it for?)

Word and Deed Witness (who does it and how?)

I do it

We do it

Training (receiving or giving?)

Prayer

-T- Tithing of ourselves (Time, Talents, Treasures)

Proverbs 3.9, 10; Malachi 3.8-10; Matthew 25.14-30;

Hope of Christ Church will not have a "stewardship season." We will not bill you for your "pledges" or knock on your door. The Bible gives clear instructions on the giving of your firstfruits for the support of God's work. Members are kept informed regularly of how giving is keeping pace with the ministry needs supported through our church budget.

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Question 5: Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of Hope of Christ Presbyterian Church, and do you promise to strive for its peace and purity?

There are two aspects of purity within the church body, purity in the way we live and purity in what we believe.

What does it mean that we are striving for purity in the way we live?

Circle some of the words and phrases in the following passages that contribute to such purity?

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3.16, 17).”

“Why are you sleeping?” He asked them, ‘Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation’ (Luke 22.46).”

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4.4-7).”

“Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (I Thessalonians 5.11).”

“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness (Hebrews 3.12, 13).”

“Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4.5, 6).”

What is the church’s (that is to say, your) responsibility when such purity is not evident?

Matthew 18.15-17

What is the purpose of discipline in light of the passage that precedes this one (**Matthew 18.12-14**) and the one after (**Matthew 18.21-35**)?

Discipline is important for all of us—for the offender as well as for the church Body. It should always be exercised with mercy rather than wrath—as a tender mother correcting her children for their good, so that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus.

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But we said there are two aspects of purity. The second is purity in what we believe.

II Peter 2.1-3; What is the warning given to the Church?

We have already read **II Timothy 3.16, 17.** What is needed for the prevention of such false teachings?

_____ shows you the path on which to walk.

_____ shows you how to stay on that path.

_____ shows you where you got off that path.

_____ shows you how to get back on that path.

“Doctrine” is just a fancy word for “teachings.” Some time back and even today in some churches, it was popular to say, “Doctrine divides.” Teaching divides?!? On the contrary, a well-instructed and discerning lay membership is the best safeguard *against* division and impurity.

Divisions and “schisms” occur as a result of a lack of sound teaching and reliance upon the Scripture. Many argue today that there is no way to know what the bible intended, but if we follow the instruction of the fathers of the Reformation, and let Scripture interpret Scripture, we will find everything *necessary* for disciples of Christ is clearly stated.

What are some doctrines that are of higher importance than others are:

Deity of Christ?

Spiritual Gifts?

Infallibility of Scripture?

Angels?

Church government?

The Holy Spirit?

Justification by faith?

The seasons?

Baptism?

The end of times?

Demonology?

The Trinity?

Does purity in belief mean we expect everyone to agree on all the points of doctrine brought out in the Scriptures?

Finally, we are not only striving for PURITY in the Body; we are also striving for PEACE.

Scriptural guidelines that will guarantee peace in the Body

Matthew 18.15

Matthew 5.23-23

Proverbs 15.30; 17.9

Ephesians 4.29-5.2; Proverbs 6.19; James 1.26

What are some ways to keep a brother or sister from giving a bad report?

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What is a reformed church?

Martin Luther's 5 *solas*: Salvation is...

...by grace alone...
...through faith alone...
...in Christ alone...
...for the glory of God alone...
...based on the Bible alone

John Calvin's five points (TULIP, sort of)

Total depravity of all mankind
Unmerited favor from God
Limited, or particular, atonement
Irresistible grace
Preservation of the saints

Other distinctives of a reformed church

Covenant theology

The Kingdom of God

The Sacraments (signs of the covenant)

Baptism

Communion