

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

August 26, 2021

My dear Friends:

Here is something that has stuck with me: at one of the first churches I served, I had a ruling elder tell me that he liked to reflect on the preaching he had heard over the past year by taking his copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and thumbing his way through it to remember if he heard those doctrines discussed from God's Word. This is an excellent practice, I think, and I would encourage you to do this.

Because we preach expositionally and consecutively through books of the Bible, we might miss the fact that we are actually getting a lot of Reformed theology from our pulpit. Just think about Genesis, which we just finished:

- **Genesis 1:** "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good" (WCF 4:1).
- **Genesis 3:** "Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit...By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculty of soul and body" (WCF 6:1, 2)
- **Genesis 12:** "Those of mankind that are predestined unto life, God...hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto" (WCF 3:5)
- **Genesis 15:** "This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belong to it, therein bequeathed" (WCF 7:4).
- **Genesis 17:** "Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament...to be unto him a sign and a seal of the covenant of grace" (WCF 28:1).

And so forth. I could keep going and touch all the theology we did in Genesis with the doctrines of predestination and reprobation (WCF 3:8), providence (WCF 5), Jesus as surety/substitute (WCF 8:3), Jesus' humiliation and exaltation (Westminster Shorter Catechism [WSC], Q23 with WCF 8:4), Jesus' priestly intercession (WSC, Q25, with WCF 8:4), faith (WCF 14), repentance (WCF 15), and other doctrines beside.

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This is important. As pastors, we don't preach the Confession of Faith, but the Bible; yet, as Reformed believers and Presbyterian pastors, we have freely declared that doctrinal statement to be what we believe the Bible to teach. And so, to borrow from Charles Spurgeon's phrase, if you were to take a pin and prick us, not only would our blood run "Bibline" but also "Westminsterian." When I'm preaching, I'm regularly telling you to look at your Bibles; what I'm suggesting now is to take the advice of the old ruling elder and periodically reflect on what you've heard by looking at the Westminster Standards. I think you'll begin to see how these expositions of the Bible all fit together within our doctrinal system; or perhaps better, how our doctrinal system arises naturally from the way we study and teach the Bible.

I hate to end this pastor's letter on a sad note, but I do need to make you aware of two ministry staff transitions that will happen in the coming months. It is bittersweet for us to let you know that Jennifer Velázquez and her husband, Jose, are moving to Boston to be near their children and grandson. Jennifer has served as our organist and associate director of worship and music for over twenty-three years. She has demonstrated exemplary collegiality and professional excellence, but even more, she has loved us all so very well. I know that I speak for us all when I say that we will miss the Velázquez family terribly. Jennifer and Jose expect that their transition to the northeast will be completed no later than the end of September. Also difficult for us is this news that Zach and Olivia Hood recently accepted a new position at Houston Lake Presbyterian Church in Warner Robins, Georgia. Zach first came to IPC in 2017 as a youth intern and took on the role of director of college ministry in summer 2018. God has used him in an incredible fashion to redevelop our college ministry from scratch. The Hoods are planning to transition to their new ministry in mid-October. We will have an opportunity to say good-bye and Godspeed to these friends in different ways in the coming weeks.

In the grip of God's grace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stan".