

WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?

TEACHING NOTES

Uptown Church

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Class 1-Teaching Notes

What is Reformed Theology?

I. Intro: Overview of the Class

A. Expectations

B. Schedule

II. The Definition of Reformed Theology

A. "Theology"

1. We are talking about a way of thinking about God. We are talking about studying the nature, character, and actions of God.

2. Why Does Theology Matter?

a) What are some reasons people don't think theology matters

(1) Stifling, just creates arguments

(2) What matters is how you live

b) Does matter

(1) Way you view your marriage

(2) Way you view God's love for you

(3) Way you approach evangelism

(4) The way you view the significance and function of your vocation.

*(5) **All of life is theology*

1. We are All Theologians

- a) Some people say, well you be a theologian and I will do the ministry.
- b) However, we are all theologians, the question is whether we are a good one or a bad one.

B. "Reformed"

1. From the Protestant Reformation

- a) Obviously the title suggests that our theology is a "corrective" to something else. It reforms an already existing theology that was troublesome. Of course, the term "reformed" comes from the historical events of the Protestant Reformation.
- b) In 1517, a young German monk by the name of Martin Luther nailed 95 these to the door of the Wittenberg Church and began one of the greatest theological and historical shifts in the modern world.
- c) Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, were also part of the movement that affirmed certain truths about God.
- d) Continued on to the Puritan movement in England to other men like George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, etc.

2. Not an Innovation, but Renovation

- a) Important thing to note about Reformed Theology is that, in essence, it wasn't a new idea, or a new religion, etc.
- b) It was a rediscovery of something old. It was a recovery of a lost truth from the times of Jesus and the apostles.
- c) Even the early church fathers, like Augustine, believed in core components of Reformed Theology.

1. Manifested mainly in modern Evangelical Presbyterian congregations (as well as Baptist and others)

II. The Foundations of Reformed Theology

A. *Centered on God Alone (Soli Deo Gloria)*

1. Supremacy of God

- a) Reformed theology strives to be a very God-centered theology, not a man-centered theology.
- b) At the core of this is a vivid belief in the absolute glory and supremacy of God over all things.
- c) **They came up with a number of “solas” in the reformation time to uphold God’s supremacy in every area.

2. God’s Sovereignty

- a) The hallmark belief of Reformed Theology is in control of everything.
- b) WCF 3:1: “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”
- c) In our world, where man is king and supposedly are entirely independent and in charge of our own life, there is no doctrine more offensive.
- d) But, as reformed people we don’t believe that the sovereignty of God over everything is something we have added to the idea of “God”; we think it is inherent in the very idea of theism itself. We think God must be sovereign over all to be God.
- e) Why do we believe that God must be sovereign in order to be God?

(1) Well, if there were anything outside of God's control then there would be something more powerful, greater than God.

(2) Even if God allows things to happen, he chooses to do so, when he has the power to change it, and thus he is still sovereign over it.

*(3) **If there is one rogue molecule in the world, outside of God's control, then we have no assurance or guarantee that he can carry out his promises.*

*(4) **imagine riding in an airplane and the pilots saying, our mechanics have looked at 95% of all the parts on this plane and can assure that its safe. We are confident that most of the parts are working." But, we might ask, what about that little rudder rod that cost \$5 bucks and is tiny? That is enough to crash the plane. We must have a God in charge of everything to be sure his plan will not fail.*

b) How would the belief in God's total sovereignty affect our life?

(1) It changes the way view events in the world, from hurricanes to illness to promotions at work.

(2) Not a hair from your head is hurt without God's control.

2. God's Holiness

a) The reformers were also very serious about upholding the holiness of God, the glory of God, the weightiness of God. God is not to be minimized or trivialized or made our "buddy."

b) What impact would a deep understanding of holiness have on our lives?

(1) We would want to be holy

We appreciate our salvation more deeply; it's the holiness of God that is the basis for salvation by grace

(1) alone, surely we could never be holy enough to meet his standards.

(2) We would worship and pray with more seriousness

*(3) **Application!!*

B. Based on God's Word Alone (Sola Scriptura)

1. Overview

a) Reformed folks take the Bible very seriously. A God-centered theology will take God's word and its authority very seriously.

b) Reformers, therefore have upheld the full inspiration and authority of scripture in very direct ways.

c) But the key word here is "Alone". Other folks believe in the Bible as an authority but not the ultimate authority.

2. Contra Roman Catholicism

a) How would the Reformers view of the Bible differ from the Roman Catholic view?

(1) Scripture and Tradition: Did any other document have the right to bind the consciences of men? The reformers said no.

(2) Interpretation of Scripture: Since the church is not co-equal in its authority with the Bible, then it is not the final interpreter of Scripture. Private interpretation is allowed.

3. Contra Modern Approaches

a) How does the Reformed view of Scripture different than modern approaches?

(1) Scripture is the foundation for knowledge in all areas; not just religious! This is a key point. The Bible is authoritative over all areas of life, because God is Lord over all areas.

(1) The Bible is not just one of many things to be considered as we live our lives.

(2)**Application: What is our approach to Scripture Like? Do we take it as seriously as the Reformers? Do our actions and attitudes and thoughts show that we think it ALONE is the ultimate authority in our lives?

B. Committed to Salvation by Faith Alone (Sola Fide)

1. Luther's journey

a) Luther was haunted by an incredibly sensitive conscience. He used to enforce strict penance on himself for his sins. He would slip for weeks and weeks without blankets (in cold monasteries!). He would go up the monastery steps, one at a time, on his knees, praying as he went. He outmonked all the other monks.

b) After careful rethinking on the doctrine of justification, he realized that it was different than the RC had said

2. Justification by Faith: God declares us to be righteous (even while we are sinful) based on the righteousness of Christ.

a) Faith= just +works

b) Instead of faith + works=justification

3. What are the implications of the Roman Catholic view of justification?

a) The work of salvation is not complete (Application! Example of running race)

b) A sinner can have no assurance of their salvation

If we are saved God gets some glory and WE get some glory. This denies the full supremacy of God in salvation. Faith is the perfect instrument for salvation

- a) because it takes the focus off of us and onto Christ and his work.
- b) **This maintains the Supremacy of God over all!

Teaching Notes-Class 2

What is Reformed Theology: Total Depravity

I. Review

A. Reformed theology and the Supremacy of God

II. Introduction: What are the Five Points of Calvinism?

A. Historical Origins

1. James Arminius, a Dutch Seminary professor, lead a group called the Remonstrants (protestors), that protested the Reformed theology being taught in Holland at that time.
2. Thus, they drew up what is known as the 5 points of Arminianism
 - a) God elects based on foreseen faith
 - b) Men can lose their salvation, etc.
3. Synod of Dort, 1618, rejected these doctrines as heresy; many of which are still taught today. And they put forth the 5 points of Calvinism which are designed to respond to the 5 points of Arminianism.

B. T.U.L.I.P.

1. These 5 points are easily remembered through this acronym. We will cover one of these the next five Sundays.
2. **The key to remember is that all the five points hang together and logically imply one another. If you grant this first point, the rest will follow naturally.

III. Definition of Total Depravity; What does this Mean?

A. Stated

This doctrine, in essence, teaches that all people are born sinful, wicked, with a heart that does not know God or seek

1. God. Men are not good, are not born good, all are born corrupt, with a tendency towards sin and evil.

B. WCF:

1. “Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from God, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

C. This is hard for us to believe sometimes because our culture so speaks the opposite message. No one likes to talk about sin; so often people sit in their churches week after week and the word “sin” is never used.

D. In what areas of our world/culture do we see this truth rejected?

1. Children: NBC Ad, “Children learn to hate. They aren’t born that way.”
2. Education
3. Penal System
4. Pluralism/multiculturalism
5. **The world continually looks for a source outside ourselves for evil; it must be some outside corruption.

II. The Source of Total Depravity: Why are Men Born Sinful?

A. Original Sin

1. The Bible teaches that all men are born sinful and born under God’s wrath because they are born corrupt due to Adam’s sin.
2. We inherit a corrupt nature from Adam, and thus there is no natural good in us.

B. Denial of Original Sin

1. Historically, there have been those that have rejected the idea that men are born sinful due to Adam's sin.
2. Pelagius was an early heretic during the time of Augustine who said that man is not born sinful, but free and good and that they must only decide by the power of their will to choose to be converted.
3. Charles Finney also rejected Original Sin and had a similar view of man.
4. Why do people object to this doctrine?
 - a) Say its unfair
 - b) Don't like the implications

*B. **This reminds us of the importance of the historicity of Adam if we are to maintain sound doctrine.*

II. The Extent of Total Depravity: How Far did We Fall?

A. Things Total Depravity does not mean

1. Every person is as wicked as he can be
 - a) Obviously, this doctrine does not teach people are as wicked as they can possibly be.
2. All men are equally bad
 - a) Obviously some live more wicked lives than others

B. What Total Depravity Does Mean: Rom 3:10-18

1. Inability to be righteous (Actions)
 - a) Notice Paul's insistence that not anyone who has ever lived has been righteous. So what is the definition of righteous? What do people in the world think the definition of righteous is?
 - b) Its meant here in this context as perfect conformity to God's law, which all have vastly fallen short of.

- a) **Man cannot just decide to live a righteous life. He is powerless to do so, and powerless to defend against sin.
- b) Objection: What if someone says, but my neighbor who is not a believer is pretty righteous. She does all sorts of good acts, how can you say she doesn't do good?

(1) Because she doesn't perform the actions according to God's word and for his glory.

(2) He can do formerly good things, but not on the macro level.

*(3) **All your righteous deeds are like filthy rags.*

2. Inability to understand (Mind)

- a) We need to note also that the fall effects the mind! It's a cognitive issue. Its not just that unsaved people don't do the right things, but they cannot even on their own understand and recognize truth.
- b) ^{NIV} 1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
- c) ^{NIV} John 8:43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.
- d) **Side note: You may think that without God's help, the unbeliever cannot understand religious things, but that without he God he can rightly understand non-religious things. But, the Bible claims all knowledge is found in God,a) and thus the unbeliever needs God even to know anything at all!

3. Inability to seek (Will)

a) Finally, the fall affects the will of man. He not only disobeys, and misunderstands, but he doesn't desire to do good, doesn't desire God, seek God, or love God.

b) Isn't this going a little too far? Don't we all know people who are seeking God?

(1) To have some intellectual interest in God is not the same thing as seeking God.

(2) To seek God is to seek him above else.

(3) Some may be seeking peace, joy, fulfillment. Although we know these things are found only in God, that doesn't mean they are seeking God.

*(4) **If someone does seek like this, then God has already touched them first.*

c) Why would the non-Christian seek God? God is the sinner's enemy and opponent.

d) ^{NIV} Romans 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

e) ^{NIV} John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

f) ^{NIV} John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

II. The Implication of Total Depravity

A. *God would be entirely Just to save no one*

1. Do people ever hear about some being saved and not others and say, "That's not fair."

a) **Calvin and Hobbes: how come the world is never unfair in my favor.

2. First thing to realize when we understand total depravity, is how amazing it is that God saved anyone at all!

a) The question is not, "how could God choose some and not others?", the question is "Why did God choose to save any?"

b) **This begins to answer the question of the person on the desert island who has never heard.

3. What Impact Should this have on us?

a) We don't ask that question much because we have a fairly high opinion of ourselves; privately we think that God really ought to save us.

b) **How often are we amazed by God's mercy? We are often shocked and amazed by his judgment, but should that really surprise us? Our hearts should overflow with thanksgiving.

A. Man has “free will,” but it is enslaved to sin

1. Man will always act according to the desires and inclinations of his heart.

a) Imagine a person who hates chocolate ice cream. Even if you give him a genuine choice between chocolate and vanilla, he will always choose vanilla because that is what he likes.

b) Men are not morally neutral and therefore their choice is predetermined ahead of time. If one defines “free will” as only when we make a choice with no prior ideas or influences or inclinations, then there is no such thing as free will.

c) Sinners still have the natural ability to make choices, but they don't have the moral ability to make the right ones.

2. What keeps man from being more wicked than he already is? God's common grace restraining sin.

B. If man is utterly dead spiritually and unable to seek God, then God must seek him

1. This is where we see the implications of this view on salvation. If man can never choose God, then how can anyone be saved?

2. Total depravity means that God must do the saving, not man.

3. **Two men who are on a pew and hear a gospel message, and only one goes forward and one stays seated. What accounts for the difference? Is it man? No, it is God choosing them.

1. **Thus, our concept of salvation must be very God-centered. Salvation is about what God has done, not what we have done. This doctrine upholds the supremacy of God in salvation.
2. **This means even faith is a gift of God and the result of God's work on our hearts.
3. How would such a concept affect the way we do evangelism?
 - a) We would not present the gospel as if the sinner had everything in his power and control.

Unconditional Election

Definition: God does not choose us for salvation based on any goodness or prior condition in us, but only based on his divine prerogative.

The History of the five points of Calvinism

After Jacob Arminius died (1609) his followers systematized his teaching. The two of his followers who did this were Simon Episcopius and Jan Uytenbogaert. These two led Arminius' followers in 1610 of setting out their views in a systematic fashion. They were set out in the 'Arminian Articles of Remonstrance'. There were five articles in all, and the Synod of Dort (1618-19) declared them heretical and responded with what has come to be known as the Five Points of Calvinism.

Conditional Election. Arminius taught that God elected us but that the election was conditional. Arminius taught that our election was based on two things: God's foreknowledge of those who would believe and the belief of those who would be saved. Since they are the ones who would choose to believe then they are distinctly different from the "incurable and unbelieving". The prior condition of their belief and God's foreknowledge was the cause of our election.

Arminian Articles (1610)

I. Article 1

That God, by an eternal and unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incurable and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," and according to other passages of Scripture also

The Problems with Conditional Election

1. It flies in the face of the **sin nature**, we are all equally sinful, some of us are not better, more prone to faith, than others. **Total Depravity** precludes our turning to Christ in faith on our own. The worst sinner can be saved, by grace.

Romans 3:11-12 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

1 Timothy 1:15-16 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

2. Were it true, then our election would mean that there is some positive condition in us for which we were elected. It is by virtue of our eventual faith. But Scripture says there is **no merit** in us that deserves election:

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

3. Were this true there would be some reason to think ourselves intrinsically superior to the lost, that is, we were wise enough or spiritual enough to believe therefore we are saved. Scripture says our salvation is a gift entirely and therefore **magnifies God's mercy** since we are undeserving sinners.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Romans 9:15-16 For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” 16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

Titus 3:4-5 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

4. Were it true then **human will** would be the final determining factor in who is saved, not divine will.

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

Romans 9:15-16 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

A Closer Look at Unconditional Election

1. Problems and objections

a. But don't we contribute faith?

b. What about good works and our salvation?

c. Didn't I decide to follow Christ, isn't that good?

d. How can we be held responsible if it depends on His election?

e. How can the Bible sincerely say: 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV)

2. What unconditional election does not mean

a. God has no reason to choose some

b. God is capricious in his election

c. God elects based on his foreknowledge of those who will believe

d. Man has no free will

3. What it means

a. there is no good in us that determines our election, we contribute nothing to our salvation.

b. God chooses us based on his own desire not our goodness.

Ephesians 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (NIV)

Ephesians 1:4-6 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his

sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

4. Why it is important

- a. Makes us thankful. No one saved can think that they were better than the unsaved, or had some good thought or deed or faith that caused their salvation!
- b. Gives us peace knowing that we contribute nothing to our salvation and therefore it does not depend on that contribution continuing. It makes us rest secure!
- c. Gives us hope that even the most “unworthy”, the worst looking sinner can be saved.

What is Reformed Theology?

Class #4: The Supremacy of God in Salvation: Limited Atonement

Intro and Review

I. The Issue of Limited Atonement

A. Did Christ die for the sins of every human being, or for the sins of the elect only?

B. Everyone “limits” the atonement in some way

I. II. The Case for Limited Atonement

A. The Argument from Election

B. The Argument from the Substitutionary Atonement

C. The Argument from the Scriptures

1. ^{NIV} **John 17:6** “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

1. ^{NIV} **Matthew 20:28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

2. ^{NIV} **John 10:14** “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father— and I lay down my life for the sheep.

3. ^{NIV} **John 6:36** But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

I. III. Implications of Limited Atonement

A. The Death of Christ was Successful and will not Fail

B. Christ Has a Special Love for you and Died Specifically for You

C. We May Need to Rethink the Way we Speak to Non-Christians about the Death of Jesus

Teaching Notes Class #5

What is Reformed Theology: Irresistible Grace

I. Intro

II. The Core Question of Irresistible Grace

A. Core Question: If a Person is Dead in their Sins, How do they become Born Again in Jesus Christ?

1. Issue here is getting from death to life, from point A to point B.
2. What distinguishes between one man who believes, and another who doesn't ?

B. Common Answer: Faith

1. Most people believe that faith is the first thing that a person does to get out of this problem. If he believes, then he is born again and given new life. Faith precedes new birth.
2. What is the problem with this?
 - a) What would cause this person to believe? How can a dead person believe, or even want to believe?
 - b) ****Moreover, it makes the solution to the problem of sin lie with man. He must take the deciding step. He must do something about his problem. He must believe.**
 - c) ****It could theoretically allow men to thwart God's plan. If all rests with men's response, their decision, then God is on the sidelines. God is an observer. God continually tries to make his case, but its really up to man. And apparently God has not done**

state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ;(3) enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God;(4) taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh;(5) renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good;(6) and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ;(7) yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.(8)

a) **Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,**

^{NIV} **John 3:3** In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”⁴ “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!”⁵ Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

^{NIV} **Ezekiel 36:26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

b)

2. Regeneration Precedes Faith

a) This is the radical teaching of Reformed theology, that a person doesn’t believe in order to have new life, but that they have new life in order to believe and receive Jesus Christ.

^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 12:3** Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

^{NIV} **Acts 16:14** One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.

^{NIV} **1 John 5:20** We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true— even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

1. Can the Grace of Regeneration be Resisted?

a) Some would argue that Grace is only offered to the unbeliever to help him overcome his sinfulness. But it need not be received. The sinner can refuse to cooperate with the grace offered to him.

b) What is the problem with this idea?

(1) What factor allows the sinner to decide whether or not he wants to cooperate with grace? If its own fleshly nature deciding such a thing, he will always decide against grace!

(2) And if he were to decide for grace out of his sinful nature, then he never needed grace to begin with! He already, apart from grace, was able to choose the good option. This again gives too high a position to the sinner and ignores total depravity.

c) Dead people cannot decide whether they want to be given new life. Look at the example of Lazarus. He cannot resist being made alive again. He is totally passive.

d) Warfield: Sinful man stands in need, not of inducements or assistance to save himself, but precisely of saving; and Jesus Christ has come not to advise, or urge, or woo, or help him to save himself, but to save him.”

^{NIV} **John 6:37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

e)

f) **Again the issue is: Does God actually save sinners, or only make salvation possible for sinners and thus allowing sinners to save themselves?

I. Objections to Irresistible Grace

A. *Doesn't Irresistible Grace violate man's free will?*

1. No, the issue here is not forcing someone to do something against their will, but to give them new life so that they are willing. Men who come to Christ, come willing and come wanting, not forced.
2. We all have experiences where we change our minds and gladly doing something that we before opposed. The renewed heart that God provides gives us that new perspective.

B. *But Doesn't God call the sinner to repent, believe, and obey? Why would God call the sinner to do something he cannot do?*

1. God is telling the sinner what he ought to do, what he needs to do, not what he can do
2. Does Jesus contradict himself, when he invites all to come to him, and then says you cannot come to me unless the father draws you?
3. Does not God call us to be perfect holiness as he is holy, knowing all along that we cannot possibly keep such a command?

II. Application of Irresistible Grace

A. *All Believers have a Changed and Renewed Nature*

1. Some groups out there who put regeneration after faith, think that the work of renewal that the Spirit performs can be resisted by the believer. So, he can be saved, but still be carnal and have a hard heart. He can have Jesus as savior and not as Lord.

1. The reformed view of irresistible grace challenges that view. All believers are given a new heart that loves God and pursues him. That is the foundation for why Christians should live holy lives. We live holy lives because God has now given us the power and desire to do so.

B. Our Faith is not a “good work” that caused God to save us

1. Sometimes we think that faith causes salvation. Really, in some ways, it is salvation that causes faith.

2. Our faith is not a good work. It is the result of God’s actions to raise us from spiritual death.

Teaching Notes Class #8: Covenant Theology Applied

I. I. Review of Last Week

Covenant of Works

Covenant of Grace

One Body & One Covenant of Grace:

God has had one purpose and plan for mankind ever since the Fall: to restore a people for Himself from fallen humanity through Messiah Jesus. - Fred Klett

II. II. Covenant Theology & Scripture

- It Gives Unity: “I will be your God, and you will be my people”—There is a unifying theme (Gen. 17:7; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 37:27; Hos. 2:23; Rev. 21:3)
- It Gives Life: The Covenant is the heart of Scripture; it gives the whole counsel of God its life.
- It Gives Us Jesus: We really can say that Jesus is throughout the Scriptures
- It Gives Redemptive History : Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, & New Covenant (They are not separate events regarding God’s dealings with man, but they are unfolding covenants, that build on top of one another and ultimately point to Christ; subsequent covenants do not replace, but expand/modify previous covenants)
- It Gives Interpretive Tools: New Testament helps us to understand the Old Testament (Scripture interprets Scripture)
- It Gives Relevance: All of Scriptures are relevant. All of bible applies today, the only question is how it applies.

III.III. Covenant Theology & The Law

A. A. The Moral Law: 10 Commandments

Then:

What was the immediate purpose of the 10 commandments for the Israelites?

Read Exodus 19:3-6—To show the Israelites how to live with their covenant God.

Read Exodus 20:1-2

**Mosaic Law is under covenant of grace. Covenant is bigger than law. It supercedes it.

“Now it came about in *the course of* those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice *of them.*” Exodus 2:23-25

Now:

What other purposes does it have?

Curb: Exodus 20:20

Mirror: Romans 3:20; Gal. 3:24

Guide: Exodus 20:2

How does this affect the way we view the 10 commandments?

“The 10 Commandments are not moralism or a legalistic way of salvation, but a call to life motivated by gratitude for God’s compassion and deliverance”

**Legalism is when we look at the law without the lens of the covenant.

B. Division of Covenant Law:

1)Moral Law (i.e. 10 Commandments)

- 1=1 relationship from OT to NT
- Directly related to God’s character
- No social context (i.e. universal)

2)Ceremonial Law (i.e. food laws, sacrificial laws, offerings, tabernacle)

Ceremonial Law No Longer:

- Christ changes these laws, as he fulfilled them
- They were types that foreshadowed Christ
- Heb.9:15,23; 10:1—they were shadows of a better reality
- 1 Corin. 5:7—Christ is our Passover
- Col. 2:14-17**
- Eph. 2:15-16
- Dan. 9:27

3) Civil Law (laws associated with government of Israelite nation-state)

Civil Laws No Longer:

- We no longer live in a theocracy; separation of church/state
- The New Testament Israel is the Church;
- 1 Peter 2:13-14—speaks to separation
- 1 Corin. 5—excommunication is the church's death sentence of the OT

Jesus Changes Understanding of OT:

Example of changes in interpretation of OT Laws: 1 Timothy 5:18

—Deut. 25:4

Dispensationalists & Law: If law is not repeated in NT, then it is not for Christians

I. IV. Israel & The Church

Dispensationalism:

- *A Fundamental Distinction b/t Israel & Church
- *Two distinct programs in history, one for Israel and one for the church: Two peoples & Two destinies.
- *The church does not fulfill or take over any of Israel's promises or purposes
- *Church age was not foretold by the OT saints. It is a parenthesis that temporarily suspended His primary purpose with Israel.
- *Believe in a future literal fulfillment of OT prophecies for Israel (literal, physical descendants of Jacob): such as land, descendants, king, kingdom

Deuteronomy 7:6-8/9:5-6 Israel A Chosen People

Promises & Fulfillment (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15:1-6)

What did God promise Abram?

- 1) God will give Abram Land
- 2) God will give him a great Nation
- 3) God will make Abram's Name great
- 4) God will bless all people through Abram
- 5) God promises offspring (and subsequently descendants).

It's Ultimate Fulfillment:

- 1) Land fulfilled in the Church's home—Hebrews 11:10,16
- 2) Nation fulfilled in Church—1 Peter 2:9 (Exodus 19:6; Deut. 7:6)
- 3) Abraham's name made great through the Church—Gal. 3:8-9
- 4) All Nations Blessed through in the Church—Gal. 3:6-7
- 5) Promised offspring fulfilled in head of church—Gal. 3:16

Other OT Prophecies:

Everlasting Kingdom (2 Sam. 7)

Fulfillment: Jesus' kingdom in Revelation

New Covenant (Jeremiah 31)

Fulfilled in Luke 22:20

Who are the Israelites?

Romans 2:28-29	Jews are those who have circumcised hearts
Romans 9:6-9	Jews are those who believe in the promise
Gal. 6:16	Israel of God: gentile believers
Acts 7:38	The Israelites are the church in the wilderness
Colossians 2:11-12	Gentiles have been circumcised through Christ
Philippians 3:3	Circumcised are those who glory in Christ

Do the OT prophecies have any fulfillment for physical national Israel?

No, and it never did. Those fulfillments were meant to be shadows of a much greater reality. By claiming the old covenant form, Israelites and those Christians who claim to be on their side, are forfeiting its greater new covenant fulfillment. Gal. 5:2—"If you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be no value to you at all". How sad it would be for Christians to misdirect a Jew's expectation. It is akin to telling Esau to take a fleshly pot of porridge instead of claiming his rightful birthright

I. V. Other Implications of Covenant Theology

- 1) Infant Baptism
- 2) Communion (new covenant of my blood—Luke 22:20)
- 3) Church Community

- 4) Personal Growth: Covenant Security, Covenant Direction (proper role of law); Covenant Discipline (Psalm 89:30-34); Covenant Providence
5) Worship—As a time of covenant renewal

WHAT IS COVENANT THEOLOGY?

J. Ligon Duncan

Covenant theology is the Gospel set in the context of God's eternal plan of communion with his people, and its historical outworking in the covenants of works and grace (as well as in the various progressive stages of the covenant of grace). Covenant theology explains the meaning of the death of Christ in light of the fullness of the biblical teaching on the divine covenants, undergirds our understanding of the nature and use of the sacraments, and provides the fullest possible explanation of the grounds of our assurance.

To put it another way, Covenant theology is the Bible's way of explaining and deepening our understanding of: (1) the atonement [the meaning of the death of Christ]; (2) assurance [the basis of our confidence of communion with God and enjoyment of his promises]; (3) the sacraments [signs and seals of God's covenant promises — what they are and how they work]; and (4) the continuity of redemptive history [the unified plan of God's salvation]. Covenant theology is also an hermeneutic, an approach to understanding the Scripture — an approach that attempts to biblically explain the unity of biblical revelation.

When Jesus wanted to explain the significance of His death to His disciples, He went to the doctrine of the covenants (see Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, 1 Corinthians 11). When God wanted to assure Abraham of the certainty of His word of promise, He went to the covenant (Genesis 12, 15, and 17). When God wanted to set apart His people, ingrain His work in their minds, tangibly reveal Himself in love and mercy, and confirm their future inheritance, He gave the covenant signs (Genesis 17, Exodus 12, 17, and 31, Matthew 28, Acts 2, Luke 22). When Luke wanted to show early Christians that Jesus' life and ministry were the fulfillment of God's ancient purposes for His chosen people, he went to the covenants and quoted Zacharias' prophecy which shows that believers in the very earliest days of 'the Jesus movement' understood Jesus and His messianic work as a fulfillment (not a 'Plan B') of God's covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:72-73). When the Psalmist and the author of Hebrews want to show how God's redemptive plan is ordered and on what basis it unfolds in history, they went to the covenants (see Psalm 78, 89, Hebrews 6-10).

Covenant theology is not a response to dispensationalism. It existed long before the rudiments of classical dispensationalism were brought together in the nineteenth century. Covenant theology is not an excuse for baptizing children, nor merely a convention to justify a particular approach to the sacraments (modern paedocommunionism and baptismal regenerationism). Covenant theology is not sectarian, but an ecumenical Reformed approach to understanding the Bible, developed in

the wake of the magisterial Reformation, but with roots stretching back to the earliest days of catholic Christianity and historically appreciated in all the various branches of the Reformed community (Baptist, Congregationalist, Independent, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Reformed). Covenant theology cannot be reduced to serving merely as the justification for some particular view of children in the covenant (covenant successionism), or for a certain kind of eschatology, or for a specific philosophy of education (whether it be homeschooling or Christian schools or classical schools). Covenant theology is bigger than that. It is more important than that.

“The doctrine of the covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture, are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenant of law and of grace. May God grant us now the power to instruct, and you the grace to receive instruction on this vital subject.” Who said this? C.H. Spurgeon — the great English Baptist preacher! Certainly a man beyond our suspicion of secretly purveying a Presbyterian view of the sacraments to the unsuspecting evangelical masses.

Covenant theology flows from the trinitarian life and work of God. God’s covenant communion with us is modeled on and a reflection of the intra-trinitarian relationships. The shared life, the fellowship of the persons of the Holy Trinity, what theologians call *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, is the archetype of the relationship the gracious covenant God shares with His elect and redeemed people. God’s commitments in the eternal covenant of redemptive find space-time realization in the covenant of grace.

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Is the covenant conditional or unconditional?

The answer again is – it is both. From the perspective of planning, administration and execution, the covenant is truly a covenant of *grace*. It is all of grace. And grace is sovereign and unconditional. The blessings of the Gospel come our way without any deserving or merit on our part.

Yet once the bond is established, there are elements of conditionality attached to it. To enjoy the blessings which the covenant offers and promises requires of us that we live and act in obedience to the claims of God. John Owen affirms that there are

conditions in every covenant. In his discussion of this question, John Murray makes these important points:

1. "No theologian within the Reformed camp took the position that, in the saving provisions of which the Covenant of Grace is the administration, the thought of condition is to be completely eliminated"; and
2. "Those who maintained the conditional nature of the covenant were jealous at the same time to maintain that the fulfilment of the conditions on the part of men was wholly of God's grace"

(Collected Writings, Vol 4, p229)

Perhaps the clearest scriptural assertion of this is at Psalm 103:17, which states that "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them".

Covenant of Redemption:

Hear that clearly. In the Covenant of Redemption, the Son buys you by right. You hear that? Last week we said the whole function of Covenant Theology is to do what? Build the assurance of God's people in His promises. Now the Covenant of Redemption tells you that when Christ dies for you, it makes your salvation absolutely certain. Why? **Because the Father has promised the Son, "If you will take that man's place, I will give him to You."** The whole point is that the Father cannot renege. He has promised the Son in the Covenant. So there we have the Covenant of Works and The Covenant of Redemption.

