

G R A C E

... it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace ... Hebrews 13:9

Issue 162 November, 2009

Studies in Galatians—Part Thirty

John G. Reisinger

Paul has now reached the end of his letter. He reminds his audience of the main point of the letter: the purity of the gospel and his determination to protect that purity. We could label 6:11-18, “The Essence of the Gospel of Sovereign Grace.” Let us read the entire section and then study it.

Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. (KJV)

Paul directs the Galatians’ attention to the fact that in this section, he is no longer dictating the letter through a secretary, but has picked up the pen himself. We know from his second letter to the Thessalonian church that Paul included a mark in his letters to distinguish them from letters that *seemed* to be from him (2 Thess. 2:2; 3:17). It would seem from these passages that other people were writing let-

Galatians—Continued on page 2

In This Issue	
Studies in Galatians —Part Thirty John G. Reisinger	1
What Does God Know? Steve West	1
Naaman the Leper —Part III Dr. Philip W. McMillin	3
Reformed Evangelism Andrew Smith	5
Continuity and Discontinuity John G. Reisinger	7

WHAT DOES GOD KNOW?

Steve West

According to the Bible, God knows everything (I John 3:20b). This is not mere proof-texting—although having one text which proves a point is surely better than having no texts which prove a point—the whole sweep of the Bible’s teaching about God’s knowledge indicates that there is nothing that he does not know. If we pose the question, “Does the Bible present God as limited in knowledge?” the answer would surely have to be “No.” God is just not depicted as a divine being lacking in knowledge or ignorant of any facts.

Readers of my last article briefly discussing omnipotence will not be surprised (although they may be wearied) to discover that many people today both within and without the ‘Christian’ camp are rejecting God’s omniscience. Or, more properly, they are redefining God’s omniscience

to mean that he does not know the future, but is still omniscient. How exactly is such a redefinition supposed to work?

Well, it is normally asserted that God cannot do that which is logically contradictory. He cannot make a round square, or a triangle that has only one angle. God cannot know things which are impossible to know. So he cannot know that $1 + 1 = 7$, because $1 + 1 = 2$. He cannot know that he does not exist, because he does exist. Such knowledge would not be real knowledge.

The second move is to argue that all future events are by definition logically impossible to know. Why is that the case? They are logically impossible to know because they have not happened yet. Since they take place in the future,

West—Continued on page 22

Galatians—Continued from page 1

ters in Paul's name and that he did not want the church to be misled. To prevent confusion, Paul always added something to every epistle in his own handwriting. Sometimes he merely signed his name, other times he wrote a blessing, and here he wrote an entire paragraph. Perhaps he used the size of the words ("see with what large letters I am writing to you") to draw the reader's attention to this distinguishing mark of authenticity or to signify both the mark and the importance of his upcoming words.

Why might Paul's next words be so important? In verses 12-14, he contrasts the motives of his opponents with his own motives. This is consistent with his strategy throughout the letter to contrast the true gospel that he preached with the false gospel the Judaizers preached. In verse 15, he once more clarifies and exalts the heart of the gospel: what is important is a new creation.

This portion of the passage (Gal. 6:12-15) raises and answers two questions concerning the nature of true Christian faith.

1. Is the nature of the gospel outward or is it inward?
2. Is the essence of faith human or is it divine?

If the nature of the gospel were external, then we would find Paul promoting circumcision and the works of the Mosaic law. What we find, however, is the opposite. In this letter, Paul stresses the point that faith in Christ does not manifest itself as a religion of external ceremonies administered by "holy men." The gospel that Paul preaches deals with the heart and is inward and spiritual. As we explore these verses, it is good to remind ourselves that the problem Paul addresses in this letter is not restricted to the first century. The enemy that Paul fought so fiercely still exists today.

John Stott, in his commentary on Galatians, points out that the Judaizers, typical of all legalists, were concerned primarily with something outward, in this case, circumcision.

In verses 12 and 13, they are described not only as 'those who receive circumcision' themselves, but as those who 'would compel you to be circumcised' or (NEB) 'are trying to force circumcision upon you'. It is with justice that they are sometimes called 'the circumcision party'.¹

As Stott notes, the Judaizers were rightly labeled the circumcision party, because their religion was primarily interested in circumcision and law-keeping. In effect, they denied that the gospel taught that salvation was by grace through faith alone. According to Luke, the gist of their teaching was, 'unless you are circumcised and keep the law of Moses, you cannot

¹ John R. W. Stott, BST: *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1988), 176.

Galatians—Continued on page 4

HELP NEEDED:

From anyone who understands "old english" writing, I have an article that was written in 1646. It is 26 pages long and the pages are 3" wide and 5" high. Anyone who is able and willing to type this into modern English on a computer please call 585-396-3385.

† Grace Gems!

A treasury of ageless sovereign grace devotional writings. Freely download thousands of choice Puritan books, sermons and quotes — along with select audio messages. Sign up to receive daily Puritan audio and text devotionals, delivered directly to your email. *No donations accepted.*

www.GraceGems.org

Sound of Grace is a publication of Sovereign Grace New Covenant Ministries, a tax exempt 501(c)3 corporation. Contributions to *Sound of Grace* are deductible under section 170 of the Code.

Sound of Grace is published 10 times a year. The subscription price is \$10.00 per year. This is a paper unashamedly committed to the truth of God's sovereign grace and New Covenant Theology. We invite all who love these same truths to pray for us and help us financially.

We do not take any paid advertising.

The use of an article by a particular person is not an endorsement of all that person believes, but it merely means that we thought that a particular article was worthy of printing.

Sound of Grace Board: John G. Reisinger, John Thorhauer, Bob VanWingerden and Jacob Moseley.

Editor: John G. Reisinger; Phone: (585)396-3385; e-mail: reisingerjohn@gmail.com.

Webmaster: Maurice Bergeron; webmaster@soundofgrace.com

General Manager: Jacob Moseley; info@newcovenantmedia.com

Send all orders and all subscriptions to: Sound of Grace, 5317 Wye Creek Drive, Frederick, MD 21703-6938 – Phone 800-376-4146 or 301-473-8781 Fax 240-206-0373. Visit the bookstore: <http://www.newcovenantmedia.com>

Address all editorial material and questions to: John G. Reisinger, Sound of Grace, 3302 West Lake Rd, Canandaigua, NY 14424-2441.

Visit the Sound of Grace Web Page at: <http://www.soundofgrace.com>

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by Permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked "NKJV" are taken from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by Permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Contributions

Orders

VISA or MasterCard

If you wish to make a tax-deductible contribution to *Sound of Grace*, please mail a check to: Sound of Grace, 5317 Wye Creek Drive, Frederick, MD 21703-6938.

Please check the mailing label to find the expiration of your subscription. Please send payment if you want your subscription to continue—\$10.00 for ten issues. If you are unable to subscribe at this time, please call or drop a note in the mail and we will be glad to continue sending *Sound of Grace* free of charge.

NAAMAN THE LEPER—Part III

CHRIST'S COMPASSION FOR LEPERS

Dr. Philip W. McMillin

As we have already said, to be a leper in days of old was to be dead while you lived. Not only were you shunned and disgraced because it was believed in Israel that God had brought the curse on you for some terrible sin, but also you would die a death perhaps as dreaded as crucifixion.

Both Mark and Luke speak of the Lord being in Bethany at the house of a man known as Simon the leper. He is probably a man whom the Lord had healed of his leprosy and so he was remembered in a way that referred to that notable event. The reason I believe that is because Lazarus, whom the Lord resurrected from his grave, lived in Bethany also. Wouldn't it be a dual teaching, that a man who had the disease symbolic of sin and certain death, was healed and that one whom sin had already destroyed in his body was raised from the dead? Christ has power to sustain life and to restore it. In him is life. In him we live and move and have our being. That power is exercised both in time and in eternity. There is both a balm in Gilead and there is a physician there. There is a recovery of health for the daughter of the people.

In Mark 1 there is a record of a leper whom Christ healed. Listen:

"Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him; 'If you are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing, be cleansed.' As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." (Mark 1:40-42)¹

This man was between the proverbial rock and a hard place. He had a disease that could not be treated, which twisted and disfigured and finally it killed. I am sure he had heard of the miracles being done all over Galilee. Demons had been cast out and many diseases had been cured. He knew these diseases had made the doctors impotent to help and it would do no good for him to go to them. He knew that this great healer could do as he pleased with him. So he came humbly; kneeling down to him as a beggar; imploring, pleading with Christ, he said, "If You are willing." You do not command the one whose voice even the winds and the waves obey. This universe, the creature and all else in it is the work of this man's hand before whom the leper bows. He shows mercy to whom he wills and he shows compassion to whom he is willing to show it. So he bows before Jesus and recognizes this right of the healer; "If you are willing, You can make me clean."

He is the rewarder of all who diligently seek him and who believe that he is God. All such come humbly, imploring him.

I know, by faith, that to all who come to Christ in their beggar's rags, he stretches out his hand and says to them, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately their leprosy leaves them.

This man experienced a miracle in both body and soul. Remember, even today, leprosy is only cured by taking multiple drugs over long periods of time, and sometimes the seemingly cured have relapses. But this man's leprosy left him at once.

And so it is in the quickening to life by regeneration. At once the dead live. There are no relapses in Christ's healing ministry. His people are willing in the day of his power, for the power of the Spirit overwhelms their deathly state and it leaves immediately.

Christ told this man to go to the priest for examination and offer up the things Moses had commanded as a testimony, and to tell no one about it. But he went out and proclaimed it widely, spread the wonder so far that Jesus could not openly go into the city, but was outside in deserted places.

When God saves you, you will find that you cannot keep the secret. It will slip out somewhere, somehow. To be clean, to be free of your leprosy is a wonder the soul cannot bottle up. "Praise God, my sins are gone."

It might be of help to you to read the account of healing in Matthew 8:1-4 also.

There is another account of lepers who came to Christ for healing, which is very instructive also. It is found in Luke 17:12-19:

Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' So when He saw them, He said to them, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the *New King James Version*, unless noted

otherwise.

Galatians—Continued from page 2

be saved' (Acts 15:1). Peter rejected that teaching by directing attention to God's work of cleansing the heart (Acts 15:9). Heart cleansing is internal. Paul picks up the external/internal contrast as he refutes the Judaizers' claim.

It is important to note in verses 12 and 13 that Paul exposes the motivation behind the Judaizers' teaching. Why were they so insistent that Gentiles be circumcised, and even more importantly, why did they want to put the Gentile believers under the law? Look closely at these two verses.

As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. (KJV)

Under the Old Covenant, Jewish people could have no personal fellowship with Gentiles. This prohibition placed the first-century Judaizers in a dilemma. On the one hand, they professed to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They were part of the "knowing ones" for whom Nicodemus spoke: "We know thou art a teacher come from God for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except

manifested itself in their insistence on circumcision for the Gentile believers. Earlier in this epistle (Gal. 2:4), Paul had called the Judaizers "false brethren." They were *brethren* in the sense that they had made a profession of faith, but they were *false* brethren whose behavior invalidated their profession. Their commitment to Judaism included their desire to be accepted by those of their Jewish brethren who did not view Jesus as Messiah. They wanted to add Jesus to their Judaism without forsaking Moses and the Old Covenant.

Paul believed that the Judaizers' motivation was clear. They wanted to have the approval of the Jewish community, but that was impossible as long they had any fellowship with the uncircumcised Gentiles. If they could persuade, or force, the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses, they could then boast that they had actually made Jews out of the Gentile converts. The Judaizers hoped they could glory in the flesh—circumcision—of the Gentiles and thereby have both the approval of their unbelieving Jewish brethren and the acceptance of the Gentile believers. This solution, however, suffered from several flaws. One problem with it was that the Judaizers themselves did not keep the law (v. 13). How ri-

Only the blood of Christ shed on the cross could bring forgiveness. Paul preached, "There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and that *all* included every Jew (Rom. 3:22b-23, ESV). To in any way imply or suggest that a Gentile was even remotely close to being equal to a Jew would have seemed heretical. It would have eliminated the distinction the Old Covenant enforced. In order to join the group of believers, the Judaizers had to confess that "no distinction" applied also to the gift of justification by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24, ESV), but they could never profess it to their non-believing Jewish brethren without incurring their wrath. Circumcising the Gentiles—in effect, making them Jewish and giving them an elevated status—seemed like an answer.

Preaching the cross also meant declaring the sacrificial death of the Messiah. That sacrifice superseded all the other sacrifices of the Old Covenant: the Jewish Pascal lambs, the Day of Atonement, and all the priestly rituals of that religion. Everything that made Judaism God's Old Covenant religion was forever finished. It was all fulfilled and thus done away with. It is not difficult to see why an unbelieving Jew would hate the very

***How ridiculous to impose law keeping as essential to salvation
when you yourself did not keep the law!***

God be with him" (John 3:2b, KJV). Our Lord had all of the necessary credentials to prove he was the Messiah and on the strength of that evidence, the Judaizers had "believed." On the strength of that confession, they had joined the group of believers, a group that eventually included Gentiles. On the other hand, they did not actually submit to Jesus Christ as lord and they certainly were not willing to forsake the Old Covenant and move into the New Covenant. This reluctance

was ridiculous to impose law keeping as essential to salvation when you yourself did not keep the law! Their position was ludicrous.

Another problem was that the real persecution came from the *preaching of the cross* (v. 12). The preaching of the cross is hated today, but it was especially odious to the Jews in Paul's day. Preaching the cross meant that all people, without exception, were equally guilty sinners before God.

ment of the cross. His religion—his entire way of life—consisted of rituals and ceremonies. The function of religious rituals and ceremonies was to ensure that one approached the deity properly. Thus, there was a visible temple, a visible altar, and visible sacrifices and offerings. There was a visible high priest with colorful clothing. There was the history and glory of a visibly manifesting and interven-

Galatians—Continued on page 10

REFORMED EVANGELISM: CALLING PEOPLE TO THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST BY DECLARING HIM AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

Part 1 of 3

Andrew Smith

Introduction

It will be my privilege to write a three part series on the subject of Reformed Evangelism. My hope is that those who read these articles will gain a renewed confidence in Christ (our Prophet, Priest, and King) that will spur bold, biblical, New Covenant, Christ-centered evangelism. In addition, I hope that we understand the urgency of this type of evangelism in light of the current postmodern landscape. In an age like ours, we must make it clear that there is truth and that we have that truth as Christians, which is rooted solely in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To begin with, let's ask a foundational, but important question, "What is Reformed Evangelism?" Let me summarily provide an answer to this question by means of a definition. I would like to define Reformed Evangelism as follows:

Reformed Evangelism is the passionate responsibility of God's people, the church, to biblically and clearly declare Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King to sinners by identifying with Christ as "prophets", "priests", and "kings."

There are two important features of Reformed Evangelism that this definition expresses. First, this definition sets forth the fact that innate to a correct understanding of Reformed Evangelism (hereafter identified as RE) is a recognition of the primacy of a proper theology. This is expressed in the first half of the definition, "Reformed Evangelism is the passionate responsibility of God's people, the church, to biblically and clearly declare Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King to sinners..." Second, flowing from this we see that understand-

ing RE also stems from an acknowledgement of a proper methodology. The methodology of RE is revealed in the second half of the definition, "... by themselves identifying with Christ as "prophets", "priests", and "kings."

It is important to understand that the order of these two facets of RE are not accidental or incidental. If one were to reverse the order, then one would not have RE. In other words, RE depends on a proper theology. Moreover, it is only after the establishment of this proper theology that one can then develop a proper methodology (method to evangelize). In fact, this is what makes RE unique to contemporary trends of evangelism.¹ Unlike contemporary trends, RE is consumed with precision—communicating the Gospel clearly, accurately, and thoroughly. At the heart of this desire is the clear, accurate, and thorough communication of Christ. In the words of Tom Wells, "It's not possible to trust a person about whom we only have vague ideas".² RE seeks to avoid vagueness about the person of Christ.

In contradistinction to Arminian (or Semi-Pelagian) evangelism, which is thoroughly man-centered, RE is thoroughly God-centered. A man-centered approach to evangelism understands man as basically good;

¹ Kim Riddlebarger, *Telling the Truth in Love* <http://www.christreformed.org/telling-people-the-truth-in-lo/>. Riddlebarger rightly points out that the Second Great Awakening gave way to the trend of no longer placing theology as primary, but substituting methodology as primary. That view dominates much of the church today.

² Tom Wells, *Come to Me!*, (Carlisle, PA, Banner of Truth, 1986), p 59

Andrew Smith is a graduate of Clearwater Christian College (B.A. in Bible) and Southern Seminary (Master of Divinity-Theological School). He is currently the Associate Pastor at Grace Chapel in Kingwood, WV. He and his wife Corie have two children—Gracie and Jackson.

basically possessing a desire for God. In this approach, though man is seen as sinful, it is understood that he still retains some ability to choose Christ. As a result, man-centered evangelism is based upon an emotional set of techniques that help convince the sinner to make a decision that he presumably has the power to make. It places power not only in the unbeliever hearing the message but also in the hands of the person presenting the Gospel. Energy is put into pressing for a decision, rather than pressing for a clear understanding of the person and work of Christ.³ On the other hand, RE understands that the Holy Spirit is the only true agent that can bring new life (Jn. 3:1-8). RE robustly affirms that it is the preaching of the Gospel which God has established as the means the Spirit uses in order to bring about genuine conversions (Rom. 10:14-16). Thus, RE strongly affirms the power of the message preached, not the power of the messenger and certainly not the ability of the listener to believe! Rather, it rightly emphasizes the power of a sovereign God Himself.⁴

³ Tom Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory*, (Cape Coral, Founders Press, 2006), (see last chapter).

⁴ Joel Beeke, *John Calvin: Teacher and Practitioner of*

Smith—Continued from page 5

Historically, this “threefold office” (munus triplex) of Christ as our Redeemer was made popular by John Calvin. It has since become a common way to express the person of Christ in the Reformed and Lutheran traditions.⁵ Seeing Christ as Prophet, Priest and King obviously places an emphasis on Christ being the theme of redemptive history, and thus Scripture itself. If indeed we agree with the Apostle Paul that Scripture is the “word about Christ” (Col. 3:16), then we can readily see Christ as the fulfillment of those three offices that God established in the nation of Israel. In the Old Testament era, all three of

to oppose the Roman Catholic Church who promoted an incorrect view of the Gospel.⁶

Essentially, Calvin argued in his own context the same thing we, as Reformed Christians, must argue and fight for today when it comes to evangelism. That is, very simply, that the most important aspect of RE is a God-centered focus that spends time, energy and even money on declaring the Gospel with precision. RE rightly sees that possessing a proper theology of Christ is not good enough. We must share this with a lost and dying world that is full of God’s elect sinners. Witnessing is foundational for RE. J.I. Packer strongly agrees with this senti-

ment when he says, “There is no evangelism where this specific message is not declared.”⁷

Therefore, in these articles I simply want to argue that setting forth Christ as Prophet, Priest and King is an easy and familiar way in which to remember the essentials of Gospel proclamation. This means that teaching, instruction, and information about the Gospel will take precedence above all else. It will rise above an ambition—even good ambition—for converts and the growth of the church. Most importantly, it will reign supreme over our methodology. The proposition of this paper is simple: RE derives its methodology (the way one

Reformed Evangelism is the passionate responsibility of God’s people, the church, to biblically and clearly declare Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King to sinners by identifying with Christ as “prophets”, “priests”, and “kings.”

these offices pointed to Christ. In the New Testament era, He fulfilled all three of these offices. In these articles, I am simply arguing that in our evangelism we point others to Christ by showing His true identity as Prophet, Priest, and King. As I stated above, RE centers its evangelism on a precise declaration about Christ. The munus triplex does this well. In fact, Calvin himself developed this understanding of Christ’s fulfillment of these offices

Evangelism, (<http://hnrc.org/files/CalvinTeacherOfEvangelism.pdf>), p. 79, Beeke makes the following conclusion in this article, “Election evokes missionary activity characterized by humble dependence on God for blessing. The doctrine of free grace is not a barrier to God-centered, God-glorifying evangelism; it is a barrier against a humanistic concept of evangelistic task and method”.

5 Kim Riddlebarger, *The Triple Cure: Jesus Christ—Our Prophet, Priest and King*, (<http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/etc/primer-friendly.asp?ID=507>), grace online library does not appear to give page numbers?

6 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1960) “As Augustine rightly states, the heretics, although they preach the name of Christ, have herein no common ground with believers, but it remains the sole possession of the church. For if we diligently consider the things that pertain to Christ, we will find Christ among the heretics in name only, not in reality. So today the words ‘Son of God, Redeemer of the world’ resound upon the lips of the papists. Yet because they are satisfied with vain pretense of the name, and strip him of his power and dignity, Paul’s words apply to them: ‘They do not hold fast to the Head’ (Colossians 2:19). Therefore, in order that faith may find a firm basis for salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him, this principle must be laid down: the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts. For he was given to be prophet, king, and priest. Yet it would be of little value to know these names without understanding their purpose and use. The papists use these names, too, but coldly and rather ineffectually, since they do not know what each of these titles contains” (494).

shares Christ) from its theology (what one believes about Christ and the Gospel message).

Now that we have a working definition of RE, and a clear proposition for this study we can pursue this topic with some organization. I want to organize this study under three headings: 1) *Declaring Christ as Prophet*, 2) *Declaring Christ as Priest*, and 3) *Declaring Christ as King*. As we move through these three headings, I will show how RE derives its methodology from its theology. This will, therefore, lead us to consider not only *what* we declare (the essence of our message), but also *how* we declare that message (our attitudes, motives, etc.)

DECLARING CHRIST AS PROPHET

Theology: How Do We Declare Christ as Prophet in Our Evangelism?

Smith—Continued on page 16

7 J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, (Downers Grove, IVP, 1961) 39.

Thoughts on Continuity and Discontinuity

John G. Reisinger

Different theological systems provide different answers to the question of what continues when covenants change. Regardless of what view one takes on the continuity or discontinuity between the Old Covenant and the New, we believe that the following five foundational principles are essential for any theological system within evangelicalism. Each of these principles has implications; we have identified some that we feel are significant and have offered some brief observations about the application of those implications.

Principle One: Every verse of Scripture, no matter in what part of Scripture we find it, is “God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15, 16). The word Scripture in this text is either referring to the Old Testament or includes it.

Implications of this principle: We use this text to prove the inspiration of the Scriptures, and rightly so, but if we stop there, we have failed to heed all that this text teaches. According to this text, *all* of God’s inspired Scripture is profitable for training new covenant believers in righteous living so we must actually use all of the sixty-six books of the Bible to teach us *something about holy living today*. Adherents to Covenant Theology are disingenuous when they use this text to argue against New Covenant Theology. Their system divides the law into three sub-categories, one of which, the ceremonial law, they view as done away in Christ. They then ignore those laws, for all practical purposes, for God’s people who live on this side of the cross. In the system of Covenant Theology, the ceremonial laws provide one aspect of what constituted

righteousness, or holy living, for God’s people who lived prior to the coming of Christ, but those same laws have no practical value, in that system, to equip God’s people who live after the cross for good works in holy living. Covenant Theology’s tri-partite division of the law fails to recognize the implications of this text. It seems to me, however, that some adherents of New Covenant Theology do exactly the same thing via a different route. It is vital to remember that interpreting the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament is not the same as discarding the Old Testament altogether.

Applications of this principle: All of the Old Testament Scriptures are still part of the Word of God that helps new covenant believers to “*be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” Therefore, our system of theology and our actual practice must incorporate the book of Exodus, and every other book in Scripture, to teach, to rebuke, to correct and to help train God’s people in 2009 to live righteously *in some sense*. Regardless of in what way or to what degree Christ’s death on the cross did away with the ceremonial laws, as ceremonial laws, those verses of Scripture must have *some function* in helping new covenant believers to live God honoring lives today.

Principle Two: Being under the Scripture and being under the law are two different things. We have established from 2 Timothy 3:15, 16 that all of God’s people are under the Scripture in the sense that it (all of it) is necessary and sufficient for training in righteousness. Paul, in his letters to the Romans and to the Galatians, establishes just as clearly that Christians are not under the Mosaic law (Rom. 6:14, 15; 7:6; Gal. 4:21-31).

Implications of this principle: The Christian must see himself as completely and forever free from the Mosaic law and must not allow anyone to place his conscience under that law in any sense. At the same time, however, Christians must also see themselves as under the absolute authority of Scripture, and that Scripture includes everything to which 2 Timothy 3:15, 16 refers.

Applications of this principle: When someone asks, “Are Christians free from the law, meaning the Old Covenant?” we respond, “Absolutely.” If someone asks, “Are Christians free from the Old Testament?” we respond, “Not as long as 2 Timothy 3:15, 16 is in the Bible.” We can see specific examples of this application by considering the third principle.

Principle Three: There is a clear distinction between the Old *Testament*, meaning the thirty-nine books of the Bible written before Christ came, and the Old *Covenant*, meaning the legal covenant that God put Israel under at Sinai. These two nouns (*testament* and *covenant*) are not synonyms for the same thing, but name two radically and distinctly different things.

Implications of this principle: Christians, while being free from the Mosaic law—the Old Covenant—are not free from the Old Testament. Failure to maintain this distinction will result in confusion and can lead either to legalism or to antinomianism.

Applications of this principle: Evangelicals disagree over the status of the death penalty. Some point to Romans 13:4 to establish the death penalty as continuing under the new covenant. Others, however, understand “bearing the sword” in that verse to refer not to capital punishment, but to the authority of the government to enforce its will. They view the death penalty as an old cov-

Reisinger—Continued from page 7

enant law, rescinded by the advent of the new covenant. It does not matter which of the two views are correct, or if neither is correct, since the status of the death penalty does not depend on one's interpretation of Romans 13:4.

God grounds both the necessity of the death penalty and the promise of the rainbow in the covenant he made with Noah, recorded in Genesis 9:5-17. This covenant predates the Old Covenant; therefore, these verses are a part of the Old Testament, but not a part of the Old Covenant. If we believe that the promise of the rainbow continues because the Noahic Covenant continues, we must also believe that the necessity of the death penalty continues, unless we have specific Scriptural evidence to the contrary. Therefore, when we go back to Genesis 9:6 to prove that the death penalty is still in effect today, we are not going under the law. Instead, we are heeding a law that God gave to mankind long before he gave the law covenant to Moses and the people of Israel. While we are mindful that the new covenant rescinds all the laws, *as covenant terms*, that the Old Covenant instituted, we must remember that the Old Covenant did not institute all of the laws in the *Old Testament Scriptures*.

Principle Four: God requires his people to be holy. He commands it under the old covenant (in Leviticus 19:2) and under the new covenant (in 1 Peter 1:15, 16).

Implications of this principle:

There is continuity in God's sovereign purpose in election unto salvation as well as unto holy living for his people under both the old and the new covenants. God's people are responsible to obey the command to be holy, regardless of which covenant they live under. The details of holy living may or may not be the same under both covenants. Therefore, God's people must find out, from God's revelation to them, how their covenant delineates holy living.

Applications of this principle: In Leviticus 19, God, through Moses, provides a partial list of what being holy will look like in the daily life of his old covenant people. The passage gives them a list of very specific laws defining what God demands of them. He grounds his commands on the truth that they are to be holy because he is holy: *Ye shall be holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy* (Lev. 19:2). This list includes respecting parents, keeping Sabbaths, making various sacrifices, gleaning, stealing, cursing the deaf, bearing tales, mixing fibers in cloth, sowing different seeds in the same field, acquiring tattoos, shaving, and others such things. Israelites (the old covenant people of God) demonstrated their love to God by obeying, among other things, the laws listed in Leviticus 19. This obedience constituted holy living for them. Peter quotes this verse when urging followers of Christ (the new covenant people of God) to be holy. Peter says Christians are to be holy in all they do: *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is writ-*

ten: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). Unlike Moses, however, Peter does not follow this command to be holy with a detailed list of what holy behavior will look like in the daily life of God's new covenant people. Given this lack of specific detail, how are new covenant believers to know how to live in order to be holy by God's definition of the word? Does Peter intend his readers to understand themselves as under the Mosaic law and to turn back to that law to find out how to be holy? Do they obey everything in Lev. 19, some things in Lev. 19 or nothing in Lev. 19?

Covenant Theology would answer yes to the first question above. They would send a new covenant believer back to the law of Moses to learn what constitutes holy living. They believe that holiness is the same under both covenants, although they jettison many of the details found in Leviticus 19 by appealing to their tri-partite division of the law. The "moral" law list remains while the "civil" and "ceremonial" law lists pass away. New Covenant Theology, however, draws a different conclusion from Peter's quotation. An Israelite demonstrated his love for God "in all he did," and some of what he was supposed to do was spelled out in clear and specific rules in passages like Leviticus 11 and 19. Those rules prescribed behavior that we can classify as moral in nature, ceremonial in nature, and civil in nature. However, the *essence* of all those rules/laws was the same to the Israelite. An Israelite obeyed the law of God, period. For Israel, there was

Meditation on the Glory of Christ

John Owen

Christ Himself with all His glory will be really and continually with us. We shall no longer have to be satisfied with the mere descriptions of Him that we have in the gospel. We shall see Him face to face (1 Cor 13:12) and as He is (1 John 3:2). We shall see Him with our bodily eyes, for Job says: "In my flesh shall I see God (my Redeemer), whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold" (Job 19:25-27). Our bodily senses will be restored and glorified in a way we cannot now understand, in order that we may be able to look at Christ and His glory forever and ever. We shall see not only His human nature but His divinity also in its infinite wisdom, love and power. That glory will be a thousand times more than anything we can imagine.

one “law of God.” The old covenant believer did not have *moral* duties, *civil* duties and *ceremonial* duties. He obeyed every law God gave him and he obeyed them all for the same reason: they were commandments of God.

One reason that New Covenant Theology rejects the tri-partite division of the law is that it is impossible to go through Leviticus 19, or the whole Pentateuch, and find three distinct *lists* of law: one ceremonial, one civil, and one moral. There were moral laws, ceremonial laws and civil laws, but there was not three codes, or lists, of laws whereby you could keep one list and dismiss another list. The statutes and rules are mixed together, regardless of what *kind* of behavior they govern. The second greatest commandment, according to our Lord, is found in Leviticus 19:18: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. No one would deny that was a moral commandment. The very next verse forbids crossbreeding two kinds of cows, planting two kinds of seed in the same field, and mixing linen and wool in the same fabric. No one would think of making any of these three in verse 19 a “moral” commandment. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit does not make any distinction between verse 18 and 19. An Israelite was equally responsible to obey everything in both verses 18 and 19 (as well as all that precedes and follows those two verses). Yet most theologians teach that none of the three things in verse 19 in any way teach a Christian how to be holy today. What justifies saying that verse 18 is still binding but verse 19 is not? To answer this question is to begin to establish a New Covenant Theology hermeneutic.

What was God teaching Israel with all the rules in Leviticus 19 as well as the long list of food laws in chapter 11? From the time an Israelite got out of bed until he retired at night, he had clear rules detailing how to

dress, how and what to eat, how to shave, and how to do a multitude of other things. Imagine a Gentile asking an Israelite why he dressed, ate, planted his garden, and the like so differently from the custom of other people. The Israelite could only say, “Because God told me to.” God was teaching, in a series of object lessons, that his people were different from other people. The God of the Israelites controlled their entire life. God was saying, and enforcing by specific and detailed laws, the need to “come out from among them and be ye separate.” But is that not exactly the same thing Paul teaches in the new covenant (2 Cor. 6:17)? The Israelite showed he was different from the non-Israelite by obeying a comprehensive list of minute rules.¹

We have continuity of principle between covenants because new covenant believers, like the Israelites, show that they are different from unbelievers. And, like the Israelite, the believer today does the same thing out of love for God. Both groups, the Israelites and new covenant believers, live differently from those around them. However, the two groups also live differently from each other, as well. This means that we see discontinuity of detail. How the Israelite marked the difference between himself and non-Israelites differs from how the Christian marks the difference between himself and non-Christians. The new covenant believer **does not** show his love to God by adopting a *new and different list of rules* that marks him as distinct from non-Christians, but by adopting Christ as a moral example. The old covenant had prophets, priests, and kings, but none of them could serve as a moral example for the people of God, because the very law that established those roles also

¹ Some of these rules pertained exclusively to Israelite men and some pertained exclusively to Israelite women. In other words, holiness under the Old Covenant was also gender specific.

restricted them. A Levite could not say to a non-Levite, “If you want to be holy, do what I do and perform sacrifices.” A non-Levite was not allowed into the Holy Place much less authorized to offer sacrifices. No single figure under the Old Covenant could be a moral role model for the people of God. The new covenant, however, has a single figure who is prophet, priest, and king, and who serves as a true moral example for all new covenant believers. Thus, Paul can say, “If you want to be holy, imitate me (and others like me) **as we imitate Christ**” (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:9).

Both covenants (the old and the new) command God’s people to be holy, but what constitutes a holy life for a Christian differs from what constituted a holy life for an Israelite. How both groups manifest holiness is one of the differences between law and grace. In the absence of a functional role model, law is necessary. The advent of a functional role model, however, renders law obsolete. Grace marks the age of Christ, our total role model. I fear that some New Covenant Theology people are neglecting the role of Christ as a sufficient moral example. They seem to want to create a *new* old covenant that is just as rule, or law, centered as the *old* old covenant. This observation brings us to the fifth principle.

Principle Five: The new covenant has no parallel to the Ten Commandments. By this statement, we mean that there is no “new covenant law list,” in the same sense that the old covenant had a list that served as its founding document.

Implications of this Principle: Some theologians want to make the phrase, the *law of Christ* (Gal. 6:2), do the work in the new covenant that the “Ten Words” did in the old. To do so, however, is to misunderstand and

Galatians—Continued from page 4

ing God. With the end of the Old Covenant, all of that is gone. In the New Covenant, all is now spiritual. Sight has given way to faith and the visible to the invisible. The outward has given way to the inward and spiritual. It no longer matters which mountain you worship on, because there are no longer any holy mountains or any other holy places, including what was once the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle. When the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51), the Most Holy Place (a place that only one man on one day of the year was allowed to enter) was no longer holy. I say this reverently: it became an ordinary, mundane place that could have been rented out for a pigpen. The Ark of the Covenant (an object so holy that no human hands were permitted to touch it) was no longer holy and could have been melted down and sold on

the essence of what Jesus said to the woman at the well, recorded in John 4. The nature of the gospel is inward, not outward.

The answer to the second question raised in this passage, *Is the essence of faith human or is it divine?* is that it is divine. What we mean by this question is whether Paul's message primarily focuses on what we do for God or on what God, through Christ, has done for us.² In verse 12, Paul describes the motive of the Judaizers as making "a good show in the flesh" and in verse 13 as desiring to "glory in the flesh." If they have their way, they will be able to say, "Look what we have done! We have brought the Gentiles into the kingdom. We have done something (circumcision) that joins them to the people of God; we have given them something (the law of Moses) that allows them to remain as part of the people of God; and we

foolishness," and in the same chapter, verse 31, he adds, "*that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*" He is quoting from Jeremiah 9:24, which states, "*But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness ...*" We glory in something when we are proud of it. We boast about something when it makes us feel special and exceptional. But before God, sinners do not have anything of their own about which to boast. Winning seven gold medals at the Olympics certainly gives a person the right to be proud of his accomplishment before fellow humans, but God is not really impressed. Gold medals are not made of the stuff that never rusts or corrodes. The only source of gospel glorying is when we glory in the fact of God's loving-kindness in electing us to know and

Human hands and human agencies can produce everything involved in a human-centered religion, but only God can produce a true spiritual and eternal change in sinners.

the gold market. We can understand to some degree the Jews' plight upon the inauguration of the New Covenant.

We can see the significance of the New Covenant as it relates to worship when we read John 4:19-24.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (KJV)

Paul, in Galatians 6:12-16, repeats

have done all this for God." Paul contrasts the Judaizers' human-centered religion with his God-centered gospel. Human hands and human agencies can produce everything involved in a human-centered religion, but only God can produce a true spiritual and eternal change in sinners. The Judaizers may glory in the flesh but Paul is emphatic—he will glory in nothing but the cross (v. 14). Verse 14 is one of Paul's great Christ-centered "glory shouts."

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (KJV)

Paul's theology allows for a single object of glorying, or boasting: the cross of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul writes, "*the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing*

understand his revelation of himself. You may glory in your baptism, or in your church, or in your pastor, or in your theology, but I will glory in the fact that "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Note that Paul glories in the very thing, the cross, that those who are perishing call foolish. Why is the preaching of the cross foolishness to unbelievers? Many unbelievers do not ridicule the preaching of the love of God. In fact, these people object to preaching that omits the love of God. Not everyone becomes upset when we preach the miracles in the Bible. What is it about preaching the cross that so upsets people? Preaching the cross is preaching that we are so guilty before God that nothing less than a bloody sacrifice could effect forgiveness of sins. It is preaching that God's holy

² Ibid., 178.

McMillin—Continued from page 3

any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.’”

The Samaritans were despised by the self-righteous Jews. They would gladly consign the lot of them to hell. Verse 12 of the passage states that Christ entered a certain village. Notice how often the word certain is used in Scripture of a place or of persons who are treated in an especial way by a merciful God.

When Christ came to that city there were ten lepers, standing far off because of their uncleanness. They cried out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

Notice how differently Christ performed the miracle of healing here. He didn’t reach out his hand to them, but told them to go and show themselves to the priests. And it was as they went that they were cleansed.

I think it is of note that in the first case of the leper who came to Christ alone, which we studied in Mark 1, the same event is recorded in Luke 5:12-14. Luke’s record shows that the

man addressed Christ as Lord or Kurios, which means supreme in authority. Here, the ten lepers address Christ as master, which means teacher or one appointed to teach. It was a title coveted by the Scribes and Pharisees, a proud greeting among them.

Nicodemus used that title, Rabbi, for Christ when he came to him and in a sense at least equated Christ with himself, he being a notable teacher in Israel. It seems to me that these ten lepers want a healing sign to be granted to them, a merciful healing, but they are not seeking it as a grant that God alone can give. They stood far off, while the other man came to Christ and kneeled and implored him. I don’t see the ten give the recognition which the other man’s “if You are willing You can heal me,” gave to Christ.

As we noticed before, Christ did not touch them, he just said go show yourselves to the priests. It was as they went that they were cleansed. It is like Naaman, whom Elisha sent to dip in the Jordan. These men had hearts like the Syrian, I think they knew Christ as Master and Teacher,

but not as Lord.

But things changed with one of them when he was healed. He looked in wonder. He was no longer a leper. When he saw that, he lifted up his voice, again. He was not crying for mercy, but glorifying God for the mercy he had received. He ‘fell down at Jesus feet giving thanks.’ Then Scripture adds, “And he was a Samaritan.”

I presume that the other nine were Jews who were drawn to the company of one they despised by necessity alone. And they didn’t see that their leprosy was a mark from God that in themselves they were no better than the leper. God made them associates of one whom they despised. Did they learn? No!

Christ said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

Matthew Poole said that he didn’t see any sign that the leper in Luke 5 knew who he had come to for help. I

McMillin—Continued on page 20

Serve Jesus—Not the Law

John Piper

Paul says, serve Jesus not the law. Romans 7:6, “But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.” Paul contrasts serving under the old written code with serving in the new life of the Spirit. Once we focused on the demands of the law for justification, and our service was deadly. No one is justified by works of the law (Romans 3:20). But now that Christ has come we have died to this focus on the law and its demands and we focus on Christ and his life-giving Spirit (Romans 7:4).

What this means is that serving Christ is not mainly following a new law. Rather now a Person, Jesus Christ, stands where once the law stood. And that divine Person is first and foremost a Law-fulfiller not a law demander. And in that way he is utterly unlike Moses. “It is fitting for us,” Jesus said, “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). He fulfills the law perfectly and bears its curse perfectly. Therefore serving this Christ is radically different from serving law. Serving a demand and serving a divine person who meets the demand before he makes the demand is radically different.

So serving Christ, not the law, means believing who he is, the Messiah and Son of God, and believing what he has done, provided my perfect pardon and perfect righteousness, and then seeking with all our might to become in practice what we are in him. This service is a great liberty. This slavery to Christ our righteousness is freedom and joy.

Galatians—Continued from page 10

and just character must be propitiated and nothing less than the vicarious atoning work of Christ on the cross could accomplish that job. People hate the cross because it condemns them in their sin.

In verse 14, Paul shows that there are two sides to crucifixion. He is crucified to the world and the world is crucified to him. When we glory in the cross, we demonstrate the irreconcilable natures of the world where self reigns and the preaching of the reign of God's sovereign grace. As John Stott notes, it is impossible to boast in the Lord and boast in ourselves at the same time. By choosing to boast in Christ, we have drawn a line in the sand.

As a result, we and the world have parted company. Each has been 'crucified' to the other. 'The world' is the society of unbelievers. Previously we were desperately anxious to be in favor with the world. But now that we have seen ourselves as sinners and Christ crucified as our sin-bearer, we do not care what the world thinks or says of us or does to us. 'The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.'²³

Being crucified to the world means more than just being crucified to its immorality. We have declared as criminal the entire world and life-system and philosophy that suggest that we can live a meaningful and satisfying life apart from Christ. We must not seek or yield to its smiles of approval any more than we yield to its allurements of sensual sins. I have known some great people who would not succumb to the fiercest temptation, nor abandon the faith under the most severe trials, yet they yielded to the world's smile of approval.

In verse 15, Paul sets forth the great truth concerning the nature of faith in Christ.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor un-

3 Ibid., 180.

circumcision, but a new creature.

We can substitute anything a person does in the place of *circumcision* and the meaning of the verse remains. When it comes to our relationship to God, all that avails is the cross. Our ancestors, even if they were the holiest people who ever lived, avail us nothing. Baptism, as a child or an adult, by sprinkling or immersion, counts for nothing. No individual action or accomplishment can put grace into our hearts. Nothing that a human being can do, or have done to him by another human being can earn an ounce of grace with God. In order to inherit the kingdom of God, we must be born of the Spirit. It is not circumcision made with hands but the circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit that counts with God. Paul wants the Galatians to realize the real issues involved. John Brown, in his commentary on Galatians, explains:

***When it comes to our relationship to God,
all that avails is the cross.***

It is as if the apostle had said, 'Your false teachers glory or boast in their influence over you, proved by your submitting to the initiatory rite of Judaism in consequence of their urgency; but I have a more solid ground for my boasting. I glory not in the blind submission of men to my authority; I glory in the Cross of my Saviour.'²⁴

One of the key words in Paul's assertion is *avails* or *counts*. The idea of contrast between covenants is clear. Paul is teaching that under the New Covenant, it does not matter if you are or are not circumcised. Under the Old Covenant, circumcision was not only important, it was vital. It had great significance and counted for much. Moses almost lost his life for not having his son circumcised (Ex. 4:24-26). It did not, in and of itself, secure salvation, but those who had

⁴ John Brown, *An Exposition of Galatians* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant & Sons, 1853), 363.

the mark qualified for important privileges. Those who were uncircumcised were without these privileges and consequent blessings (see Eph. 2). John Brown details this contrast between covenants:

A Gentile, on being circumcised, was admitted to the participation in all the external privileges of the chosen nation; and, on the other hand, a Jew, a descendant from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if he did not submit to circumcision, was cast off from the people of the Lord, and had no more interest than an uncircumcised Gentile in the blessing of the natural covenant. But under Christ it is otherwise: circumcision is nothing: it has no force in introducing a man into the enjoyment of its privileges: uncircumcision has no force in excluding him from them. Submitting to the initiatory rite of Judaism has nothing to do with Christianity. He that submitted to it is not on that account the nearer to the enjoyment of the blessings Christianity promises: he that

has not submitted to it is not on that account the farther from the enjoyment of these blessings. The circumcised and the uncircumcised stand, in reference to them, on the same level.⁵

Under the New Covenant, all that avails (counts for) anything before God is that which is wrought by the Holy Spirit. The contrast between that which humans do and that which the Holy Spirit does cannot be starker. Every blessing and privilege of the New Covenant is contingent on our "being in Christ." That, and that alone, is what is vital. Only the Holy Spirit can baptize us "into Christ." This sovereign work of God (placing us into Christ) will always produce a new creation. Throughout his letters, Paul uses the phrase *new creation* two different ways. He sometimes refers to the new age, or dispensation,

⁵ Ibid., 379.

Reisinger—Continued from page 9

hence misuse the term. The phrase, *the law of Christ*, as Paul uses it in Galatians, probably means that the law that governs the new covenant people of God is love (see also James 2:8). It does not refer to an exhaustive and detailed list of laws. The new covenant has clear and specific commands, but it does not have any laws in the sense of true law. Law without a penalty is not law per se, but only good advice. A law that sets a speed limit of sixty-five miles an hour but has no penalties for violation, no law-officers to enforce it, and no judges to punish infractions of it is not true law. It is the penalty, enforcement, and punishment aspect of law as law that makes it impossible for a new covenant child of God ever to be under the law. We can argue about whether or not the new covenant establishes severe consequences for violating its commands, but the Scripture is clear about punishment: it is impossible for a Christian ever to come under condemnation (Romans 8:1). Thus, one essential element of law is missing. If there is no condemnation, there is no punishment (because there must be some ground on which to mete out punishment), however, *Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? [It is] God who justifies (Romans 8:33)*. There can be no condemnation because all of the evidence against us was destroyed at the cross!

Application of this principle: The law of Christ is not a new list of laws (even if we want to qualify them as higher laws than those that God gave Moses), that replaces the laws given to Israel. The new covenant ethic is not law-oriented but grace and love-centered. The new covenant believer does not first ask, when considering an action “Is it a sin according to some law,” but “What kind of person do I want to be? Is this action consistent with the attitude of someone who wants to be like Christ? Will this

honor my Lord?” The old covenant believer asks, “What does the law say?” The new covenant believer asks, “Is this appropriate behavior for the child of the King?”

The new covenant established by our Lord is not based on a legal works relationship, as was the old covenant. It is based on a personal and familial relationship with God as our Father. We are still commanded not to kill and steal but the reason is not because it is one of the laws that determine our covenant relationship with God. It is because such behavior is totally inappropriate for a member of God's family.

When someone asks, “Is it a sin for a Christian to get a tattoo?” we should not say either yes or no. Instead, we should say, “Why are you asking? Are you thinking about getting one? Why would you want to get a tattoo? Is this a ‘personal yen’ or are you trying to impress someone? Are you trying to make a statement or trying to attract attention? Do you believe Jesus would ever get a tattoo? You confess Christ as your lord; you are a soldier under his orders. Would he, your general, ever order you to get a tattoo or to refrain from getting one? Would it be a matter of indifference to him? If your general allows it, then it is allowable. Just be sure you have heard him correctly.”

If the imaginary conversation above demonstrates how we are to think (and live), then it also demonstrates how new covenant preachers and teachers should preach and teach. If the new covenant insists that whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23), then it follows that we cannot formulate a universal list of rules comparable to the old covenant laws. Faith is personal and individual. To make such a list would be to deny (unconsciously, I hope) the heart of New Covenant Theology. Instead of making a list of rules that prescribes or prohibits certain acts, we ought to reframe

the questions. We need to shift the perspective of the person asking the question away from a law-centered, action-centered ethic, because that belongs to the old covenant. We need to ask, “What kind of person do you want to be?” This puts the focus on Jesus Christ, where it belongs in the new covenant age. A legalist will be satisfied with nothing less than a new covenant rulebook. The New Testament Scriptures do not oblige him nor should we.

Conclusion: the new *covenant* has replaced the old *covenant* in totality, but it has not replaced the God-breathed *Old Testament Scriptures*.

Implications of this conclusion: (1) If we are discussing the one sovereign, unchanging, purpose of God's grace, then there is complete continuity in all of Scripture. (2) If we are discussing the two major covenants around which most of Scripture is built, the old and new covenants, then there is complete discontinuity. We alluded to this continuity/discontinuity aspect of the covenants when discussing the applications of Principle Four: God requires his people to be holy. He commands it under the Old Covenant (in Leviticus 19:2) and under the New Covenant (in 1 Peter 1:15, 16). We saw there that we find continuity of principle, but discontinuity of detail. We would expect nothing less when considering the loving action of God toward his people (continuity) joined to his sovereign purpose in placing the objects of his love—his people—in distinct and different settings (discontinuity). The most significant factor for ethics in the new covenant is that God expresses his love in the new covenant era through the means of a fulfilled promise—the person of Jesus Christ. It is therefore appropriate to view him as our role model and to order our lives accordingly. Ω

NEW COVENANT MEDIA PUBLICATIONS

TITLE	LIST	SALE	QUANTITY	COST
<i>Abraham's Four Seeds</i> —Reisinger	\$10.95	\$8.76		
<i>The Believer's Sabbath</i> —Reisinger	\$3.75	\$3.00		
<i>Biblical Law and Ethics: Absolute and Covenantal</i> —Long	\$15.75	\$12.60		
<i>But I Say Unto You</i> —Reisinger	\$10.95	\$8.68		
<i>Chosen in Eternity</i> —Reisinger	\$5.50	\$4.40		
<i>Christ, Lord and Lawgiver Over the Church</i> —Reisinger	\$2.50	\$2.00		
<i>Definite Atonement</i> —Long	\$10.95	\$8.76		
<i>The Doctrine of Baptism</i> —Sasser	\$3.50	\$2.80		
<i>Full Bellies and Empty Hearts</i> —Autio	\$14.99	\$12.00		
<i>Grace</i> —Reisinger	\$13.95	\$11.16		
<i>In Defense of Jesus, the New Lawgiver</i> —Reisinger	\$23.95	\$19.16		
<i>Is John G. Reisinger an Antinomian?</i> —Wells	\$4.25	\$3.40		
<i>John Bunyan on the Sabbath</i> —Reisinger	\$3.00	\$2.80		
<i>Jonathan Edwards on Biblical Hermeneutics and the "Covenant of Grace"</i> —Gilliland	\$3.95	\$3.16		
<i>Limited Atonement</i> —Reisinger	\$7.00	\$5.60		
<i>Ministry of Grace Essays in Honor of John G. Reisinger</i> —Steve West, Editor	\$14.85	\$11.88		
<i>The New Birth</i> — Reisinger	\$5.50	\$4.40		
<i>New Covenant Theology</i> —Wells & Zaspel	\$19.95	\$15.96		
<i>The Newness of the New Covenant</i> —White	\$12.99	\$10.39		
<i>The Obedience of Christ</i> —Van Court	\$2.50	\$2.00		
<i>Our Sovereign God</i> — Reisinger	\$4.45	\$3.56		
<i>Perseverance of the Saints</i> — Reisinger	\$6.00	\$4.80		
<i>The Priority of Jesus Christ</i> —Wells	\$11.95	\$9.56		
<i>A Prisoner's Christianity</i> —Woodrow	\$12.99	\$10.40		
<i>Prophetic Fulfillment—Spiritual, Natural, or Double?</i> —George	\$4.25	\$3.40		
<i>Saving the Saving Gospel</i> —West	\$12.99	\$10.40		
<i>Sinners, Jesus Will Receive</i> —Payne	\$9.99	\$8.00		
<i>Studies in Ecclesiastes</i> —Reisinger	\$23.99	\$19.20		
<i>Tablets of Stone</i> — Reisinger	\$10.95	\$8.75		
<i>The Sovereignty of God and Prayer</i> —Reisinger	\$5.75	\$4.60		
<i>The Sovereignty of God in Providence</i> — Reisinger	\$4.45	\$3.56		
<i>Total Depravity</i> — Reisinger	\$5.00	\$4.00		
<i>What is the Christian Faith?</i> — Reisinger	\$2.50	\$2.00		
<i>When Should a Christian Leave a Church?</i> —Reisinger	\$3.75	\$3.00		
			Total Price	
	See Rate Charts on Page 15		Shipping	
	Canadian orders—Visa or MasterCard only—please.		Total Order	

Ship to: _____
 Street address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Country: _____

My check (payable to New Covenant Media) is enclosed
 Charge to my: VISA MasterCard
 Expires _____/_____
 Account Number: _____/_____/_____
 Signature: _____

M O R E R E S O U R C E S

TITLE	LIST	SALE	QUANTITY	COST
<i>Philosophical Dialogues on the Christian Faith</i> —Steve West	\$12.00	\$9.50		
<i>What Jesus Demands from the World</i> —John Piper	\$19.99	\$13.25		
<i>The First London Confession of Faith-1646 Edition</i> — Preface by Gary D. Long	\$7.99	\$6.50		
<i>All Things New</i> —Carl Hoch	\$19.98	\$15.95		
<i>Context! Evangelical Views on the Millenium Examined</i> —Gary D. Long	\$25.00	\$17.50		
<i>The Doctrine of Christ</i> —William Sasser	\$4.75	\$3.75		
<i>The Doctrine of Salvation</i> —William Sasser	\$4.75	\$3.75		
<i>The Doctrine of Man</i> —William Sasser	\$4.75	\$3.75		
<i>The Doctrine of God</i> —William Sasser	\$4.00	\$3.00		
<i>The Atoning Work of Jesus Christ</i> —William Sasser	\$5.00	\$4.00		
<i>The New Covenant and the Law of Christ</i> —Chris Scarborough	\$10.95	\$9.50		
<i>How to Keep Your Kids Drug Free</i> — Robert Morey	\$4.95	\$1.00		
<i>Battle of the Gods</i> — Robert Morey	\$10.95	\$2.00		
<i>Here is Your God</i> — Robert Morey	\$9.95	\$2.00		
<i>The Origins and Teaching of Freemasonry</i> — Robert Morey	\$7.95	\$2.00		
<i>Introduction to Defending the Faith</i> — Robert Morey	\$4.95	\$1.00		
<i>Should Christians Fear God Today?</i> —John Korsgaard	\$6.95	\$3.50		
<i>Justification by Faith</i> —James White	\$6.95	\$2.75		
<i>Answers to Catholic Claims</i> —James White	\$9.95	\$2.00		
<i>The Fatal Flaw</i> —James White	\$11.95	\$2.50		
<i>God's Sovereign Grace</i> —James White	\$8.95	\$3.50		
<i>Behind the Watchtower Curtain</i> —David A. Reed	\$10.95	\$2.00		
<i>How to Share Christ with a Jehovah's Witness</i> —Patrick J. Campbell	\$5.95	\$2.50		
<i>The Reformers and Their Stepchildren</i> —Leonard Verduin	\$9.95	\$9.50		
<i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> (The Accurate Revised Text by Barry E. Horner)	\$12.00	\$9.75		
<i>Biblical Eldership</i> —Alexander Strauch	\$14.99	\$9.30		
<i>Biblical Eldership Study Guide</i> —Alexander Strauch	\$19.99	\$12.50		
<i>Biblical Eldership Mentor's Guide</i> —Alexander Strauch	\$19.99	\$12.50		
			Total Price	
See Rate Charts Below			Shipping	
Canadian orders—Visa or MasterCard only—please.			Total Order	

Postage & Handling Rates United States	
Up to \$20.00	\$3.95
\$20.01—\$50.00	\$6.00
\$50.01 and Up	12%

Postage & Handling Rates Canada—VISA or MasterCard	
Up to \$30.00	\$7.50
\$30.01 and Up	25%

Postage & Handling Rates Overseas—VISA or MasterCard
Please call or e-mail for rates

“The best way to purify a church and keep it pure is to get rid of all the goats, and the best way to run the goats out of a church is to feed them sheep food. God’s sheep will grow in grace under the preaching of grace, but goats will go hungry because they choke on sheep food. They will soon leave and go somewhere else. Preach sovereign grace!”

Elder D.J Ward

Smith—Continued from page 6

RE begins with the declaration that Jesus Christ fulfills the work of all the Old Testament prophets. In the Old Testament, a prophet served as God's representative to His people. Jesus fulfills this prophetic function precisely because He is the self-revelation of God. Thus, He stands head and shoulders above the best of the prophets of ancient Israel (Hebrews 1:1-2).

We find evidence for Christ being the "Prophet of all prophets" in both the Old and New Testaments. Moses himself predicted that there was coming a prophet greater than himself (Dt. 18:15-18).⁸ In addition, Jesus Himself even hints at His identity as "prophet" (Lk. 13:33).⁹ And again, in the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah refers to the coming Messiah as "a witness to the peoples" (Is. 55:4)—a prophecy clearly predicting Christ's identity as a prophet. In addition to this, there is even recognition of Christ's role as prophet by those in Israel who witnessed His miracles (Lk. 7:16; Jn. 6:14; 7:40; 9:17).¹⁰ Aside from the biblical data in both the Old and New Testaments, it makes sense that Christ would fulfill the role of prophet by

in order to fulfill their God assigned role.¹¹ Again, Isaiah predicts that the Messiah will be Spirit anointed (Is. 61:1-2). And, of course, Christ was anointed as prophet, priest, and king at His baptism where we find the great declaration by the Father about Christ, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". This came after the Spirit of God descended upon Him (cf. Mk. 1:9-11). With respect to His specific role as prophet, this statement is made again during the Transfiguration with the added phrase, "Listen to Him!" (Mk. 9:7b). This is nothing less than the Father affirming Christ's identity as the "Prophet of prophets."

In addition to the explicit references to Christ's identity as prophet, we have more implicit, yet clear, references as well. For instance, the Apostle John records for us Christ's own declaration about his prophethood by affirming that everything He speaks, He speaks authoritatively, and in complete agreement with His Father in heaven. Jesus implicitly refers to His identity as the "Prophet of prophets" in at least one place (Jn. 12:49-50).

However, it must also be affirmed that in a very real way Christ departed

phetic role as the ultimate representative of God. The Apostle John hinted at this when He referred to Jesus as the "Light of the world" (Jn. 1:4-5).

Methodology: How Do We Identify with Christ as Prophets in Our Evangelism?

There exist practical implications for evangelism when we come to realize that Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament office of prophet. Theologians often describe Christ's prophetic role as both immediate and mediate.¹² He functions immediately in the Old Testament through the various theophanies¹³, and in His incarnation as He spoke directly to man. On the other hand, He functions mediately both through the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament Apostles in His written revelation. In addition, He continues to function mediately as prophet even now through the agency of believers who are indwelt by the Spirit. Calvin describes the continuing role of Christ as prophet this way:

"[W]e must note this: He received anointing, not only for Himself that he might carry out the office of teaching, but for His whole body that the

***No prophet, in all of Israel, ever had the type of authority that Jesus had.
He was, after all, the self-revelation of God.***

virtue of His title, Messiah. "Messiah" simply means "Anointed One". In the nation of Israel, those serving as prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil to set them apart

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, "Although God, by providing his people with an unbroken line of prophets, never left them without useful doctrine sufficient for salvation, yet the minds of the pious had always been imbued with the conviction that they were to hope for the full light of understanding only at the coming of the Messiah" (494-495).

⁹ Riddlebarger, *The Triple Cure*.

¹⁰ They did not necessarily understand what exactly this meant.

from the other prophets in the area of superiority. No prophet, in all of Israel, ever had the type of authority that Jesus had. He was, after all, the self-revelation of God. No other prophet could say this. Other prophets could affirm they spoke on behalf of God ("Thus says the Lord"), but none in the category of prophet (even the greatest and most faithful) were ever considered to be the very self-revelation of God Himself. Jesus the Prophet reveals the character and holiness of God not only in what He said, but in the way He lived. So Christ must rightly be viewed as fulfilling the pro-

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 495.

power of the Spirit might be present in the continuing preaching of the Gospel. This, however, remains certain: the perfect doctrine he has brought has made an end to all prophecies. All those, then, who, not content with the Gospel, patch it with something extraneous to it, detract from Christ's authority. The voice that thundered from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son; hear him', exalted him by a singular privilege beyond the rank of all others.

¹² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996-combined edition with new preface) Berkhof uses the terms "immediate" and "mediate" (p.359).

¹³ These are the various "Angel of the Lord" appearances.

Then this anointing was diffused from the Head to the members”, as Joel had foretold.”¹⁴

This very thing was longed for in the Old Testament (Num. 11:24-30). Moses’ desire for everyone to speak like prophets was fulfilled in the new covenant as prophesied by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29). Peter affirms this very thing in his famous sermon (Acts 2:14ff.). R.B. Kuiper in his book *God-Centered Evangelism* concludes, “It has been said correctly that Pentecost spells the universal prophethood of believers. It can just as well be said that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit rendered every member of the church

Pet. 2:9). Thus, we identify with Him by doing the work of a prophet ourselves.

How do we identify with Christ as a prophet? First, identifying with Christ as a prophet means we embrace our role as prophet/evangelists. To embrace our role involves understanding and taking seriously the prophetic task of all believers to tell the truth about Christ to others. New Covenant believers will, therefore, view evangelism as an issue of obedience (Mt. 24:14; Mt. 28:18-20). The Apostle’s in the early church relied upon God’s sovereignty in salvation to encourage their evangelistic endeavors (Acts

authority and great responsibility, but his authority to proclaim the message is rooted in his identity as an ambassador—nothing more, nothing less.

Part of our role as ambassadors involves consistently, authoritatively, and faithfully declaring the message of the Gospel, but the other aspect includes inviting men to come to Christ. It is not only the desire of the King to have His message disseminated, but He also desires His message to be responded to by sinners. Thus, the goal of RE is genuine conversions (1 Cor. 9:19 ff.; 1 Pet. 3:1; Lk. 5:10; Mt. 4:19; cf. 13:47). Furthermore, the sanctified means of garnering conversions

God desires all people to come to Him. He does not delight in the death of the wicked, so we urge you, yea, we plead with you in Christ’s stead (2 Cor. 5:20) to come right now (Is. 55:1-3).

evangelists. So it was at Pentecost, and so it remains today. Every single believer is a God-ordained agent of evangelism.”¹⁵ We are called to be truth-telling prophets because we possess the only truth—the Gospel.

Practically speaking, this means every new covenant believer has been given orders by their Lord and King to fulfill their duty as “prophets” (in the broad sense) on behalf of the “Prophet of prophets”! In fact, Peter alludes to the church’s fulfillment of these three offices in some sense (1

13:44-49). In addition, Luke makes it clear that it was the Lord Himself who convinced Paul to evangelize by pointing to a secured elect that God had set apart (Acts 18:9-11). Thus, anyone who leans on Reformed theology to negate his responsibility to evangelize fails to realize that a strong view of God’s sovereignty also demands a respect for the means God uses to bring others to Himself—the elect telling the truth about Christ. This is the only tradition of the Apostles.

Embracing our role as evangelist/prophets is taken seriously when we understand our identity as ambassadors. On two occasions Paul spoke of his role as an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:19-20). Rightly understood, an ambassador “is an authorized representative of a sovereign”.¹⁶ His duty is wrapped up in one function—to accurately speak the message that the King sent him to proclaim. He does not speak in his own name, but in the name of the King. He does not speak his own message, but the message of the King. Thus, he has

comes through an invitation to come to Christ. We authoritatively summon others to come to Christ on His behalf. This was the model of Christ (Mt. 11:28-29), and the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 5:19-20). Both our Lord and the Apostle Paul gave the message, and then urged people to respond! In addition, this invitation is always accompanied with an attitude of love and sincere concern for others (1 Thess. 2:7-12).

For those who hold tightly to the role of God’s sovereignty in salvation, there has been some debate on the question regarding what inviting people to come to Christ actually means. Are we obligated to clarify our invitation with words such as, “Christ desires only His elect to come, so if you think you are elect, then come to Christ?” Or, do we have the liberty to say something like, “God desires all people to come to Him. He does not delight in the death of the wicked, so we urge you, yea, we plead with you in Christ’s stead (2 Cor. 5:20) to come right now (Is. 55:1-3) ?” Biblical data suggests the latter statement is actual-

14 Calvin, *Institutes*, 496.

15 R.B. Kuiper, *God Centered Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1961), 109. Just prior to this statement Kuiper says, “That was a prophetic wish. Centuries later the prophet Joel foretold the granting of that wish (Joel 2:28-29). That prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost, when not only the apostles, but all the members of the Jerusalem church, were with one accord in one place and ‘they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance’ (Acts 2; 1, 4)”.

16 Packer, 44.

Galatians—Continued from page 12

brought into being by the advent of the Holy Spirit. Second Corinthians 5:17 is an illustration of this use. In that passage, Paul is not talking about a dramatic change in a person's mindset and lifestyle. He is talking about the age of grace that replaces the old Adamic age. In Christ, a new creation came into being—the old creation had passed away. Paul uses *new creation* to refer to the advent of the kingdom. In Galatians 6:15, however, Paul seems to be talking about the radical change in a believer's mindset and lifestyle. The person himself is the new creation. Both aspects are equally true of every believer living under the New Covenant. We may separate them for the purpose of study, but we must never separate them in experience. Christians live on this side of the cross and resurrection. They have been born into a new kingdom characterized by grace instead of the old kingdom based on law. They have also been born of God and given the Holy Spirit as a personal teacher. John Stott summarizes verses 12-15.

So, then, Paul has contrasted false and true religion. On the one hand was circumcision, standing for the outward and the human, a formal external religion and our own efforts to save ourselves. On the other is the cross of Christ and the new creation, the finished work of Christ on the cross to redeem us and the inward work of the Spirit in our hearts to regenerate and sanctify us. These are fundamental parts of the gospel. No-one has understood the gospel who has not grasped that Christianity is first inward and spiritual, and secondly a divine work of

grace.⁶

Having established the necessity and the sufficiency of the new creation, Paul pronounces a blessing on all who walk by this rule (the necessity and the sufficiency of the new creation) and refers either to them in addition to the Israel of God or to them as the Israel of God.

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.
(Gal. 6:16 KJV)

Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.
(Gal. 6:16 NIV)

The Greek text allows for either translation. Thus, commentators disagree over the meaning of *the Israel of God*. The two most widely held interpretations are, 1), the Israel of God is all Jewish Christians, and 2), the Israel of God is the New Covenant church.

John MacArthur's Study Bible takes the first view, which is Dispensational:

Israel of God. All Jewish believers in Christ, i.e., those who are both physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham (see notes on 3:7, 18; Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6, 7).⁷

The NIV study Bible takes the second view, which is non-dispensational:

Israel of God. In contrast to "Israel according to the flesh" (a literal rendering of the Greek for "people of Israel" in 1 Cor. 10:18), the NT church made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, is

⁶ Stott, *Galatians*, 180.

⁷ MacArthur Study Bible, 1801.

the new seed of Abraham and the heir according to the promise (3:29; cf. Rom. 9:6; Phil. 3:31) □though some limit the phrase here to Christian Jews (translating the conjunction [*kai*] as "and" instead of "even.")⁸

Most non-dispensational Calvinistic commentators assume the phrase is referring to the church. John Stott is typical.

a. The Church is the Israel of God.

'All who walk by this rule' and 'the Israel of God' are not two groups, but one. The connecting particle *kai* should be translated 'even,' not 'and,' or be omitted (as in the RSV). The Christian church enjoys a direct continuity with God's people in the Old Testament. Those who are in Christ today are 'the true circumcision' (Phil. 3:3), 'Abraham's offspring' (Gal. 3:29) and the 'Israel of God'.

b. The church has a rule to direct it.

God's people, God's 'Israel,' are said to 'walk by this rule.' The Greek word for 'rule' is *kanon*,⁹ which means a measuring rod or rule, 'the carpenter's or surveyor's line by which a direction is taken' (Lightfoot, 224). So the church has a 'rule' by which to direct itself. This is the 'canon' of Scripture, the doctrine of the apostles, and especially in the context of Galatians 6 the cross of Christ and the new creation. Such is the rule by which the church must walk and continuously judge and reform itself.

⁸ NIV Study Bible, 1789.

⁹ This is the word we use when we speak of the "canon of conduct for the Christian" or of the "canon of Scripture." The whole of Scripture, all sixty-six books, as understood through the lens of the New Covenant, is the Christian's "canon" of conduct.

*Christ, by His death . . .
satisfied divine justice,
pacified divine wrath,
brought in an everlasting righteousness, and
accomplished the eternal salvation of His people!*

Thomas Watson

c. The church enjoys peace and mercy only when it walks by this rule.

‘Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.’ How can the church be sure of God’s mercy and blessing? How can the church experience peace and unity among its own members? The only answer to both questions is ‘when it walks by this rule’. Conversely, it is sinful neglect of ‘this rule’, the apostolic faith of the Bible, which is the main reason why the contemporary church seems to be enjoying so little of the mercy of God and so little internal peace and harmony. ‘Peace upon Israel’ (for this phrase cf. Nu. 6:24-26; Pss. 125:5; 128:6) is impossible when the church departs from its God-given rule.¹⁰

Paul closes the epistle with verses 17 and 18, where he insists that he has no need to prove his love of God and his readiness to follow without question the rule that God has revealed in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. (KJV)

In essence, he wrote, “Don’t hassle me. I don’t need your approval and I have no intention of discussing with you the authority of God’s perfect rule.”

The Greek word for *marks* is *stigmata*. In the secular Greek, the word described the branding of a slave. It is possible that Paul is emphasizing that he is a slave of Jesus Christ. He received his branding in the many persecutions and beatings he endured. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-25, Paul writes that he ‘received countless beatings’—five times the thirty-nine lashes of the Jews, three times beaten with rods, and once stoned. The scars from these persecutions were “the marks of Jesus.”¹¹ Paul may be contrasting his scars with the mark of circumcision that the Judaizers

insisted was necessary, implying that his marks are more legitimate. The Judaizers, by insisting on the mark of circumcision, did all they could to appease the unbelieving Jews and avoid persecution. Paul bore the marks that proved he faithfully proclaimed the truth, knowing that hateful persecution would result.

Paul also may be directing his readers’ attention back to his comment in verse 11, making a parallel between the mark of authentication in the letter and the mark of authentication (his scars) in his body. Just as Paul’s distinguishing writing mark proves the authenticity of the letter, so his physical scars prove the authenticity of his ministry. No one is to trouble him for further proof. Thus, he opens and closes his letter with an appeal to his authority to write as he does—as a spokesman for the risen Christ. This authority gives his words a weight that the Judaizers cannot match.

Paul bookends the letter with grace and peace as well as with an appeal to his authority. Paul started by praying that the Galatians would experience both grace and peace (1:3). In verse 18, he asks that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with them. There is no greater blessing we can ever pray for our fellow believers than to ask God to increase their awareness and enjoyment of his amazing grace, bestowed on us through Jesus Christ.

We have finished our comments on this mighty epistle. This is the thirtieth article. I trust Paul’s letter to the Galatians has become more meaningful to you. I hope you have enjoyed reading the articles as much as I have enjoyed writing them. I pray the same prayer for you that Paul prayed for his first-century readers:

Brothers and sisters, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

LETTERS

Dear Brother John,

Warmest Greetings in the Lord. I have been reading in *Sound of Grace* now over many years to my great benefit the fruit of your careful studies in the Scriptures. You have encouraged and helped me toward a better appreciation of the biblical storyline and the place of the Old Covenant, and the role of ethnic Israel in the unfolding of the history of Redemption, now in the course of fulfilment and consumation under the New Covenant. I was nurtured on the WCF as a boy, and in my early Christian life, and still treasure the Free and Sovereign Grace truths learned in those early times. Thank you for the ministry the Lord has enabled you to maintain over the years, in helping us to grapple with the essentials of NCT. I had the privilege of involvement in Adult Bible Class teaching from 1953 - 1992, in a Baptist church in Belfast, and your ministry has been an influence for good in my life over many years.

May the Lord continue to bless and encourage you, and all who stand with you as co-workers in the Gospel.

Warmest regards ,

JH

Bro. Reisinger,

We still enjoy the *Sound of Grace* magazine and appreciate the truth as presented in it. It is always a blessing. God bless you as you continue to teach God’s Word.

In His Grace,

LG

¹⁰ Stott, *Galatians*, 180-81.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

McMillin—Continued from page 11

think he did. He recognized Christ as sovereign, worshipped him, and implored him for mercy. He bowed to the fact that Christ could do as he pleased with him. I am certain that this leper had not seen the priests as yet, for he had a debt to God that he would acknowledge and glorify God for the gift of life. With the ten, he had called for mercy from a distance. But seeing mercy had been extended to him, he came near, his voice lifted up in praise! It is the foreigners, the ones with no right to covenant mercies, who praise and glorify God for his healing. God says to those worshippers, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

This passage is so descriptive of the effect of our evangelism today. A god is presented who is impotent, has done all he can do and the rest of salvation is left up to you. He is tied to an altar rail, you must get down there to be heard. When you utter a few words, which are put in your mouth by the priest, you are often told this; "God is obligated to honor your prayer; no matter what happens; never doubt that you are saved." Nine Jews are what such evangelism produces. But even in such hands, once in a while God heals and a foreigner comes back and in a loud voice gives glory to God.

I believe it was like that with the ten lepers. They had heard of the Great Teacher who worked miracles. Nevertheless, Scribes, Pharisees and priests denied that he was the Mess-

ah, the Christ. They even accused him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub.

Look around you. Our world is as wretched in every way as theirs was. Our churches cleanse the outside of platters while the inside is left full of greed and wickedness. But for the grace of God, the pastors of today would send men away like that. However, the strangers to such worldly religion come back and kneel and glorify God for their cleansing.

I think many lepers were cleansed in Israel who are not mentioned in Scripture. Luke 10:6-8 includes leprosy among the diseases that the twelve were to cure. Christ sent them to the lost sheep of Israel. He instructed, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. *Freely you have received, freely give.*" (Mat 10:7-9)

In Matthew we find the account of John the Baptist, who was in prison, sending to Christ to ask if he was the Messiah, or if they looked for another. I am sure that as the twelve looked for a restoration of Israel's earthly kingdom, John wondered how, if his deliverer was come, he had been imprisoned. Christ answered him like this; "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me" (Matthew 11:4b-6). What grace, the

word was preached, and as Hebrews 2:4 says; "God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

Did not Christ answer Philip similarly when he asked Christ to show them the Father? "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.'" (John 14:9-11) Please read John 5:36, 37 and John 10:38 as there you will see that Christ told the Jews the same.

One final text, Matthew 10:1 "And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease." When Paul was commissioned an apostle by God (see Romans 1:1) he also was given healing powers as stated in Acts 19:11-12: "Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them." Thank God for giving faith strong evidence. Ω

I Am Astonished

(A Puritan Prayer)

O bottomless Fountain of all good, I am astonished at the difference between: my receivings—and my deservings, the state I am now in—and my past gracelessness, the heaven I am bound for—and the hell I merit.

Who made me to differ, but You? I could not have begun to love You, had You not first loved me.

O Lord, I am astonished that: such a crown should fit the

head of such a sinner, such high advancement for one so worthless, such joys for so vile a rebel!

Let 'wrath deserved' be written on the door of Hell; but the 'free gift of grace' on the gate of Heaven!

Let Your love draw me nearer to Yourself. Wean me from sin, mortify me to this world, and make me ready for my departure hence. Secure me by Your grace as I sail across this stormy sea.

Smith—Continued from page 17

ly more appropriate. In addition, historically speaking, the latter statement has been far more common within the Reformed heritage.¹⁷

When considering this issue, it behooves us to distinguish between what might be called God's revealed will, and God's secret will.¹⁸ In one sense, God genuinely desires all men to be saved (Ezek. 33:11; Mt. 11:28-29; 22:1-14; 23:37; Lk. 14:16-24; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 5:20; Rev. 22:17). Let us call this His revealed will. On the other hand, He has clearly chosen to save only those He elected before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-11). Let us call this His secret will. I submit to you that affirming God's secret will does not necessitate a denial of God's revealed will. In other words, God can desire men to be saved, while at the same time determine/purpose that only His elect will be saved.

Some theologians deduce that God's revealed will, as it relates to the salvation of all men, results in a "serious offer" of the Gospel. In his book *Saved by Grace*, Anthony Hoekema points out that the Canons of Dort affirm a serious offer of the Gospel to all men.¹⁹ In addition, Hoekema reveals that Calvin himself

¹⁷ Hoekema points out that this is one reason John Gill is viewed by many as a hyper-Calvinist. Gill's theology shows that he would likely prefer the first statement that I gave.

¹⁸ Some theologians respectfully call these: 1) will of precept, 2) will of purpose.

¹⁹ Anthony Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989), 77-78) One of the articles reads, "All who are called through the Gospel are called seriously. For seriously and most genuinely God makes known in His Word what is pleasing to Him: that those who are called should come to Him. Seriously he also promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who come to him and believe" (77-78).

recognized a general love of God for all of mankind.²⁰ Thus, I conclude that RE does not require an unnecessary rationalization between God's sovereign decree of election and particular redemption together with His love for all of mankind. Instead, RE believes that both are true in a manner in which we cannot understand.²¹ This serves as one example of many concepts found in Scripture that fit into God's box of mysteries complete with the wrapping paper of theological paradox (Rom. 11:33-36). We will not open this box on this side of glory. Instead, our evangelism must be imbued with the spirit of Deuteronomy 29:29 on the one hand, and take seriously our role as prophets and ambassadors on the other. Thus, a strong view of God's sovereignty in salvation should never result in a lack of evangelistic zeal.

We must speak on behalf of the King. Practically, this means we can genuinely tell sinners that God does not desire them to die and go to hell. Furthermore, we can honestly urge them to come to Christ, as if Christ Himself were urging them (2 Cor. 5:20). This is a God-centered ap-

²⁰ John Calvin, *Commentary on 2 Peter*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2005-reprinted) "So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of His own prepared to bestow salvation on the lost... But it may be asked, 'If God wishes none to perish, why is it that so many perish?' To this my answer is, 'That no mention is here made of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His will as made known to us in the Gospel.' For God there stretches forth His hand without difference to all, but lays hold only of those, to lead them to Himself, whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world" (419-420).

²¹ See Beeke's article to reinforce the fact that Calvin Himself clearly saw a free offer of the Gospel to all men.

proach to evangelism.²² We would do well to follow the example of our Lord in this matter who in one sermon made it clear that only the Father could give the elect to Him. Nevertheless, in this same sermon He promised that those who come to Him would in no way be rejected (Jn. 6:37). Whether speaking to a mass of people from the pulpit, or to one soul in the break room at work, the thrust of our message must be God's grace, not man's responsibility.²³ The atonement is particular to God's elect, but the Gospel is free to all. We must be honest about both. And we will do this in varying degrees depending on the context and audience. "The non-elect of the world are faceless as far as we are concerned."²⁴ In fact, Peter strongly insinuates that the whole reason believers are not immediately taken to heaven after coming to saving faith in Christ is to fulfill their role as prophets—proclaiming the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). We do this to every sinner, not just some we might think are elect. Ω

²² This does not mean we can *never* teach particular redemption (that Christ only died for the elect) from the pulpit. On the contrary, Scripture teaches it, and if we are faithfully declaring the whole counsel of God, and not just parts of it, then we will not avoid the biblical notion of limited atonement.

²³ For some people (religious people) this will mean that we be more direct about man's complete inability to come to God (John 3:1-8). With other people we strongly affirm man's inability (this is central to the Gospel message itself), while at the same time acknowledging the sincere call of Christ Christ (Matthew 11:28-29; John 4, Samaritan woman at the well).

²⁴ Packer, 99.

West—Continued from page 1

and the future has not yet unfolded, nothing has taken place for God to know. He knows everything in the present time, but he cannot know what happens in the future. In this model, future events are unknowable because they do not have any concrete status. Since they have not yet happened, they are not objects of knowledge, and thus it is no imperfection to not know them! God knows everything that can be known, but future events are not genuine objects of knowledge.

At this point it is necessary to see why it is argued that God cannot know that future. After all, nothing in this position has made it impossible for God to know the future—all that has been said is that he doesn't. Why can't he know the future? Interestingly enough, the main answer does not have to do with his relationship to time or his eternality (although God's eternality necessarily takes a major hit in these discussions too). God cannot know the future, we are told, because if he did, man would not have freewill.

There is a long historical debate about freewill and God's knowledge. If God knows exactly what I will do tomorrow, I cannot do anything other than what he knows. Libertarian freewill argues that I must, at any moment, have the ability to choose between A or B. If God knows that I will choose A instead of B next week,

I cannot choose B at that time (since God infallibly knows the future). If I cannot choose B, then I must choose A, and on standard accounts of freewill, this means that I do not have a free choice, and therefore I am not truly free. God's omniscience of future events destroys this understanding of freewill. Both Calvinists and non-Calvinists have supported the strength of this argument down through the centuries.

The Socinians in church history argued precisely this way, and rejected God's knowledge of the future. They were condemned by church creeds, and men like John Owen and John Calvin. Today, open theists such as Clark Pinnock and Richard Rice continue the Socinian tradition, and as such are simply re-presenting an old heresy that was condemned long ago. But why deny God's knowledge of the future? The reason is that a particular definition of freewill is sacrosanct. Freewill becomes exalted to the place of hermeneutical and theological control. If anything or anyone, even God himself, threatens our understanding of our freewill, we do not modify our understanding of our freedom; we attempt to modify the God of the Bible.

Let me cite just a couple verses from Isaiah. Isaiah chapters 41-47 deal with God's foreknowledge, with his telling the future, and with the fact that nobody else is able to do this. These are not astute guesses by God,

and they are not short-term predictions. God infallibly knows the future from the very beginning.

"Bring in your idols, to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods." (Isaiah 41:22-23a, NIV)

"Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him foretell what will come. Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago?" (Isaiah 44:7-8a, NIV)

Since we all make hundreds of decisions every day, and God knew what the future held, even though that future included trillions of human decisions, it is clear that human freedom and decision making does not destroy God's perfect knowledge of the future. The Bible is clear that God knows the future; if a definition of freewill conflicts with this, then the right thing to do is to modify the latter, not redefine or reject the former.

There are terrible entailments if God does not know the future. Theoretically, since the future is so volatile, and human decisions are so fickle and wicked, another generation could arise which totally throws God's plan overboard. He might have things that he wants to do, but not be able to do

SUBSCRIBE TO SOUND OF GRACE \$10.00 FOR TEN ISSUES

- My check (payable to Sound of Grace) is enclosed.
- Charge to my: VISA MasterCard Expires ____/____/____ Account Number: ____/____/____

Name: _____

Street address: _____

City: _____

State/Province: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

**SUBSCRIPTION
ORDER/RENEWAL
FORM**

them, since he cannot interfere with human freedom, and he does not know what we will do. He might even bring great judgment like the flood, and then realize afterwards that he made a terrible mistake. If only God had known the future and been able to see all the ramifications of his actions, he might have acted differently! Hindsight is 20/20, and this would be just as true for God as for us. In the present, though, God might lead us down a path which seems right to him now, but which will end up in disaster for us thirty years down the road.

Yet, at the end of the day, all we have to do to avoid these implications is go back to the Bible. There are plain, propositional statements that teach that God knows the future. Some have conceded this, and then argued that God only knows some things in the future, and that in some remarkable cases he can interfere

with human freewill to bring his purposes to pass. In my judgment, this is simply giving away the farm. It makes the future logically certain, and therefore knowable; if God can know 10% of the future, or 50% of the future, why then can he not know 100% of the future? And how is it possible for God to know part of what will happen 2000 years from now without knowing all that will happen? Does he just decide randomly to peek into the future and see what will happen February 8th, 3456, but not February 9th, 3456? I do not have time to unfold the following position, but I believe God knows 100% of the future because he has decreed 100% of the future. All the future was known to God before the creation of the world, because the entire sweep of time and space, including every event that will ever be, was planned out according to his exhaustive wisdom and perfect

sovereignty.

Do not exchange the manna of God's revelation for the meat and vegetables of Egypt's philosophy and theology. We praise God, in full continuity with the historic church of Jesus Christ, because God is perfect in every way. His knowledge is perfect, and he perfectly knows the future. Before the world was created he knew you would read this article, and what your reaction to it would be. (In fact, before the creation of the world he knew whether or not this article would be accepted for publication, so perhaps it will be rejected and there will be no readers for it! God knows the future, not I.) In conclusion, let us answer two simple questions. What can God do? Anything that he desires. What does God know? Everything. Soli deo Gloria.

"DOCTOR" OR "BROTHER"

Arthur W. Pink

What strange methods God sometimes employs in teaching His children much needed lessons! This has recently been the writer's experience. I have been approached by a university to accept from them a degree of "D. D." Asking for time to be given so that I might prayerfully seek from God, through His written word, a knowledge of His will, fuller light came than was expected. I had very serious doubts as to the permissibility of one of God's servants accepting a title of fleshly honor. I now perceive that it is wrong for me to receive it even complimentary. Various friends, as a mark of respect, have addressed me as "Dr. Pink." I now ask them to please cease from doing so. Let it not be understood that I hereby condemn other men for what they allow. No, to their own Master they stand or fall. The principal passages which have helped me I now mention, praying that it may please God to also bless them to others.

First, to the false comforters of Job, Elihu (God's representative) said. "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto men" (Job 32:31). Second, "Be not ye called Rabbi or teacher" (Matthew 23:8), which is what *Doctor* signifies. Third, John 5:44 reproves those who "receive honor one of another" and bids us seek "the honor that cometh from God only." Fourth, none of the Lord's servants in the New Testament ever employed a title. "Paul, an apostle," but never "the apostle Paul." Fifth, the Son of God "made Himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2:7); is it then fitting that His servants should now follow an opposite course? Sixth, Christ bids us learn of Him who was "meek and lowly" (Matthew 11:29). Seventh, one of the marks of the apostasy as "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 17). Eighth, we are bidden to go forth unto Christ outside the camp "bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13).

For these reasons it does not seem to me to be fitting that one who is here as a representative and witness for a "despised and rejected" Christ should be honored and flattered of men. Please address me as **Brother** Pink.

SOVEREIGN GRACE NEW COVENANT MINISTRIES
5317 WYE CREEK DRIVE
FREDERICK, MARYLAND 21703-6938

Check your label for expiration.
This is Issue 162. Please renew
your subscription promptly.

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 45
FREDERICK, MD 21701

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

A Meditation¹

George Matheson²

I thank Thee, O Lord, that to Elijah and to me Thou hast revealed a new and better way. I thank Thee that the still, small voice has taken the place of the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. I used to think that law would redeem Thy world. I thought that stern penalties would repress the course of crime. I thought the thunders of Sinai would make the sinner pure. I thought the vision of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone would put out the love of evil. Thou hast taught me better, O, my Father! Thou has taught me that the love of evil can only be extinguished by another love. My heart cannot be conquered by the hand. If it is centred on the Prince of Evil, it will not be cured by the imprisonment of that prince; I should love him in his prison, I should love him in his bonds. If I am to cease loving him, I must have a new prince—the Prince of Peace. Send me this new Prince, O my Father; nothing but Christ will put out Barabbas from my heart! I love wrongly, but none the less do I love intensely; nothing but another love will set me free. Famine will not; Carmel will not; wind and earthquake and fire will not; the burning lake itself would not extinguish my love! Therefore, my Father, let me love again, let me love anew! Send into my heart a fresh ideal! Send me a sight of the 'altogether lovely'! Send me a vision of the 'chief among ten thousand'! Send me a picture of Him who is 'fairer than the children of men'! Break the old ideal by the vision of a higher beauty! Let my night fade in Thy morning, my thorn vanish in Thy flower! One leaf of Thy summer's bloom will disenchant me of the winter's charm. The idols will be 'broken in the temple of Baal' when I see Thy King on the holy hill of Zion.³

¹ Francis B. Reeves, *The Evolution of Our Christian Hymnology* (The John C. Winston Co., Philadelphia, 1912) Addenda page 181

² George Matheson, D.D. is the author of *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go*.

³ Submitted by David Painter