

## Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

### Lesson 13 (HCLD 32)<sup>1</sup>

**Preparation:** Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

**Background Reading:** Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1

**Vocabulary:** Covenant theology, natural revelation

**Question:** Does God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

**Answer:** God does not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery,[1] into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Works;[2] but of his mere love and mercy delivers his elect out of it, and brings them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Grace.[3]<sup>2</sup>

Covenant theology concerns how God chose to deal with mankind through covenants. God created man and upon placing man in the garden set conditions whereby he would be blessed or cursed depending on his obedience to the commandments. The word covenant is not introduced at this point, however the conditions of an asymmetrical covenant are present. God has never chosen to deal with man outside of covenant. While we will find many covenants in Scripture, some general and some exclusive, they are contained within the scope of the two listed in this statement of the Westminster Divines. Since this is God's chosen method of dealing with man, it is proper we should understand what is meant, and how we are to interact with the covenants revealed in Scripture. We could enter into a discussion or definition of covenant or contracts here, but I think the definition from the "Children's Catechism is sufficient for our purposes: "A covenant is an agreement between two or more persons." With the additional note that you do not have to

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<sup>1</sup>The Heidelberg Catechism, Third Part: Of Thankfulness  
Lord's Day 32

Q86: Since, then, we are redeemed from our misery by grace through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we do good works?

A86: Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image, that with our whole life we show ourselves thankful to God for His blessing,[a] and that He be glorified through us;[b] then also, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by the fruits thereof;[c] and by our godly walk may win others also to Christ.[d]

a. Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10, 12; 1 Cor. 6:20;

b. Matt. 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12

c. Matt. 7:17-18; Gal. 5:6, 22-23

d. Rom. 14:19; 1 Peter 3:1-2; 2 Peter 1:10

Q87: Can they, then, be saved who do not turn to God from their unthankful, impenitent life?

A87: By no means, for, as Scripture says, no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like shall inherit the kingdom of God.[e]

e. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5-6; 1 John 3:14-15

<sup>2</sup> a. 1 Thess. 5:9

b. Gal. 3:10, 12

c. Titus 3:4-7; Gal. 3:21; Rom. 3:20-22

personally sign or assent to a contract (covenant) for it to be binding upon you. For example the Mortgage on your home will be binding upon your heirs though they did not personally sign nor enter into that covenant (contract). The person who originally signed passed on the obligation to all of his posterity. We note it is asymmetrical because it is from a greater to lesser in position and was not then of necessity agreed on by the lesser, though we find nowhere in the Bible that the fathers including Adam rejected the covenant.

This distinction of only two covenants is important to the Reformed churches. One of the biggest errors in the history of the church is "Dispensationalism" which recognizes all the covenants in the Bible in progressive order, and teach that God dealt differently with His people according to the conditions of each covenant. Not true! God does not change, indeed cannot change and be holy. These facts are clear from Scripture. Thus we will see at the proper place in this series of questions dealing with covenants that the choice of wording is one covenant "administered" differently in two dispensations. The intent and result never change. Thus God's "progressive" revelation of Himself through the covenants with His chosen people are not changes in the mind of God, but an ever upward movement in revelation, until the complete means of salvation is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ.

The Westminster Divines have rightly in both natural revelation and for our proper understanding and appreciation introduced salvation at it fullest at this point in the catechism. As we have delved into the darkness of sin, and seen how vile we are as men, surely we would despair if the light of God's love and mercy were not seen at this time. If you have stepped into this study at this point, I invite you to return to the beginning and follow the route of the Bible and the order of presentation of the Westminster Assembly before continuing. While the attempt has been to make each question stand alone, I do not think we can appreciate the mercy of God, until we have felt, smelled, tasted, and experienced the darkness of death revealed in the heart of the creature and born into life as the offspring of darkness, sin.

We find the term estate once more chosen by the Westminster Divines as the means of explaining where we stand in salvation. This word has a breadth and depth that has far more meaning than the ownership of something. It is the place where we live, exist, and have our being. Though somewhat archaic in this use, I am not sure we have a more modern word that can reveal this same understanding of the completeness of what God has wrought in our salvation. More modern writers have substituted economy here, but it doesn't have the personal depth estate does.

Having established the truth of the first petal in the preceding statements, the Westminster Divines and Scripture here reveals the second tenet of Christian doctrine as God's love and mercy are revealed immediately in the creation story, where God removed man from the garden lest he partake of the tree of life and exist forever in sin. Thus at the end of the section on sin and man's very nature being made sin, and as darkness settles over mankind, we immediately see the light of the second tenet to give hope to the heart of mankind. Without elaboration the Westminster Divines point to the third tenet as they point out that this covenant is for the benefit of the elect. And as before we then find the fourth to be of necessity, for the dead make no decisions, thus the fourth tenet is not only revealed here, but when set against the very nature of sin as revealed in the previous section, we can readily see that perhaps the greatest grace shown by God is to "irresistibly" execute the gift of His love and grace shown toward the elect. How different than the darkened heart of man, that God pursues those who have chosen to deny their creator. We might liken it to the beast that bites the hand which feeds it. The fifth tenet then not only resting upon the sovereignty of God as revealed truth, begins to be understood within the logic of the created. As God has revealed His love for man, and His mercy toward man in the election and salvation of some, it is only logical that the God of creation would not begin what He could not complete. Thus

having brought man to salvation would prove Himself most weak and unworthy not to be able to hold what is His, and to complete that which He begins.

Within the full revelation of the TULIP we find in this question, surely we can thank and praise God not only for this revelation of Himself and His mercy, but providing the understanding brought by our precious Reformed faith, that we might rest in Him, tossed no more by the doctrines of the whim of the creature. How much more we should be moved to emulate our Creator, and rather than condemn those outside the Reformed camp, lovingly pursue them with the truth of God's love and mercy, but also His assurance of salvation for our comfort and strength in this veil of tears, as we await the day we see this glorious truth of God in its full radiance before His throne in heaven.

Perhaps no other work in Scripture lays before us the truth of the "covenant" better than that of the prophet Amos. Amos was from the tribe of Judah (Southern kingdom) however he ministered to Israel (Northern kingdom). Authenticating his message as that of prophecy from God in the first two verses Amos proceeds to show God's wrath shed on the surrounding nations. We find nothing unusual here, and perhaps will even applaud the vengeance of God on the likes of these heathen nations. However our glee soon turns to confusion as both the Northern and Southern kingdoms enter the same fate as the nations (temporally speaking).

Chapter two, verse four finds judgment being spoken against Judah. Next in verse six we find the condemnation of Israel. And can you believe it, it is introduced with the same words, "Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of xxxxxxx, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof?" What no preferential treatment, the chosen people only get the same four chances as those heathen? This is a key to understanding the covenant, the election, and how the two interact with each other. As we lay the foundation then, let us remember that the pattern God has set in history with the nation of Israel, His chosen people, is that of the covenant.

Chapter three begins with a view of the whole of Israel as God's chosen people, as God reminds them He is the one who brought them up out of bondage in Egypt. Nonetheless, the warning is addressed to the Northern kingdom only. Chapters three through six lay out the charge against Israel (Northern kingdom) and calls her to repent. Chapter seven presents five visions representing divine justice against Israel that are averted by intercession.

However it is in chapter seven I want to try and open before us a painting of the covenant. It is in chapter seven, verse seven that a plumb line is set in the temple. Though not directly set forth in this passage, the plumb line is always among God's people and only those He has enabled to walk in its shadow shall know salvation and not the wrath of His judgment. We see this theme reinforced in Hebrews 4:17 where we read that judgment begins in the house of God (church). We cannot deny that when we speak of Israel in the Old testament, we speak of God's covenant people. Though all of the elect, those able to walk before God by the plumb line, will be of this covenant, the covenant as such, has absolutely nothing to do with eternal salvation. In the parable of the wheat and tares Christ paints the same picture for the church, not all of the church (covenant) have eternal salvation. Some disagree this parable points to the church, but rather to the world. True, but if the world only, why the question about removing the tares? As we will see later, the scope of the covenant and who is included is wider in the New Testament. The Jews did not and have not grasped this yet, and rely upon their birthright as children of Abraham, rather than as children of promise in the Messiah as the hope of their eternal resting place. Let us remember that the covenant according to the Westminster Larger Catechism question number thirty-one that

the covenant of grace was made with Christ, and in Christ with the elect only. This will differ from those who see it as being with mankind, whereby all humanity are in the covenant, some to eternal damnation for being covenant breakers, and the elect to eternal glory having the requirements of the covenant met by Christ in their behalf. I believe the Westminster Standards present the correct application of the Scriptures, and then choose the word select for who is in the covenant, which indeed has both elect and non-elect for the glory of God as we shall see in the following exposition of Amos.

We see in the New Testament the believers called "... a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. His own special people that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Compare the choice of words by the writers of Holy Writ in comparing the church to ancient Israel, "priesthood, chosen people, holy nation, and a people." As with ancient Israel also, all who are of the church are not elected of God unto eternal salvation. The covenant covers a people to whom God has chosen to more overtly proclaim His direct revelation and through this people proclaim His glory to all the world. Note the word of God to the Pharaoh of Egypt and God's raising up of that office that God might in bringing His people forth show His power and glory to all the world. This is "hard" doctrine, and many will turn away from this sovereign God who will so use man. That doesn't change the revealed truth of God, nor hinder His right to have mercy upon whom He will have mercy. All mankind being dead in sin already leaves no place for the condemnation of God in such an action, nor impugns His righteousness and justice. Nothing changes from the Old Testament to the New Testament regarding God's purpose in calling a people to Himself in covenant. This covenant is both conditional and unconditional in two ways, that is we have a dichotomy within a dichotomy in the covenant. The covenant is made with two kinds of people, those whom God has determined to save in spite of their failure to keep the covenant on their own, and those whom God passes by in the covenant. God requires obedience in this covenant, and we find this as being a condition of the covenant. Yet to those whom He has elected, God gives the means to keep the covenant, so we could say it is unconditional in that God made the covenant, and God keeps the covenant for His elect through the gift of faith in the Messiah.

Notice the protection of the covenant however in that when the people without regard to election keep God's commandments, the people (nation) prospers. When the whole (majority) of the people do not obey God's commandment, without regard to the election, all suffer the wrath of God on them as a people (nation). We see this same thing in the New Testament when Jesus tells the story of the sower, and those nearby received the word and rejoiced, but because of the condition of their heart could not keep the word. This seems like a universal offer until we realize that all men have a heart of stone and unfit for the seed to take root, except God creates in them a new heart (Ezek. 11:19). It could be said then that God has "selected" a people consisting both of elect and non-elect to use as an example to the rest of mankind of the righteousness He exhibits both in His mercy and in His judgment.

Another thing we need to pay attention to is the promise of redemption to the elect throughout this demonstration of God's mercy and judgment. It is this truth that keeps the elect from ever falling into complete or utter despair (2 Cor. 4:8-9). Likewise in the book of Revelation when the wrath of God is fully poured out on the earth, we see a pause in the midst of the turmoil of that period as God reassures the saints, and lets them know they are not forgotten (Rev. 7).

Thus we see the covenant made with a people, or nation, but within that people also exists an

elect seed of God, for whom God has provided a redeemer. The covenant speaks of a people, first in the Old Testament as a nation and in the fullness of God's revelation in the New Testament a people of all nations. A shift in the overall inclusion of people (nations) in the covenant, but yet the election remains the same within both administrations of the covenant as the holy seed of faith in the promised Messiah. Thus a covenant that is both conditional and unconditional, a chosen people and an elect people. Add to this the experience of life and the various teaching among God's people and we should not wonder that the simplicity of covenant theology eludes most. Praise God that the simple fact His Son died for my sins is all the understanding required to grasp eternal life in Jesus Christ by grace through faith, and that the gift of God.

Nonetheless, we can watch the development of "covenant" theology in the history of the church bring much debate and even division among churches who all claim the Reformed title. I believe without digging into the eternal counsel, where perhaps we aren't even welcome, we can see from the clear word of God speaking in the Holy Scriptures that the election is the one ingredient necessary for eternal salvation in Christ. In making that election God set in place the things required to meet the conditions of the covenant to be provided for the elect, and in due time it will be made manifest in history through the working of the Holy Spirit within the heart of each elect person, the mysterious salvation God has established for the elect. Clearly then while God chooses to work through and in the covenant, it is not the covenant that establishes election but election is of God from the beginning and the covenant is the tool of election to make these things manifest in history.

I believe when we let the "simplicity" or clarity of Scripture rule, we do away with most of the arguments that have divided the church for so many generations. For example no true Reformed would use words to indicate it was ever possible for man to earn eternal salvation by the keeping of God's law. It is specifically spelled out in Scripture that the law has never and will never save any. Yet our dispensational brethren as a rule hold for separate program for the Old Testament Israel whereby in perfectly keeping the law was the way God chose to save them. I submit that the condition of obedience we see set in place at Sinai, at best if man were able to keep it, is that which indicates man is in the covenant, not eternal salvation. We may note that in several places God puts conditions on this covenant with words to the effect, if you will obey this law you will be my people and I will be your God. Being of the chosen people then is entry into the covenant, but not necessarily of the election to eternal life. The promise to the seed has always been of faith. I think this is the clue we need to understand what we do in baptizing our children. This brings them into the protection of the covenant, but not salvation which is of God in accordance to the election. This is not a step one then step two arrangement. Infants are baptized into the covenant, but flowing entirely from the grace of God the gift of faith needed to please God is bestowed severally according to the eternal election of God. They are the children of God and in covenant with God, but with the ability to fall away remaining, and I don't think it too strong a word to say, will fall away from God in time, and that before standing before the judgment seat of Christ, unless they are also of the elect. Baptism then is the "official" sign and seal of entry into the covenant, the same as circumcision was in the Old Testament (1 Pet. 3:21).

The standard set before those in the covenant of the ever present plumb line cannot be kept apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit so working in the heart of the individual, that it is of God for that person, to will and to do the good pleasure of God (Phlp. 2:13). To stand on the assurance then of the sacraments as signs and seals of our entry into the covenant is no more than the Hebrew people to stand on their right as the children of Abraham, to which our Lord said, God is able to raise up children of Abraham from the stones that line the road (Mt. 3:9). Notice Christ did

not say that God was able to raise up true children of God or elect souls from those same rocks. I submit then that the words God can do all things do not mean that God will do all things. God will not violate His own Word, and that Word points both to a covenant and to an election. I believe from places like the book of Amos we can see the plumb line is not only the standard, but the same plumb line then becomes a dividing line between the elect and all others.

Though we have many who think and teach different, they do so in denial of the clearest interpretation of Scripture in my opinion. I believe if we will let the Scripture speak without our attempt at reducing the sovereign acts of God to that which fits man's logic, we will find a more pure and powerful church to confront the world. To debate and divide the church over the turn of a word surely cannot be of God's best for the church. Yet it seems each of us comes to the table with our own concept of what the Word of God really means, then attempt to move heaven and earth to defend that position. We find such division was the problem of the church at Corinth, where division was removing the discipline and attention to the things of God, that one or the other might appear more holy or of holier stock than another. So much so that the table of the Lord was a farce, and the worship of the church totally lacking in decency and order (1Cor. 1:13; 5:14).

Kuyper as I understand his overall theology almost had it right in that every person has a place and when each person finds their place in God's will the nation will prosper. This works for the elect's sake which are in that nation. However it is true that God does have a place for even the reprobate and that place is in the covenant and in obedience to God's law. Obedience isn't optional, it is commanded. It is only first by inclusion that God may appear vindicated among all the inhabitants of the universe in excluding any. Though as the Sovereign, God need not vindicate Himself, we find He has so chosen to show the glory of His justice through the covenant and the condition His law be obeyed. It is just as sure none can walk this line and remain in the shadow of the plumb line apart from the gift of faith from God in grace.

### **Suggested Sermon Outline:**

#### **New Life Through the Holy Spirit**

Since we are redeemed from our sin and its wretched consequences by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why must we do good works?

Because just as Christ has redeemed us with His blood He also renews us through His Holy Spirit according to His own image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves grateful to God for His goodness and that He may be glorified through us; and further, so that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits and by our reverent behavior may win our neighbors to Christ.

Can those who do not turn to God from their ungrateful impenitent life be saved?

Certainly not! Scripture says, Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10)

#### **I. Saved Sinners Become Sanctified**

**A. Do not surrender to sin.** *Let not sin* therefore *reign* in your mortal body, *that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.* (ROMANS 6:12)

1. **The real power driving your life will show through in your conduct.** Know ye not, that *to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey;* whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (ROMANS 6:16)

2. **Refusal to accept sin's mastery is evidence of new life in Christ.** But *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,* and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! *who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (ROMANS 7:23-24)

People who are content with sin do not yearn for the Savior and the changes He brings to life.

**B. Holiness is the appropriate objective of someone freed from sin.** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye *present your bodies a living sacrifice,* holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.* (ROMANS 12:1)

**C. Redemption is in order to productive service.** *Ye* also, as lively stones, *are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious:* but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But *ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:* Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 PETER 2:5-10)

## II. Holiness Honors the Savior

**A. Transformed lives inevitably cause other people to turn toward the source of the change.** *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father* which is in heaven. (MATTHEW 5:16)

1. **Righteousness compounds itself.** But *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more* unto the perfect day. (PROVERBS 4:18)

2. **It doesn't matter how hopeless holiness may seem, by God's grace it is sufficiently powerful to overcome evil.** *Arise, shine; for thy light is come,* and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, *the darkness shall cover the earth,* and gross darkness the people: *but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.* And *the Gentiles shall come to thy light,* and kings to the brightness of thy rising. (ISAIAH 60:1-3)

**B. The life which does not appear changed may not be changed.** What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and *ye are*

*not your own?* For **ye are bought with a price:** therefore **glorify God in your body**, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20)

**C. Changed lives teach theology in ways arguments cannot.** Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by **your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.** (1 PETER 2:12)

**D. The external evidence of the internal nature is inevitable.** Even so **every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.** (MATTHEW 7:17)

**E. The good fruit which is the evidence of a changed life is far from mysterious.** But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance:** against such there is no law. And **they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.** (GALATIANS 5:22-24)

**F. Reverent behavior is a powerful evangelistic tool.** Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, **if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation** of the wives; **While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.** (1 PETER 3:1-2)

### III. Absence of Holiness Is Evidence of an Unchanged Life

**A. Those who continue to practice evil have no place in the coming kingdom.** Know ye not that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived:** neither **fornicators**, nor **idolaters**, nor **adulterers**, nor **effeminate**, nor **abusers of themselves with mankind**, Nor **thieves**, nor **covetous**, nor **drunkards**, nor **revilers**, nor **extortioners**, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10)

**1. God uses strong language to condemn what modern people excuse as sharp business practice. A false balance is abomination** to the LORD: but **a just weight is his delight.** (PROVERBS 11:1)

**2. People get returns on what they invest in — for good or for evil. He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity:** and the rod of his anger shall fail. (PROVERBS 22:8)

**3. Society's acceptance of evil practices will not excuse them to God. Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees,** and that write grievousness *which* they have prescribed; **To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people,** that widows may be their prey, and *that* they may rob the fatherless! (ISAIAH 10:1-2)

**B. Unacceptable behavior for Christians is obvious.** Now **the works of the flesh are manifest**, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.** (GALATIANS 5:19-21)

