

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 25 (HCLD 22)¹

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 & 2.

Vocabulary: Perseverance, Temptations, State of Grace

Question: Can true believers not, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace? Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the state of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation? Do all true believers always infallibly know they are in this state of grace?²

Perhaps the saddest thing in all Christianity is to see someone who has taken hold of Christ by faith continuing to carry around the guilt of past sins as well as a very present fear of not being able to keep themselves from sin to a degree that is acceptable to God. The same error that gives to the created free will and the ability to choose God also teaches that a believer can back slide all the way into hell. This ignores so many verses of Scripture that it seems only the blind could take hold of such a doctrine. Nonetheless, there are many who are introduced to God through a group with these beliefs, or they have been raised therein and have never heard of grace in the reformed sense of that word.

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 22

Q57: What comfort do you receive from the "resurrection of the body"?

A57: That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head,[a] but also that this my body, raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ.[b]

- a. Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23
- b. I Cor. 15:53-54; Job 19:25-27; I John 3:2

Q58: What comfort do you receive from the article "life everlasting"?

A58: That, inasmuch as I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy,[c] I shall after this life possess complete blessedness, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man,[d] therein to praise God forever.[e]

- c. II Cor. 5:2-3
- d. I Cor. 2:9
- e. John 17:3; Rom. 8:23; I Peter 1:8

² Jer. 31:3; II Tim. 2:19-21; II Sam. 23:5; I Cor. 1:8-9; Heb. 7:25; Luke 22:32; I John 2:27; 3:9; Jer. 32:40; John 10:28; I Peter 1:5; John 2:3; I Cor. 2:12; I John 3:14, 18-19, 21, 24; 4:13, 16; Heb. 6:11-12; Rom. 8:16; I John 5:13

In 1 John 4:17-19 we read "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us." "...As he is, so are we in this world." is misunderstood by so many because it is an acknowledged fact that we are not perfect and have the nature of sin within the flesh. This does not speak of perfection, but of maturity. There are those who from this verse claim that we can reach perfection in this world, but they too err. The truth is we cannot be made perfect in that sense of perfection because we cannot shed this raiment of sin before the day we too are glorified in Christ. However the intention of being spiritually mature that this verse deals with is not only possible, it is the position we find ourselves in when first we enter the state of grace. We have imputed to us the, that is credited to our account the righteousness of Jesus Christ. By faith in Jesus Christ we are justified.

I know that I dwell upon the perfection or completeness and unity of God, but it is only in His perfection, His immutability we can find the understanding to grasp these deeper things of God, and with His faithfulness toward us, not our meager reflection of faith toward Him begin to understand and know this life without fear that the Bible so continuously promises. Not unlike Peter walking on the water, our attention is caught up in the world and we cannot grasp the truth so clearly presented and begin to sink once more into the darkness from whence we came. We are not saved by our knowledge or abilities, but faith and faith is not that which we can see or hold, yet is more tangible than those earthly senses in that with the eye of faith we can both comprehend and obtain the unseen. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). In another place Paul writes it is no longer hope if it is seen. Likewise, in first coming to Christ many have had great emotional experiences, and have felt the presence of God. Reading His Holy Word brings chill bumps and deep and profound emotions burst forth from deep within the soul. This however is no assurance of anything. We do not live by experience or feelings, but the word of God.

We can see from the Bible that it is not by the experience, no matter how deep and profound that we obtain this state of grace. Yet, our hope (faith) is such an intangible thing, as if smoke or vapor. Within our own faculties, all of which have been darkened and rent asunder with sin we cannot grasp such a truth as "the just shall live by faith," a recurring theme in both Old and New Testaments. How then does the peace so often spoken of in Scripture, the contentment that Paul assures us belongs to the household of faith become manifest to mere mortals like me? God's faith toward me, God's grace wherein by faith in Christ I stand, sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption, the selfsame Spirit who will lead me to these jewels of faith in the Holy Writ, that through sin stained flesh and clouded eyes I can see the Gospel truth is all of grace and not I.

From the vantage point of that grand Reformed flower, the TULIP it is so easy to cast stones at those who see not its simplicity, its beauty, its divine truth. To me all of the above, at least in their infancy come with regeneration and causes the flesh in which I dwell to often wonder of the very salvation of those who don't understand nor embrace this beloved bloom from God's own garden. Sadly I attempt to share this glorious seed from God with those whose sincerity could not have been matched by the holy apostles themselves, yet they are so filled with fear surly they are not of the elect. But thankfully God's own word returns to quell such feelings of ego and I am reminded that it was not so long ago I too wandered in such darkness. Though glorious she be, the TULIP is not the measure of election, but only that of faith which comes only by grace. For this reason those whom God has so blessed to reside in the garden amid the full bloom of the TULIP should labor without end to share the truth with those who have not yet stood in her light amidst the darkness. Compared to the rest of the Christian church, the Reformed are but a small fraction of the body of Christ. With patience and love of Christ made manifest in us, we can share this glorious truth with others. Such is the responsibility of those whom God has so blessed. From those who have been given much, much will be required.

When the truth of God's word matures within and we realize that right understanding of His precious word is too a gift of grace. That for His own purpose He often allows His own children to continue for a season, striving in fear of the awesome God of creation. These believers continuously wash themselves in the grief of their own shame of past deeds finding they are never clean enough to enter the palace of the Great King. Until in His own time, the King Himself points out that they have never been outside His palace, and they have no need of fear of being cast from His presence, for they are His children. "Perfect love casts out all fear." Children do not fear their parents, neither do we fear our heavenly Father. It is only at this point we can understand Romans 8:28 that all things work for good.

All of this rests upon the sovereignty of God and His immutability. It is God who has told us of the union with Christ, and that this union cannot be broken. It is God who has imputed to us the righteousness of Christ, that He sees not our flesh and evil, but His beloved Son in us, today and eternally. It is God who has said you are saved by grace thorough faith. Though we attribute the writing of the word to human authors, it is all of God. Now, anything less than a God who is both sovereign and immutable and these are but empty words, promises without hope. It is for this reason I so jealously guard the word grace, and teach a particular grace only. God in His perfection cannot give a gift that is not perfect and complete. Thus the doctrine of "common grace" seems alien to me to the sovereign God of the universe. I choose other ways to show God's mercy and love toward all of creation, not the dividing of grace into several classes.

To this sovereign God, who cannot lie nor change I can cling with all certainty and hope in faith, embracing His promises then as deeds already performed. Here, resting in His grace naught makes sense but the Reformed scheme of things, and I can see the beauty of the TULIP as a thing to be shared and not to glory in. Our TULIP appears to be such a harsh and severe doctrine when first approached, it causes many

to turn aside in dismay. But with the love God has shown us, we can confidently share the grace thus bestowed, and lead others into the safety of the Master's garden. Perhaps it was for this very reason our forefathers chose the petals of the TULIP for the memory device to share this divine truth. Though they rise to greet the sun in all their glory, these beautiful flowers make not whips, nor have limbs sturdy enough to scourge another with.³

As I have written in considering the issue of sin in these lessons, the price of sin is twofold, that is the wages of sin are death (meaning the second death), but sin also has a present and earthly price, human misery. Likewise it is with error of doctrine brings about more suffering of the soul and searching for that which cannot be obtained. Wandering endlessly lost and alone, until God in His unending mercy guides us into the reformed TULIP garden. We are to be constantly reminded, it was not with human hands that the TULIP was planted, and it is of no personal effort that here we rest. Thus to patiently, and lovingly share the Reformed truth becomes our duty as we await the prayed for return of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. How sad then when the haughtiest of God's children so often seems to be those God has shown the most mercy, and it is from within the ranks of the Reformed the roar of the Canon sounds loudest in condemnation.

The Westminster Assembly have rightly answered this question, and I think none among men will find a more accurate nor precise wording. "Ye are saved by grace through faith, and it is not of yourself, but the gift of God lest any should boast"⁴

For further thought:

1. Name the five tenets of faith represented by the TULIP.
2. How would you explain each of these to a person who had never heard of the reformed faith?
3. How would you explain each of these to a person who was not a Christian?
4. Would you explain these five tenets differently to these two groups of people? How and why?

³ I am not sure any can testify with certainty when and where this acronym was first used. However it was derived from the Calvinistic doctrine affirmed by the Synod of Dort, which was held in the Netherlands, not the spiritual or poetic reason used here. It is a fantastic tool to understand and share the Reformed faith with others. No true Reformed can deny unbelief in any single tenet of Christian faith affirmed by the TULIP.

⁴ Westminster Larger Catechism questions 79,80, and 81.

Suggested Sermon Outline

Resurrection

What comfort does the Resurrection of The Body give you?

That after this life my soul shall be immediately taken up to Christ, its Head, and that this flesh of mine, raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and be conformed to the glorious body of Christ.

What comfort does the article concerning The Life Everlasting give you?

That, since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, I shall possess, after this life, perfect blessedness, which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, and thereby praise God forever.

I. At Death Believers Go to Heaven

A. Jesus promised the thief on the cross that he would be with Jesus in heaven immediately after his death. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, ***To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*** (Luke 23:43)

1. God remembers those who trust Him. And call upon me in the day of trouble: ***I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*** (Psalm 50:15)

2. There is no problem too great for God to overcome. Come now, and ***let us reason together,*** saith the LORD: ***though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;*** though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. ***If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:*** (Isaiah 1:18-19)

B. Paul preached the advantage of going to Jesus. For to me to live *is* Christ and ***to die is gain.*** (Philippians 1:21)

1. We cannot take confidence in things of the world and at the same time in the sacrifice of Christ. 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.*** (Galatians 6:14)

2. We will share in the second coming. When ***Christ, who is our life, shall appear,*** then shall ***ye also appear with him in glory.*** (Colossians 3:4)

3. The world's attractions fade before the prospect of the life to come. For ***I am in a strait betwixt two,*** having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; ***which is far better:*** (Philippians 1:23)

II. Believers Will Be Resurrected

A. Resurrection of the body and its reunion with the soul is a central Christian doctrine. But now is *Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.* (1 Corinthians 15:20) So also is *the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption:* It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.* And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit *that was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.* (1 Corinthians 15:42-46) So when *this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* (1 Corinthians 15:54)

B. Resurrection is one of the oldest doctrines of the faith. For *I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed* within me. (Job 19:25-27)

C. Precisely what resurrection will encompass remains to be seen. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and *it doth not yet appear what we shall be:* but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* (1 John 3:2)

D. The Lord Jesus will do what is necessary to make everything right for His people. Who *shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,* according to the working whereby *he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* (Philippians 3:21)

III. The Resurrection Will Start a Wonderful Age for Believers

A. The joy starts even in the present. For *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness,* and peace, *and joy* in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17)

B. Though we begin to enjoy the good life in the present, its full measure is far beyond anything we could begin to imagine. But as it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* (1 Corinthians 2:9)

C. The resurrected life will be like the best we have known to this point but far more. And *this is life eternal,* that they might *know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* (John 17:3)

1. The good times are as certain as anything in our faith. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: *for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.* (Psalm 9:10)

2. Put your confidence in the integrity of Christ. Thus saith the LORD, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might,* let not the rich man glory in his riches: But *let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.* (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Heidelberg Catechism

Lord's Day 022

Questions 57, 58

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