



# REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:  
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;  
he shall set me up upon a rock.  
—Psalm 27:5*

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Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning  
*From the Ramparts* Editor: Dewey Engelsma

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## MEDITATION

And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go. Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also. And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river.

—Exodus 7:14–25

**G**od now stretched out his hand and laid it upon Egypt. The mighty miracle plagues by which God would destroy Egypt had now begun. First plague: the river turned to blood.

The scene was riveting. The haughty, hard-hearted Pharaoh came down from his palace to the bank of the Nile River early in the morning. Moses was already standing there waiting for him with the rod of God in his hand and the word of God in his mouth. Moses announced that because of Pharaoh's disobedience to the Lord God of the Hebrews, the Lord God of the Hebrews would turn the waters of Egypt to blood. Pharaoh was not impressed. Moses told Aaron to take the rod of God and stretch it out

over the waters of Egypt. Aaron did so, and all the waters in the land of Egypt instantly became blood. The seventy-nine billion gallons of water that flowed through Egypt each day in the mighty Nile were now seventy-nine billion gallons of blood. The millions and millions of gallons of water in every tributary that fed the Nile were now millions and millions of gallons of blood. Every stream was blood. Every pond was blood. Every pool was blood. Every water bowl and pitcher and cistern in every home in Egypt was now filled with blood. Being filled with blood and not water, the Nile flowed like blood, thick and viscous and sticky and sluggish. The Nile stank like blood, so that an iron tang filled the air. All the fish in the Nile died, along with all

the Nile's flora and fauna. Not only could the Egyptians not drink the water, but they were also revolted by it. They were loathe to drink it. For seven days they gagged and retched at the blood as they dug here and dug there and dug everywhere in the ground to find some water to drink. The land was filled with blood and stink and death.

The first plague was death to Egypt. The water that was Egypt's life now became the blood of Egypt's death. The river that was Egypt's god had been overthrown in a moment by the Lord God of the Hebrews. The Lord stretched out his hand to smite Egypt with his mighty wonders, and Egypt died under the blow.

What would Pharaoh do? Would he repent? Would he humble himself before Almighty God? Would he let the Hebrews go into the wilderness to serve their God? Nothing of the sort. Pharaoh called for Jannes and Jambres and the magicians, who performed the most spectacular folly ever seen in Egypt: Jannes and Jambres made

more blood! When Egypt needed its wise men to turn the blood back into water so that Egypt could drink, all that God permitted the magicians to do was to make more blood. Pharaoh did not take God's word to heart, but he turned away from Moses and Aaron and Jehovah and the Nile and the blood and the stink and went into his house.

But what was death to Egypt is life to God's people. For God's people the stretched-out arm of Jehovah does not smite unto death but saves unto life! And for God's people blood is not their death but their life! For God stretched out his hand in Jesus Christ and by the blood of the Lamb redeemed them from their death unto eternal life. Listen to name that God gives himself in this first plague: "The LORD God of the Hebrews" (Ex. 8:16). And listen to the name that God gives his people in this first plague: "my people" (v. 16). The covenant God saves his covenant people by the covenant Head through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

—AL



## REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

# THE GOOD LAW & THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

OCTOBER 31, 2023  
7:30PM

The distinction between the law and the gospel is the most important distinction in the Christian faith.

Martin Luther: "Distinguishing between the law and the gospel is the highest art in Christendom, one who every person who values the name Christian ought to recognize, know, and possess."

The distinction between the law and the gospel is of great comfort for the child of God. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

For these reasons, the distinction between the law and the gospel is the most heavily assaulted doctrine in the Christian faith. This Reformation Day, join us for an explanation and defense of the great distinction between God's good law and God's glorious gospel.

### HOST

Remnant Reformed  
Church

### SPEAKER

Rev. Andrew Lanning

### FORMAT

Lecture followed by  
Q&A and refreshments

### VENUE

The Pinnacle Center, 3330 Highland Drive, Hudsonville, MI 49426

Questions can be submitted either before or after the lecture via the [Contact](#) page of our website

[www.remnantreformedchurch.org](http://www.remnantreformedchurch.org)

## Article XXIX. The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)

**T**he problem of “common grace” so we concluded last week implies two fundamental questions. In the first place the question naturally must arise in this connection: Is it possible that God in any sense of the word, and to any extent, assumes an attitude of favor and love over against those that are not in Christ Jesus? And in the second place, the equally fundamental question arises: Is there in the heart of natural man any receptivity for the grace of God?

It seems to me, these questions cannot be avoided. They force themselves upon us. They are of principle importance. Yet, with all that has been written on the subject of “Common Grace” an adequate answer to these questions has not been suggested. If the covenant revealed immediately after the flood, was a covenant with all men, and if the essential idea of the covenant is that of friendship, the question comes naturally: Can God be the friend of all, can He assume a relation of friendship to the seed of the devil? You say, that this covenant implies only temporal relations and temporal blessings and that there is no eternal salvation involved. Good; but my objection is not removed. The question only assumes a still stranger form: How can God temporally assume an attitude of friendship with men whom He has destined to condemn eternally? And as far as the subjective side of the whole problem is concerned: How is it possible that any relation of God to the corrupt sinner, without spiritual good, can be a blessing of grace to the latter?

You must not misunderstand the question. The **facts** which are commonly referred to as manifestations of “common grace” we do not

deny. To do this would mean to contradict Scripture; it would mean to stand diametrically opposed to a reality in the world that is too real to be denied; it would to a certain extent bring us into contradiction with some expressions in the Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dordt. In the Confession we read that man “has retained a few remains thereof” that is of his original excellent gifts (Art. XIV); and in the Canons it is stated that “there remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society and for maintaining an orderly external deportment” (Chapters III, IV; Art. 4). As we have emphasized before, and as must be clear without any argument to all, when Adam and Eve were saved from utter ruin and death, not only the elect but the whole human race from a natural point of view was preserved for the time being. The members of this human race all possess the same natural life of souls and body, manifest the same power of intellect and will. They live in the same world and enjoy the same outward privileges. They move in the same spheres of life, in state and society and to an extent even in the church. From this point of view elect and reprobate, those that are and that are not in Christ Jesus, may live in the same house, be born of the same parents, receive the same education, move about in exactly the same surroundings and enjoy the same environments. Still more. In the Christian world, they may be baptized with the same baptism, live under the same preaching of the Word, partake of the same Lord’s supper. The nearer anyone lives to the



outward sphere of Christianity, the more he receives of these outward gifts, free for all and, in that sense, common. Yet, Scripture emphasizes this still more strongly, when it wants us to understand, that even the seed of the devil may be enlightened, may taste of the good Word of God, taste of the heavenly gift, taste of the powers of the world to come, and, what is more, be partaker of the Holy Spirit, and yet show by his irretrievable falling away, that he belonged to the reprobate! Hebrews 6:4, 5; cf. Hebrews 10:28, 29.

It is not the facts, therefore, concerning which there is any controversy on our part. It is the explanation of these facts from the point of view of a “common grace” which we wish to dispute. For once more, the question that must be answered first of all is this: Is there grace, in the real sense of the word, for those that are not in Christ Jesus, the Head of the Covenant of Grace?

In answer to this question it may be urged in the first place, that there is nothing in any of the standards of our church that justifies the phrase “common grace.” Remarkable is, indeed, the scantiness of expressions in this standards with regard to the remains of natural good left to man, and the manifestation of a certain fearfulness that this be over-emphasized and misunderstood. What they emphasize very strongly is not this natural goodness but the natural corruption and depravity of human nature because of sin and man’s incapability even of receiving the blessings of grace unless he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. That this is true you may be able to judge for yourselves if we quote the whole of the paragraph where these expressions occur. Art. XIV of the Confession has it: “For the commandment of life which he had received he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death. And being thus become wicked, perverse and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness, as

the Scripture teach us, saying, The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not, where John calleth man darkness” etc. Surely, it must be admitted that the “remains” are not over-emphasized in this article! And in the same strain the Canons speak in Chapters III, IV, Art. 4: “There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this natural light from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright **even in things natural and civil**. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.” A question I would like to put here in parentheses. If it is true that in some spheres of life the christian must also live from the principle of this “common grace”; if it is true, moreover, that there are spheres of life in which “special grace” and the light of Scripture do not pertain: how can such a view be brought in harmony with this strong statement in our confession which maintains that man is incapable of using this natural light even in things natural and civil, and that he holds it in unrighteousness, rendering it wholly polluted? Surely, if you compare these scanty and sober expressions concerning the “few remains” and the “glimmerings of light” which are, moreover, “wholly polluted” and “held in unrighteousness” with the anthems of praise sung in honor of “common grace” one begins to look for the harmony between the things compared. And as far as the very term “common grace” is concerned it must be observed that it occurs only in the negative part of the Canons Chapters III, IV, Art. V, where the phrase is laid in the mouth of the enemy of Reformed Doctrine. For there we read that the Synod rejects the errors of those who teach: “That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which

they understand the light of nature) or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use, a greater, viz., the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself.”

In the second place, it must be clear that the term “common grace” implies that in some way God is graciously inclined to all men, without distinction, regardless of their relation to Christ Jesus, that He assumes an attitude of favor and love to those too, that are not in Him, whom God has not foreknown from all eternity. I am well aware of the fact that no one ever asserted that this “common grace” was saving in power, and that it is always maintained that it results in blessings only for this present time. But principally this makes no difference. The fact remains, that in some way, to certain extent, in a certain measure all men partake of grace, and hence God must be graciously inclined to all. Now it must be said, that in the light of Scripture, and in the light of the fundamental conception of our Reformed Doctrine such an attitude of God is utterly inconceivable. From the Arminian or Semi-Pelagian point of view this were possible. If you will deny that God in Sovereign grace chose His own people from before the foundation of the world; if you will deny, therefore, that God knows with Divine certainty who are to be saved and who are not; if you will deny that from eternity God considers His people in Christ and others outside of Christ; this conception of an attitude in God of universal grace, thru which He is favorably inclined to all for a time, is, indeed, conceivable. In that case God must first assume the attitude of watchful waiting. He sent Christ into the world, as far as He is concerned for all men indiscriminately. And now He watches to see who of men might haply accept Him. In the meantime He cannot but assume an attitude of general grace toward all without distinction. But, surely, he who stands with us foursquare on the basis of the Reformed View of life will not thus surrender his conception of God and deprive Him of His absolute Sovereignty.

God has His own people in the world. These He knew with divine love in Christ from before

the foundation of the world. To them He assumed an attitude of grace in our Redeemer from eternity.

But as well as He knows the elect He knows the reprobate. They are not in Christ. They stand before Him in all their sin and transgression. They are guilty. They have forfeited all. For time as well as for eternity they have lost the right to any of the blessings of grace. They are, in a word, objects of His wrath.

To maintain that, objectively speaking, God can assume an attitude of grace to them, say for six thousand years, is to make an attack upon God’s holiness and righteousness. No sinner can stand in any relation to the holiness of God without being deprived of all grace. No naked sinner can maintain himself or be maintained as an object of love in view of God’s righteousness. And principally it makes no difference whether you assume such an attitude of love and favor in God over against the sinner outside of Christ for an endless eternity or for a single minute. The fact remains the same.

And thus it is according to Scripture. Jacob and Esau are both children of Isaac. To a large extent they enjoy the same blessings. Esau even enjoying the privilege that he is first-born. But Jacob is the child of election, Esau of reprobation. And what saith the Scripture? Does it say: Esau I loved but Jacob I loved more? Does it say: Esau I love for the time being, but Jacob for eternity? No most positively it says: “Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated.” Rom. 9:13

Hence, we deny that in any way or to any extent, for time or eternity God assumes an attitude of positive favor or grace over against the reprobate. The seed of the serpent are objects of His wrath.

You remark, that nevertheless the fact remains that the wicked and the just alike enjoy common blessings? We do not deny this. And it seems to us, on the basis of Scripture there is a far better explanation possible of this phenomenon than that of a separate kind of grace.

—Holland, Mich.