



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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And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.

—Exodus 26:15–30 (See also 36:20–34.)

The Sturdy Frame

The lovely tabernacle curtains would need a sturdy frame over which they could be draped and upon which they could be hung. God gave Moses detailed instructions for a wooden frame that would be a marvel of beauty and craftsmanship. In the glorious dwelling that was God's tabernacle, even the frame was impressive and spoke of wonderful covenant truths.

Like the rest of the tabernacle, the wooden frame would be made of materials that were of the highest quality and of surpassing beauty. The boards would be shittim wood, or acacia—the same dark brown hardwood from which the tabernacle's furniture would be made. The crossbars that supported the boards would also be of acacia, and both boards and bars would be overlaid in gold. The bases in which the frame would be set would be pure silver. When reared

up in their respective places, the boards and bars and bases would gleam with an opulent luster.

For all its rich beauty, the outstanding characteristic of the tabernacle's wooden frame would be its sturdiness. Shittim wood is one of the densest of all hardwoods, notable for its strength and durability. It is resistant to rot, to moisture, and to insects. Thus, the long boards of acacia that would be used for the tabernacle's frame would be the sturdiest and most enduring that could be found. Board would be joined to board by clever tenons that master craftsmen would fashion in each so that the entire structure would be firmly fixed together. Each board would be anchored to the ground by two silver bases. Because each base would be a full talent of pure silver, each board would be held fast to the ground by well over one hundred pounds of solid

silver. The boards would be held even more firmly in place by crossbars that would run perpendicular to the boards. Boards, bars, bases, and joinings would all render the wooden framework of the tabernacle the sturdiest of structures upon which the tent of the tabernacle could be spread.

In the sturdy frame of the tabernacle there is a comforting truth for God's helpless people. For God has built for us a sturdy house that endures. His covenant with us is firm and sure. He has

prepared for us a city that hath foundations. He builds his church upon the stone that the builders refused but that God hath made the head stone of the corner. He has laid our foundation upon the precious and colorful stones of his gospel, which gospel is lovely and enduring. In his firm tabernacle, in his abiding covenant in Christ, we helpless sinners are safe. "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" (Ps. 27:5).

—AL

EDITORIAL

God of God: Nicea's Septendecicentennial (7)

The Tide Turns

The Arian camp was the first to speak to the question of whether Jesus is God. Eusebius of Nicomedia arose and confidently stated his position that Jesus is not God but that he is merely the highest of all creatures. Eusebius of Nicomedia and the other Arians had come to the Council of Nicea expecting to win a decisive victory. And why shouldn't they? Arius' doctrine had enjoyed widespread acclaim in the city of Alexandria. Arius' hymn was in every mouth in Alexandria; many citizens of the city had marched in the streets singing lustily, "There was when he was not." Why shouldn't the delegates to the Council of Nicea confess the same thing? Yes, Arius had been deposed by Alexander, but the Arians saw the Council of Nicea as their opportunity to overcome Arius' deposition and to bring Alexander down to defeat instead. So confident were the Arians of their cause that they had prepared a creed ahead of time to present for the council's adoption. Eusebius of Nicomedia read the creed to the assembled delegates.

But something unexpected happened as Eusebius of Nicomedia spoke. As he explained the Arian doctrine that Jesus is not God, the delegates to the Council of Nicea reacted against him very strongly. Men shouted against Eusebius until the room was full of clamor and his speech was drowned out in the tumult. One historian tells the tale thus:

According to the reports of those present, what changed matters was the exposition that Eusebius of Nicomedia made of his own views—which were also those of Arius. When the bishops heard his explanation, their reaction was the opposite of what Eusebius of Nicomedia had expected. The assertion that the Word or Son was no more than a creature, no matter how high a creature, provoked angry reactions from many of the bishops: "You lie!" "Blasphemy!" "Heresy!" Eusebius was shouted down, and we are told that the pages of his written speech were snatched from his hand, torn to shreds, and trampled underfoot.¹

¹ Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 188.

The Arians tried to mount a defense of their doctrine, but one Arian speaker contradicted another until the entire camp fell silent. Athanasius, an eyewitness of the events, recounted the Arians' confusion.

Scarcely, however, did they begin to speak, when they were condemned, and one differed from another; then perceiving the straits in which their heresy lay, they remained dumb, and by their silence confessed the disgrace which came upon their heterodoxy.²

In the midst of the confusion and contradiction of the Arian camp, eighteen of the original twenty defenders of Arius abandoned him.

The Arians first proposed a creed, which however was rejected with tumultuous disapproval, and torn to pieces; whereupon all the eighteen signers of it, excepting Theonas and Secundus, both of Egypt, abandoned the cause of Arius.³

What had happened? Most of the delegates to the Council of Nicea had arrived ready to seek a compromise with the Arians. As events after the conclusion of the council would reveal, most of the delegates would return to their homes prepared to compromise as well. Of all those present at the Council of Nicea, only Athanasius and a few others would consistently stand for the truth declared at Nicea. But in spite of the general atmosphere of compromise both before and after the council, in the critical moment at the council when the Arian heresy was on the floor, the council rose up as one to condemn it.

The only explanation for the council's strong reaction against the Arian heresy is that the exalted Christ, sitting at God's right hand, visited the council by his word and Spirit and moved men to insist on the truth. All power in heaven and on earth belongs to our risen Lord. He turns men's hearts whithersoever he will. It was our Lord's will at this critical moment in the life of his church that his church officially confess the truth about him: Jesus is God. And our Lord used the most unlikely means of the Arians' own speech to expose the depth of their lie that Jesus is not God. It was utterly unexpected and humanly impossible that the Council of Nicea be turned from compromise to orthodoxy. No mere man could have brought about the decisive moment when Nicea would galvanize against the lie and for the truth. But the only begotten Son of God came to Nicea and did what no mere man could do.

The mood of the majority had now changed. Earlier they hoped to deal with the issues at stake through negotiation and compromise, without condemning any doctrine. Now they were convinced that they had to reject Arianism in the clearest way possible.⁴

But what was the clearest way to reject Arianism? It would come down to a single word, which the Lord would provide through another somewhat unexpected source.

To be continued...

—AL



² Athanasius, *Decretis or Defence of the Nicene Definition* in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 4, *Athanasius: Select Works and Letters* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1886–1900; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1.2.1–1.2.4. The portion quoted here can be found online at <https://churchhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Nicene-parallels.pdf>, 14.

³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity* (1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 628.

⁴ González, *The Story of Christianity*, 188.

REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE OF THE REFORMATION

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2025 | 7:00PM

What was the great sixteenth-century Reformation of the church about?

Well, it was about a great many things.

- It was about popes and penance.
- It was about corruption and conscience.
- It was about monks and masses.
- It was about the truth and the lie, Christ and antichrist, righteousness and unrighteousness.
- And much more besides.

Yes, but what was the Reformation about? What was it essentially about? What was the heart and the kernel of the Reformation? What was the issue that lay at the root of all that was said and done in the great Reformation of the church? What, in short, was the Reformation about?

Ah, therein lies the gospel. For the Reformation was about justification by faith alone.

We call the doctrine of justification by faith alone the material principle of the Reformation. That is, justification was the doctrine, the essence, the heart, the kernel, the issue—the material—of the entire Reformation.

And what marvelous material is justification by faith alone! For it is the gospel of our salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

This Reformation Day, we would be delighted if you would join us to hear about and rejoice in the wonderful gospel of justification by faith alone, the material principle of the Reformation.

HOST

**Remnant Reformed
Church**

SPEAKER

Rev. Andrew Lanning

FORMAT

**Lecture followed by
Q&A and refreshments**

VENUE

Pavilion Christian School, 9181 Kenowa Ave. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534

lawgospel.com

Article CXXX: The New King and His Kingdom: The Children of the Promise (continued)

“In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”—Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7

All the children of the flesh are of Israel and therefore circumcised. In the outward sense, according to the flesh, they were in God's covenant, and therefore, they must have the sign of the covenant in their flesh. But all of Israel according to the flesh were not saved. With many of them God had no pleasure. Yet, the word of God was not brought to naught because of those that were not saved. And that for the simple reason that all the children born of Abraham according to the flesh were not children of the promise.

Thus, in general, is the line of reasoning the Apostle Paul follows in Rom. 9:6–8. And to convince his readers that this is actually the case he quotes from history. In the first place he refers to the example of Isaac and Ishmael.

The passage to which the apostle refers is Gen. 21:8–12: “And the child grew and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son: for the son of this handmaid shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy handmaid; in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Now, in order to understand this passage and the light of the New Testament upon it, we must bear the facts as

they are in mind. Externally both Ishmael and Isaac were at this time in God's covenant. They were brothers and both were circumcised. Both were children of Abraham and both bore the sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed in their flesh. Moreover, as was the case in the relation between Esau and Jacob, Ishmael was the first-born of Abraham. It seemed, therefore, as if he had a claim to the inheritance of Abraham. Undoubtedly, as is evident from the attitude of Sarah, this claim to the inheritance of Abraham is the occasion of Ishmael's manifestation of hatred toward the child Isaac. Principally the question between Isaac and Ishmael is who shall be heir of the world. Ishmael wants to be heir. But Isaac is the child of the promise and Ishmael is the son after the flesh. For this reason the latter hates the former. And on the occasion of the great feast Abraham makes when Isaac is weaned, he reveals this hatred toward the son of the promise. He mocks him. No doubt his mockery bears reference to Isaac's heirship. Sarah in this instance understands the will of God concerning her son more clearly than Abraham. She knows that her son and not the son of Hagar is to be heir of the promise. And she requests that the handmaid and her son be cast out, stating as her reason for this drastic action that Ishmael shall not be heir with her son Isaac. Abraham, for the moment considering this request from the point of view of the flesh, is grieved because of his son Ishmael. But the Lord reveals also to Abraham that Sarah is right. Not in Ishmael, but in Isaac shall the promise be continued and the seed of Abraham be called. Thus is the purpose according to election. Ishmael and Isaac are temporarily brought together as the seed of Abraham.

They are very nearly akin. And because they are so nearly akin according to the flesh while absolutely different from each other spiritually, the enmity of the flesh to the spirit reveals itself inevitably. But after this has been revealed the separation according to the election takes place and Ishmael is cast out.

This passage is referred to by the Apostle Paul in two different connections. In the first place in Rom. 9:6–9. There the apostle writes: “But it is not as though the word of God hath come to naught. For they are not all Israel that are of Israel! neither because they are Abraham’s seed are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.” The meaning of this passage is lucid. All the Israelites were children of Abraham according to the flesh. For that reason they all belonged to God’s covenant as it manifested itself in the world. They belonged to God’s people and had the sign of the covenant. But although this is true, all the children of the flesh are not children of the promise. Many were nothing more than children of Abraham according to the flesh. Of these two different classes of children among Israel Paul sees the types already in Ishmael and Isaac. They, too, were both children according to the flesh. Yet they were not children of the promise. For not of Ishmael, but of Isaac God said that in him Abraham’s seed should be called. And when God himself made this separation he did not bring to naught his own word. For it was in regard to Isaac that he had given the promise. Ishmael was not a son of the promise. Isaac was. For to Abraham God had revealed: According to this season will I come and Sarah shall have a son. Hence, also here we have the same thought. There are children of the flesh and children of the promise. These two are closely akin, seeing that they are both children according to the flesh. But the separation according to election comes and the children of the flesh are cast out. They are no heir with the

children of the promise. And when this separation is accomplished, the word of God is not brought to naught.

The second passage in which the apostle refers to the same historical incident is Gal. 4:21–30. There we read: “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid and one by the freewoman. Howbeit the son of the handmaid is born after the flesh; but the son by the freewoman is born through the promise. Which things contain an allegory: for these women are two covenants; one from Mount Sinai bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar. Now, this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to the Jerusalem which now is: for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for more are the children of the desolate than her that hath the husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now. Howbeit what saith the Scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman.” Also in this passage the apostle emphasizes in the first place that both Ishmael and Isaac were sons of Abraham. In the second place, also here he characterizes them as son of the promise and son of the flesh, while in addition he mentions that the one is a son of the freewoman, the other of the bondwoman. In the third place, he reminds us that the son of the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit. With these words the apostle evidently refers to the mockery of Ishmael. He calls it persecution. On the face of it we would probably judge that this is a rather strong expression. In Gen. 21 we simply read that Ishmael was mocking Isaac. But Scripture in this passage from the epistle to the Galatians interprets this mockery as persecution. There was hatred back of this mockery on the part of Ishmael, religious hatred. And even though this

hatred of Ishmael could not possibly express itself more forcibly, could not reveal itself in actual persecution, nevertheless in principle this mockery was persecution. If Ishmael had had the opportunity, he would have killed Isaac. His mockery was a manifestation of the hatred of the flesh against the spirit, of the son of the flesh against the son of the promise. And, finally, the apostle reminds his readers that the son of the bondwoman was cast out according to Scripture and did not inherit with the son of the freewoman.

Now, these things, so Scripture explains, contain an allegory. Hagar is an image of Sinai, whence the law was given. And her son is picture of the children of bondage among Israel, those that sought salvation in the works of the law. Not understanding the purpose of the law, Jerusalem as it was then, literal Jerusalem, Israel according to the flesh, had become enslaved to the law. And in the church of Galatia there were

those who emphasized the necessity of keeping the whole Mosaic law, who would bring the church of the new dispensation under the same bondage of the law as earthly Jerusalem. They were members of the church, yet children of bondage as Ishmael was. On the other hand, Sarah is an image of the free Jerusalem, of the true Church, and Isaac of her spiritual children. These spiritual and these carnal children live side by side. These free and these bond children are in the same church. And even as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, so the children after the flesh persecute the children after the Spirit. But while the latter are the true heirs, the former will be cast out even as Ishmael was. They are all children. Outwardly they all belong to the Church. They are with God's people in the world. But they are not all children of the promise and, therefore, they are not all heirs of the kingdom of God.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

