



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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— PAVILION —

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MEDITATION

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be. And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us. And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me. And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD. And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

—Exodus 8:20–32

God's command to Pharaoh was not outrageous, not even from Pharaoh's point of view. God's command to Pharaoh was merely that Pharaoh let God's people go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice unto God. The implication was that after their sacrifice, the Israelites would return to Egypt to resume serving Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God was not requiring Pharaoh to let Israel go forever. Though it was God's purpose to deliver Israel once and for all from Egypt by destroying Pharaoh and Egypt, God's command to Pharaoh was, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." Moses' explanation of God's command was, "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us." There was nothing outrageous about it.

But Pharaoh's heart was hardened even to this simplest of commands from God. Pharaoh hated God. Pharaoh hated God's people. Pharaoh hated God's commandments. And why was Pharaoh so disobedient and hard-hearted? Because God had appointed Pharaoh to disobedience. God himself had hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that Pharaoh steeled himself against even the simplest command of God. And God had raised Pharaoh up precisely to reveal God's absolute sovereignty to harden whom he will.

Early in the morning, the command came to Pharaoh at the brink of the Nile: "Let my people go, that they may serve me." And just as early in the morning came Pharaoh's reply that he would not let God's people go.

Fourth plague: flies.

The flies infested the land of Egypt by swarms. Great clouds of flies flew through the air. Great billows of flies descended upon the land. Flies moved upon the ground in such numbers that it appeared the ground was crawling. Flies covered the beasts. Flies entered the homes. Flies covered the people. Flies on the walls. Flies on the food. Flies in the eyes. Flies in the nostrils. Flies on the lips, trying to crawl into the mouths. Flies everywhere, until the whole land of Egypt was corrupted with the grievous swarms.

Pharaoh was desperate. He called for Moses and Aaron in order to bargain with God. Pharaoh said that Israel may sacrifice to God, but they must not leave Egypt. Pharaoh was being crafty. Shepherds and their sheep were an abomination to the Egyptians, so that as soon as Israel would have tried to sacrifice, the Egyptians would have prevented them. So Pharaoh tried again. Israel may sacrifice to God, but they may not go three days' journey away. Moses rebuked Pharaoh for his deceit and warned him not to deal deceitfully by changing his mind. But as soon as the plague was stayed, so there remained not a single fly in

the land of Egypt, Pharaoh hardened his heart, neither would he let the people go.

But with the fourth plague, there came something new from God. Whereas the first three plagues had fallen upon every part of Egypt, including Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt, the fourth plague fell upon every part of Egypt except Goshen. God severed the land of Goshen from the plague of flies, and God made a division between his people and Pharaoh's people. God's purpose was to kill Pharaoh and Egypt, but God's purpose was to save Israel. Whereas God had appointed Pharaoh to disobedience and destruction, God had appointed his people to salvation and life.

The plagues can only be understood in the light of election and reprobation. For in the fourth plague the gospel of God's gracious election was illustrated. Behold the mercy and grace of God: "I will put a division between my people and thy people." Behold the comfort of Israel: "my people."

—AL

FROM THE EDITOR

A blessed Thanksgiving Day to our readers in the United States next week. And to all our readers wherever you may be,

O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.
(Ps. 107:1–3)

This issue contains a timely article by Dewey Engelsma. May the Lord prosper it for the warning, admonition, and profit of our readers. And if

anyone in the Protestant Reformed Churches has an ear, let him hear.

Also included in this issue is a lightly edited transcript of a Reformation Day lecture hosted by Remnant Reformed Church on God's good law and glorious gospel. The transcript includes the opening remarks and prayer by Deacon Keith Gritters, as well as the question and answer period following the lecture. Thanks to our tireless copyeditor for the transcript, as well as just the right touch in copyediting to adapt the spoken word to the page.

—AL

Trusting in the Shadow of Egypt

I recently received from two individuals information regarding the engagement by the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) of Guidepost Solutions. According to the letter I was sent, Guidepost Solutions is “a global leader in organizational compliance and monitoring.”¹ This is part of the third-party investigation that a recent synod of the PRC approved to investigate sexual abuse in the PRC. The motive of both individuals in sending the letter was a care for those who may have suffered abuse while in the PRC.

Let the reader understand that what is going on in the PRC right now regarding abuse is a sham. It is not done in good faith, and it only gives further evidence of the spiritual condition of the denomination.

The letter from the ad hoc committee of the Protestant Reformed synod states that the purpose of this investigation is to “investigate reports of all sexual abuse” in the PRC, past or present. The leaders of the denomination want you to know that this is the *only* type of abuse that will be investigated. In the July 2023 editorial of the *Standard Bearer*, Rev. Josh Engelsma stated this explicitly to the members of the denomination.

The third-party organization is being hired to look into cases of *sexual* abuse. Synod acknowledged that there are many

other forms of abuse, all of which are harmful and heinous, but decided to narrow the focus of the investigation to sexual abuse.²

This is like the mayor of Chicago looking into knife violence in the city but declining to investigate all other forms of violence.

Sexual abuse is symptomatic in a church that has denied the truth of justification by faith alone and salvation by Jesus Christ alone. Man rules in the PRC; and man, according to his nature, is nothing more and nothing less than an abuser. All man can do is abuse.

Once a church has replaced Christ with man, that church will then see abuse manifest itself in the home in the form of spousal abuse; in the consistory, classis, and synod as spiritual abuse; and in the counseling room as sexual abuse. Such abuse will inevitably manifest itself when once a church has cast out the truth of justification by faith alone.³

The PRC are not sorry at all for the abuse they have perpetrated against the innocent.

I say this not because I can see their hearts but because I can see their fruit.

From 2015 to 2018 Mr. and Mrs. Neil Meyer were spiritually abused by the consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church.⁴ The Meyers will carry the marks of this abuse to their graves.

¹ Letter from the ad hoc committee of the Protestant Reformed Synod 2023. This letter can be found at www.prc.org/guidepost.

² Joshua Engelsma, “Synod 2023 Approves a Third-Party Investigation,” *Standard Bearer* 99, no. 18 (July 2023): 414; emphasis is Engelsma’s.

³ I need not defend that here. It has been proven. By the Protestant Reformed synod’s own confession, the issue was justification by faith alone, and the lie that was taught after that decision was the same as the lie taught before the decision. Anyone who denies that today and says it was only a minister who did not understand what he was saying and the whole controversy was really just a big misunderstanding is either a liar or unforgivably (at this late hour) ignorant. In the case of ignorance, he should follow this formula: One, educate yourself. Two, speak.

⁴ If you care to read about some of the violence perpetrated by Hope PRC, I invite you to read Dewey Engelsma, “Violence (Protestant Reformed Churches)(PRC) (Hope PRC) (Grace PRC),” *A Strait Betwixt Two* (blog), May 20, 2021, <https://astraitbetwixtwo.com/2021/05/20/violence/>.

Mr. Meyer was put under Christian discipline for three years for defending justification by faith alone. While her husband languished under this spiritual murder (which took away his right to protest), Mrs. Meyer valiantly contended for the faith. I have only heard pieces of what they had to endure. It was brutality that only an organization bearing the name *church* could administer. Two of the elders responsible for that abuse were Joel Minderhoud and John VanBaren. I know that because I have read the material and attended the assembly meetings, and these men were prominent either in the documents or in their proclamations at the assembly meetings. What did the PRC do with these men when it was shown that the issue was justification by faith alone and the Meyers had been vindicated? This is what they did: they appointed these men to the Theological School Committee, which is the highest it gets in the hierarchy. Such positions are given as favors in the PRC, and these men were duly rewarded for their labors.



*TSC members: Rev. W. Langerak, B. Looyenga,
Rev. N. Decker, Rev. J. Mahtani,
D. Pastoor, J. VanBaren, Rev. G. Eriks,
J. Minderhoud, D. DeBoer
Absent: Rev. D. Noorman⁵*

Perhaps someone will respond, “But Hope PRC said they were sorry!” Or, “The PRC are sorry!” No, they are not sorry.⁶ They have not repented. They simply wipe their mouths, say they have done no evil, and put these men—opponents of justification by faith alone and men who have shed the blood of the innocent—on their highest-powered committees.

The PRC are rife with spiritual abuse. Such abuse has been well-documented.

This is to say nothing of the spousal abuse that is rampant in the denomination and about which nothing has been done.

What about that third-party investigation? Have the PRC finally gotten serious about protecting the innocent and punishing the evildoers?

Hardly.

The PRC have abdicated their responsibility by hiring a third party. Everything needful for the rule of the church is found in the offices which Christ, the head of the church, has ordained. What the PRC say by hiring a third party is that what Christ has ordained is not sufficient. Read article 30 of the Belgic Confession, and tell me where you find the command to bring in a third-party organization that will help you *develop a healthy faith community*.⁷ You will not find a reference to a third-party organization in article 30 of the Belgic Confession because that idea is not found in “that spiritual policy which our Lord hath taught us in His Word.”⁸ If you want to know how to “help purify and fight against this evil”⁹ in your denomination, turn to the word of God, not a godless third party.

Here is the reality of the PRC’s hiring a third party. The PRC had a responsibility to govern according to the “spiritual policy” taught them

⁵ Ronald Cammenga, “Seminary News,” *Standard Bearer* 100, no. 2 (October 15, 2023): 47.

⁶ Dewey Engelsma, “Repentance,” *A Strait Betwixt Two* (blog), May 4, 2021, <https://astraitbetwixtwo.com/2021/05/04/repentance/>.

⁷ See letter from the ad hoc committee of the Protestant Reformed Synod 2023.

⁸ If you want to find another reason (second to the compromise of justification by faith alone) that the PRC are in the condition that they are in, where good order and decency have been lost, then you can find that at the end of article 30, which rule they also have not followed. “By these means everything will be carried on in the church with good order and decency, *when faithful men are chosen according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul in his epistle to Timothy.*”

⁹ Letter from the ad hoc committee of the Protestant Reformed Synod 2023.

by the Lord in his word, by which means justification by faith alone would have been preserved and taught; abusers of all kinds would have been punished; and the weak and helpless would have been relieved, defended, and protected. Having not done this, and reaping the bitter fruit that inevitably follows, the PRC now say this to Guidepost Solutions, a godless, worldly organization: “We have not ruled the church according to our Lord’s command. Now we need you to come in and help us.” To the eye of the flesh this looks grand! The PRC are no doubt spending an inordinate amount of money to bring in this high-powered outfit that has experience working with other corrupt organizations, and this outfit will help clean house. The problem is that this is not the “spiritual policy” that our Lord instituted. This is to replace heavenly wisdom, which is glorious, with earthly wisdom, which is sensual and devilish.

But what kind of third-party organization have the PRC partnered with to help them root out sexual abuse? This kind of organization:



That was a Twitter post released by Guidepost Solutions on June 6, 2022, in which they saluted and celebrated Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Pride Month. The post still stands today.¹⁰

They state publicly that they are an “ally” to the LGBTQ+ community.

This is so outlandish as to beggar belief.

The PRC have hired a group that supports homosexuality to help them with their sexual abuse problem. This was no knee-jerk reaction: “Hey, we have a problem! Let’s bring in Guidepost!” I can about imagine the number of sub-committee meetings, assembly meetings, overtures, appeals, and hundreds of hours that went into finally hiring this group. And after all of that work and all of that time, they end up with a firm that glories in that which God hates.

The matter of unpunished sexual abuse in a church is a spiritual problem that requires a spiritual solution. The PRC are looking for spiritual help. In other words, the PRC did not hire this firm to cut their grass. They hired this firm—outspoken enemies of Jesus Christ—to help them with their spiritual problems.

But the ad hoc committee and the PRC will have a response to this charge. “We have a disclaimer!” And they are right. They do have a disclaimer.¹¹ A church that purports to be a church of Jesus Christ has a disclaimer. Here is a translation of that disclaimer: “We have chosen to work with an enemy of Jesus Christ and to seek its help in reforming our church. Our ministers have failed, and the elders have failed; so now we must turn to this group for help, a group that glories in the filth of Sodom and that hates God and his law. But we do not believe that these are ‘points of difference’ that will ‘adversely affect the investigation.’”

¹⁰ Guidepost Solutions (@GuidepostGlobal). 2022. Twitter, June 6, 2:05 PM. <https://twitter.com/GuidepostGlobal/status/1533872616812978176>.

¹¹ That disclaimer reads as follows: “It is to be understood that contracting Guidepost to do this specific task would not imply or express agreement with all of the statements, positions, values, etc. of the organization or its members. Guidepost is competent to investigate, and the points of difference are not such as would adversely affect the investigation” (Protestant Reformed Synod 2023, Committee 2 report, page 4).

You can hear them explaining to God why they allied themselves with his enemy and indeed brought the enemy right into the church itself: “But we had a disclaimer!”

I could have saved the PRC a lot of time and money. This is what the report will say:

We found instances where the PRC did not handle things properly. They should stop doing that. To prevent things like that from happening again, we recommend they add some protocols and procedures and even some additional oversight. We think the PRC should form a “TASK FORCE.” If the PRC are really serious about this matter, they would do well to form a “COMMISSION.” This should be above reproach, so it should be an “INDEPENDENT COMMISSION.” The next step in the process is to consider creating an “ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY” to help guide the PRC going forward. Next, the PRC should create a “RESOURCE TOOLBOX” to provide resources to the organization. You’re welcome. Now please remit the check for our services as soon as possible.

In other words, the PRC could have just copied and pasted the report Guidepost created for the Southern Baptist Convention.¹²

It is earthly wisdom writ large.

But what is important is what God thinks about all of this.

Here is the word of God to the Protestant Reformed Churches:

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and

have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! (Isa. 30:1–2)

This is what happens to the denomination that kills a faithful prophet, that tramples underfoot the truth of justification by faith alone, and that counts the blood of Christ—the blood of the covenant—an unholy thing. The churches now find themselves in the bed of fornication with an organization that glories in the filth of Sodom.

Disclaimer be damned.

Just as it would have been damned¹³ had the people of Israel given God their disclaimer upon hearing Isaiah 30 read to them. “God, it is to be understood that contracting Egypt to do this specific task would not imply or express agreement with all of the statements, positions, values, etc. of Egypt or its citizens. Egypt is competent to investigate, and the points of difference are not such as would adversely affect the investigation.”

You can hardly believe what you are reading. The PRC do not believe that the “points of difference” between themselves and Guidepost Solutions are such that they would “adversely affect the investigation.”

They have again gone to Egypt for counsel.

Having sown the wind, the PRC now reap the whirlwind.

But this is not written first to the members of the PRC. This is written to those who may not yet know of the grave danger the PRC represent.

And this is written to those who have come out of the PRC but who, as time goes on, will be tempted to forget about the wickedness of the church from which they have fled.

The Protestant Reformed denomination is a false church.

¹² You can find that here: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/22031737-final-guidepost-solutions-independent-investigation-report>.

¹³ There is a blue dotted line under this word in my Microsoft Word document, which, when I hover over it, reads, “This language may be offensive to your reader.” Yes, it no doubt will be offensive to some readers. But that is exactly the word that must be used, as the wisdom from which this idea proceeded is from the place of the damned, and this idea ought to be condemned back to the place of the damned. “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15).

She is a false church according to the marks given to the church in Belgic Confession articles 28 and 29. The PRC has corrupted *the* mark of the true church, which is the pure preaching of the word, and therefore the other marks as well: the proper administration of the sacraments and the exercise of Christian discipline. She now shows forth the bitter, ugly fruit of her apostasy, which fruit is represented in her allying herself with Guidepost Solutions. The fruit is undeniable.

The calling with regard to such a church is to come out of her. The calling to come out is to come out of her in every respect. It is not simply to withdraw our church membership from such a church and then still function in and around her as if she is not the spiritual adulteress that she is.

Having fled Babylon, we ought not then turn around and partake in her potlucks.

Do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, as you have opportunity, reprove them. This is the law of God for his children.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. (Eph. 5:11–12)

Why ought the child of God obey that law, when obeying that law will bring only more loss?

Obey out of gratitude.

God has called us out of that false church. He has plucked us as firebrands out of the fire and has done so twice. He has called us out and not for anything we have done or will do (God being gracious) but has done so only according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:5–6).

Out of this knowledge, then, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Rev. 18:4–5).

—DE

THE SCRIVENER

Opening Remarks—Keith Gritters

Good evening, everyone. I would like to welcome you all to our speech tonight.¹ It is a great privilege to be able to come at this late hour in the world, while we hear our Lord’s footsteps thundering all around us, and hear a speech on the wonderful topic of “The Good Law and the Glorious Gospel.” I would like to begin by reading from I Timothy 1.

[Reading of I Timothy 1]

Let’s open with a word of prayer.

Our Father which art in heaven, we come unto thee in the evening hour of this day. As we have seen the beautiful snow falling upon the earth, we confess that we see in this the glorious truth of thy gospel and what thou hast done to

our sins. Thou hast washed them clean, white as the snow, in the blood of our savior Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, that thou wilt ever teach unto us thy people this gospel, that as we go about our lives in this world, we may grow more and more to know and to love thee, that through this gospel we may see that all of the law has been finished for the sake of our savior Jesus Christ, whose obedience was imputed unto us, and that according to that gospel we have all of the blessings of salvation and life everlasting. We pray also that thou wilt be with us in this evening as we consider for a moment the topic of “The Good Law and the Glorious Gospel.” We pray that thou wilt edify us in that topic that we may grow in our knowledge of and our love for thee. We pray also, Lord, forgive us; for we confess

¹This is a copyedited transcript of a speech given October 31, 2023, in Hudsonville, Michigan. The speech can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfokYQOu8rc>.

that we are sinners. We have sinned against thee in thought, in word, and in deed. We pray all this in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Comments on the night's agenda]

I would like to introduce our speaker to everyone. Our speaker tonight is Rev. Andrew Lanning. He is the pastor of a small church in West Michigan called Remnant Reformed Church. This small church came into being in May 2023, when a little band of believers came together and formed this church, thereby calling Reverend Lanning to be their pastor. This church has been given by all the eyes of men one of the smallest possible places in this world. We are one church, and although we desire other

congregations to come and federate with us as a denomination, it has not pleased God yet to grant us this desire. But although our place may look like the smallest possible place in this world, God has given to us the most expansive and large place possible, and that is because he has given to us the gospel. No matter how small or despised this church may look in the eyes of men, when we look through the eyes of faith we see the largest and most firm foundation for a church, and that is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And tonight for a few minutes we hear instruction on that glorious gospel and its relation to and distinction from God's good law.

The Good Law and the Glorious Gospel

The topic of tonight's lecture is "The Good Law and the Glorious Gospel." In that topic we have two things. On the one hand, we have the law of God; and that law of God is good. On the other hand, we have the gospel of God; and that gospel of God is glorious. These are the descriptions that Paul gives to the law and the gospel in I Timothy 1. "We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (I Tim. 1:8). And he speaks of all sound doctrine being judged "according the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (v. 11). From those descriptions we get our topic "The Good Law and the Glorious Gospel."

We must distinguish those two things as the word of God does, so that in our lecture tonight we are going to see the distinction between God's good law and God's glorious gospel. There is a danger for us tonight, as we open up this topic, that we consider the matter of the law-gospel distinction and the law-gospel relationship from a purely intellectual point of view. The topic of the law and the gospel is intellectually stimulating. It is a fascinating topic. We could even say that the relationship between the law and the gospel is a kind of theological puzzle, and a puzzle stimulates the mind of man, so that the threat to us is that we view this whole matter

merely as a curiosity or as a puzzle to solve or something to figure out merely intellectually and academically. But the perspective that we must take tonight regarding this distinction between the law and the gospel is that it is the most important distinction in the Christian faith. The distinction between the law and the gospel is salvation. The distinction between the law and the gospel sets us squarely before the throne of God.

That is where our lecture must begin: standing before God's throne and looking upon the holy God. Can you see him? Can you see that God with the eye of faith? There in heaven God has set his throne, and it is a glorious throne. It is majestic. Upon that throne sits the ancient of days, he who is untouched by the passing years and centuries and millennia, he who from the beginning was the ancient of days and who to all eternity is the ancient of days. He is the I AM THAT I AM. That God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). That he is a consuming fire refers to his perfect devotion to himself. So consecrated is he to himself in love that he burns unto himself. His devotion rises from him and returns to him like the waves of heat of a hot furnace. Our God loves himself. He loves his being. He loves his holiness. He loves his majesty. He loves his glory.

So much does God love his majesty and holiness and glory that God will not stand anything that is contrary to him. God abominates and hates and curses and destroys all that is contrary to him. So great is the holiness of God that the creatures that dwell in heaven, made by God and standing before him as his servants, cover their faces night and day in his presence. The angels are holy, perfectly devoted to the service of Jehovah God. Those holy angels are so glorious that when men saw them, the men fell down upon their faces as dead men. Nevertheless, before the holy God those holy angels cover their faces and cover their feet, and they cry the holiness of Jehovah God night and day without ceasing. “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:3).

And now you stand before that God. You stand before him who can see you; whose eyes are as lamps of fire; who beholds the heart of man; who sees not as man sees, judging appearance and judging externally and superficially, but who sees as the all-knowing God, who with his holy eyes looks into you and looks through you; who sees your mind and all of its thoughts; who sees your deeds and all of their motives; who sees your heart and all the things that are therein. You stand before that holy, almighty God.

And now, as you stand before that God, there is on one side of God, looking down upon you with God, the good law of God—the law of God that declares unto you, “You be holy the way God is holy,” the law that says to you, “You must obey this God; and you must obey him perfectly because he is a perfect God, and there can be nothing less than perfect obedience.” That law speaks not only to your hands and what you work and not only to your feet and how you walk, but that law also speaks to your mind and how you think. That law speaks to your heart and what you are. And that law says to you, “Thou shalt obey. Thou shalt be perfect. Thou shalt be holy. And if you are not, then there is only one thing for you, and that is death. That is the curse of this holy God, before whom you stand, for his eyes are too pure to behold evil,

and he is perfectly holy.” The law proclaims to you—not to other men now but to you and to me—“You must be holy, and if you are not, you must be cursed,” so that the whole infinite being of the I AM THAT I AM, whose days are unnumbered, must be against you and must fall upon you and must destroy you.

And as you stand before that law and hear its requirement of you, “Be perfect,” what is exposed in you and in me is our sin. You are not perfect. You have not obeyed with the obedience that that law requires. You have transgressed the law. And that transgression of the law is sin. You have rebelled against the one who made you and set you before that law, and you have done so in the most treacherous manner possible. In your first father Adam, you disobeyed the command of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was teachery on *your* part through Adam. And in your own lives, you—who have been brought into covenant fellowship with God and made his friends, made the members of his family—have disobeyed the God who has shown you nothing but mercy. The law exposes you as a transgressor, whose transgression is of the most heinous treachery imaginable. You wear all your evil deeds like a leprosy upon your flesh, so that you stink and your sores run with your sin, with your abomination. You wear your departure from God as a foul garment that is rotted and stinking and torn and filthy with your transgressions. There you stand before God, and there you hear his law from the one side of him.

And as you stand before that God, there is on the other side of him another word. That is the word of the gospel. That gospel comes to you, picks you up from your place before the eyes of Jehovah, takes you to itself, and puts another in your place—that other being the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ stands in your place before the holy eyes of Jehovah. Jesus Christ stands under the word of the law that demands that he obey and obey and obey and obey. Jesus Christ stands before that law, which requires that his motives be entirely pure, that his works be without any taint of sin, that he be holy and

without blemish before this God who is holy and without blemish. And as that law thunders its requirements upon the Lord Jesus Christ in your place, the Lord Jesus Christ obeys, obeys, obeys, obeys that law. The Lord Jesus Christ measures up to the righteousness of the holy being of Jehovah God.

And as Jesus Christ stands before the word of that law, he wears his obedience and his goodness as a garment. He wears all of his holy motives and all of his holy love for God as perfectly spotless, clean purity. The Lord Jesus Christ stands in your place before the eyes of Jehovah and obeys the law. And the gospel—that other word that is next to Jehovah, that has declared unto you Jesus Christ—takes off his pure garment and takes off your filthy garment and puts your filthy one upon him and his clean one upon you. That gospel takes off the leprosy and stinking sores of your flesh and puts them upon the clean flesh of Christ. The gospel takes the clean flesh of Christ and gives it to you. Now Christ stands before the holy God, whose eyes cannot behold evil and who will not tolerate transgression against him, as stinking, filthy, sinful, not for anything that he has done but for everything that you have done. And the law curses him. And because that law is the law of God, it is God who curses Jesus Christ, taking Christ's leprous flesh, nailing it to the tree of the cross, pouring out of the depths of God's infinite being upon Jesus Christ the curse that is due to you, the curse that is essentially this: "Be gone from me! Go away from me!" so that Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The Lord God curses Jesus Christ with the infinite curse that belongs to your sin, so that God is emptied of that curse, finishes it, pours the whole thing into a cup, and puts it to the lips of the Lord, who drains it to its dregs and empties it so that there is no curse left that belongs to your sins.

The gospel, which has shown to you the Lord Jesus Christ and shown to you the Lord's bearing your curse for your sin, now declares to you what Jehovah finds in you. And because that gospel is the gospel of God, that gospel declares

the word of God himself. This is what the gospel of Jehovah God says to you, who are covered in the blood of Christ: "I see no iniquity in you. And my eyes can discern iniquity; my eyes are holy. They can discern and distinguish iniquity, and I don't see it in you."

That is the absolute *truth*. That is the way it really is. For the law came by Moses, but grace and *truth* came by Jesus Christ, so that God's declaration regarding you is absolutely true: "You are righteous. You are perfectly in harmony with my being. You measure up to me with my own righteousness, so that you may stand in my presence and live with me and come into my house." There is no pretending in that. There's no fiction in it. It is the grace and truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is true because of the substitution of your head for you and you for your head.

There is the law-gospel distinction where it matters. There is the law-gospel distinction not as some puzzle to be amused with. There is the law-gospel distinction before the throne of Jehovah God. And there is the importance, the significance, of the distinction between the good law of Jehovah God and the glorious gospel of Jehovah God. It is from that perspective that we must understand the law-gospel distinction. It is from that perspective that we must open up our investigation of the good law and the glorious gospel this evening.

So let us pursue that distinction: the good law and the glorious gospel.

The Law

Let us begin with some definitions of the law and the gospel because if we are to distinguish them, we must know what they are.

Let's begin with the law. Here is a definition of God's law: God's law is God's requirement for what man is to be and for what man is to do.

What does that definition mean? The law is God's requirement for what man is to do, first of all. The law comes to man and says, "Thou shalt not have any other god." That action, that activity, that thing of having another god you

may not do. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” You may not do that thing that is called making a graven image. “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.” “Thou shalt remember the sabbath day, and thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.” Right through the ten commandments of the law of God, God’s law requires what man must do. And that requirement of what man must do can be summarized as *love*. You *must* love God, and you *must* love your neighbor. The law is God’s requirement for what man must do.

The law is also God’s requirement for what man must be—not only now the actions he performs and the words he speaks and the thoughts he thinks and the motives he wills, but God’s requirement in his law is that a man *be* something. And what man must be, according to the law, is perfect, absolutely perfect. When God commands a man, “Love me,” he does not say, “Love me sincerely. Love me to the best of your ability. Love me according to your standard of love.” But he says, “Love me with *all your heart*, your mind, your soul, and your strength. As my eyes pierce through you and look to the depths of your mind, your heart, and your soul, there is to be no imperfection there, out of which hatred of me or hatred of the neighbor should arise. Love me with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength.” You are to *do* perfectly, and you are to *be* perfect.

The law is God’s requirement, which means that the law comes to man speaking about man. The law points at you and points at me, and the law says, “*You.*” “*Thou.*” “*Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt be perfect. Thou shalt not do this. Thou shalt be perfect in this.*” The law squares you up before it, and the law points you to you. “*Thou, thou, thou, thou, thou.*”

In its requirement of what thou art to do, the law is relentless. The law is not a set of guidelines; it is not a set of optional choices from which we select; the law of God is relentless in its requirement and command and demand for perfection. The law never takes a break from demanding of you perfection. The law never

gives you a day or a night off in its demands. The law grants no quarter and no exceptions. The law does not say, “I understand how hard this commandment is going to be for you in the circumstances in which you find yourself, and so you are relieved from obeying this part of the law”; the law comes relentlessly, demandingly, day and night. “Thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt not.”

The law as God’s requirement for what we are to be and what we are to do proclaims a curse upon failure to be perfect and failure to do perfectly. The law declares that those who disobey must die. God to Adam: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17) and the apostle on behalf of God to all men: “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). That declaration of death is not arbitrary. It is not some punishment that God imagined as merely a good way to get across to man the seriousness of the law. Not at all. That death is not arbitrary but necessary—not as if God is bound by some external necessity; but the fact that God in his being is holy and perfectly devoted to himself as holy, perfectly consecrated unto himself as a consuming fire, means that there cannot be any life apart from perfect obedience to his law. Jehovah God is a holy God, and therefore all who disobey must die.

That curse is simply God’s maintaining himself as God over against the creature. God is not the creature, and God never becomes the creature. Over against the creature God maintains himself as God—as the holy God, as the pure God—so that those who transgress must be cast from him and suffer the infinite weight of his infinite curse in outer darkness and fire.

The law, then, requires of a man that he be perfect and that he do perfectly. To get the full picture of that, you can take hold of the description that Paul gives in Romans 6 of being under the law, so that the picture in that phrase “under the law” is of an iron dome that is over our heads, an iron dome between man and heaven. That iron dome is the law that looks down upon us and thunders down upon us the requirements

of God. And the way to go be with God is only through that law if one is under the law. When a man wakes up in the morning, the law is there at his bedside, in his face, thundering down from heaven God's requirements, "You must be perfect in your awaking, and you must do perfectly in your awaking." When that man sits down to his meal and spoons the food into his mouth, the law is there with every bite: "You must eat perfectly to the glory of God, and you must be perfect in your eating." When he goes to his work, the law drives with him in his car and thunders at him, "You must be perfect in your laboring." When he comes home and is among his family, the law sits with him on his sofa and thunders to him, "You must be perfect in your life in your family." And when he lays down his head at night, the law thunders to him, "You must obey me absolutely perfectly." And morning, noon, and night, at every step, if a man disobeys, the law says to him, "You must die. Death is all there is. That is all I can speak to you: perfection in you and if not, death for you."

That is the law.

The Gospel

What is the gospel? We can use this definition of the gospel: the gospel is God's declaration of his grace in Jesus Christ. There is really only one thing the gospel says: the gospel says, "Jesus." That is, the gospel says, "Christ." The gospel says, "Jesus Christ in all his person and what he is." The gospel says, "Jesus Christ in all his work and what he did." The gospel says regarding Jesus Christ, "He is the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, who himself is God, the second person." That is who Jesus is: God, the second person of the Trinity, who has come in our flesh and united to himself the nature of man, so that he is very God and very man.

If you penetrate into the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will find in that heart only purity. If you penetrate into the mind and the will of Christ, you will find only holiness and righteousness, only perfect obedience to the law of God. And if you examine all the works of the

Lord, all the steps of his feet, all the labors of his hands, all the words of his mouth, you will find that all of them, to the smallest detail, measure up to the very being of God, so that what Jesus Christ is is *right*—right with God, righteous before him.

The gospel declares *why* Christ did it. Why did he do all that righteousness? The gospel tells you something that *only* heaven could reveal, *only* heaven could know, *only* God could say. The gospel says, "The reason he did it was that he was a substitute for some who were filthy, for some who did not obey." At the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ we find the fact of substitution. He took the place of, he did it *for*, me and all his people. The matter of substitution that the gospel declares is not that Christ is going to make you better; he is going to make you a better person; he is going to give you strength so that *you* are going to do good things, and *you* are going to be something good. At the heart of the gospel is this: he did it *for you*, in your place. He did what you don't do. And he did it perfectly.

The gospel declares that substitution. The gospel declares Jesus' suffering the curse, his taking your leprosy and your filthy, clotted garments and bearing the curse in your place for your sin. There is substitution. And the gospel declares substitution with regard to his perfect deeds. He did those *for you*, so that when you stand before God and God declares regarding you, "I see no iniquity in you," that has nothing to do with what you did or didn't do. That declaration is not anything to do with your obedience, and it is not anything to do with your disobedience. For that declaration of God in the gospel, as you stand before him, it doesn't matter whether you obeyed or did not obey. It does not matter whether you loved God or did not love God. It does not matter whether you are perfect or not perfect. It matters whether *Jesus* obeyed God or did not obey God—and he obeyed God. It matters whether Jesus was perfect or was not perfect—and he was perfect. He was perfect for you, in your place, so that the declaration that

comes to you is a declaration of what God imputes to you for Jesus' sake, which is the covering of Christ and the blood and obedience of Christ.

Just as the law is relentless—morning, noon, and night in your face with its demands—so the gospel is rich and full with a richness and a fullness that cannot be searched. The gospel gives to you the bank vault of heaven. It gives you the key to that bank vault, in which are all the treasures of Christ, the treasures of salvation, the treasures of heaven. And when you open the bank vault of heaven with the key and marvel at all the riches, you come to the very last corner of that vault and find another key that opens the bank vault of heaven's heaven and in that vault another key that opens the bank vault of heaven's heaven's heaven. The riches of Christ are unsearchable, so that there is never an end to them. In the morning when the child of God wakes up, the gospel is there on his pillow and says to him, "God is gracious to you. God sees no iniquity in you. God sees you in your Lord Jesus Christ." And when that man eats his food, the gospel says to him, "Christ already did all this perfectly. He ate and he drank, and he woke and he slept, and he worshiped and he worked, and he prayed and he labored, and he rested and did all things perfectly for you, so that all that the Lord sees in all your waking and sleeping and eating and drinking and laboring and resting and suffering is the perfection of Christ."

The gospel declares life, peace, happiness, and fellowship with God for Jesus' sake. Whereas the law requires of a man that he work perfectly and that he be perfect, the gospel gives to a man faith by which that man has Christ. The gospel gives to a man faith and Christ and all the things of Christ.

The full picture, then, of this gospel for the child of God is seen in Paul's word in Romans: "Ye are not under the law, but under grace" (6:14). And whereas under the law the way to God is through obedience to that law, being under grace means that the way to God is that God comes down to you, takes hold of you, and picks you up to him. Being under grace means

that God put the Lord Jesus Christ under the law—made of a woman, made under the law—so that in all his eating and drinking and waking and sleeping, the law thundered down upon him, "Obey, obey, obey, obey"; and Jesus Christ obeyed, obeyed, obeyed, obeyed and through the law, through his own obedience, through his own work, went right into heaven and the presence of Jehovah God. And the way to heaven for you now, being under grace and not under the law, is not through your work; but the way to heaven for you is through the flesh of Christ, the new and living way, the veil that he rent, which veil was his flesh. Through Jesus Christ you go to the Father. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

That is the law, and that is the gospel.

The Law-Gospel Distinction

What must we say, then, about the distinction between the law and the gospel?

Negatively, the distinction between the two is not their author, as if the law has one author and the gospel another. It is God's law, and it is God's gospel. He is the author and the speaker of both. Neither is the distinction between the law and the gospel their power, as if one has power and the other has no power—let's say the gospel has power, and the law has no power. That is not the distinction. Both of them have power to accomplish the purposes that God has set for them. Neither is the distinction between the law and the gospel their goodness, as if one is good and one is bad. Both are good. The law is good. So says the apostle in Romans 7—the law is holy and just and good—and in I Timothy 1: "The law is good." And the gospel is good and in fact glorious, according to the word of the apostle in I Timothy 1: all sound doctrine must be judged according to the glorious gospel.

Nor is the distinction between the law and the gospel their honor, as if one is honorable and the other is dishonorable. God does not disparage the law or the gospel. God loves his law, and God loves his gospel. Nor may man disparage God's law or God's gospel. Man may not call

the law a wicked thing or a despicable thing. Even in those passages where the inability of the law to save men is set forth, the law as the law of God is not disparaged. For example, in Galatians 4, where Paul warns the Galatians about returning to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, he is not calling God's good law "beggarly." What he is saying to the Galatians is this: all the Old Testament forms—lambs, goats, days, seasons—never had power in themselves. All those forms were types of something else. Why now, being delivered from those forms, do you try to return to those mere forms? The forms are what are beggarly, not the law that required those forms as types. Therefore, the distinction between the law and the gospel is not that the gospel is good and the law is bad and that we therefore disparage the law. Both of them are honorable. We love God's gospel. And we love God's law.

What is the distinction, then, between the law and the gospel? The distinction is this: their office—that is, God's purpose that he has with each and the work that he accomplishes by each. The distinction between God's good law and God's glorious gospel is that he has given the law certain work, and he has given the gospel certain work. And the law does not do the gospel's work.

What is the office of the law? The office of the law, first of all, is to expose man in his sin. Romans 3:20: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." When the law thunders down upon a man, "You must be perfect, and you must do perfectly," that man sees himself in the light of that law and sees "I am not perfect, and I have not done perfectly." The law's office, in the second place, is to be the rule and the standard and the guide of a man's thankful life for the salvation that he has in Christ. The law does not give a man his thankful life. The law doesn't bestow anything upon a man. The law only tells a man what that man is to do. But the law is the rule that shows a man, "This is how you live in gratitude to God for what you have in the gospel."

The gospel's office is to save and to bestow upon and give to man all the things of heaven.

The gospel comes to a man and does not say to him, "Thou, thou, thou shalt," but says to him, "Christ, Christ, Christ did." Christ obeyed. Christ suffered. Christ atoned. Christ gives all of heaven, all of salvation to you.

Romans 8:3 teaches that what the law could not do, the gospel does—meaning that the law's office was never to give, never to save, never to make you happy. It was the gospel's office, always the gospel's office, to save and to make you happy.

And that gospel in its office indeed saves and makes us blessed. God says about that gospel an astounding thing in Romans 3.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God *without* the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets [that is, the Old Testament]; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. (vv. 20–22)

The gospel declares to you the righteousness of God. That does not mean that the gospel tells you how righteous God is. It is true that God is righteous. But it means that the gospel declares to you that you have the righteousness of God. You measure up to God with the same righteousness with which God measures up to God—not because of what you have done. This is entirely without the law and the deeds of the law. But you measure up to God with God's own righteousness for Jesus' sake because Jesus measures up to the righteousness of God with the righteousness of God; and that is imputed to you.

That is the distinction between the good law and the glorious gospel, which distinction is biblical and confessional. We have seen some scriptures. Let me merely mention a couple of confessional passages. First of all, the Heidelberg Catechism, in Lord's Day 2 and then again in Lord's Day 6. Lord's Day 2: "Whence knowest thou thy misery? Out of the law of God." There is the office of the law: to show you your misery.

And Lord's Day 6, question and answer 19: "Whence knowest thou this [thy Mediator]? From the holy gospel." There is the office of the gospel: to show you Christ and all his things.

Then the Canons of Dordt, heads three and four, articles five, six, and seventeen. In those articles you will find what the law could not do, not because there was a problem with the law but because it wasn't God's office to save by the law and because the flesh of man cannot keep the law. What the law could not do, that God has done by the gospel, which is the glad tidings of the mediator and salvation in Christ.

This distinction between the law and the gospel is essential Reformed doctrine.

The Significance of the Law-Gospel Distinction

What is the significance of this whole distinction? What is the point of there being this distinction?

In the distinction between the law and the gospel, this question is answered: of whom is salvation? Is salvation of the Lord entirely; or is salvation of man, even in part? If salvation comes by the law, then salvation is of man; for the law says, "Thou, thou, thou, thou. Do and be what I say." And if any of that doing and being of man that the law requires is unto his salvation, then salvation is of man. And if salvation is of man, then there is no salvation. None whatsoever. For if a man would be saved by the law, by the deeds of the law, then he must continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. He must. He may not continue in some things or in most things but must continue in all things perfectly, always. And man does not. If salvation is of the law, then salvation is of man, and there is no salvation.

But if salvation is of the gospel, then salvation is of God, for that is all the gospel declares: God and his grace in Jesus Christ. Christ, Christ, Christ and what Christ has done. Christ, Christ, Christ and what Christ is, with no part of salvation being supplied by man and his obedience. If salvation is of the gospel, then salvation is of the Lord, and salvation is sure.

That is the importance of this distinction. And that explains why forever and again in the history of the church there is an attempt to make salvation of the law and salvation of the works of man. The theology of the Roman Catholic Church; Arminian theology; conditional covenant theology; conditional experience of the covenant theology; Pharisaism; Judaism; Cainism and the offering of Cain of his works; and the theology of the fig leaves in the garden of Eden, whereby man tried to cover his sin with his own works—all of those are attempts to make salvation of the law, of what man must do, and therefore to make salvation of man. And there is no salvation in it.

The problem in the church is the *use* of the law and the *use* of the gospel. The law must be used lawfully, which is Paul's play on words to say that the law must be used in its office, for its purpose. The law may not be held before man as that by which man obtains anything in his salvation. The law exposes man's sin and shows him the life of gratitude, but it doesn't give him any salvation. Salvation is of the gospel because salvation is of the Lord.

That is for you as you stand before the throne of God, with his eyes which burn as lamps—Jehovah God, who is a consuming fire, who loves himself and is devoted to himself perfectly. As you stand before that God, your salvation cannot come of the law but must come entirely of the gospel. You must have that gospel pick you up and set you behind Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ and have that gospel give you the flesh of Christ and the garments of Christ for your own. Salvation is only of the Lord.

There could be no more glorious truth than salvation of the Lord, for in that truth is revealed this truth: that God alone is God and that man, who cannot save himself, is not God. God is God, and God saves man to his own glory.

In this distinction of the law and the gospel, then, we find ourselves squarely in that great *sola* of the Reformation: *solī deo gloria*. To God alone be the glory.

Question and Answer Session

Considering there is no grace in the law, should the threats of the law be used to bring regenerate believers who are walking waywardly in sin to repentance? If so, how should this be done? A similar question: Is there a place for threats to the child of God in the preaching?

In both of those questions the word *threats* is underlined, which leads me to believe that is the focus: the threats of the law.

The Heidelberg Catechism teaches us in Lord's Day 44 how to preach the law. "Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?" I take that word "strictly" to mean that the ten commandments are to be preached with what they require, as well as with what they threaten. In the Catechism's explanation of why God will have the ten commandments so strictly preached, not any part of the answer indicates that the strict preaching of those ten commandments will give the child of God peace, will deliver the child of God from the threats of the law, or will give the child of God obedience. All the things that the child of God receives, he must receive from elsewhere—from Christ.

In fact, in this answer of the Catechism, the two offices of the law are given. Why will God have the ten commandments so strictly preached? "First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin and righteousness in Christ." Notice that that "more earnest in seeking the remission of sin" does not come out of the law. What the law does is teach us our sinful nature. It is from the preaching of the *gospel* that we see that there is remission of sin and righteousness in Christ. The law doesn't even say that there is remission. It offers no solution.

Then the second reason to preach the ten commandments strictly: "Likewise, that we constantly endeavor, and pray to God for the grace of

the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in a life to come." Again, that endeavoring and that prayer do not come out of the commandment itself or out of the law or out of the preaching of that law; that endeavoring and that prayer must come out of the gospel, which is the only place where the grace of the Holy Spirit is revealed. But the law does show the rule, standard, and guide of our thankful lives, which the Catechism refers to here as "more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in a life to come."

So is there a place for *threats* to the child of God in the preaching? Or considering there is no grace in the law, should the *threats* of the law be used to bring regenerate believers who are walking waywardly in sin to repentance? If so, how should this be done? The law must be preached. It must be preached strictly. It must be preached with its threats. But if that is all there is in the sermon, then the sermon was not a sermon. The sermon must set forth Jesus Christ crucified, and the sermon must set forth Jesus Christ as the deliverance for the child of God from the threats of the law. And it is that preaching of Jesus Christ as the *deliverance* from the threats of the law that will make the believer turn from his sin. It will give the believer all his life of obedience and gratitude. The gospel gives that, not the bare law or the bare threats of the law.

There is another similar question asking about the preaching, with something tacked on at the end. I will continue the answer after reading this question. All Reformed churches preach the law. The preaching is called "the chief means of grace." When a minister preaches the law, then, is the only part of the sermon that is a means of grace the gospel that is often added at the very end of a quote-unquote "law sermon"; or is this a problem in the preaching itself, so that the whole law sermon ought still to have the gospel at its center?

If the name *Christ* and the word *grace* are tacked on at the end of a sermon that has put the people of God under the law for their salvation, then that sermon is not a sermon. Or, another way to say that is that it is a bad sermon; it is a false sermon. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not put the people of God under the law for their salvation. Rather, the sermon explains the law as a servant of the gospel. It is the gospel by which God saves, not the law. The gospel sets forth Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the law. It sets forth Jesus Christ as the righteousness of the believer. It sets forth Jesus Christ as the only way to the Father, so that the child of God, hearing that sermon, knows “I am not under the law but under grace. And the way to heaven for me, the way to fellowship with God, the way to anything with God for me, is not through the law but through the gospel and through the finished work of Jesus Christ.”

In a sermon that expounds Jesus Christ, the law is a servant. The law has been compared to Hagar, who served Sarah. That law serves the gospel by showing the believer “You are dead apart from someone else doing something to save you.” And that law serves the gospel by showing the believer “Now that you have been delivered, this is the life of gratitude that you live to the glory of God.” In that, the law doesn’t give the obedience or the gratitude. The gospel gives the obedience and the gratitude.

When it comes to how much of the sermon may be law and gospel, that is simply impossible to answer, I believe. It is not how much—it is not the volume—but it is the driving message of the sermon that is important. If the driving message of the sermon puts you under the law—so that you are sent home believing that you must do this to have God, you must do something to have Christ, you must do something to have salvation, you must do something to have God’s fellowship—then that sermon was not the preaching of the gospel, even if the word *Christ* was used many times in the sermon. But if that sermon shows you that you are under grace and have been saved in Christ, even though that was just a small part of the sermon but it was what

everything in the sermon drove to, then that sermon was the preaching of the gospel. The law must not be used unlawfully (I Tim. 1:8)—*unlawfully* meaning to put the people under it. The law must be used lawfully, to show a man that he is a whoremonger, an adulterer, and an idolater and a thief and all the other things that are listed in I Timothy 1. But his deliverance from his sin is Jesus Christ.

In Psalm 1:2 we read, “The blessed man’s delight is in the law (the Torah) of the LORD, and in his law (Torah) doth he meditate day and night.” What is the meaning of “law” in Psalm 1:2? How does it relate to the gospel and to the blessed man, Jesus Christ?

This question begins with an exegetical point about how to interpret the word “law” in Psalm 1:2. “Law” there could be taken either to mean the Bible or the commandments. For the point of Psalm 1, it doesn’t matter. The point of Psalm 1 is to say that there is a blessed man who is *consumed* with God’s word or God’s law. He is eaten up with it. Off the top of my head, I think the word “law” there could be interpreted as *commandments*, in which commandments Jesus Christ meditates day and night.

But whether “the law” in Psalm 1 is the commandments or the whole scripture, you and I don’t meditate on them day and night! You and I are not blessed men in ourselves, who meditate all day and all night on the Bible or on the ten commandments. But there is a blessed man who does. That is the blessed man who is going to stand in the judgment. That is the blessed man who is going to live in the congregation of the righteous. And that is the blessed man who is contrasted with those men who have a scorner’s seat and who walk in the way of transgression. They are not like that blessed man. They are blown away as the chaff.

The key in Psalm 1, however you take “law,” is that the blessed man is Jesus Christ. He did all the righteousness mentioned in the psalm: not standing in the way of sinners and meditating on God’s law day and night. He already did it. Therefore, he flourishes. His leaf is green; it

never withers. He brings forth his fruit in his season. Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

And then the psalm *ends* with you. Now we come to you. “The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous.” That way of the righteous is Jesus. And the Lord knoweth that way of the righteous eternally in election. That is where you and I come up in the psalm, as those who are righteous for Jesus’ sake and blessed for the blessed man’s sake.

Jesus is the only way, truth, and life. Good works are not the way or even a part of the way unto salvation, unto fellowship, or unto the experience of fellowship. How can it be taught by Remnant that the way to experience singing with Christ, the way to experience fellowship in worship with Christ, is by singing the psalms? Singing the psalms is taught as part of the way unto experiencing this fellowship with Christ. Shouldn’t the good work of singing the psalms be rejected as a way to achieve the experience of singing with Christ? Shouldn’t the way to singing with Christ be entirely without the believer’s works of the law?

This question reveals what is apparently a pretty entrenched misunderstanding of what Remnant Reformed Church teaches and what it means to sing with Christ. This question asserts that Remnant teaches that singing the psalms—doing the good work of singing psalms—is the way *unto* experiencing fellowship with Christ. And the question puts it in the terms of “the experience of singing with Christ” or the experience of fellowshiping with Christ in singing. The doctrine of Remnant Reformed Church is *not* that the good work of psalm singing is *unto* fellowship with Christ or any other way you want to put that—unto the experience of fellowship with Christ, unto the experience of the fellowship of singing with Christ, or any other thing. We do not sing psalms in order to get fellowship with Christ. We sing psalms *because* we have fellowship with Christ. Singing psalms is the *fruit* of fellowship with Christ, just like any obedience to any law of God is not *unto* salvation or fellowship or experience but is the fruit of salvation and fellowship and the experience of God’s covenant.

The apostle Peter and the apostle Paul both speak of suffering as a Christian or suffering with Christ. I hope that can be an illustration that will make clear what singing with Christ means. When Peter says, “Suffer as a Christian. Don’t suffer as an unbeliever who steals and robs and kills, but suffer as a Christian who suffers for the sake of the gospel,” Peter is not saying that by refraining from stealing and by suffering for the sake of the gospel, you have done something *unto* fellowship with God, *unto* suffering with Christ, or *unto* suffering as a Christian. What Peter is saying is, “You *are* a Christian, and Christ doesn’t rob stores, so don’t rob stores. You *are* a Christian, and Christ doesn’t murder, so don’t murder.” Do the things that Christ does according to the law of God not *unto* but *because* of your salvation.

That is Remnant’s doctrine of psalm singing. Remnant’s doctrine of psalm singing is that God’s law requires the singing of psalms. The fact that he gave a book of psalms, the fact that he specifically says in the Old *and* the New Testament, “Sing psalms in the body; sing psalms in your worship” is where we get our doctrine that God’s law requires the singing of psalms. And when we put that in the terms, “Sing psalms with Christ,” that doesn’t mean sing psalms so that you can get *unto* some fellowship or experience of fellowship with Christ or singing with Christ or anything else. It means this: Christ is the sweet psalmist. Christ sings psalms. He doesn’t sing the hymns of Isaac Watts in church. Christ also doesn’t sing in church, to put it somewhat crassly, the latest country songs that are on the radio. Christ doesn’t sing those songs. Sing as a Christian! Sing as Christ does! Not so you can *get* unto fellowship with him but because you already *have* it.

And that illustrates the fruit that is borne by the gospel of having fellowship with Christ for Christ’s sake. The fruit of the gospel is that the child of God wants to obey the law. He loves that law. He desires to follow it. And if the law of God is “Sing psalms,” then the child of God says, “I’m going to sing psalms.” And if the law of

God is “Don’t steal,” the child of God says, “I’m not going to steal”—not unto fellowship but because of it.

The real issue that the question raises is not the inaccurate presentation of Remnant’s doctrine of singing with Christ. The real issue that stands between the questioner and Remnant would be, is psalm singing required? Is exclusive psalmody required? Remnant Reformed Church says yes. I take it that the questioner would probably say no. That is the issue. If singing psalms is required, if exclusive psalmody is required, then do that in gratitude. If something else is required as your gratitude, then do that. But the doctrine of Remnant is that psalm singing is what is required.

Hopefully that apparently entrenched misunderstanding of Remnant’s doctrine can be put to rest somewhat with that answer.

Is sanctification progressive?

I think this question would fit with the topic of the good law and the glorious gospel with the idea that the gospel gives our sanctification as well as our justification. We are justified by faith alone in Christ alone, and we are sanctified by faith alone in Christ alone. From that point of view, then, what is the sanctification of the believer?

It is not progressive. That sanctification is perfect and complete in Christ. The proof of that is I Corinthians 1, where Paul says that Jesus “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (v. 30). None of those other things—wisdom, righteousness, or redemption—are incomplete. None of those have a progressive aspect to them. Christ is our wisdom. We have full wisdom with Christ. Christ is our righteousness. We don’t get more righteousness after Christ. Christ is our redemption. Our redemption is finished and accomplished. In the same way I would say that sanctification is finished and complete. Jesus simply is our sanctification. The way to try to put that in language that I can understand would be “He already did everything that I am supposed to do.” He already did all the growing: he

increased in wisdom and in stature. He already did all the obedience; he already did all of the obedience that a twelve-year-old does and that a grown man does. He did it all. There is nothing left of all of that for me to do or to somehow get. He is my sanctification.

That sanctification is going to play out in my life in a certain way when I am twelve and in a certain way when I am forty-four. That sanctification comes to manifestation; it shows itself. And that explains the “more and more” that you constantly find in the Heidelberg Catechism. That explains the “grow” that you constantly find in the scriptures. Christ is my sanctification. I had him as my sanctification at twelve, and I have him as my sanctification now. The circumstances of my life were different yesterday than today and will be different tomorrow again. In all these different places we are in life, that sanctification is manifest. I take that to be the “more and more.” And that is also the encouragement to the child of God that he continue in obedience and service of God. It is impossible that he *not*. It is impossible that the gospel leave him careless and profane. The child of God, hearing that gospel, wants more of it. But that does not mean that his sanctification is somehow incomplete. Jesus right now and yesterday and at the cross and in eternity, in election, was my sanctification, as well as my righteousness, wisdom, and redemption.

Some people might argue from passages like Matthew 11:28 [which is Jesus’ word, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden”] and Acts 16:31 [which is Paul’s word to the Philippian jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”]—some people might argue from those two passages that law and gospel are artificial categories, based on a negative view of God’s commands. How should we interpret these passages within a framework that distinguishes between law and gospel?

What is interesting about this question is that it brings up what we call *the call of the gospel*. In Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me.” In Acts 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and

thou shalt be saved.” And the question relates to the fact that someone might point out that those are actually commandments. “Come” is an imperative. “Come unto me. You come unto me.” And “believe” is a commandment. It is in the imperative mood. “You believe in Jesus Christ.” Someone pointing that out about the call of the gospel might say, “That throws away this whole distinction between the law and the gospel. It always was an artificial distinction. It was made for whatever reason, probably because of a negative view of God’s commandments.” But if the law-gospel distinction is correct, how should these passages be interpreted within that framework, which distinguishes them?

In answer to that question, I believe we must maintain the distinction between the law and the gospel. The word of God is too crystal clear on it. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). “Therefore we conclude,” for another passage, “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28). Or for another passage yet, “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:2). The scriptures are crystal clear that the law does not have the office of saving us. So we must maintain the distinction between the law and the gospel.

That is not a negative view of God’s commands. That is a very positive view. The law has an office, and the law is very good at its office. The law is God’s word in that office. But the law does not have the office to save.

How do we interpret the call of the gospel then, in that framework? We explain that by opening up an entirely new topic in the law and the gospel called the *hermeneutic* of the law and the gospel or how to interpret the Bible using the law and the gospel. For example, there is a passage that says, “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine” (Ex. 19:5). The hermeneutic of the law and the gospel says that when we interpret

that passage, we cannot interpret it as a promise of salvation to us. “If you obey all my commandments, then you will be a peculiar people unto me.” That must be interpreted as the law, which shows us what we are required to do but cannot do, so that that law is saying to us, “Obey me perfectly, and you will go to heaven.” And we say, “But if that is all there is, then I am never going to heaven, because I cannot obey those commandments.” That commandment may *not* be interpreted this way: “If you obey me, then I will give you the *experience* of fellowship” or heaven or anything else. “You do, and I’ll give.” The law always operates as the law, to show us what we cannot do so that we realize that we need another to do it. It doesn’t announce to us who the other is. There were many lambs slain at Sinai in Exodus 19, where that word was given, and that announces who does it. That is Jesus Christ.

So within the whole idea of taking the law-gospel distinction and interpreting the Bible through the lens of that distinction, when we come to the call of the gospel, what is the point of that call of the gospel? Don’t merely pay attention to the form, which is the imperative mood. *Come. Believe.* Just as in Exodus 19, you don’t pay attention to the form that there is a future. You shall be a peculiar people. You don’t interpret that as a promise. So also in the call of the gospel, it is not the form that determines the meaning. What is the *point* of the call? And the point of the call is *not you!* The point of the call is *Christ*. “Come unto *me*,” he says. “Believe in *Jesus Christ*,” he says. That is the gospel. It has the form of an imperative mood; it has the form of a commandment; but the point of it, the meaning of it, is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And now we understand a little of what Luther said: “Distinguishing between the law and the gospel is the highest art in Christendom.”

So how would the call of the gospel be interpreted in a framework that distinguishes between law and gospel? It would be interpreted as the gospel of Jesus Christ that shows us the only one in whom there is salvation and that gives us the very coming and believing that is spoken of.

In his introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism, Zacharias Ursinus says that the two principal heads of the doctrine of the church are “repentance and faith in Christ, which we may regard as synonymous with the law and gospel.” In what sense is repentance synonymous with the law?

First of all, that is a striking statement by Ursinus in his commentary on the Catechism. He opens up in the very beginning of his introduction by saying that all doctrine is law and gospel. The whole Christian faith is law and gospel. That indicates that there was great significance to the law-gospel distinction for the Reformed.

But then, with regard to his putting repentance and law together and faith and gospel together, in what sense is repentance synonymous with the law? I believe this is a case where the word *repentance* was sometimes used more broadly than we might use it today. When we use the word *repentance*, we mean the godly sorrow for sin that loves God and, in the instant of loving God, at the same time hates sin. We mean a gift of the gospel. Repentance *has been* used in the sense of meaning being crushed under the weight of guilt and the weight of sin, so that repentance isn't being used by Ursinus exactly as we might use it, as a gift of God's grace given in the gospel; but repentance is being used in one of the ways that it meant before, of being exposed in sin. In that sense repentance is synonymous with the law. The law shows us our sin and leaves us there. It doesn't give us a holy, godly sorrow and longing after God. The *gospel* comes and says, “But there is salvation in Christ, and in this the love of God is revealed to you.” And it is that gospel that works in our hearts not merely a being crushed with sin and

guilt but also a being sorry for our sin and a love for God that at the same time hates sin.

Thank you for those questions. I found them very interesting, personally stimulating, and a help to us to remember the importance of this glorious distinction between God's good law and glorious gospel.

Thank you to everyone for coming tonight. Your presence, whether in person or online, is encouraging. We're thankful for it. And please join us, you who are here in person, for refreshments afterwards. Let's close with a word of prayer.

Our Father which art in heaven, how great thou art, and how small man is, and how small we are as we stand before thy good law and thy glorious gospel. We find, Father, that as thou dost open up the truth unto us, we can begin to see it in its depths by the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ but must at the same time acknowledge that there is so much that is yet to be discovered and plumbed. We pray that thou wilt use the lecture this evening for the beginning of it, that we might continue to understand more thy law and thy gospel. And we pray, Father, that thou wilt give us the comfort of the gospel and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has accomplished all things and who has obeyed perfectly and atoned for our sins that we might be counted righteous before thee for his sake and have salvation and fellowship and thy blessing forevermore. Wilt thou remember us as we depart. Keep us in safety on our ways home, according to thy will. Wilt thou hear our prayer, forgiving our sins, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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REFORMED
— PAVILION —

Article XXXII. The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)

The line which we have thus far attempted to draw runs as follows.

In the first place we argued that the Lord God of heaven and earth for the glory of His Name saves the whole world in the sense of its being His handiwork, the manifestation of His one Name. Not only the salvation of our soul must occupy our attention, but with the deliverance of the soul the saving of the body; with the saving of our person the salvation of the entire Body of Christ, the organism of the human race as it shall appear in the new world; and with that organism the entire world of God's creation, the entire kingdom as He originally formed and ordained it; — all things are to be saved as one grand harmony, as one grand manifestation of the power of the Almighty, His glory and His grace.

In the second place we merely reminded of the fact, that this work of salvation is to be accomplished in Christ Jesus the Head of the covenant of grace. It is thru one sin that all the world, the king and the kingdom fell into the power of sin and death; it is also thru the same grace that this whole world will ultimately be saved and reunited under one and the same Head, Jesus Christ.

And in the third place we claimed that also the world in its present existence, with its present life and with all its institutions rests upon the same power of what we are used to call "special grace." It is because the human race in Adam sank upon the power of grace as it was in Christ, that it was saved from immediate ruin in paradise. It is because of this grace in Christ Jesus, that the whole human race, for the sake of

the elect develops and temporarily continues to exist. It is because of the same grace, that orderly life has been made possible, that the state and society continue to furnish the natural bed in which the stream of our life continues to run till the end of the world. In a word as we stated last week, all the blessings, also of this present time are blessings of one and the same grace, for one and the same purpose: the realization of the eternal covenant, and the establishment of God's eternal and glorious kingdom.

This same truth can be stated in another way.

There are not two covenants, one special and one common, one eternal and one temporal, one of grace and one of nature, but there is but one covenant, the covenant of grace of which Christ is the Head and His people are the members. This is often denied. It is often presented as if, for this dispensation, there are really two covenants. The one is the covenant of nature, established with Noah after the flood, and in him with all men, while the other is the covenant of grace, established with Abraham, particularly for the people of God.

But this is, evidently, an untenable position.

We know very well, how the idea is arrived at. As the covenant is established with Noah after the flood, there are no spiritual blessings of "special grace" revealed at all. What God promises is that all flesh shall no more be cut off by the waters of a flood in the future, and that he will no more smite everything living. While the earth remaineth, so the Lord speaks, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, day and night shall not cease. They are purely natural blessings, and therefore, the conclusion

is, that this is a covenant established with all men. Still more. It is specifically stated that God established this covenant with Noah and his seed, and surely Noah is the second progenitor of the entire human race. His seed embraces all men. And, therefore, it seems rather plain that this is a covenant established with all men. Yet this is not the case. In the first place, we naturally ask the question, how God could ever establish a covenant with natural men, that are outside of Christ, that are objects of His wrath. This is admittedly impossible. Even Dr. Kuyper in various passages emphasizes this fact. And this holds good not only in regard to the eternal covenant of grace, but just as well in regard to a covenant that would imply only temporal blessings. In the second place, in as far as the argument is concerned, that the blessings are promised here, that flow upon all men, we may answer there is nothing strange in this, and that this is no proof at all, that for that reason the covenant is established with all that outwardly participate in its blessings. The same may be asserted of the blessings of the covenant of grace in its special sense. Or is it not true, that there is an overflow of the blessings of Abraham upon Ishmael? Gen. 17:20. And is it not true, that in the new dispensation the blessings of that covenant flow upon many that are enlightened, that taste the good Word of God, that see the beauty of the world to come, and that yet crucify the Son of God afresh? Hebrews 6:4, 5. It is a general rule in this dispensation that the blessings of God's covenant in the outward sense overflow upon those that are not in the covenant. In the third place, also the fact that this covenant is established in the most general sense with Noah and his seed does not warrant the conclusion that this is a covenant established with men in general. The same is said of the covenant as it was revealed to Abraham, and yet the covenant is evidently not established with all of Abraham's seed. In Gen. 17:7 we read the well-known words: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, thruout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after

thee." The promise is as general as you can conceive. Yet in the same chapter it becomes evident that this seed is not as general as might be surmised. When Abraham pleads that Ishmael might live before God's countenance, the Lord reveals, that not in Ishmael but in Isaac the covenant shall be continued. Ishmael, therefore, falls out. The same is true of Esau, and it is not till Jacob and his sons, that the covenant established with Abraham permanently continues in the line of the generations of Israel. Only after the entire nations have been separated from the covenant-line, does it remain permanent. And all this according to the law which Paul points out in Rom. 9:6-12, when he says: "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. And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, — for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to the election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved but Esau I hated." If the same rule is applied to Noah and his seed, we realize that the facts are not explained by saying that the covenant of nature is a covenant with all men.

What, then, is the case?

This. There is but one covenant, and that covenant is the one established with Christ as the eternal Head of His people. In a general way, that covenant is historically revealed already in paradise, immediately after the fall. Revealed not only in the promise of a seed, but just as well in the implied promise that Eve shall bear children, that the earth shall remain, that it shall bring forth meat for man. With respect to its natural and temporal blessings that same covenant is revealed to Noah after the flood, and that in the form of a covenant. It is established with

Noah, not merely as man, as sinner, but as the bearer of the Holy Seed. The line of the holy seed, of the seed of the woman, the line of the covenant of grace ran thru Noah and he himself belonged to that seed. In this general form the revelation of the same covenant continues till Abraham, when God reveals that henceforth it shall run in the line of his generations. Again, not as if all the seed of Abraham actually belongs to the covenant, but the children of the promise, the holy seed are in his loins. Gradually the line becomes more definite. Ishmael and the children of Keturah are separated from the seed of Abraham; Esau is separated from the generations of Isaac; Judah is pointed out as the bearer of Him that is the Head of this same covenant of grace, the Lion of Judah's tribe; with David the covenant is established that of his seed shall sit on the throne of Israel forever. The holy line continues in the old dispensation and God remembers His covenant, till in Immanuel the tangible realization of that covenant appears, of the seed of Abraham, the lion of Judah's tribe, the root of David, God dwelling with man. Thus the line of the holy seed runs all thru the old dispensation. And this is the wonderful fact, that the blessings of this one and the same covenant, that culminates in the Christ, in the Incarnation, overflow also upon those that are actually the seed of the serpent. In the widest sense this is true of the natural basis of this covenant as revealed to Noah. It touches all men that live in the world. In a more specific sense this is true of the seed of Abraham, outside of Israel. They came in closer touch with the blessings of that same covenant. In the most specific sense this applies to what was called Israel and yet was not Israel. They received all the outward blessings of that covenant, lived in the land of the covenant, enjoyed the light of its revelation, participated in the worship of the sanctuary, and yet, essentially they never belonged to the covenant in Christ. There is an overflow of the blessings of the covenant in the world.

Or once more, the same truth may be stated in still a different form. You may picture the

relation as being represented by various concentric circles, circles of different size with a common centre, one within another. The center in that case represents Christ, for whom and because of whom all the different spheres exist. The innermost circle embraces those that are the members of His covenant, the people given to Him from all eternity by the Father, the elect, the seed of the woman. Next comes the circle that encompasses those who live in very close touch with that covenant, outwardly, the children of the kingdom that shall yet be cast out. They are baptized in the name of the Triune God, are instructed along with the children of her promise, taste the Word and the powers of the age to come very often, even come into a certain contact with the Holy Spirit of grace, yet they receive no grace, and these blessings become a curse to them, a savour of death unto death. Again, there is the still wider circle of nominal or false christianity. Either personally or in past generations they have tasted of the powers of God's kingdom, but they have fallen away and though nominally belonging to the christian world, they reject the Christ of the Scriptures. It is in this sphere that you are liable to meet with the humanistic attempt to establish a kingdom of the world, outwardly resembling the kingdom of Christ, but without acknowledging Him as the Anointed of God. And finally, there is the widest circle of all men, heathendom included, participation in the blessings of this covenant as it was revealed to Noah and his seed.

In all these different spheres there is an overflow of the blessings of grace.

Yet, they are blessings of grace to the innermost circle only.

The question that arises is: How, then, is it possible that the same gifts of God are blessings of grace to the one and not the other?

The answer, at least the Scriptural key to the answer, is found in Hebrews 6:4–8.

About this another time.

—Holland, Mich.