



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Divine Purpose

TRANSCRIPT

“The Fall of Man and the Messianic Promise, or The Covenant of Grace - I”

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the privilege of our studying again together tonight. We thank Thee for the word of God, and we thank Thee, Lord, for the privilege of thinking through some of the great teachings that are found within it, and we pray, Lord, that our study may help us to think more clearly with reference to the divine teaching. We know that, as some of these great truths become plainer and clearer in our own minds, it enables us to read the Scriptures with greater understanding, and, thus, greater submission. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast called us to the study of the Scriptures. We think of all of those many exhortations, and then the many promises as well, for those who give themselves to the study of Thy word. We pray that our time tonight may be edifying and fruitful, and that it will build us up in our faith.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Now, tonight, we are coming to the study of the Covenant of Works, which is the third and last of the great covenants of covenant theology. It may be part of your study in your past that you had a course in “God’s Plan of the Ages” or in “Dispensational Truth.” Throughout the last hundred and fifty years, that kind of study has been very popular, and usually in that kind of teaching, “God’s Plan of the Ages” is

the subject and beginning with the Creation, and going all the way through to the New Creation upon the earth, there is a study of the development of the progress or the progress of divine revelation. That really is what dispensational theology is all about. It is the study of the development of the divine revelation in history.

Now, if I were to be critical of dispensational theology at this point in a broad way, I would say that the error that was made by many dispensational theologians, not all of them, for many of them came from Calvinistic backgrounds, the error of many of them was to look at the progress of divine revelation from the human standpoint. And, thus, as you know, the progress of divine revelation or the history of man from the time of Creation was divided into a number of different periods; sometimes seven, sometimes eight. And so we had the dispensation of innocence, the dispensation of conscience, the dispensation of human government, the dispensation of promise, the dispensation of the Law, the dispensation of the church or of grace, as sometimes called, and then the dispensation of the kingdom, and finally, the eternal state. And this was an attempt to show the flow of divine revelation, and it was the contention of dispensational theologians, that in those dispensations, God was testing man with respect to specific item of obedience. And the conclusion of dispensational theology was that man failed all of those tests, and God has in a sense, overruled man's failure by the saving work of Jesus Christ. As you can see, there's a lot of truth in that. But the essential nature of the system was an attempt to analyze the progress of the divine revelation; you could say, the progress of human history, but often it was put under the terms of the “progress of divine revelation”.

Now, coming to the Covenant of Grace, I say that just by way of introduction, because covenant theology and this may surprise some, and particularly some dispensationalists who've never covered covenant theology and most have not. I hate to say that, and I don't mean to say it in a nasty way, but it's true. Most dispensationalists have never studied covenant theology in any depth. Covenant theology, I say, and this

may surprise some, marked a distinct epoch in the appreciation and understanding of the progressiveness of the divine revelation. Modern critical students have sometimes lost track of that fact; that in covenant theology there is an analysis of the progress of divine revelation as well.

William Robertson Smith, who was a well-known biblical scholar, has given this appraisal. “With all its defects, the federal theology,” now remember, covenant theology and federal theology are two terms for the same thing, because the Latin term *foedus*, F-O-E-D-U-S is the Latin word for “covenant.” And so federal theology is covenantal theology or covenantal theology is federal theology. And remember Cocceius, we studied him, was one of the earliest of the developers of covenant theology and laid special stress on the progress of divine revelation; what we would analyze today as relating to biblical theology. “With all its defects,” William Robertson Smith said, “the federal theology of Cocceius is the most important attempt in older Protestant theology to do justice to the historical development of revelation.” And Gerhardus Vos, one of the great theologians of the earlier part of this century, a Dutchman who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary in the earlier part of the twentieth century, has made the claim for the same thing.

Now, we have talked about the Covenant of Redemption, the covenant made between the persons of the Trinity and you can see it analyzed a bit on this little diagram. And then we talked last week about the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Works was the covenant made between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Now tonight, we’re turning to the Covenant of Grace. There are points of similarity and dissimilarity between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. Similarity exists in the author, for the author of the Covenant of Works is God, and the author of the Covenant of Grace is God. In the contracting parties, there is a similarity between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, because in the case of the Covenant of Works, it is God and man, and in the Covenant of Grace, the contracting parties are God and man. We’ll talk later about the way in which we may further define

the divine part in it. In the external form of the Covenants, in that there are promises that are given in the Adamic Covenant, the Covenant of Works, and there are promises or a promise that is referred to in the Covenant of Grace, and further, that there is a condition; a conditional element in the Covenant of Works, and a conditional element in the Covenant of Grace. Furthermore, in the contents of the promise, for we have eternal life promised by obedience in the Covenant of Works, and we have eternal life promised in the Covenant of Grace. And then also in the goal of the Covenants there is a similarity because the goal of the Covenant of Works was the glory of God through the indefectable holiness of Adam if he should have obeyed, and in the case of the Covenant of Grace, the ultimate end of that Covenant is the glory of God with life for God's elect.

There are some important differences between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace as well. In the Covenant of Works, God is Creator and Lord, and that's the way in which the encounter with Adam is to be regarded. In the Covenant of Grace, God is redeemer and Father. In the former Covenant, man is simply a creature of God created in holiness, but in the Covenant of Grace, he is a sinner who appears in his surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, he is seen as being “in” the redeemer to come, what Paul spells out as, “in Christ”; the Lord “acting as a public person” to use good Puritan theological language; a public person, or sponsor, or mediator, or representative. So all of those terms mean essentially the same thing.

In the first case, the Covenant of Works, the Covenant rests on the uncertain obedience of a changeable man Adam, but in the gracious compact of the Covenant of Grace, the foundation is the obedience of Christ the mediator, certain and perfect. In the one, the way of life is by keeping God's commandments, but in the other, it's through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has accomplished by now, the saving work. So that's the introduction.

Let's turn now to Roman I in the outline that you have before you; The Structure of the Covenant of Grace, and capital A: The Parties to the Covenant. The party of the

first part in the Covenant of Grace is God, being seen as a gracious and redeeming Father. Reform theologians have not been unanimous in identifying the party of the second part, but the great majority consider the party of the second part to be the elect or the elect sinner in Christ. So when we think about the Covenant of Grace, we should think about God the Father and we should think about the elect sinner but in Christ. The limitation in the objects of the grace appeared in the Abrahamic Covenant's provisions. For example, as the Covenant of Grace in its history unfolds, we notice the ways in which God's blessings are narrowed down to particular people. Remember when the Abrahamic promises were given. Nothing is said about the fact, that kings would come out of Abraham, but later on it is stated, that kings would come from Abraham. Nothing is said in the Abrahamic promises in Genesis chapter 12 about the limitation of the promise to the seed of Isaac. That flows out of the historical development. In chapter 21 of the Book of Genesis in verse 12, it is stated, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” One might think from the beginning, that all of Abraham's seed are in the Covenant, but as it develops historically, it's obvious that there is an elect body within Abraham's seed, and that becomes in its final analysis, an acknowledgment of the fact that there is an Israel that is Israel, and an Israel that is not Israel. “Not all who are of Israel are Israel,” Paul will say in Romans chapter 9 in verse 6, later on. Now, he's not talking about Gentiles. He's talking only about Israelites, but he's simply saying, that there is an elect Israelite, and there are non-elect Israelites. So let us remember that.

Olevianus, one of the men that we looked at, gives the party of the second part, as all those whom God, out of the mass of lost men, has decreed to adopt as children by grace, and to endow them with faith. Now, that really raises a question of the relation of the children of believers to the Covenant. Most reformed individuals believe that the promise of God to Abraham and his seed is to be understood collectively; that is, while each individual person is responsible to believe for himself, “we count upon God” reformed men would say. We count upon God to, as a rule, gather his elect out of those

who stand in this covenant relationship. In other words, we may expect, we count upon the Lord God to gather the elect people of God from the children of believers. Now, that is, in general, a reformed position. Thus, as Bavinck, the famous Dutch reform theologian of the first part of this century contends, “Children of believers are *in foedari* in the Covenant; but not *de foedari* not of the Covenant, until they believe.” So they’re “in” the Covenant, he tries to say, but not “of” the Covenant, and only Bavinck could define what he meant by those terms.

So the result has been that generally speaking, not entirely but generally speaking, covenant theologians believe that it is perfectly proper and in fact commanded by God to baptize infants in the hope, in the assurance, in the conviction that God will gather his elect people out of the body who are children of believers. Now, one only has to look at the history of the Christian church to see that that is largely an unfounded hope. If you look at the condition of the Reform churches today, you can see if your eyes are open at all spiritually, that it is not justified by history to make such a claim.

I received a call, in fact, the exact time was October the tenth, so that’s about three weeks or so ago from a Presbyterian minister; Presbyterian minister in the southeast. He called me. He was a man who grew up in the Independent Church movement; Bible Church movement. He grew up in Campus Crusade for Christ. He went through the seminary here in Dallas. He not only went through the seminary, but took his doctorate from the seminary here in Dallas. He was a man who came to understand the doctrine of the Grace of God. He went out into ministry; was for a number of years a successful minister of the word of God; still is a successful minister of the word of God; a gifted man. And after becoming convinced of the doctrine of the Grace of God and finding in the Bible Church movement not very much fellowship, because generally speaking, the Bible Church movement is at best Calvinian, and probably the majority are really Arminian, although they hold to one point usually; that is, the doctrine of the Eternal Security of the Believer. But the great mass of Bible Churches lean toward the Arminian

side, and they'd be very hurt, many of them, if you said that, but that is the truth theologically.

At any rate, this man felt finally, that he must go into the Presbyterian Church, so he went into the Presbyterian Church. We talked about it, and knew, of course, that I had been tempted at one time to do that. When I was converted, I was in the Presbyterian Church, tempted to go that way, and Dr. Barnhouse was the one who told me, and urged me to go to a Presbyterian Seminary and to study the word there, because, quote, “The Presbyterian Church needs men like you” unquote. And, fortunately, I'd heard some other men who taught the word of God, and I was pretty well certain that when I went to my theological seminary in my church, I was not going to get the Bible. I might get a position in a church, but I wouldn't get the Bible. So I went elsewhere as a maverick, and I'm happy that I did.

But this individual called me about three weeks ago, and he said, “Lewis.” He said, “I just find now that being in a Presbyterian Church, I've discovered that the PCA,” he's in the PCA, an orthodox group for the most part, the group that has broken off the liberal Presbyterian Church. He said, “I've found that for the most part, I'm unhappy with some of the things that are happening in our Church.” He said, “I've found that they have problems, just like other churches have problems. I guess I was not really as clear thinking as I should have been, and I'm interested now in leaving.” And he said, “Some of the things that I don't like include baptizing infants.” He said, “I just have a difficult time every time I'm called upon to baptize infants, because I've tried to find that in a Bible and I just cannot find it in the Bible at all.” So he's now looking for a position where he won't have to do that.

But that's part, generally, of covenant theology; that is, by virtue of the concept of the Covenant of Grace and the relationship of believers and their children, it is almost always a requirement that one do that. There's one exception, and that is that there are

some Baptist churches, very few, that say that they are reformed and they do not baptize infants.

All right. Capital B: The Promises of the Covenant. The fundamental promise of the Covenant, which includes all others, and which is often repeated in Scripture is, “I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” It’s expressed in ways like this. “I will be a God unto thee, and thou shall be my people.” This is the fundamental promise of the Covenant of Grace. It finds its final realization in the beautiful text of Revelation chapter 21 in verse 3, and you might turn to this. Revelation chapter 21 in verse 3 where we read, I’m reading from the Greek text, because it reads a little bit different than in some of the translations. There’s a textual question that is at issue here in this verse. In verse 3 of Revelation 21, we read, “And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, ‘Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them their God.’” Now, that expresses the completion of that great covenantal promise that God will be our God and we shall be his people. That statement, “I will be your God, you shall be my people” includes all of the promises of the Covenant of Grace. In fact, it includes all of the promises that may be found in the word “salvation.” When we talk about the plan of salvation, we’re talking really about the plan as expressed in a Covenant of Grace, and so when we talk about, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people,” you include everything that is found within the blessings of God. He is our God; our infinite portion; the source to us of all that God is. We are the objects of his love, and he is our Father. His being our God implies also that he assures us of his love, admits us to communion with himself, as his favor is life in the fullest and most spiritual sense. His loving kindness is better than life. As the vision of God, the enjoyment of his love and fellowship with him secure the highest possible exaltation and beatification of his creatures. It’s plain, that the promise to be our God in the scriptural sense of the term, includes all conceivable,

and all possible good. That’s a magnificent promise. “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”

If you think of a father and his children, and then you magnify that to infinity, for all fathers fail and all children fail too, for that matter. If you think of all that a father is ideally to a child and think of it spiritually and think of it infinitely then you have some simple illustration of what god means when he says, “I will be your God.” What little child with a loving father does not conceive of his father as the solution for the problems of his life? His needs are met through his father. Oh, I’m not leaving out the mother, but he’s the one who supplies the things that make that house go. And when we add the fact of “mother” in the family relationship, we have the two sides of the love of God. But a father who loves, a father who provides, a father who takes a child into his fellowship and communion, and magnify that to infinity, and you have something of what it means when Scripture says, “I will be your God, and then you shall be my people.” Isn’t that magnificent? That is the promise, ultimately, that includes all of the promises of the word of God, and when we think of biblical salvation, that’s the final expression of all that is meant in it; for included in that, “I will be you God, and you shall be my people” are all of those things that we think of as the blessings of divine salvation; the work of regeneration, the work of faith, the work of justification, the work of adoption and the work of the forgiveness of sins, the work of reconciliation. All of those things are simply separate aspects expansions of, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.” That’s the blessing of the Covenant.

Now, Capital C: The Proviso of the Covenant. For adults it is faith in Christ. In one sense, we can speak of the condition of the Covenant as faith; namely, as its “sine qua non”. Now, I don’t like to use the term “faith” as a condition of salvation. I’ll tell you why. Because it’s too easy to understand faith as a condition of salvation as implying that faith is a meritorious cause of our salvation. There are two ways in which faith could be used as a condition, however. It could be used in the sense of a meritorious cause, or it

could be used simply as that, without which you don't have salvation. Now, that's the sense in which, if you're going to say faith is a condition, that's the sense that you should use it. It should be the “sine qua non” without that which there is not salvation, but it's not a condition as a meritorious condition, and it's important for us to remember that. We must not think of faith as the meritorious ground on which certain benefits are bestowed, but it's fundamentally the instrumentality for the receiving of a gracious gift. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned unto righteousness.” Incidentally, the Authorized Version is responsible for a lot of confusion there, because it reads, “His faith is reckoned for righteousness.” But the preposition that is used there, is a preposition that means “unto”; that is, “unto the obtaining of.” Faith is an instrumentally. Faith cannot be righteousness if it is the means by which we obtain righteousness. That should be obvious to us. And over and over in the New Testament it says that we're justified “through faith; by faith.” So it's clear that faith couldn't be the justification of the righteousness. So “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto the obtaining of righteousness.” Or, to put it in another more familiar text, “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Bavinck again comments, “But the Covenant of Grace precedes faith. Faith is not a condition to the Covenant, but in the Covenant; the way to obtain possession of, and to enjoy all the other blessings of the Covenant. Thus, the Covenant itself is an unconditional Covenant; unconditional because God supplies the faith by which we instrumentally receive the covenanted blessings of divine salvation.” So let us never forget that. Any kind of preaching of the Gospel, it implies that faith is the means of salvation, but meritorious in itself, is destructive of the grace of God. It's a failure to understand the essence of divine grace.

Now, let's look at the historical development of the Covenant, and capital A: The Unchanging Principles. The principles of grace pervade the Covenant's unfolding, in that

the Father gives the surety to meet our obligations; that is, the Father gives the Son to meet our obligations, in that the surety willingly stands for us, as representative bearing our judgment. And in that through the Spirit he creates faith in us, enabling us to meet his covenant demands. It is grace from beginning to end. Remember Jonah’s famous statement, “Salvation is of the Lord.” And Mr. Spurgeon’s great statement, “Jonah learned that line of good theology in a strange college.” I’ve always enjoyed that. It is a Trinitarian covenant, therefore, originating in the distinguishing love of the Father, executed by the suretyship of the Son, and realized in sinners by the application of the Spirit. Now, that’s very important for some of the issues of salvation; that is, the Father loved a certain people, the Son of God died for that people, and the Holy Spirit applies the redemption accomplished by Christ to that people. It’s all so beautifully simple; all so relevant of the purpose of God in our salvation; all the members of the divine Trinity, as a result of the eternal Covenant of Redemption working toward the accomplishment of one specific purpose; that is, that God may be the God of this people and that they may have him as their God. It is an eternal and unbreakable covenant, in that God remains forever true to it. As we shall see when we come to the historical covenants, the Abrahamic Covenant, we will note that the term “eternal and everlasting” comes to be attached to those historical covenants because God remains forever true to them.

And, further, the Covenant of Grace is a particular not a universal covenant; not realized in all men, nor actually offered to all. Let me say that again because, I think, that perhaps you may not have absolutely clearly in mind what I’m saying. This Covenant is a particular covenant, not a universal covenant; not realized in all men, nor actually offered to all, although offerable to all. Now, all you have to realize to see the truth of that, is to reflect upon history. Has everyone who has ever lived heard of the plan of salvation? Why, of course not. Countless peoples have died with no opportunity whatsoever to hear the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That gospel has gone out to a particular body of people. You can count yourself blessed that you live in a country where the Gospel has

gone forth. If you had lived in some societies in the twentieth century on the face of this globe, you would have lived in societies who had no understanding whatsoever of the Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Grace, or the plan of salvation, or the Lord Jesus Christ, or any of the other great blessings found in the word of God. And, of course, as you know in the United States, everybody has an opportunity, in the sense that the Gospel is proclaimed, but even here there are many people who have not, it seems, heard.

Capital B: The Changing Dispensations, and Arabic 1: Of the Old Testament.

Reform theologians do admit, that there are biblical dispensations, so when we think of covenant theology, we should remember that when we talk about covenant theology, we are not opposing covenant theology to the term “dispensation” but we should go on to point out that when covenant theologians use the term “dispensations” they don’t use it in the same sense that dispensational theologians use the term. Dispensationalists use the term “dispensation” as economies in which man is tested in some particular way. That’s the sense of dispensation in dispensationalism. That shouldn’t surprise you, that the term “dispensation” is used in different senses, because it’s used in even a third sense in Roman Catholic theology. So you can have a special dispensation by which you can violate the principles of the Church that are normally carried out if you get a special dispensation from higher authority, sometimes from the Pope. For example, not too many years back, Braniff Airlines, which was as you know from its beginning, operated by a Roman Catholic family received special dispensation from the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy to serve fish on Fridays in their planes as they flew around the country. Well, that was not the sense of dispensation that dispensationalism uses the term, nor is it the sense in which covenant theologians do. When covenant theologians use the term “dispensation,” they’re talking about the division of the history of divine salvation into certain specific periods.

For example, Professor Burkhof in his “Systematic Theology” speaks of two dispensations; that of the Old Testament, and that of the New, but he goes on to say he’s willing to subdivide the Old Testament Dispensation into several periods or stages in the revelation of the Covenant of Grace. So dispensationalists use the term “dispensation” as a reference to economies in which man is tested in some particular way. Covenant theologians use the term “dispensation” as stages in the unfolding of the Covenant of Grace; historical unfolding of the Covenant of Grace. Do we get that? That’s important, because occasionally you’ll find people say, “I’m a covenant theologian. We believe in dispensations.” Or you’ll find some dispensationalists who may be seeing things slightly differently, and so they will say, “But we use the term dispensation, but they do too.” They do, but there’s a difference sense.

Charles Hodge, who is to my mind one of the greatest of the Reform theologians, admits to four dispensations. These are the dispensations according to Charles Hodge: from Adam to Abraham, in which the original promises concerning the seed were given. Genesis 3:15. We’ll talk about that next week; that passage. Then secondly, as you might expect, from Adam to Moses, I’m sorry, I said from Adam to Abraham and then from Abraham to Moses; the second. The special selection of Abraham and more definite promises of redemption characterize this time. For example, remember when the Abrahamic promises are given it’s stated, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” But if you go back to Genesis 3:15, all we are told there, is that the redeemer shall come from mankind, and then in Genesis chapter 9, when Noah makes his great prophesy, it is stated in effect, that he redeemer is going to come from the Semitic division of mankind. And then Abraham’s promises are in the Abrahamic or that division of the Semitic family; the seed will come from him. And then as you know, we’ve been talked about this already, later in Genesis 21 it is stated, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called,” and finally in the Book of Genesis itself, further division is suggested by the fact that it is stated that, “The king shall come from Judah,” and then later on he’s identified as coming

from the family of Jesse of the tribe of Judah. So you have all mankind, the Semitic division of mankind, the Abrahamic family within it, and so on down until finally, the Old Testament puts its finger on the time when the seed should come in Daniel chapter 9.

So the third of the dispensations of the Old Testament is from Moses to Christ; the conditional Mosaic Covenant; its Law, its priesthood, its ordinances characterize this time. So if we were to think of the Old Testament, it is made up of three dispensations according to Hodge. It's made up of from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and there is a development of the divine revelation of the Covenant of Grace during that time. And then the New Testament is the fourth of the dispensations; the age of the fulfillment.

So that's Arabic 2 of the New Testament, the “Gospel Dispensation” as Hodge calls it, or we could call it the “Dispensation of the Church.” It's Catholic; that is, confined to no one people. It's more spiritual in the sense that the types and ceremonies are done away with and the revelation is more inward. It's clearer. It's more explicit in its teaching. It's also more purely evangelical; not that the Gospel is not purely revealed in the Old Testament, but all of the angles of it, and the clarity of it, are set out in the New Testament, in the completion of the work of Christ. “He has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel,” so the apostle says; not that it was not there, but he has brought it to light. So it's specially the dispensation of the Holy Spirit who works to accomplish the program of the Father and the Son in the present age. It's permanent. It's final.

.Now, Roman III: The Practical Use and Comfort of the Covenant. Capital A: Covenant and Sacraments. Reform theologians teach that the baptism of infants is the sign and seal of entrance into the Covenant of Grace. For example, if you were to go into a Presbyterian church on that morning a child is baptized, if that reformed or if that Presbyterian minister were true to his faith, he would point out that the act of the baptizing of an infant does not save that infant. The only thing that it does is simply to

recognize the fact that that infant is an infant of a believing family and thus in the objective sense, stands within the Covenant of Grace. And you'll find them speaking about “in the Covenant”; not saved, but possessed of certain blessings that belong to families that are believing families. Now, the idea of an infant possessing certain blessings, an infant of believers, is a biblical idea. You'll find it in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 about verse 14, where Paul says, “The child of a believing parent,” not parents, but parent. In other words, if you had a mixed family, a father a believer, wife mother an unbeliever or vice versa, a child born in that family, Paul says, “is sanctified”; not saved, sanctified. What is meant by that is that that child is possessed of certain privileges and opportunities that belong to a child brought up in a family in which there is a believer, and anyone who knows anything about Christian homes knows that that is a tremendous blessing. Think of the countless millions who don't have that particular opportunity, but that's a far cry from baptizing them as being “in a Covenant.” So reform theology, it's the sign and seal of entrance into the Covenant of Grace, and according to reform theologians, they believe that God has promised to perpetuate his work among the children of believers as a group, although they're willing to admit, that not every individual child will be saved. The Lord's Supper is the sign and seal of abiding in the Covenant, replacing the Passover. It's observed only then, after a Profession of Faith.

So proponents of infant baptism like to point to the fact that infants of the Old Testament who were male were circumcised on the eighth day. That was the sacrament of belonging to the Covenant of Grace in Old Testament times. So why not baptize infants in the present day as the sign of belonging to the Covenant of Grace in the present day? And, thus, has originated the practice of infant baptism.

I always think of a story I heard about two people who were having an argument over this, and one of the individuals in citing some scriptural texts spoke to his Baptist friend and he said, “In Matthew chapter 19 and verse 14 it says, ‘Permit the children to come unto me, and do not stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as

these.” And thinking that he had settled the question with that, he hesitated and the Baptist fellow interjected his response, and he said, “And Og, King of Bashan, for his loving kindness is everlasting.” And the Episcopalian, or the Presbyterian said, “What in the world connection does Og the King of Bashan for his loving kindness is everlasting, have to do with infant baptism?” And the Baptist replied, “None, just the same as the text you just quoted.” Well, perhaps it’s unfair to deal with something as serious as that in that way, but so often we bring forward texts to support ideas when, upon careful examination, they really don’t have anything to say about it at all.

Now, one final thing before we stop, and next week we want to talk about the Genesis chapter 3 in verse 14 through verse 19, and its relationship to the Covenant of Grace. This is capital B: The Comfort of the Covenant. William Hendrickson, who was a covenant theologian, has written some very fine commentaries. He has a beautiful exposition of the comfort. He sums it up as, “the enjoyment of all involved in ‘I will be a God to you.’ It’s Christ and all his benefits unconditionally offered and brought to the experience of believers.” And he urges believers to be covenant conscious.

Well now, we have a few moments and, I think, maybe we ought to have a few questions, so why don’t you ask your questions. We’ll try to clarify some of the things that may have come to your mind. Yes, sir. Would you speak loud enough so everybody can hear.

[Question inaudible]

The Covenant of Grace is an everlasting covenant. It’s spoken of as an everlasting covenant; that is, everlasting as the purpose of God. Purposes of God are everlasting. And so when you speak about something like that, you have to say “in ages past.” It is an outgrowth of the Covenant of Redemption made between the persons of the Trinity. In fact, the Covenant of Grace rests upon the agreement made between the persons of the Trinity to perform what we would call, “the purpose of God.” And so the Covenant of Grace is the working out in history of the eternal Covenant of Redemption. So it is

undergirded by the Covenant of Redemption. At the same time, the Covenant of Redemption would be a fruitless hope were it not for the Covenant of Grace because then there would be great promises made, but no one specifically carrying out the necessary work. Our Lord Jesus came, of course, and bore the judgment along to sinners and, thus, made it possible for the promises involved in the eternal Covenant of Redemption to be administered to those who belong to the Covenant of Grace.

[Question inaudible]

The Covenant of Works, so far as we know, would be in that plan, because everything was in that plan, in the sense that he works all things according to the council of his own will. So though the Covenant of Works was a step along the way to the accomplishment of the revelation of God's grace and his justice and through the revelation, the salvation of the people of God.

Yes.

[Question inaudible]

Nancy would you speak just a little louder, because my hearing is not that good.

[Question inaudible]

Would somebody repeat exactly what she said? But she said, “The Covenant of Grace was what?” Exchanged. Well, you can speak of faith obedience or the obedience of faith. As you know, those are biblical expressions that the Apostle Paul uses in the Epistle to the Romans. He talks about the obedience of faith. Faith is obedience and obedience is faith in the biblical sense; that is, to believe the word of God. So in that sense, you could identify faith and obedience, but you must not identify, if you use that expression, you must not use it in the sense of faith as being a work. Maybe that's not altogether clear, but another question.

Yes, James.

[Question inaudible]

Professor Hodge was a post-millennialist, and so he would include that as the ultimate conclusion to the present age through the preaching of the Gospel. Through the preaching of the Gospel, world-wide preaching of the Gospel, the world will, ultimately, be prepared for the coming of the redeemer, at which time will be ushered in, the kingdom of God upon the earth. So he was a post-millennialist. So he conceived of that as being the natural culmination of the present age of the preaching of the Gospel.

There's a revival of postmillennialism, as you know, in the present day. Most people felt that World War I and World War II pretty well signed the death nail of post-millennialism, but there's been a revival. A small group of people have tried to revive postmillennialism, but that's the essential way in which post-millennialists view the future.

Yes, ma'am. Miss Oggh.

That Og of Bashan was spelled with just one “g.”

Without the “h.”

[Question inaudible]

Well, I cannot answer that because in our church they didn't rise. Did not. In fact, the the two or three churches in which I was, have been the one in which I was born, and the one in which I grew up, and the one in which I was married and was a member not any of them did that. So that was evidently a local custom. Maybe they do that in Texas. I don't know. Was it in a Texas church? Well, I was a member of that church one time. I guess I don't remember seeing anybody baptized. When I came to Dallas, I transferred my membership to that church

Yes, Wilfred.

[Question inaudible]

No, the Presbyterian polity, generally. I know that in certain churches that's changed in recent years, but ordinarily in Presbyterian churches, this was the procedure that you followed. A believing family, upon the birth of an infant, would bring the infant at the proper time, dressed in baptismal flowing robes, little infant, bring the infant to the

front, and the minister would put his hand in the baptistery, and put his hand on the head of the infant, and baptize him in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And if he were true to his own faith, he would say, “This child is not a child saved by this act, but we recognize that he belongs to the Covenant of Grace objectively.” The same way in which all of Abraham’s seed did. Then as history unfolds, let us say the child at age twelve has an experience of personal faith. Then the child is to appear before the elders and make his confession of faith before the elders. Now, when the elders are satisfied that his profession of faith is genuine then he is received into the membership of the church without any further baptism. So he enters the church and enters salvation in their minds through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but his baptism is not repeated. That is once and for all, a recognition of his relationship to the Covenant of Grace.

[Question inaudible]

Some Presbyterian churches now do use Confirmation, and then introduce the individual to Presbyterian Church history, Presbyterian doctrine, and that type of thing. That, however, is an optional thing. It’s not part of Presbyterian doctrine to have Confirmation. That’s not a Presbyterian doctrine, but it’s practiced so widely now, that it’s almost becoming part of their doctrine. Well, Presbyterians stand a good bit more in the line of Baptist thought on most things, with that exception. They believe strongly in salvation by faith, apart from any salvation through sacraments or ordinances.

One final question. Bob.

[Question inaudible]

They would only take communion after they have become believers in Christ and have become members of the church, which, I think, is a proper approach.

Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and for the privilege of studying. We thank Thee for some of the great men of faith who have been reformed theologians. We

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pray also, Lord, that Thou would give us a proper critical approach to all of the human
theologies. Enable us to more clearly discern exactly. [End of Tape]