

What is Man?

Lesson 4

The Covenant of Grace

Forum



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With

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Question 1:

In God's eternal counsel, what plans did he make to redeem sinners?

Dr. David VanDrunen

Of course, there's a great mystery when we speak about God's eternal counsel. We, as finite, temporal creatures, can't even imagine what it is to exist outside of time. And yet, Scripture does tell us some things about God's eternal plan, especially his eternal plan regarding our salvation. And I think the place to start when thinking about this, is to turn to the opening of Ephesians, and Ephesians says that God elected us "*in* Christ." And that really gets to the heart of God's eternal counsel for us, that God planned to save us through his Son. And even that term "Christ" is, that's a term for the Son as he has become incarnate. And that gives us a clue that even from eternity God has willed to save us through his Son becoming a man like us. And so, for that and other reasons we confess that, even in eternity, God willed Christ to come, to go to the cross, and to accomplish the things that he has... And this makes sense with what we find in the Gospels. How many times in the Gospels does Christ speak about coming to do his Father's will? Christ didn't just show up on the scene and do what he wanted. He came into this world in order to fulfill what had already been established long before he came, even from outside of time, from all eternity. And Jesus prays — I think of his great High Priestly Prayer in John 17 — he says that "Father, I have glorified you by finishing the work that you gave me to do" and now he asks that the Father would glorify him again with that glory he had from the beginning of the world. So, there we see that God, from all eternity, God's counsel for our salvation was centered in Christ, centered in him coming and fulfilling the work which he did, and then being glorified because he fulfilled it so faithfully.

Dr. Stephen J. Wellum

The book of Ephesians is such a wonderful letter that we have of the apostle Paul. It's a letter that captures so much of God's plan right across redemptive history and the fulfillment that has come in Jesus Christ. Particularly in Ephesians 3, he speaks of the mystery that has been revealed... A mystery is that which was hidden in ages past, part of God's eternal plan, that as history unfolds it becomes disclosed; it becomes known. And, of course, in Ephesians 3, what he is speaking of in terms of that which was hidden in God's eternal plan which is disclosed is the relationship of the Jew and Gentile into the church. As you go back into the Old Testament era, we begin with Adam and see the universal effects of God's plan. God has made us image bearers; he has tied us to creation. In light of sin and the Fall, there is a separation of those who are God's and those who are not. And in the Abrahamic covenant, especially, you see the redemptive purposes, where through Abraham and his seed, he is going to be the means by which salvation will come to the world, and it will bring a blessing to all nations. So "the nations" picks up that universal focus of God's purposes, but through a man, a nation, ultimately through the Lord Jesus Christ. As you walk through the Old Testament, there is many, many Abrahamic passages that are picked up, that Israel as people, who are a means by which the Savior will come, will also incorporate the Gentiles, that in God's purposes Jew and Gentile will be brought together in Christ in one new man, the church. And that's what Paul is speaking of in Ephesians 3, so that in Christ now, in this place in redemptive history we see more clearly God's eternal plan.

Rev. Jim Maples

The free and immutable counsel of his will motivated God to redeem fallen mankind as Paul said in Ephesians ... "according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with his will." We can say that God's plan to redeem fallen humanity was eternal, even. Ephesians 3:11, Paul says according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus. And thus, God's motivation to redeem fallen humanity does not depend upon any other thing or any other condition than his goodness alone.

Dr. Jeff Lowman

The agreement between the Father and the Son occurred in eternity past. It was an agreement in which the Father plans the work of salvation on behalf of his people. He also determines that he will provide for the Son a body, a physical body in which the Son will come and be incarnate. And the Son agrees to come to this earth, lay down his life on the cross — a perfect life — lay that perfect life down on the cross, and be a substitute for God's people. Also, part of that covenant of redemption is the sending forth of the Holy Spirit who takes the work of Christ and then applies it to God's people.

Question 2:
Which persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation?

Dr. David VanDrunen

Salvation is a thoroughly Trinitarian action. And I think we can see this from various angles. One rather simple way to see it is to think of the Father especially as the one who has established the plan of salvation and from all eternity has set apart his Son to be our Savior. We think of the Second Person of the Trinity as the one whose special work was to come in the fullness of time to become incarnate, to be obedient unto death, to offer himself up as a sacrifice for sins, to rise, and to be exalted on our behalf. And then, the Holy Spirit is the one whose special work is the application of what Christ has done for our benefit. Christ has accomplished salvation; he's earned our salvation. The Spirit is the one who has the special work of opening our hearts and applying all the benefits of Christ to us in our lives. But there's even a sense in which that's not sufficient. It's even richer than that, because all of those things that I mentioned, each of those individually are really Trinitarian works. It wasn't just the Father who planned our salvation from all eternity. Father, Son and Spirit together willed our salvation. When we think about Christ coming, it wasn't Christ acting all alone, but he was acting according to the will of his Father. And, you think of Hebrews 9 says that he went to the cross by the Spirit. And even as we think about the application of salvation by the Spirit, what is the Spirit doing? The Spirit is applying Christ to us. So, whatever aspect of our salvation we're thinking about, we have to say that this is a Trinitarian act and that Father, Son and Spirit work together in this marvelous unity to accomplish all these great benefits for us.

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

If you can understand how the Trinity works in achieving our salvation, it will — even those who are skeptical of the Trinity — put them at ease. First, we hear throughout Jesus' missions talking about obedience to the Father. And you see the Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane crying, "Father, let your will be done, not my will." So, we can see that in our salvation we have the Father actually sending the Son, the Father actually giving the Son over to die on the cross for our sins but linked to that we have the Son obeying the will of the Father. We have the Son dying on the cross for our sins, and we get that picture again on the cross when the Son cries, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*" — "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" — when the Son experienced the full wrath of God, when the Son has the sins of the world on him. So, you see there again, the Father is involved in our salvation, the Son is involved in our salvation, but you also have the Holy Spirit involved in our salvation, because unless the Holy Spirit works in changing our hearts, in actually bringing us to faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot really come to believe in him. Therefore, we have all three of the persons of the Trinity involved in our salvation.

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

Irenaeus spoke of the two hands of God, the Spirit and the Son coming forth. Ephesians 1:3-14 really most magnificently sets that forth, that the Father elected those who believe before the foundation of the world. In a sense, in that way, he predestined all things. And yet he did so in the Son. He loves the world, and he's — through his beloved Son — made that possible... And so, we see the Father and then the Son effectuating that substitution we need. That's why he's worshiped as the Lamb who was slain who purchased by his blood those from every tribe and language and nation and people — something of that order. And then, of course, comes the promise of the Holy Spirit... We are baptized and sealed, and we have this down payment — I love that phrase, “down payment” — the Spirit who comes into our life, and we've had some joy and wonderful relationship with God in our life, and that's just a tiny bit of what's to come. So, Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, effectuating as the two hands of God, these missionary arms of God, drawing us to himself. It's precious.

Question 3:

How did the Fall affect the image of God in mankind?

Rev. Rid Rodeheaver

Okay, we're made in the image of God, but we understand that man is in a fallen state, so how exactly did the Fall affect that image of God in man? And again, throughout the history of the church there's been varying views on this. Luther, for example, believed that the image of God was completely decimated, that there is no image of God. We know from Scripture that that's clearly not true: you have Genesis 5:1, 3; Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9, all of those referring to the image of God in man *after* the Fall... The Reformers, John Calvin in particular, he recognized that the image of God is completely retained in human beings even after the Fall, but even though it's completely retained, it's completely corrupted. And so, all of humanity still has the image of God, but it's corrupted in every way and shape possible... So, rather than all of creation imaging and bringing glory and establishing the rule and reign of one sovereign king, we are now a planet populated by billions of mini kings all trying to establish their own authority and establish their own sovereignty. That right there in itself goes a long way to explain all the conflict and selfish competition in individuals and families and communities and nations.

Rev. Xiaojun Fang, translation

How did sin affect God's image? As the book of Romans puts it, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The most direct consequence of that sin is that the image of God in man has been destroyed. What was once perfect no longer exists. As a result, man's thoughts, will, and emotions experienced a change. Though man still lives, the image he bears is now fractured. In other words, no matter how hard we try, we cannot return to the image God gave us at creation through thoughts, emotions, or

will. This restoration is only possible in Christ. It is only through the salvation of our Lord Jesus that someone can truly know the truth, can truly love God and love others, and make the right judgments and decisions in their will.

Dr. Philip Ryken

Imagine a picture of person that then someone comes along with a pen and draws in a little mustache or puts some other marks on that person to alter their physical image. You can still tell who the person is, and the person is still there, but some damage has been done to that person's face and to their image. And I think we see something similar with the image of God in people. There's something that needs to be restored in us because of sin, and that's part of the work of Jesus Christ. He restores us in knowledge and righteousness and holiness. There is a perfection of the image of God in people that we see in Jesus Christ, and Jesus wants to give us, ultimately, that perfection. But the image of God has been damaged because of sin, and when you look at a person you do not see the full beauty of what God originally intended. Something really harmful has happened because of the fall into sin.

Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

The way the Fall affects the image of God in mankind is not that it gets rid of the image. I think one of the reasons we can see that for certain is in Genesis 9, when there is the first prohibition against murder. It says, don't kill anyone or don't murder anyone. Why? Because in the image of God humans were made. So, there's that fact that the image remains. That doesn't mean the image isn't affected, because you do see language, such as in the book of Colossians 2, where it does say we're being renewed in the image of God, really. So, you have texts that say something happened, or suggest something happened, but you also have texts that tell us, hey, humans are made in the image, therefore, they have a certain dignity, purpose and worth, and they should always be treated that way... An author named Anthony Hoekema, I like the way that he breaks it up; he says there's a structural dimension of the image that remains. There's just something fundamental to being human whereby we're made in the image, and it remains no matter how people act. And then there's the functional dimension that's distorted, and that's ways, we might say, that humans insufficiently express the fact that they're actually made in the image of God. So, we say that, for example, that to be in the image of God is to have a certain dignity. You might say that the dysfunction with the image is that people don't live up to that dignity; they live in a distorted expression of what it is to be human. Another way to think about it, another illustration I like to use, if you think about a mirror, it's one thing if you see a mirror and you see your image, your reflection, perfectly. It's another thing if that mirror is cracked or shattered. There's still a reflection there, but it refracts differently, so, there's something there, but it looks a whole lot different... There's all kinds of distortions that are there. I mean, I think that's a way of thinking about what happens with the image; distortions happen but the image is still there.

Question 4:**Does the fact that the covenant with Adam was a covenant of works mean that God did not give grace to Adam before the Fall?****Dr. Richard Phillips**

One of the questions being dealt with in theology is the question of whether or not there was grace before the Fall. And the Bible presents God's covenant with Adam as a covenant of works. It was by violating the command of God that he fell into the curse of death, and he would have kept it through obedience to the word of God. And so, that covenant in the Garden of Eden was one of works. So, was there grace prior to it? Well, first we're going to define grace, and we need to define our terms. Now, in the New Testament sense, grace is God's unmerited favor towards sinners. And what happens is, if you have a theological term that has meaning, and then you expand the meaning of that, you lose the term for the particular thing you were talking about. And the word for God's favor extended towards sinners is "grace." And my concern about applying grace in a prelapsarian situation, or my concern about using grace in a pre-Fall situation, is that we lose the special aspect of the grace of God in our soteriology — our teaching of salvation — which involves God's kindness, not merely to those who haven't earned it, but to those whose demerit has actually earned condemnation. Now, a case can be made for grace prior to the Fall. I think "goodness" would be a much more serviceable way. You know, sometimes we just need to use theological terms, and even biblical terms, in a consistent way. That's how the early church solved the Trinity issue by just getting its terminology lined up. And so, I think it's better to speak of God's goodness prior to the Fall. Now, many people will take it that at the end of the Genesis 1 account, God blessed them, and they will see there's grace first. I think that's stretching it a little bit, that "God blessed them" is not a statement of what the New Testament calls "grace." So, you see what happens. We start blurring the definition of what we're talking about to fit into a certain mode. Now, in the twentieth century there was a theological concern — Karl Barth is associated with it — that grace must precede law, and this is what's been driving this train. If law is first and grace is second, then God is mean. Well, no. Law is, law and lordship are derivative functions of being the Creator, and so there's nothing inherently wrong with the fact that the Bible presents a situation in which God deals by law, by works, and then later by grace. God knew what was going to happen; God had ordained all things. So, I think that we will serve ourselves better by keeping our theological terminology clear and consistent, and the use of the term "grace" prior to the Fall, I think it accomplishes little and ends up potentially costing much. The grace of which we speak in the Bible, the only time the Bible ever speaks of grace is a postlapsarian situation. It's a post-sin situation. The context in which the Bible speaks of the grace of God at work in his covenant dealings and then through Jesus Christ is a context among sinners who have earned the just condemnation of God. Well, let's preserve all of that. Let's not blur that at all. And I think we will be wiser to reserve the word "grace" for God's dealings after the Fall.

Dr. Guy Waters

When we talk about the covenant of works, what we mean is that that covenant that God made with Adam operated on a works principle: “Do this and you will live.” Or as God put it in the Garden: “You are not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil for on the day that you eat of it you will surely die.” That doesn’t mean that we could not speak of God’s generosity towards Adam in the Garden. Adam was not at that point a sinner, so if we mean by “grace” the grace that pardons sin and cleanses from sin, well, then no, God didn’t show grace. But if we mean by “grace” his generosity and goodness, well there was ample evidence of that to Adam. He placed him in a garden, he gave him run of it to eat of all the trees save one. There was the goodness of God abounding all around him. So, even as we speak of a covenant of works, we need to stress that that covenant of works was given to Adam by a God who was demonstrating in many ways, and at all times, his goodness towards him.

Question 5:**Were Old Testament saints saved on the basis of Christ’s future work?****Dr. Simon Vibert**

I think there’s a common misunderstanding about, namely, that people in the Old Testament were saved by works and that in the New Testament they’re saved by grace. Whereas, in fact, a careful reading of the Bible shows that people in both the Old and the New Testament are saved by grace through faith, and that it was always the expectation that God would provide a perfect sacrifice for sin, and that it is through trusting in that sacrifice and believing in it that God gives us the ability to grasp, by faith, the benefit of Christ’s sacrifice that we are saved. And that was always the expectation in the Old Testament, looking forward in anticipation to the coming of Christ. And that is the expectation of the New Testament writers that we’re saved by grace through faith. So, it is a consistent message that runs all the way through the Bible.

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

Abraham was saved by faith, and we see that in Hebrews 11 that Abraham was always saved by faith, not by works. And it’s interesting because Paul takes a similar story in Romans 4. Let me read it for us, where it says,

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:1-3, ESV).

Now, you see clearly Paul sees Abraham as saved by faith, not by works. And in

Hebrews 11, it's made clear that the patriarchs were saved, looking forward to the promises of God, and we know that the promises of God were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the patriarchs, the people of the Old Testament, were saved by looking forward to what Jesus Christ was going to do on the cross, while we are saved by looking backward to what Jesus Christ did on the cross.

Dr. John Oswalt

One of the issues that is so important for Christians to come to grips with is how the two Testaments fit together. Tragically, some branches of the church, at least tragically in my view, some branches of the church have *all but* taught that the New Testament has replaced the Old. I don't think that's true at all. In fact, they are complimentary, they fit together with each one connecting to the other, the Old Testament providing the base upon which the New Testament builds. The Old Testament teaches from start to finish that the only basis for our redemption is grace. There are those who would argue that the Old Testament believer was *intended* to be saved by obedience. I don't think that's correct. I think that just as Paul deals with Abraham in the book of Galatians and says, you know, grace preceded Torah; grace preceded the Sinai covenant with its restrictions. I think that's even true in Exodus. I've often said to people, "Did God say to the Hebrew people in Egypt, 'Here's my Torah; keep that perfectly for about four hundred years, and I'll come and deliver you'?" If he had, they would still be in Egypt. But no, he delivered them by grace. Then comes the Torah — "Would you like to be my people? Would you like to walk with me? Well, here's what that would mean..." So, I think just as the New Testament epistles in particular speak about people who have come into the covenant by grace, and now Paul says, now here's what the implications are for your life. I think the Old Testament is doing the same thing, that it is saying the only way anybody comes into a relationship with God is by God's grace. And having come in, then there is some implications from that.

Question 6:

What does Jesus do as the mediator of the covenant of grace?

Dr. Alan Hultberg

The mediatorial role of Jesus is especially laid out in the book of Hebrews, and in Hebrews we're told that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, that is, that through the work of Christ ... the new covenant that was promised in Jeremiah 31 is initiated in the life of the church. And so, what did Jesus do to initiate that covenant? The author of Hebrews tells us that he offered his blood as blood of a better sacrifice for this covenant, that that sacrifice is not better only because it was the blood of Christ, but also because it was offered in the heavenly tabernacle, not in the earthly temple. His blood atones for sin once and for all, the author of Hebrews says. That is, it's only offered one time, and its effect is forever. And so, Jesus moves us from temporary and, maybe not corrupt, but imperfect sacrifices, imperfect atonement, to perfect

atonement, to eternal atonement. And then, as our mediator, he stands as our high priest before the throne of God, interceding for us so that it's impossible to be disconnected from the love of God when you have a Great High Priest — Jesus — standing, pleading our cause constantly before the Father.

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

As the mediator of the covenant of grace, Jesus fulfills both the Lord's commitments to his people and his servant-people's commitments to the Lord. The Lord promises to bless his people, and in fact, God's promise to Abraham that he would bless Abraham, his children and the nations through Abraham, extends even in spite of the fact that Abraham and his children will themselves violate the covenant. But God promises to bring blessing. So, that poses the problem, how can God bless and remain just if he's blessing those who have violated his covenant, who have not been loyal and not been thoroughly obedient? Of course, God had the plan from eternity past in the covenant of redemption to establish a covenant of grace in which the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, would become our human brother and become the faithful servant of the covenant; he would faithfully fulfill the requirements laid upon us to be utterly loyal to the Lord and absolutely obedient through his whole obedient life. We speak of his active obedience and the imputing, that is, the crediting to us, of his righteousness. And then, as the climax, Jesus offered up himself to endure the curse of the covenant that we deserve. Paul speaks in Galatians 3:13 of Christ becoming accursed for us because though he deserved no curse, we do. And so, he frees us from the curses of the covenant, he bestows on us his righteousness; our sins are imputed, credited or debited to him as he endures. And so, he brings us together with God the Father. He mediates. He brings us together in peace and joy and blessing.

Question 7:

What is prevenient grace?

Rev. Canon Alfred Sebahene, Ph.D.

Prevenient grace refers to the grace of God in a person's life that precedes conversion. Its emphasis is in the fact that ... any spiritual life has no hope of a beginning without God's prior action on behalf of a sinner. In other words, it is all about the ways in which God's grace comes into our lives prior to conversion... Prevenient grace acts as a bridge between human depravity and the free exercise of human will.

Dr. Mike Fabarez

"Prevenient grace" is the title that we give, I suppose literally, to the grace that precedes conversion — prevenient grace. And everyone would believe in that. All theologians and pastors would look and say, of course, there's God's endowment of grace that leads up to conversion, but when people speak of prevenient grace in

theological discussions, they mean something different. What they mean is that there is a kind of grace that enables someone to make a decision to follow Christ. Prevenient grace, they mean, is a kind of a removal of what Adam has done to blind mankind to God, and it gives them opportunity to respond to Christ. And in that sense, the doctrine of prevenient grace for many means that they may or may not, with the endowment of prevenient grace, choose to follow Christ. That stands in contradistinction to effectual grace, or a kind of grace that not only opens eyes to the truth of the gospel, but brings them all the way to conversion. And so, when you hear the phrase “prevenient grace,” you need to know that what usually is meant is a distinction between a kind of grace that allows the human being now to choose Christ or the effectual grace that makes that process effective, that people come not only to understand the gospel but come to the place of regeneration.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

Prevenient grace is the grace that goes before. It's not saving grace, but it's a grace that makes us capable of a decision for Jesus. So, if you believe that you're so naturally sinful, and there is no prevenient grace in your life, it's kind of hard to choose for the Lord. However, if you have prevenient grace that means that you can, by God's grace, make a choice for him or against him. Prevenient grace comes into our life, and we're thankful for it because it allows us to see light as it truly is and then make a decision for it... So, everybody has a measure of prevenient grace whereby they can choose right from wrong inasmuch as it's Jesus or not Jesus. Do I serve him? Do I not serve him? Am I his disciple? I don't want to be his disciple. Do I say “yes” to God and his will for my life or “no” to God and his will for my life? Prevenient grace allows us, gives us the opportunity to say “yes.”

Question 8:

What must we do to receive redemption and be saved?

Prof. Mumo Kisau

The covenant of grace means that we, in terms of acting, in terms of doing something, in terms of sacrifice, where sin, since it becomes a separation between us and God, there is nothing we can do to be able to be saved because salvation is by grace. However, we must do something. We must believe. Because when we believe, then it's by grace that then we are saved, because we believe that Christ died for us. Without his death, we cannot be saved. So, this is one thing we must do, even though we do nothing. But we must believe.

Dr. Steve Blakemore

We can receive redemption in only one way, and that is by trusting in what God has done. If you think about it, what is it that's lost in the Fall? It is a relationship of profound trust in God and reliance upon God. Adam and Eve refused to trust in God's word about the tree. They refused to rely upon the wisdom of God, and therefore,

their loss of trust and reliance — what we might call “faith” — is that which devastates the human condition. We can’t fix that. We can’t fix the betrayal against God that we have acted out. We cannot undo the affront that our sin is to God. Only God can change that. We can’t set ourselves free from the power of sin. Only God can do it for us. So, how do we receive redemption? We receive redemption by understanding we can’t do anything to save ourselves, to fix ourselves, and we throw ourselves completely upon the goodness, and the mercy, and the sovereign power of God to reach into our lives and redeem us by his grace.

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

Jesus was once asked the question: “Teacher, what must I do to be saved?” And of course, he looked at this young rich man and told him to sell everything he had, and we are told in the Scripture that he went away sad. And the disciples even marveled at Jesus’ response that that teaching is hard. And Jesus makes an interesting comment where he says, “With man this is impossible, but with God it is possible.” What that, to me, highlights is the fact that there’s nothing really we can do to be saved. As human beings we are born into sin, and if you are born into sin, all you know all your life is sin. In fact, sin does not only separate us from God, but rather it clouds our judgment, it clouds who we are. It’s impossible to choose God unless God takes an initiative and comes to you and actually reveals, himself, who we are... So, what can I do to be saved? I think, therefore, it has to be based solely on what Jesus has done for us, his death on the cross, and his work in our lives through his Spirit will enable us to believe in him.

Question 9:

If we’re saved by grace through faith, what motive do we have to obey God?

Rev. Timothy Mountfort

The understanding of being saved by grace through faith is an occasion for some people to misunderstand what it really means. Some people understand this — and Paul addresses this in the Scriptures — that we could take that as a license to sin, we have an insurance policy, so to speak, and we can live our lives whichever way we want. But that’s really not what being saved by grace means. Being saved by grace means that we have a special relationship with God. We have a relationship with God such that we are his sons; we are his daughters. We have a relationship with God like a father with his child. And so, our actions, our obedience, becomes the kind of motivation that is the motivation of a child who is secure in his father’s love for him or her, a child who knows beyond the shadow of a doubt that their father loves them and cherishes them. So, our obedience and our good works are not aimed at gaining that approval from our Father. They’re not aimed at winning that kind of a status with God. We have it already. The motivation behind being obedient, the motivation behind doing good works, is that we so cherish that relationship that we don’t want

anything to get in the way, that we don't want anything to block that or influence that negatively, and it becomes a desire to see God smiling at us because we're being obedient, because we're doing what he wants us to do. And we can only have that because we know that we're saved by grace.

Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer

One of the most important reasons to obey God is not so that we can earn any credit. He doesn't add our obedience and put it on one side of the scale and our disobedience on the other side of the scale and see if things balance out. God has set up, throughout salvation history, a method whereby his people has always been the primary means by which he makes himself known. So, that is true for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Even going a little bit further back, it was true for Abraham and his descendants, it's true for the nation of Israel, and then it's true for the New Testament believer. So, obedience to God doesn't earn us any sort of favor or merit with God, but what it does do is it impacts the way others view God because we are the way, we are the primary means — we are a kingdom of priests, both in Old and New Testament — and we are the primary means in space-time how others come to know God. We represent God in a profound way. So, it's very important that we act consistent, as the New Testament says, to walk worthy in our salvation. The other thing is that ... sin affects our relationship with God, so while we cannot be separated from God from a salvific standpoint, it does affect our ability to be led and influenced by God when we sin.

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

One of the foundational truths of our faith is that we are saved by faith alone through grace alone. But then, what motivation is there to obey the laws of God and his guidelines for living full lives? Well, there is the nudge of the Holy Spirit, because, as the Reformers well understood, those who are saved by faith alone also receive the Holy Spirit. And so, from that point onwards there is an inward nudge, an inner prompting to follow the will and ways of God so that we can begin to experience the firstfruits of our full salvation now. In the area of our personal motivation, one of the most important motivations is adoration. We fall in love with our Savior, and by this intrinsic principle of all religion, we become like that which we adore. Secondly, there's the motivation of gratitude, and it has been the audacious claim of the Christian Reformers that motivation of gratitude is more powerful than the motivation of fear. So, we live out of adoration, we live out of gratitude, and finally, we live out of trust, believing that though these principles and guidelines that call for our obedience go against our preferences or our better judgment, they are in fact, the way of life.

Dr. David W. Jones

I think, really, for any human being, you know, we're bent towards a works-based type salvation, and the gospel message that we're saved by grace through faith alone obviously brings up the question, well then, what of works? If works don't contribute to our salvation, what's their importance in the Christian life? And I think the answer to the question is that we're not saved by works, but because we're saved, therefore,

we will work... It's not a matter of being moral in order to become a Christian, but being imputed with Christ's righteousness, as a Christian, we then should strive to seek to actualize that which we're already considered to be, that is, Christ-like. And through that process we naturally engage in good works.

Question 10:

Why did Paul interpret the Abrahamic covenant as including a promise that Abraham and his offspring would inherit the whole world?

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

We see in Romans 4 that the apostle Paul interprets the promise of inheritance for Abraham and his offspring to include the whole world. And that may surprise us at first. We think of the Promised Land as only a strip of real estate along the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. But this is really of a piece of the way Paul understands the Abrahamic covenant to be global, to be worldwide. So often he will talk about the seed, the children of Abraham, including not just his biological descendants, but really those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham, that is, the footsteps of faith, who trust in the promises of God. In fact, Paul emphasizes that not only Jew but also Gentile who believe in Christ are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to God's promise — the end of Galatians 3. So when Paul says in Romans 4 that the promises that Abraham's children, by faith, will inherit the whole world, he's really just extending that same understanding, that in a certain sense what we call the Promised Land was just a microcosm of a new heavens and a new earth that God had promised to bring his people into; of course, promised through Isaiah's prophecy, Isaiah 65, 66. We hear it echoed in the New Testament. And the preacher, the author to the Hebrews, sees things the same way. He talks about the patriarchs, Abraham and his son and grandson, as looking forward to, longing for, not an earthly homeland but a heavenly homeland, something that far outstrips a physical inheritance that God has in store for his people in the new heavens and the new earth.

Dr. Chip McDaniel

It's pretty much recognized that when God gave the promise to Abraham it covered three areas: the land, the seed, and the blessing. When we trace these through the Old Testament, we see that there's very much a physical application to these promises. And so, the seed is seen in terms of the number of children — there's the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens. The blessing is that anyone who honors the Israelite or honors the Israelite's God would be blessed, when we trace through the Old Testament. And then the land is very much a geographic part of the ancient Near East. And so, there's a physical focus to this promise. When we come to the New Testament, we have a paradigm shift in that we go from the physical to the spiritual. And so, for example, the concept of the seed is fulfilled in the singular Christ, and then anyone who is related to Christ, anyone who has the faith of Abraham, is a child

of Abraham. And so, that fulfills the seed promise to Abraham; it's now not physical but it's spiritual according to Galatians 3 and 4. So, we have Sarah as our mother, for example, we're like Isaac, we're inheritors of the promise. That would be the "seed" — Christ and those who are Christ's. The blessing portion, Paul tells us in Galatians 3, is justification by faith that is preached among the Gentiles. That would be the blessing that would go throughout the entire earth. And so, what was promised to Abram in a very physical way is now expanded to be the seed, that is to be the blessing, rather, that is found in the gospel being presented throughout the entire world... The promise of the land is also given a spiritual application in the New Testament. Jesus will say, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." That's usually interpreted to mean that in the future those who are believers will rule and reign with him and, in that sense, will rule over the earth. But I think Paul has a spiritual application as well today... Paul will tell the Corinthians that they're not to focus on individual particulars and quibble about those because everything is theirs, and it mentions the earth, it mentions the future, it mentions the present, but that whole idea of the entire world belongs to the Christian. And I would correlate this with the Great Commission, that Christ has all authority, he sent us into all the world; the whole world is his and, in that sense, the whole world is ours to serve in as well. And so, when we come to the promise of a land, again it's this shift from the physical to the spiritual, between the Old and New Testament, and we are possessors of the land at this time as well.

Question 11:

What benefits does Christ provide for us in the new covenant?

Dr. Mark Saucy

The benefits that we get from the new covenant from Jesus, I think, start to be enumerated right in the original passage of the new covenant, or at least where that term is used in the Old Testament, that's Jeremiah 31. In verse 33 and 34 there is an enumeration, or a listing, of the benefits that come in the new covenant that would be coming in the age to come. And it starts out with the law written in your hearts. And then you have, if you bring in other passages, about the law is going to be written by the Spirit that God is going to put within the individual in their hearts. Then it moves into questions of knowledge of God. And then it will move into, also, questions of the access that we have to God. And, I think in the Prophets, it also moves into things that are going to happen socially through a restored nation, and it's going to affect all nations and finally the world. And so, we bring these to Christ. Christ is the one who poured out the Spirit at his ascension. That's what Pentecost was about. That is what makes and activates the new covenant age finally for all people who will be found in it by faith. And so, what he does in regeneration, what he does on the heart, what he makes us with a new love, all of the language of the New Testament, that's new covenant promise that Jesus has already initiated. The knowledge of God, powerful demonstration of this is when the temple veil rent at the crucifixion that showed that the system that was mediating access to God by a cast, by a priestly cast, by calendar,

by clean and uncleanness definitions of the old covenant, those are done now and access is now in a new open way. God welcomes us without a priesthood, without coming on a particular day. And so, this kind of knowledge of God is... And the most profound benefit — I would go back to that passage in Jeremiah — is in verse 34 where he says, “Because I will forgive your sins.” There is the foundation of the new covenant, and there is where we see the interface of the crucifixion, the cross of Christ, to the new covenant reality in the life. The sin problem God solved, and so all of the other benefits could be poured out.

Dr. Charles L. Quarles

There are a couple of key Old Testament passages when it comes to understanding the new covenant; one is Jeremiah 31, the other is Ezekiel 36. Other texts discuss the new covenant, but these are the fundamental ones. And those texts show us that the new covenant has two primary foci. On the one hand, the new covenant promises the forgiveness of sins. Ezekiel 36 speaks of us being cleansed of our iniquities and our uncleanness. Jeremiah 31:34 speaks of God remembering our sin no more. So, obviously there’s a big focus on the forgiveness of sin, and that’s normally our focus when we speak of the new covenant. But the new covenant actually entails far more. Not only is there forgiveness of sin but there is a radical transformation of the person that results in a dramatic change in behavior. And Jeremiah says it this way; he says that God will write his law upon our hearts. And the idea is that the very heart is transformed so that we begin to naturally and spontaneously exhibit the righteousness of God’s own character. Ezekiel said it a little bit differently, but the point is the same; he said that God would give us a new heart, and he said that God would grant us the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit would move us to keep God’s commandments and fulfill his ordinances. And Jesus does both. Through his sacrificial death, he provides for us forgiveness of sin. But in addition to that, he fulfills the promise of John the Baptist where he says, “The one who is coming after me is mightier than I am... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit,” referring back to the promise of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36. And when Christ writes God’s law upon our hearts, when he places his Holy Spirit in us, it changes our very identity, it changes our very nature so that we begin to naturally and spontaneously exhibit the character of the holy God.

Dr. David B. Garner

Paul recognizes that the heart of the gospel, as he articulates in 1 Corinthians 15, is that, according to the Scriptures, Jesus died, was buried, and on the third day, according to the Scriptures, he raised from the dead. And so, what we find in the New Testament is that the *events* of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ take center stage... So, what are the implications for us as we consider the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Well, Paul says that his resurrection *is* our resurrection. In fact, he will argue it the other way around. He will say that if we are not resurrected, then Jesus wasn’t resurrected either. So sure is he about our solidarity with Jesus Christ, he will say that Christ’s resurrection power is actually in our possession right now. The implications are astounding, because what we now have at our disposal by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ is the power, actually, to say

“yes” to Christ, to say “yes” to God’s expectations upon us. No longer is the law merely something that condemns, but by the outpouring of the Spirit in fulfillment of the new covenant realized in the resurrected Christ who is the life-giving Spirit, we are empowered, we are enabled, we are motivated now to respond in obedience to God in Christ. So, our union with Christ actually fleshes itself out in the way in which we walk in a delighted obedience, and knowing that when we sin, oh, we have an advocate with the Father who stands and lives ever to intercede for us. But in that reality, in that repentance, as we enjoy that forgiveness, we are compelled once again to live in the dynamic of resurrection power because Jesus Christ is raised, and we are raised with him.

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