

Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin
(Translation by Henry Beveridge)
Men's Theology Study – August 18, 2021 – 6:30 pm

Book 2 – Of the knowledge of God the Redeemer, in Christ, as first manifested to the fathers, under the law, and thereafter to us under the gospel.

Chapter 9 – Christ, Though Known to the Jews under the Law, Yet Only Manifested under the Gospel

I. The Grace of Christ Anticipated and Manifested (s. 1-2)

DQ: What are the theological implications if there were different methods of salvation before and after Christ?

- a. The advantages of the new covenant community (s. 1)
 - i. The types and shadows of the OT revealed the one and the same God as is in the NT.
 - ii. The Law kept the pious in the OT in anticipation.
 - Calvin: “They had only a slight foretaste; to us is given a fuller fruition.”
 - Mal 4:2, “But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.”
 - 1 Pet 1:10-12, “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”
 - John 5:46, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.”
 - Matt 13:17, “For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”
 - iii. The pious of the OT believed in the Gospel too.
 - Calvin: The pious who previously died before Christ are not excluded “from a participation in the knowledge and light which are manifested in the person of Christ...”
 - iv. Walk in the bright light of Christ.
 - Calvin: “More shameful and more detestable, therefore, is the ingratitude of those who walk blindfold in this meridian light.”
 - 2 Cor 4:3-4, “...even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of

unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

b. What the Gospel preaches (s. 2)

i. The two-fold sense of the Gospel.

- Forgiveness
 - “...includes all the promises by which God reconciles men to himself...”
 - “...comprehends the evidences of mercy and paternal favor which God bestowed on the patriarchs...it is applied to the promulgation of the grace manifested in Christ.”
- Fulfillment
 - 2 Tim 1:8-10, “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”
 - Calvin: Regarding the pious in the OT, “...these promises were sealed upon their hearts; yet because he has in his flesh completed all the parts of our salvation, this vivid manifestation of realities was justly entitled to this new and special distinction.”

II. Refuting Errors on the Relation of Law and Gospel (s. 3-4)

DQ: How does inaugurated eschatology impact our theology of justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification?

a. The promises of God are not abrogated for us (s. 3).

i. Calvin condemned Servetus for false teaching.

- “He pretends, that by the faith of the gospel all the promises have been fulfilled; as if there was no distinction between us and Christ.”
- To extol Christ, he abolished “...the promises entirely, as if they had come to an end at the same time with the Law.”
- Servetus was tried and convicted for heresy in Geneva, which was a capital offense. Calvin’s role in trial and execution are disputed.

ii. Tensions in the Already-Not Yet

- 1 John 3:1-3, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

- Calvin: “Therefore, although Christ offers us in the gospel a present fullness of spiritual blessings, fruition remains in the keeping of hope, until we are divested of corruptible flesh, and transformed into the glory of him who has gone before us.”

DQ: How is the Prosperity Gospel a modern version of this old false teaching?

- iii. Like the pious before Christ, we are still waiting on promises to be fulfilled.
- iv. If the present dispensation of the Gospel is not radically different and new from the dispensation of the Gospel in the OT, then what’s the difference?
 - Calvin: “Only there is this difference to be observed in the nature or quality of the promises, that the gospel points with the finger to what the Law shadowed under types.”
- b. The opposition between the Law and Gospel ought not be exaggerated (s. 4).
 - i. Common Theological Error: Salvation before Christ was by works; salvation after Christ was by grace.
 - Calvin: “...the Gospel has not succeeded the whole Law in such a sense as to introduce a different method of salvation. It rather confirms the Law, and proves that every thing which is promised is fulfilled.”
 - ii. Scripture affirms both that gospel is the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16)” and it was witnessed to by “the Law and the Prophets (Rom 3:21).”
 - Calvin: “Hence we infer, that when the whole Law is spoken of, the Gospel differs from it only in respect of clearness of manifestation.”

III. John the Baptist (s. 5)

DQ: How did John the Baptist had an intermediate office between the Law and the Gospel?

- a. He did pronounce Christ as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29.” Nevertheless, Calvin states, that he did not “...unfold the incomparable power and glory which shone forth in his resurrection...”
- b. Jesus affirmed that John was the greatest of the Prophets, but the least in the kingdom of God is greater than him (Matt 11:11). Why? John could only prepare disciples for Christ.