

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session XIX

February 20, 2011

“IDENTIFICATION” TRUTH: Concluding Summary

God has called Riverwood Bible Church to “rightly divide” (to “accurately handle”) His revealed truth! We believe that we fulfill this divine commission by our method of Biblical interpretation – “literal”. Our teaching is based upon our belief that the original words of Scripture were “inspired” by God Himself, through the ministry of His Spirit, II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21. The Holy Spirit continues His oversight of the Word of God by “guiding” the seeking heart and open mind into the “Truth”, John 16:13-15.

A literal interpretation of the Word of God produces our Church’s system of theological understanding – “Dispensationalism”. We believe that God has progressively revealed Himself through human history. He never changes in “Who” He is or in the “way” He provides redemption, but His dealings with mankind have varied or changed as human history has unfolded. Because God dealt first with mankind as a whole, then with the Israelites as a specific group, and now is dealing with mankind as a whole through the “Gospel”, we recognize different “Dispensations” or administrative stages in His plan and purpose. This is further supported by the fact that He will return to His special dealings with the Jewish nation in the future Millennial Kingdom on this earth.

Over the last five weeks we have observed that Dispensational Theology has two clear points of emphasis which are often not understood by many genuine Christians:

1) Eschatology – the study of “last” or “final” things.

We believe that God is not finished with the nation of Israel. After the “Rapture” of the Church and the Tribulation period here on earth, Jesus Christ will “come again” to this earth, and after defeating His enemies at the Battle of Armageddon, He will establish His earthly “Kingdom” and reign on earth for 1,000 years as “King of kings”!

2) Identification Truth – the study of the N.T. Believer’s “union” with Christ!

We believe that every Christian is placed “into Christ” at the moment of salvation. This position of being “in Christ” is perfect and can never be lost for any reason, so the Believer’s salvation is secure! The Christian also receives the “indwelling” of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation which makes possible a progressive understanding and experience of Jesus Christ as the Believer’s “life” for daily living.

The Believer's "UNION" With Christ: The Contrast Between "Dispensational" And "Covenant" Theology

Dispensational View:

"Believer" placed
"INTO"
Jesus Christ --
His Body, The "Church",
His "Bride"
(Began in N.T. at Pentecost)

Note: Eternal _____!

Covenant/Reformed View:

"Redeemed" placed
"INTO"
The "Church"--
The "Community Of The
Redeemed"
(Began in O.T. after Adam's sin)

Note: No _____!

X
"Salvation"

Key: The Christian life . . .

--Is lived _____ from the Law;
--Is lived from Christ as its _____;
--Is lived from _____!

Key: The Christian life . . .

--Is lived _____ the Law;
--Is lived by H. Spirit's _____;
--Is lived by a _____!

Key Questions: Who is the N.T. Believer?

How does a Child of God live the Christian life?

Helpful Quotations:

Supporting Covenant Theology:

*"During the first one hundred years after the death of Calvin, Covenant Theology evolved, mainly through Zwingli, and became inextricably intertwined with Calvinism. Without the benefit of Scripture, this theology is based upon a single 'covenant of grace', whereby all of Israel's covenants are 'spiritualized', making the Church to be spiritual Israel: 'the continuing covenanted community.' As Martin Lloyd-Jones put it, **Paul is asserting that the Church is now the Kingdom, that what the Jewish nation was in the Old Testament, the Church is now.**"*

--Miles Stanford

“Although Jesus was greater than Moses and although His message was more gospel than law, yet He did choose twelve apostles as the nucleus of a ‘new Israel’ to correspond to the twelve patriarchs and tribes of old.” --John Stott

“Only by loving, fearing, and obeying the law, shall we be kept from sinning. . . . There is an unceasing warfare between the ‘flesh’ and the ‘Spirit’, each bringing forth fruit ‘after its own kind’, so . . . The Believer finds himself alternating between thanking God for deliverance from temptation and contritely confessing his deplorable yielding to temptation.” --Arthur Pink

“Redemption forms a new obligation to law-keeping as well as puts us in a position for it. Yes, Christ ‘hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,’ but certainly not from the law itself; for that would be to redeem us from a Divine rule and guide . . .” --H. Bonar

“Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual respect for God’s law, and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as a ‘rule of life’. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that a Christian has nothing to do with the Law and the Ten Commandments, because he cannot be justified by keeping them. The same Holy Spirit who convinces the Believer of sin by the Law, and leads him to Christ for justification, will always lead him to a spiritual use of the Law in the pursuit of sanctification.” --J.C. Ryle

Supporting Dispensational Theology:

*“(Covenant) Calvinism insists that Jesus taught the spiritual aspects of the Mosaic Law in the Sermon on the Mount, and that he instructed his disciples in that Law. True. Since the disciples were saved, their reasoning goes, **the Church is therefore subject to the Law-teachings of the Sermon. Untrue!** At that time the disciples were not Christians. There was not such a thing as a born-again Christian until the day of Pentecost. These believing disciples were Messianic Jews, saved unto the earthly Kingdom. Their Messiah-King was instructing them concerning the laws of that coming Millennial, theocratic Kingdom.”*

*“No Christian ever was, ever is, nor ever will be under law, whether Mosaic, Messianic, or Millennial! Arminianism (Methodist and Pentecostal theology) and Calvinism (Presbyterian theology) may put the Christian under law, the Believer may put himself under law as his rule of life, **but the Lord Jesus never did, and the Holy Spirit never will.**”*

*“Law demands everything, but gives and changes nothing – it is meant to condemn . . . **Christianity is a NATURE, not a REGULATION!**”* --Miles Stanford

*“It should be made emphatic that to observe ‘distinction’ between Judaism and Christianity is the beginning of wisdom in understanding the Bible. Theologians of past generations have made no greater mistake than to suppose, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that Judaism and Christianity are one and the same, or as some have said, ‘One is the bud and the other is the blossom.’ Judaism **has not merged** into Christianity. This is a colossal error of Covenant Theology perpetuated to the present day.”*

--Lewis Sperry Chafer

A Note on “Moderate Calvinism”:

“Most doctrinally sound Believers today class themselves as ‘Moderate Calvinists’. They hold the Biblical doctrines of total depravity, unconditional election, and eternal security. But in general, they believe in limited atonement; they are premillennial and pretribulational – Dispensational.”

*“The overpowering characteristic of all Calvinism, of whatever stripe, is **law**. All Calvinistic Believers are kept **under law** as their ‘rule of life’. And it must be said that the one teaching that Calvinism **does not** have is a clear-cut, scriptural separation from the **law**. Believers are not protected from the **demands of the law**, and they are **not established in grace**.”*

*“How sad it is to see some Moderate Calvinists break down their Dispensationalism and **take Believers back** to the Sermon on the Mount – seeking to apply that coming-Kingdom **law** in an effort to **regulate their Christian life**. A leader who understands the **source** of spiritual growth -- ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ (Rom. 8:2) -- would never resort to that. . . . Calvinism will go as far as the Cross for salvation, but then it **turns back** to the Sermon on the Mount and to much of the Old Testament, in order to have a ‘**rule**’ for the Christian life.”*

--Miles Stanford

Warning:

*“Where these . . . identification truths are unknown to the Believer, he finds no alternative but to try to **keep the law** as a ‘rule of life’. This erroneous expedient consists of applying the principle of law for the control of conduct – its prohibitions for **self**, its commands for life. But the Scriptures teach us that the Holy Spirit, ‘the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’, **ministers Christ to us, not law**. . . . Most of the depressing ‘**law burden**’ placed on Believers emanates from Calvinism and its Covenant Theology.”*

*“This theology **prevents** the Christian from seeing and freely taking his stand as having **died to the law** and being now **alive to God in the Lord Jesus**.”*

--Miles Stanford

Application:

This contrast between “Covenant/Reformed” and “Dispensational” Theology explains much of the _____ in Evangelical Churches today and much of the _____ and _____ among sincere Christians!

The N.T. Believer's "POSITION" In Christ

A. The Biblical "Facts" Of Identification:

"You don't know, you can't grow!"

The Believer Is "IN" Christ!

"This is our position!"

--It is perfect, eternal, unchanging!

1. "Death"

--Separation from Adam,
"self", as the source of life!

*"Knowing this, that our old self was
crucified with Him . . ." Rom. 6:6*

--Freedom from the power
of sin!

*". . . in order that our body of sin might
be done away with (rendered powerless) . . ."
Rom. 6:6*

2. "Life"

--Union with Christ
as the source of life!

*"For you have died and your life
is hidden with Christ in God . . ."
Col. 3:3*

--Manifestation of Christ
In daily life!

*". . . Christ lives in me . . ."
Gal. 2:20*

B. The Believer's "Experience":

"Reckoning" → Exercising faith by resting on the facts!

→ This determines our "condition"!

--It is imperfect, temporal, changing!

1. To Know and Reckon:

--This "knowledge" becomes a heart-attitude (a daily consciousness).
I have "died" to sin; I am "alive" in Christ to God!

2. To Abide and Rest:

--To "abide" is to "rest" where we have been created in Christ.
We are in "union" with our risen Lord, as a "Branch" in the "Vine",
allowing His "Life" to flow through me as a natural process – bearing fruit!

3. To Depend and Walk:

--This is a "choice" and produces "conscious awareness" of dependence upon
the Holy Spirit who applies the crucifixion of the Cross to the old man and
ministers the life of Christ to the new man.

*"It is the work of the Holy Spirit to block self and its sinful world, and to foster the
new life and its fruit."
--Miles Stanford*

A Common Cause Of “Failure”

1. The Cause: “ _____ ” of “ _____ ”!

Why?

- a. “ _____ ”
- b. “ _____ ”
- c. “ _____ ”

--Key: We wait until we feel we “ _____ ” God’s _____ !

d. “Love of _____ ”

--Key: We really are not _____ of “ _____ ”!

2. The Cure: “ _____ ” for “ _____ ”!

a. A _____ of “Self”;

b. A _____ of “Reckoning”!

“Our hatred of self is actually developed and strengthened during our miserable years of slavery to it. We never realize the necessity and value of Romans 7 failure while we are in its throes. It is normal and healthy to begin the Christian life victoriously, but in those infant days we know little or nothing about self, and little enough of the Lord Jesus. To rectify this deficiency, the Holy Spirit reveals the carnality of self – that we may ultimately grow into the maturity of Christ. Through this practical revelation of the sinfulness of self we gain the knowledge of the holiness of Christ and our need for counting on Him as our life. Until we thoroughly hate and distrust self, we are not fully able to love and trust the Lord Jesus. Conversely, the more we grow to love Him, the more clearly do we see self for what it is. All through our earthly life, the Holy Spirit will be allowing us to get into situations where we will discover ever deeper manifestations of the old source. For this reason He develops within us the proper ‘mind’ – the mind to suffer in the flesh, rather than yield to the flesh. . . . It takes a real hatred of the old life, coupled with a deep hunger for the new, to be able to glory in the Cross that crucifies.”

--Miles Stanford