

Countryside Baptist Church, Pasig City

Baptist Ministerial Seminary

Sunday Seminary Lecture on **The Church Covenant**

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Lesson 2: Church Covenant, Paragraph 1 (part 1)

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The Church as COVENANT COMMUNITY

1. Voluntarily Pledged
2. Regularly Gathered
3. Instructionally Ordered
4. Divinely Mandated

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

Having been led by the Spirit of God. . . Election to Salvation

Review: Order of Salvation (Ephesians 1.3-14; Romans 8:28-30)

1. God's Decree: Election to salvation
2. Christ's Atonement (see Lessons in Doctrine of Christ)
3. Application of salvation
 - a. Effectual Call by the Father
 - b. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit
 - c. Conversion of the Sinner: Faith and Repentance
4. Blessings of salvation

Objective

- (a) Justification
- (b) Adoption
- (c) Reconciliation

Subjective

- (a) Sanctification
- (b) Perseverance
- (c) Glorification

Propositions on Election unto Salvation

It is sovereign in its ground

1. It is based on God's good pleasure (Matt. 11.26, 27; Eph. 1.5, 11)
Term: *eudokia* – combination of the freeness and goodness of the act of the will. . . The decision was not a necessity; but when made, it gave favors. . . Rom. 10.1
Point: The good pleasure is antecedent (before the occurrence) to all external considerations
2 Tim. 1.9 = There was already purpose/grace before time
2. It excludes any foreseen condition in man as cause (or stimulus) of election
Wrong concept: God elected those in whom He has foreseen faith, repentance, etc.
 - (a) The Bible denies this in explicit terms. Rom. 9.11-16
 - (b) This concept militates against the essence of grace – the elect are themselves undeserving. Matt. 11.25ff; 1 Cor. 1.26f

- (c) The graces of the Christian are fruits of election, never the cause
Acts 13.48, Eph. 1.4, Heb. 8.10, 11

It is eternal in its origin

Point: It was not made at any point of human history. . . It is a decree of eternity past

1. It is amply affirmed in the Scriptures. Eph. 1.4, 2 Thess. 2.13, 2 Tim. 1.9
2. All other saving acts of God in history find their original intent in God's election
 - ▣ The Christ-event = 1 Peter 1:18-20; Rev. 13.8
 - ▣ Preaching of the gospel – Titus 1.1-3; Eph. 3.8-11

It has salvation for its purpose

Important Distinction: Purpose of election vs. result of election

1. The purpose by itself does not save. . . No one may presume on his election as ground of assurance
2. The purpose precedes the actual result of salvation, but the consciousness is born of results. Rom. 8.29; Eph. 1.4; 1 Thess. 1.4ff; 2 Thess. 2.13; 2 Tim. 1.9; 1 Pet. 1.2

Implications

1. The credit of salvation must be attributed to God's sovereign purpose. 1 Cor. 1.26-30
2. The visible assurance of election is conversion and evidence of holiness

It is infallibly certain in its result

Point: The purpose of eternity cannot be frustrated by events in time

Scriptures: John 6.37-40; John 10.16; Acts 13.48

as we believe, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith. . . Saving Faith

Preliminary

Note: Faith is the first conscious response of the sinner to the gospel, e.g. Justification by faith alone (Sola Fide)

- ▣ It is definitive of the genuineness of conversion
- ▣ It is also characteristic of the whole of the Christian life

New Testament: noun = *pistis*; verb = *piseuô*

Major NT Usage: That response to the gospel which appropriates its salvation promise.

Formal Definitions

What is true faith? – True faith is not only a sure knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us hi His Word, but also a hearty trust, which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of Grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits. (Heidelberg Catechism, Q21)

Components of Saving Faith

1. Knowledge (*notitia*)
Point: Faith has an intellectual content. On this level, faith understands the meaning of gospel propositions
 - ▣ Faith is *'believing that.* . . ► followed by a proposition that is believed. . . Jn. 20.31; Rom. 10.9; 1 Thess. 4.14; 1 Jh. 5.1

■ To believe is sometimes synonymous with 'to know'. Jn. 17.3; Phil. 3:8-10; 1 Jh. 5.20
Point: The value of faith derives solely from the truth of its object. . .not a self-authenticating force within

■ The Bible warns against the possibility of false faith. Jn 2.23ff; 2 Cor. 11.26; Gal. 2.4

■ The expression *the faith* in the NT is a reference to the objective cluster of beliefs. 2 Cor. 13.5; Eph. 4.13

2. Assent (*assensus*)

Point: Faith gives intellectual assent (approval; conviction) to the proposition that is known
Scripture: Hebrews 11:1 – “substance” = confidence or realization; “evidence” . . .On the level of assent, faith sees the proposition as evidently true. . .

Beware: The reveals the danger of pressuring a decision of believing, without persuading of the truth. . .

Pastoral Point: We evoke faith by intelligent persuasion, not by manipulative promotion. .
.2 Cor. 5.11

3. Trust (*fiducia*)

Point: The distinctive of saving faith is *trust* in the substance of the proposition – the Person/Work of Christ.

Scripture:

■ Knowledge alone is not saving faith. . .James 2.19ff (the demons believe)

■ Assent alone is not saving faith. . .Acts. 26.27, 28 (Agrippa believed the prophets, but not Christian)

■ The offer of the gospel invites trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord. Rom. 10.9ff

Pastoral Point: By emphasizing trust, the whole issue now revolves on the merit and truth of the object of trust. Faith is not an act of merit, it is an act that abandons all merit in self, and casts it on Christ!

Propositions

1. Faith is the gracious gift of God

Scriptures: Jh. 6.63-65, Acts 3.16, Acts 3.16; Acts. 14.16; Acts 14.27; Phil. 1.29; Eph. 2.8

Point: It highlights that faith has no merit of its own. . .

2. To believe is the responsibility of all sinners

Objection: The doctrine of total inability seems to contradict human responsibility

Answer: His inability arises from his depravity, and therefore remains a culpable inability

Point: The fact that faith is God's gift must not diminish the responsibility of man to exercise it. It is commanded

Scriptures: Mk. 1.15; Jn. 3.16-18; 20.31; Acts 16.31; 20.21; Rom. 1.16

3. The grace of faith is capable of growth and fluctuation in the believer's life