

The Whole Christ

By Sinclair Ferguson

Lesson 3: Preparation, Distortion, Poison (Chapter 3)

Last week we discussed how the gospel was being distorted as people were _____ Christ from the benefits of salvation. We are going to continue to examine this issue.

Preparation-The thought that one must prepare themselves first _____ they can receive the gospel

“There was an additional danger in the paradigm that separated Christ and His benefits and tended to make the subjective work of the Spirit in the elect the condition of the offer of the gospel.”

The errors of this “preparationism” can be seen in these following statements:

“You may know these benefits-if you are among the elect.”

“You may receive forgiveness-if you have sufficiently forsaken sin.”

“You may know the message of grace-if you have experienced a sufficient degree of conviction of sin.”

“Repentance, turning from sin, and degrees of conviction of sin do not constitute the grounds on which Christ is offered to us. They may constitute ways in which the Spirit works as the gospel makes its impact on us, but they never form the warrant for repentance and faith.”

“Slowly this way of thinking about the ordo salutis may drift into what is sometimes referred to as ‘the steps of salvation’ in which a quasi-chronological order of experience precedes actual faith...And there the questions arise, How much conviction of sin, or sorrow for sin, or turning away from sin is required before the next steps or phase can begin?”

We must see _____ blessings as being connected to and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ferguson then quotes John Owen who wrote:

“No certain rule or measure of them can be prescribed as necessary...unto conversion...perturbations, sorrows, dejections, dreads, fears, are no duty unto any;...God is pleased to exercise a prerogative and sovereignty in this whole matter, and deals with souls of men in unspeakable variety. Some He leads by the gates of death and hell unto rest in His love...and the paths of others He makes plain and easy unto them. Some walk or wander long in darkness; in the souls of others Christ is formed in the first gracious visitation.”

Distortion-The problem with preparationism is that it is ultimately a reflection of a _____ view of God

“One of the dangers Boston recognized was that this conditionalism feeds back into how we view God Himself. It introduces a layer of distortion into His character. For it is possible to see that no conditions for grace can be met by us yet still hold to a subtle conditionality in God’s grace in itself.”

“This comes to expression when the gospel is preached in these terms:

‘God loves you because Christ died for you!’

How do those words distort the gospel? They imply that the death of Christ is the reason for the love of God for me. By contrast the Scriptures affirm that the love of God for us is the reason for the death of Christ...The Son does not need to do anything to persuade the Father to love us; He already loves us!”

“If this is the atmosphere in which we preach the gospel and people respond to it, a suspicion of the Father may linger long and prove to be a serious hinderance in the course of the Christian life.”

Poison-Where does this distorted view of God come from? It comes from the poisonous _____ that our first parents believed and that now color and guide how we naturally think.

Satan convinced Adam and Eve to believe that God was _____ good but was in-fact selfish. He claimed God did not truly care about them and that His word simply was not true and shouldn't be trusted.

“Thus the lie was an assault on both God’s generosity and His integrity. Neither His character nor His words were to be trusted. This, in fact, is the lie that sinners have believed ever since...The gospel is designed to deliver us from this lie. For it reveals that behind and manifested in the coming of Christ and His death for us is the love of a Father who gives us everything He has; first, His Son to die for us and then His Spirit to live within us.”

_____ of the gospel must be aware that when they have a distorted understanding of the gospel, and, therefore God, it will impact how the _____ views the gospel and God.

“In the nature of the case there is a kind of psychological tendency for Christians to associate the character of God with character of the preaching they hear-not only in substance and content of it but the spirit and atmosphere it conveys.”

“What is a godly pastor, after all, but one who is like God, with a heart of grace; someone who sees God bringing prodigals home and runs to embrace them, weeps for joy that they have been brought home, and kisses them-asking no questions-no qualifications or conditions required?”

The Marrow of Modern Divinity

By Edward Fisher (notes by Thomas Boston)

Chapter 2-The Law of Faith (the Covenant of Grace)

Evangelista then continue his discussion of the Covenant of Grace by showing how it progressed from the Garden to _____, from Abraham to Israel (Jacob), and from Israel to Moses.

Evan. *“For the general substance of the duty, the law delivered on Mount Sinai, and formerly engrained on man’s heart, was one and the same; so that at Mount Sinai the Lord delivered no new thing, only it came more gently to Adam before his fall, but after his fall came with thunder.”*

Nomista starts asking questions about whether the nation of Israel was _____ to keep the law and if not what purpose it served to give the people again a law that could not be attained and had already been broken.

Evan. *“So they seeing an impossibility of obtaining life by that way of works, first appointed in paradise, they might be humbled, and more heedfully mind the promise made to their father Abraham, and hasten to lay hold of the Messiah, or promised seed...It was added to better advance and make effectual the covenant of grace...God made it with the Israelites for no other end, than that man, being thereby convinced of his weakness, might flee to Christ.”*

Nomista then responds like any good disciple of Pelagius would and argues that it seems strange for God to give the people a law to obey if they were not able to obey...it seems _____ for Him to act like this (giving false hope).

Evan. *“In short, to make them see the terms under which they stood, that so they might be brought out of themselves, and expect nothing from the law, in relation to life, but all from Christ...Therefore it was needful that the Lord should deal with them after such a manner to drive them out of themselves, and from all confidence in the works of the law; that so, by faith in Christ, they might obtain righteousness and life.”*