

Title: FIVE SUBTLE HERESIES OF REFORMED DOCTRINE
Text: Colossians 2:8
Reading: Colossians 2:1-23
Subject: The Errors of Reformed Theology
Date: Sunday Morning - November 2, 1997
Tape # U-18

Introduction:

My text is Colossians 2:8.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Colossians 2 (AV)

We warned repeatedly to beware of false religion, false doctrine, and false prophets. Here Paul urges us to beware of those who would spoil us the deceitful religious philosophies and traditions of men, particularly those who would bring us back under the rudiments of the world, that is to say, those who would make us subservient to carnal ceremonialism, sacramentalism, and legalism.

This warning is given and given repeatedly because we are all naturally prone to idolatry and works religion. **Did you ever notice how often in the Old Testament the Lord warned those who worshipped him that they must never, at any time or for any reason, put their hands upon those things which typified our Lord Jesus Christ and his great work of redemption?**

- Exodus 20:25-26, Numbers 5:15, Deuteronomy 27:5, Joshua 8:30-31, 1 Kings 6:7, 1 Chronicles 13:9-10

Exodus 20:25-26 "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. (26) Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."

Numbers 5:15 "Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth *part* of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it *is* an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance."

Deuteronomy 27:5 "And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up *any* iron *tool* upon them."

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Joshua 8:30-31 "Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, (31) As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up *any* iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings."

1 Kings 6:7 "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither **hammer** nor ax *nor* any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building."

1 Chronicles 13:9-10 "And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. (10) And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God."

There is one form of religion that is even more subtle than Arminianism and just as deadly, one form of religion which more subtly promotes the mixture of works with grace than any other. That is what men call Reformed Theology, or the Reformed Faith, or Reformed Doctrine. I am fully aware that those who call themselves Reformed profess to believe the doctrines of grace:

- Salvation By Grace Alone.
- Divine Predestination.
- Total Depravity.
- Unconditional Election.
- Particular Redemption.
- Effectual Grace.
- Perseverance of the Saints.

I also realize that the Reformed faith has become very popular, especially among smug religious people who think of themselves as academically superior intellectuals. I am fully aware that in preaching this message, I will incur the wrath of many. But the message has been on my heart and mind for months and must be delivered.

My concern is for you for whom I am responsible before God. I am concerned for the welfare of your souls. My concern is for the glory of God. And my concern is for the gospel of the grace of God. Therefore, I cannot be silent when these things are at stake.

Everywhere I go, hear people talk about the Reformed Faith. Those who do, usually talk more, much more, about the Reformed Faith, the reformers, the Reformation, and the Puritans than they do about the Bible,

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the grace of God, or Christ. I am weary of it. **I want you and all who hear my voice to understand that...**

- We are not Protestants.
- We are not reformed.
- We are Baptists.

When I speak of Reformed Doctrine, the Reformed Faith, or Reformed Theology, I am basically talking about Presbyterianism as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith. In recent years a denomination has arisen called Reformed Baptists. In reality, for the most part, they are not Baptists at all, but just ducking Presbyterians. They hold to reformed theology in all areas except baptism.

As you know, we have no confession of faith but the Word of God, no creed but Holy Scripture. I do not say that with any superficial air of superiority, but simply as a matter of fact. Our only rule of faith and practice is the Word of God. However, as I said, this message has been on my mind a good bit lately. So for the past several weeks I have been carefully studying those confessions of faith most commonly accepted as the doctrinal standards of both Presbyterians and Reformed Baptists: The Westminster Confession and the 1689 Baptist Confession. You will be shocked to discover the heresies cleverly packaged in them. **I am bringing this message to you because these things are not matters of indifference.** They are matters vital to the gospel.

Proposition: Any teaching that mixes, to any degree or at any point, the grace of God and the works of man in the affair of salvation totally denies salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Rom. 11:6).

Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

NOTE: Before I proceed further, let me be clarify one thing. I know that there are some Presbyterians and some Reformed Baptists who may not fit the mold presented in these confessions. If so, I am not talking about them. I am talking about those who believe the heresies I am about to discuss.

I want to show you five subtle heresies of reformed doctrine. I will not build a straw man, just to knock him down I leave that deceitful practice to others. I will give you their own words from their own confessions, in the context and order in which they are given. As I said earlier, Reformed Baptists are really just ducking Presbyterians. They

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would really like to be Presbyterians. They just cannot find a way to justify infant baptism. In fact, the 1689 confession of faith adopted by the Reformed Baptists of our day is almost identical with the Westminster Confession (1646), except on the subject of Baptism.

Divisions: Generally, I prefer to deal with things from a positive position. Rather than pointing out what is wrong with this doctrine or that, I prefer simply to declare the truth of the gospel. But, as our Lord warned of the Nicolaitanes, and Paul warned against Judaizers, it is sometimes necessary to identify heresy and heretics with specific clarity, so that you will know exactly what I am talking about. Here are the five heresies of reformed doctrine which I want to warn you about today. When you leave here, I want you to know precisely why we refuse to practice these things, believe them, or participate in any way with those who do.

1. The Heresy of Necessary Consequence
2. The Heresy of Conditional Grace
3. The Heresy of Self-Righteous Assurance
4. The Heresy of Legalism
5. The Heresy of Sacramentalism

I. THE HERESY OF NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE

I know that most of you are scratching your heads, saying, "What on earth is the heresy of necessary consequence?" It is the doctrine which says that the Bible alone is our only rule of faith and practice, that is to say, that which is written in the Bible and that which is logically and rationally deduced from the Bible. This is the first great error of Protestant theology. The Reformers retained this little bit of Romanism which led to the retention of much more.

In the 1689 Baptist Confession we read, "**The sum total of God's revelation concerning all things essential to His own glory, and to the salvation and faith and life of men, is either explicitly set down or implicitly contained in the Holy Scripture.**" In other words, God's Word must be supplemented by our reason and logic to determine our faith and practice!

The Westminster Confession is even more specific. "**The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.**"

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It is this doctrine of necessary consequence which allows churches and preachers to devise their own creeds and confessions and causes them to hold their creeds and confessions above the Scriptures, making void the Word of God by their traditions!

The Word of God states the matter with dogmatic clarity. Our only rule of faith and practice is the Word of God. We must add nothing to it. We must take nothing from it (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19).

Deuteronomy 4:2 "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

Deuteronomy 12:32 "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

2 **Timothy** 3:16-17 "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Revelation 22:18-19 "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: (19) And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."

We have absolutely no right to invent doctrine or ordinances of worship. We must believe and practice exactly what is written in the Word of God, not what was written and what we deduce should have been written!

- If I cannot show you where a thing is stated in Holy Scripture, I have no right to believe it, preach it, or compel you to believe it.
- If I cannot show you in the Word of God a precept or an example of an ordinance, administered and practiced in a specific way I have no right to practice it that way, nor do you (Infant Baptism - Sprinkling).

II. THE HERESY OF CONDITIONAL GRACE

I know people will respond to that by saying that I have simply popped my cork. How could anyone dare suggest that those men and churches known everywhere for preaching unconditional election, limited

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atonement, and irresistible grace are guilty of teaching conditional grace? I will show you, again in their own words.

A. First, in the matter of justification, they teach that sinners are justified by the merit of Christ's blood through the instrument of faith.

They tell us that we are justified, not when Christ died for us and satisfied the justice of God, but when we appropriate the work of Christ to ourselves by the instrument of faith.

The Westminster Confession states that "**Faith, receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification.**"

When the Word of God declares that we are justified by faith, it does not make faith a condition or instrument of justification, but the mere recipient. Our justification was accomplished and finished when the Son of God paid our debt and satisfied the justice of God for us at Calvary (Rom. 3:24; 4:25; 5:8-11; Heb. 10:10-14).

Romans 3:24 "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

Romans 4:25 "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Romans 5:8-11 "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Hebrews 10:10-14 "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. (11) And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: (12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; (13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. (14) For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

B. The reformers also make sanctification a conditional, progressive attainment of personal holiness.

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I have no quarrel with anyone teaching that believers grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. You know that. If you and I are born of God, we grow in faith, hope, love, commitment to him, and zeal for his glory. If there is no growth there is no life. But I do object strenuously to the reformed doctrine of progressive sanctification, as stated in their own confessions of faith.

While humbly acknowledging, "there abideth still some remnants of corruption," **The Westminster Confession** says, "They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are **further sanctified, really and personally**, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and **the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.**"

The 1689 Baptist Confession states the heresy even more explicitly. "This personal work of sanctification is indeed carried further...Sin's mastery is completely broken...Evil desires are increasingly weakened...moving towards a fulness of holiness in the fear of God."

I challenge you to find any place in the Word of God which even hints that our sanctification depends upon us, or that we manage through the diligent discipline of personal graces to make ourselves less and less evil and more and more holy, finally attaining that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord!

That holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14) **is Christ!** According to the Word of God, our sanctification is a threefold work of grace - **NOT A WORK OF GOD'S GRACE AND OUR EFFORTS, BUT OF PURE, FREE GRACE ALONE!**

A. We were sanctified by God's sovereign decree in eternal election, when we were set apart for God to be made holy (Jude 1).

Jude 1:1 "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called:"

B. God's elect were sanctified by the blood of Christ (declared to be holy), when he died at Calvary and out away our sins with his own precious blood (Heb. 10:10, 14).

Hebrews 10:10 "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*."

Hebrews 10:14 "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

C. Every chosen, redeemed sinner is sanctified by God the Holy Spirit in the new birth, when he is actually given a holy nature (1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:6-9).

1 **Peter** 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

2 **Peter** 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

1 **John** 3:6-9 "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. (7) Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (8) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

We do not sanctify ourselves. We are sanctified by the grace of God in Christ. Indeed, Christ is our Sanctification (! Cor. 1:30).

III. THE HERESY OF SELF-RIGHTEOUS ASSURANCE

When I speak of self-righteous assurance, I am talking about assurance based upon the presumption of personal holiness. At present I have neither the time nor the desire to quote the reformed confessions fully, but both the Westminster and the 1689 confessions of faith state that the assurance of salvation is something to be attained by personal obedience and lost by disobedience, attained by doing those things that are pleasing to God and lost by grieving the Holy Spirit, attained by a satisfactory examination of one's heart or lost by an unsatisfactory examination.

That certainly was not the case with the apostle Peter, when he said, "*Lord, Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*"

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David's assurance was not based upon his personal holiness, but upon the naked Word of God (Ps. 32; 51; Rom. 4:8).

Biblical assurance is the assurance of faith, not of evidences (Heb. 10:22; 11:1; 1 John 5:9-13).

Hebrews 10:22 "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

1 John 5:9-13 "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. (10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (11) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

IV. THE HERESY OF LEGALISM

There is no heresy I know of that is more inherently evil, causes more difficulties, creates more havoc, or runs more blatantly in the face of Holy Scripture than the teaching that believers are still under the Mosaic law and, consequently, obliged to observe sabbath days, pay tithes, and fear punitive measures in this life and in the life to come if they fail to measure up.

A. First, let me show you what the reformed people say.

Remember I am not, I am not telling you what I think they mean. I am reading to you exactly what they say.

The Westminster Confession reads, "The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof... informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly...the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof."

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Regarding the sabbath day, which they tell us was changed to Sunday, we are told, "This Sabbath is to be kept holy unto the Lord when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations; but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."

That is what the reformed folks say. Let me simply read in your hearing what God says in his Word about the law and sabbath day observance.

B. This is what God the Holy Spirit says in the Book of Inspiration
(Rom. 6:14-15; 7:4; 8:1; 10:4; Gal. 3:13, 24-25; 1 Tim. 1:8-10; Col. 2:16-17).

Romans 6:14-15 "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (15) What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."

Romans 7:4 "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Romans 8:1 "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Romans 10:4 "For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Galatians 3:13 "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:"

Galatians 3:24-25 "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

1 **Timothy** 1:8-10 "But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully; (9) Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, (10) For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;"

Colossians 2:16-17 "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: (17) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ."

There is absolutely no sense in which believers are under the law. In Christ we have been brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

1. The only way sinful men and women can honor God's holy law is by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:31).
2. Believers are motivated and inspired not by law, but by gratitude and love, in serving and worshipping Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Jon 3:23).
3. We keep no sabbath rest except the blessed sabbath of faith in Christ (Heb 4:9-10).

V. THE HERESY OF SACRAMENTALISM

The reformers and Protestants, again retaining the garments of Rome, teach that baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments rather than ordinances of worship. **A sacrament is a religious rite or ceremony by which grace is conveyed to the one who receives it. An ordinance is simply a symbolic picture of grace.** There is a huge difference between the two.

A. Presbyterianism teaches that baptism, as they call it, the sprinkling or pouring of water is a sacrament by which grace is conveyed and sealed to those who receive it.

"Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace... Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, or his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins... Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized." (Westminster Confession) The confession goes on to assert that baptism is properly administered, not by immersion as the word baptize necessitates, but by sprinkling or pouring and that it is to be administered to both believing adults and their unbelieving infants. Yet, it has the same significance to both.

FIVE SUBTLE HERESIES OF REFORMED DOCTRINE *Colossians 2:8***1. There are several things about this doctrine that are horribly evil.**

- There is no biblical precept or precedent for either infant baptism or sprinkling.
- The baby sprinkled is presumed to be regenerate.
- Baptism is never said to seal anyone into the covenant of grace or to seal the grace of the covenant to anyone.
- It destroys the biblical doctrine of conversion.

2. Baptism is an ordinance of divine worship to be administered to believers only, and by immersion only (Acts 8:36-39).

Acts 8:36-39 "And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (37) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (38) And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. (39) And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

- It is a picture of the gospel.
- It is a burial with Christ.
- It is a declaration of faith.

B. Both Presbyterians and Reformed Baptists make the Lord's Supper a sacrament by which, according to the 1689 Baptist Confession, "Those who, as worthy participants, outwardly eat and drink the visible bread and wine in this ordinance, at the same time receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and receive all the benefits accruing from his death."

I do not need to prove to you that that is not the teaching of the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:23-29).

1 Corinthians 11:23-29 "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: (24) And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (25) After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in

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remembrance of me. (26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. (27) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

1. When we eat the bread and wine, we do not feed upon Christ, we remember him.
2. The Lord's Supper does not convey grace, it shows by outward sign how grace is conveyed to sinners.
 - Through the sacrifice of Christ.
 - Received by faith.
3. In the Lord's Supper, as in baptism, that which qualifies us and makes us worthy recipients of the ordinance is faith in Christ, discerning the Lord's body.

Application: These are issues of immense importance. Be sure you understand the teaching of Holy Scripture in these areas.

1. The Word of God alone is our only rule of faith and practice.
2. Salvation is in its entirety by the free grace of God in Christ, without works, conditions, or qualifications of any kind on our part (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

3. In Christ all who believe are forever and entirely free from the law.
 - Its Curse!
 - Its Covenant!
 - Its Constraint!