

# The Promise of the Gospel

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – God has revealed the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners
2. aim – to cause us to seek the true promise of God in Jesus Christ through conversion and faith
3. passage – Genesis 3:15

### b. outline

1. The Predecessor of the Gospel
2. The Promise of the Gospel
3. The Particulars of the Gospel

### c. opening

1. a welcome and **overview** of camp teaching
  - a. **(other pastors)** Chapter 19: “Of the Law” – an overview of the content, division, and value of the law *in the lives of believers* – **i.e.** what the moral code of God *continues* to do in the lives of those who trust Christ *by faith*; why it is still important, even when our salvation is entirely *by faith*
  - b. **(me)** Chapter 20: “Of the Gospel and of the Extent of the Grace Thereof”
    1. the title *itself* is confusing: this chapter is *not* a “parallel” to 19 (as a discussion of law/gospel)
      - a. **i.e.** this chapter is *not* a rendition of the *substance* of the gospel (although it will arise briefly)
      - b. **i.e.** this chapter has *little* in common with 19 (making my messages utterly different)
    2. the keyword is “extent” – the extent of the gospel in terms of *where it is revealed* and *how that revelation comes* – the extent of the grace of God in the gospel
2. an **introduction** to Chapter 20
  - a. this chapter addresses a **particularly unique issue** rising in the W which could/would have *devastating effects* on the propagation and value of the gospel (**i.e.** its extent)
  - b. this chapter is the **first unique chapter** in the 1689 contra the Westminster Confession of 1647 (**i.e.** all of the previous chapters are “cut/paste” from the Westminster) – it is taken from the Savoy Declaration of 1658 (**i.e.** from the Congregationalists; the third group of English Protestants)
3. an **introduction to the period** and its relation to Chapter 20
  - a. the end of the Renaissance (14-17<sup>th</sup> C.) and the beginning of the Enlightenment (18<sup>th</sup> C.)
    1. a period of change in which human beings draw conclusions about the world around them primarily from *science* and *reason*, rather than from *religion* or *theology*
    2. a period of *transition* from the middle ages into the modern era, where the *primary factor* re: the knowledge of man and his world would shift from a view of God (**i.e.** theology) at the center to a view of human beings at the center (**i.e.** humanism)
    3. thus, an understanding of the world would come, not from theological considerations or a biblical worldview, but from observation, empirical data, experimentation, and verification
      - a. **e.g.** Galileo defending a *heliocentric* view of the cosmos vs. Pope Urban VII (1633)
      - b. **e.g.** the publication of *Principia Mathematica* (1687) by Isaac Newton = the foundation of classical mechanics, the laws of motion, of universal gravitation, and of planetary motion
    4. the “power” of this movement was the rise of the Industrial Revolution and the various forms of *representative government* (**e.g.** America in 1776) – the “weakness” was the rise of human-centeredness and the loss of a Christian worldview (**e.g.** the pursuit of happiness)
  - c. this chapter deals with the “pressing” issue now rising at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century:
 

“A general knowledge of the period permits the educated guess that the Puritan authors had already sensed the intellectual tendency which would later produce Deism, with its emphasis on the sufficiency of human reason and natural revelation and its opposition to supernatural revelation and the distinctive tenets of Christianity. Such men wanted to establish a completely rational basis for the existence of God and morality. They disliked the idea that a special revelation given only to some men was necessary to worship and serve God acceptably.” (Sam Waldron, *A Modern Exposition Of The 1689 Baptist Confession Of Faith*. Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2013, pp. 302-303.)

    1. that the rise of *reason* and *science* would produce the tendency in men to think that *they* could “figure out” God for themselves *without the need for a special revelation* – that they could “reason” their way to an understanding of “God” through observation of the *natural world*, and then define (for themselves) how any relationship with that “God” could be accomplished
    2. or (as in the more post-modern sense), that the *abandonment* of God in “any” sense of rational science would eventually lead to a general “atheism,” resulting in this spiritual vacuum being filled with a “version” of religion based entirely on the *subjective* (**i.e.** a “personal” God only)

3. the **content** of Chapter 20
  - a. paragraph #1: the promise of the gospel and its relation to the natural world
  - b. paragraph #2: the revelation of the gospel specifically through the Word of God, not nature
  - c. paragraph #3: the extent of the gospel as God sovereignly determines how and to whom it goes
  - d. paragraph #4: the prerequisite of the gospel as requiring the supernatural work of the Spirit

## I. The Predecessor of the Gospel

### Content

#### a. the definition of the covenant of works

"the covenant of works ..."

1. a **brief** examination of the *first* of the two (2) great covenants established between God and man
  - a. with the other covenants (**i.e.** Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Aaronic, Davidic) being *foreshadows* of the second of these two (2) great covenants, the covenant of grace, *and its progenitor, Christ*
2. the creation of Adam and Eve and the *creation mandate* placed over them (**Gen. 1:26-28**)
  - a. they were to be *fruitful and multiply*, they were to *fill the earth*, they were to *have dominion* over everything on the earth (**i.e.** its content and its inhabitants, including animals *and Satan*)
  - b. they were to remain in *perfect harmony* with their Creator by resisting the eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (**Gen. 2:16-17**) – they were remain *obedient* to him in *all these acts*
  - c. therefore, their "works" of obedience would continue them in the promise of God to *sustain* them and in perfect *harmony and relationship* with him (**note Gen. 3:8**)
  - d. thus, a covenant of works, in which Adam and his race would do all that God had commanded

## II. The Promise of the Gospel

### Content

#### a. the failure of the covenant of works

"... being broken by sin and made unprofitable unto life ..."

1. but, the failure of Adam to *take dominion* over the serpent *and his wife* led to her being tempted away to sin and Adam willingly following her into that sin
2. thus, the covenant of works was broken, and Adam and Eve would no longer be able to *perfectly* carry out the creation mandate and their relationship with God would be broken by their *rebellion*
3. so (**now**) it is no longer possible for any human being to "work" in obedience to God in such a way that he/she can maintain a perfect relationship with God or avoid the consequences of Adam's sin

#### b. the original promise of the gospel

"God was pleased to give forth the promise of the Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling the elect ..."

1. in the curses of God over the participants in the primordial sin (**Genesis 3:14-19**)
  - a. he curses the woman so that, *in her primary help-meet function*, she would endure much pain
  - b. he curses the man no longer in dominion, but under the subjection of *toil and death*
  - c. he curses the serpent into a place of utter humiliation *and in constant struggle with humans*
    1. leading to a *specific individual* who would come and fight against him in an epic "final" battle that he would lose and be utterly humiliated forever
    2. the **proto-evangelium** of **3:15** – the "seed of the woman" being a prophecy of the Christ
2. the "seed" (a "last Adam"; **1 Cor. 15:45**) coming to *complete* what the *first* Adam failed to do
  - a. he would take *dominion* over sin (in sinlessness), death (in resurrection), and the devil (in a new kingdom established under *his* authority over the earth)
  - b. he would be *fruitful and multiply* by calling an elect people to himself, forming a new race of those who belong to him (**Romans 5-6**) and experience (in him) all of the joys of a relationship with God

## III. The Particulars of the Gospel

### Content

#### a. the particulars of the gospel

"... and begetting in them faith and repentance; in this promise the gospel, as to the substance of it, was revealed, and [is] therein effectual, for the conversion and salvation of sinners"

1. the connection of anyone *to Adam* is simply by virtue of being *born a human being* – all are born dead in sin, their sin demonstrates their sinfulness, and death is the inevitable conclusion for all
2. the connection of anyone *to Christ* is through the **turning** of repentance and faith:
  - a. repentance = to *turn from sin*; to repudiate the "lure" of the world of Adam; to open one's hands and "release" the pleasures of this world wrought by the Fall of Adam

- b. faith = to *turn to Christ*, to come to Christ *with an empty hand* of trusting in him as the *only source of relationship with God*; to believe that God “*raised him from the dead*” (i.e. the one in dominion over all things) and that “*he is Lord*” (i.e. the master of a new race in perfect harmony with God)

**b. the revelation of the gospel**

- 1. **principle: the grace of the gospel is his promise – a promise announced at the very outset of creation itself, continuing generation upon generation over those who will trust in Christ through repentance and faith**
  - a. thus, the way by which humanity “finds” relationship with God is not in some *esoteric* knowledge gleaned by the careful study of nature, but through the *grace of God* in a promise established as a part of his decree to create and *revealed at the first moment it was required*
  - b. **IOW:** God’s way to save sinners from the results of the Fall is quite specific and effectual
    - 1. the remainder of the chapter helps fleshes this out *in light* of rationalism and humanism