

HRA Reformation Voice

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THIS ISSUE:

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

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A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

by Howard Sloan

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is one of the greatest travesties of justice in human history. It is a complete miscarriage of justice. Yet at the same time, it is one of the most perfect and complete acts of justice ever. From a human perspective Jesus was, as the thief on the cross admitted, an innocent man. He has “done nothing wrong.”

Yet we can read about his mockery of a trial. Why did Jesus put himself in such a place? Why did He willingly submit himself to human judgment? Or as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it “*Why did He suffer under Pontius Pilate as judge? That He being*

innocent, and yet condemned by a temporal judge, might thereby free us from the severe judgment of God to which we were exposed.” (Q/A 38). Or to put it another way, Jesus though innocent submitted to a guilty verdict in a human court, so that we though guilty would receive an innocent verdict in God’s heavenly court.

But this still only answers half of the question. It still only presents half of the picture. It is easy to see that this was a miscarriage of justice. Pilate could even see it, yet he did not stop it. But we also begin to see how this is the greatest act of justice the world has ever known. It is great because it satisfies the justice of a much higher court. It is great because of its magnificent scope. It is the satisfaction of God’s justice not regarding one man alone, but regarding all of the elect of God.

But this extends far beyond any court room, be it earthly or heavenly. This goes from the judge’s bench to the place of execution. Justice was not just

declared. It was accomplished. The sentence was not just handed down, but also carried out.

Question 40 of the Heidelberg continues this train of thought for us. “**Why was it necessary for Christ to humble himself even unto death?** *Because with respect to the justice and truth of God, satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise than by the death of the son of God.*” I hope you see and appreciate that what God desired to accomplish FOR YOU could be done no other way. This work was God’s to accomplish for you from the beginning to the end.

Q. 38 Why did He suffer under Pontius Pilate as judge?

A. That He being innocent, and yet condemned by a temporal judge, might thereby free us from the severe judgment of God to which we were exposed.

Question 37 helps us even more “*What do you understand by ‘He suffered’? That He, all the time that He lived on earth, but especially at the end of His life, sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins of mankind; that so by His passion, as the only propitiatory [wrath-satisfying] sacrifice, He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation, and obtain for us the favor of God, righteousness, and eternal life.*”

Romans 3:23-26 reminds us of what was accomplished.

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the

present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Do you see that all of this is a gift of God’s grace? Not to be earned. We are given favor with God. We cannot earn it before we are justified, nor can we earn it after. The favor of God is a gift from first to last provided by the righteous life and righteous death of Jesus Christ. The righteousness of Christ credited to us is a gift. Eternal life is a gift. And how great a gift it is. How even greater is the giver.

We have never been saved by faith! Let me say it again. We have never been saved by faith! This may sound wrong to you. This is what we always hear. It is what we have been fed, but it is not what the scriptures say. We have always been saved by God’s grace as a gift. A gift God the Father purchased by the life and blood of His own son. Ephesians. 2:8-9 says *“by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* Faith is how we receive it, but make no mistake about it, our salvation is of grace. It is God providing everything we need to be called His child and part of His kingdom.

This should lead us to radical and free obedience that comes not from seeking God’s favor, but because we have already received it in Jesus Christ. We are innocent, free, righteous, blameless before the Living God. Walk as the children of the light that you are. Put away your sin because your sin has been put away in Jesus Christ.

This should also lead to a radical and free love

for the God who sent His son, and for the son who was sent. Paul tells us in Romans 5:8 *“...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* That is radical love that should create radical love for God in us. In John 14:23 Jesus says *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* These are words of the most intimate kind of fellowship. Who has closer fellowship with us than those who live with us. Here God promises to live with us, and not only with us but in us. Paul again speaks of this kind of love in

“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 *“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”* A deep abiding love that has as its root, anchor, and source the work of Christ done on our behalf.

People of God – serve, honor, love, and glorify the God who has shown you infinite, unconditional love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rev. Howard Sloan is the pastor of St. Paul’s Reformed Church in Bedford, PA. He is also the Coordinating Secretary of the Heidelberg Reformation Association. All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, used by permission. All rights reserved.

WHAT DOES THE RESURRECTION PROFIT US?

by Howard Sloan

Q. 45. What does the “resurrection” of Christ profit us?

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, that he might make us partakers of that righteousness which he had purchased for us by his death; secondly, we are also by his power raised up to a new life; and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.

The Heidelberg Catechism brings up the perfect question for us to answer on Resurrection Sunday. “**What does the resurrection of Christ profit us?**” Or to put it another way “What is the benefit of Christ’s resurrection to us?” The Heidelberg Catechism gives us only three answers.

First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, that he might make us partakers of that righteousness which he had purchased for us by his death;

Romans 4:24-25

It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

1 Cor. 15:15-20

We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have

perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The resurrection speaks to our justification as much as the crucifixion does. Without the resurrection we are hopeless in this life and the next. The grave is simply the end. The resurrection of Christ demonstrates to us He has the power and authority to cancel our sin debt,

and stands as the proof and sign that He actually did just that. The resurrection of Christ declares for all who have ears to hear that the Son of God came down to offer Himself as a sacrifice for many. That God indeed took matters into His own hands and purchased for us righteousness, pardon, and peace.

Secondly, we are also by his power raised up to a new life.

Romans 6:5-11

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we

would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Q. 45. What does the “resurrection” of Christ profit us?

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, that he might make us partakers of that righteousness which he had purchased for us by his death; secondly, we are also by his power raised up to a new life; and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.

Because we are united to Jesus, and Jesus lives, we live with Him. We are raised from the deadness of soul and spirit that we had as part of our fallen, cursed nature, to new life with new purpose. No longer are we bound to sin, we are bound to Christ.

John 10:10

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

This is a life that is abundant in hope, joy, peace, and purpose. Ours is a life that is given over to service. A life given to be spent in fellowship with and worship of God the Father and Jesus Christ His son.

Lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.

Philip. 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

A time is coming when upon Christ's return these earthly bodies will be transformed and fitted for eternity. Maybe our broken down bodies will be risen from the grave or maybe we will be alive at the return of Christ and simply transformed. Whatever the case, renewed and perfect bodies await us. This truth ought to provide comfort for any who suffer in the body in this life, as some of our fellowship certainly do even now. All of us will certainly find ourselves in need of that comfort at some point. But there is more than just what the Heidelberg says in its short and beautiful answer.

I think we also learn that Jesus is faithful to his word.

Luke 24:5-8

And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into

the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words,

Luke records three times where Jesus told the disciples what was to come.

Luke 9:22

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Luke 9:44

"Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

Luke 18:32-33

"For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

That is precisely what happened. *"but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."* (Luke 24:11) Their fear and sadness consumed them to such a degree that they did not remember what Jesus said. But Jesus did tell them.

This reminds us that He is faithful and true. He does not mislead. He does not deceive. He is not a teller of fables or "idle tales". He spoke to his disciples about the most amazing thing that would ever take place. Something so incredible. Something so unbelievable. Yet it is precisely what happened.

Since Jesus told the truth about His resurrection from the dead, following his brutal beating and humiliating death, then everything He said about the forgiveness of our sins, about the Father's love for us, about preparing a place for us, about the Father's providence toward us, about His return to judge must also true.

Finally, it is a cause for great joy.

Matthew 28:5-8

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his

disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

We live in one of those times and places in history when there is not much joy to go around. People are losing their jobs, their life savings, marriages are falling apart, war is all around us. There are so many reasons for us to lose our joy. But our joy is not found in the things of this earth. It is not found in things that can pass away or be changed. Our joy has as its sure foundation the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:8

*Though you have not seen him, you love him.
Though you do not now see him, you believe in him*

and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

This world we live in needs to see that joy now. They need to see in us “joy inexpressible.” They need to see a joy that does not make sense in face of the shifting sands of our current existence. A joy that comes only when we “believe in Him” whom God raised from the dead.

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EMMAUS ROAD

by Howard Sloan

Two disciples are walking and talking as they head to Emmaus. We are unsure why they are going there. They may have lived there, or were just passing through on their way to somewhere else. It really does not matter. Only one is identified for us – Cleopas. The other could be a friend or maybe even his wife. We are not sure. But they have one thing on their minds – the events of the past few days. In the last 72 hours everything they thought they knew and understood had changed. Jesus was dead, . . . or maybe he wasn’t.

They could not get it off of their mind. They were trying to sift through all of the reports they had heard. They knew without a doubt that Jesus was dead and placed in the grave. But now new reports surfaced on this third day.

As they walked and talked, a stranger appears. But He is no stranger. He is the very one they are talking about. He is the one that they are trying to figure out whether He is still dead. But they are unable to see Him for the risen Christ, as the one they are talking about, the one they loved, and the one they missed. Why they are unable to see Him as Jesus is not really spelled out for us. Were they blinded by God, or by their own doubts? Possibly! But here is

Jesus and very soon their sadness and doubts will be washed away. Their hearts will burn with joy and doubt will be replaced by the perfect assurance that Jesus is ALIVE!

As Jesus enters the conversation, He acts as if He does not know what they are talking about. These disciples are stunned. This, after all, is the Top Story is Jerusalem: The execution of Jesus of Nazareth. They recount the facts for him, at least as they see them. First they spoke of what has happened to their beloved Jesus.

Luke 24:19-21

And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.

They were right in calling Jesus a prophet, although we know- and they would see - that He was unlike any prophet before. He did not just speak for

God. He is God in human flesh. The Son of the Most High God. They rightly place the blame on the chief priests, although the Romans were not guiltless in the matter. The disciples also had Him figured to be THE MESSIAH. But now that Jesus is dead, it seems obvious Jesus couldn't be the Messiah. This is where their expectations were wrong. Most everyone's expectations about the Messiah were wrong those days. They were looking for a strong military victory, not the suffering service who died as a sacrifice for sin, even though that is what Isaiah had revealed to them. Then they talk about what they had they had heard that very day.

Luke 24:22-24

Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

They were stunned, confused, and still sad. Could this be true? And what did it mean if it was? Had Jesus really risen from the dead? More than one person had witnessed it. And now standing in their midst was living proof, but they could not yet see it. So this mysterious stranger explains to them what really took place. Not from eyewitness account, but from the Scriptures they already had, and should have known.

Luke 24:25-27

And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

What specific Scriptures Jesus used we do not know. Maybe Genesis 3:15 regarding the serpent and the offspring of Eve.

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."*

Maybe He spoke of the bronze serpent from Numbers. Maybe He recalled the promise to David of the one who will sit on His throne forever. Maybe He expounded on the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Maybe He used all of these and many more. Whatever the case was, Cleopas and his traveling companion wanted to hear more. So they invited Him to stay and dine with them. This is where the veil is removed from their eyes.

Luke 24:30-31

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

It is not clear what it was about this that caused them to be able to see, or even whether it was the action itself. We are tempted to read into this a reference to the Passover meal that Jesus just spent with the apostles just days before. But these two were not of the eleven. They would not have been present at that meal. Perhaps they were present at the feeding of the five thousand. This is certainly possible. Whatever the case they now knew what they had wanted to know. JESUS IS ALIVE! But they had already begun to suspect it before they ever saw Jesus with their eyes.

Luke 24:32

They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Their hearts burned! They could not contain themselves. Their hearts had begun to grow cold in those few days because they had thought all was lost. But in those few hours their hope was regained and they were more joyful and full of love for Christ than they ever had been before. They could not wait to make the journey back to Jerusalem, which just hours before seemed dangerous to do.

Luke 24:33-35

And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then

they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Suddenly, joy unspeakable washes over them. The band of believers were no longer sad.

But what does the news of the resurrection do for you? You may say that you do not know Jesus like those disciples. You have not walked with him. You have not heard his voice. We cannot be expected to have the same burning hearts and joyful countenance. But I say you most certainly can.

1 Peter 1:8-9

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is a call to us to have that deep love for Christ that these first disciples experienced. But we treat Him as if He is alive in theory, but in practice as dead. The resurrected Christ desires fellowship. It is Christ who comes to us. It is Christ who walks with us along the road, and is with us in the mundane moments of our lives. We ought to speak of Him in the every day moments. We fellowship with Him in the treasure chest of His word. As we discover Christ and His love for us in every nook and cranny of His precious word. Christ is indeed there, waiting for us to meet Him. Waiting for us to hear from Him. He is there at the table of remembrance when we break the bread of communion. Jesus Christ lives today just the same as He did on that resurrection day. Jesus Christ still walks with His disciples. He still comforts us in our sadness. He still reveals truth to us in our confusion. He still gives us joy as we fellowship with Him.

If we wonder where is the joy of our salvation? If we wonder why our hearts do not burn with in us as we hear of His resurrection? Perhaps it is because our

relationship to Christ is cold and distant, rather than warm and real. Maybe it is because we do not see Jesus as really with us in the midst of our daily life. Maybe we conceive of Him only as the Christ on the cross and the Christ who sits in the Heavens, but not as the Christ who fellowships with us and lives with us by His indwelling Spirit.

This Resurrection season, it is important for us to ask ourselves if we really and truly walk with Jesus Christ. Do we by faith trust that out of the Grace of the God of the Universe, Christ Jesus provided for the forgiveness of sins and the perfect righteousness we need in order to be in relationship to the living God? Do we see that in the resurrection of Christ we have new life here and the guarantee of eternal fellowship with God? Enjoy and grow in the fellowship now,

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

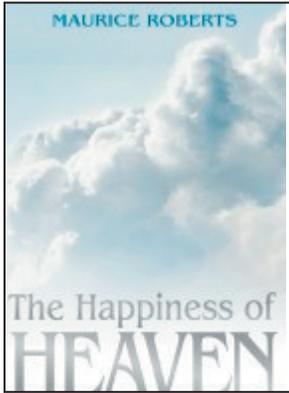
1 Peter 1:8-9

because it is the reason for our salvation. Without the sweet, intimate fellowship we cannot to know the fullness of the life that Christ has purchased for us. It will always be just going through the motions, unless we fellowship with the living Christ in the daily things of life, in his Word, and in daily petition, praise and prayer. We will never know victory over sin in our lives without practicing the daily presence of Christ in our lives. HE IS ALIVE. Speak to him, walk with Him, and fellowship with Him as the one who lives.

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Book Reviews

The Happiness of Heaven. By Maurice Roberts. 2009. Reformation Heritage Books. 129 pages. Reviewed by Rev. Howard Sloan



The Happiness of Heaven is not a book so much about Heaven as it is about general individual eschatology for the believer. Roberts' discussion includes the intermediate state, the final judgment, and final state of the believer. He does not undertake any lengthy discussion of hell or the final

state of unbelievers. Any discussion of those things takes place in the relation to Heaven or the final state of believers. Before I get to my concerns (and I have some) let me start with what I like about the book, because there is a lot to like.

To begin, Roberts' treatment in chapter 5 of "Children and Heaven" is excellent. I especially appreciated it because I have experienced the death of infant children. He draws from many sources, included some of the Reformed standards, to make the compelling case for the children of believers who die in infancy being present in Heaven. He does not make a definitive case regarding the children of unbelievers. I agree with avoiding a definitive statement on the subject since scripture is not clear on the subject. We will leave it with Jesus' statement in Mark 10:14, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for such is the Kingdom of God." This leaves room open for God in His sovereign grace to redeem which ever infants He so chooses.

Chapter 6 "Heaven After Death" discusses what is usually called the intermediate state. What is it like for the believer who dies before Christ returns? Again, Roberts shines. He does an excellent job distinguishing between the intermediate and the final state. He also touches on whether we will know one another in Heaven, and whether those in Heaven know what is happening on earth.

Chapter 7 is entitled "When the Trumpet Sounds." It is a wonderful treatment of the day of

Christ's return. Chapter 8 is on "Heaven and Christ." This chapter is wonderful. Roberts leaves us at the end of the chapter with this prayer. "*So let our prayer be that Christ may show us His glory. Pray God that we might hunger and thirst to be eternally His. What a heaven that will be!*" (p. 90)

Chapters 9-11 cover what the eternal state will be like for the believer. Chapters 9 and 11 talk about the perfection and happiness of heaven. But Chapter 10 entitled "The Dark Side of Heaven" was the most interesting. Roberts discusses some of the less pleasant aspects of heaven to our mind. This includes who will not be in heaven with us, whether we will see hell, and the eternal destruction of the wicked. This chapter is terrific.

My problems with the book came in the earlier chapters. I want to thank Rev. Roberts for interacting with me on my concerns. Early in the book, I encountered this statement, "*In heaven the saved sinner will find a perfect place for moral and spiritual development.*" (p. 15) This statement struck me as odd since we shall be sinless in heaven. I struggled over the idea of "moral development" in heaven. Later on in the book Rev. Roberts makes this statement that helps to clarify his view.

"Heaven is not a static state. What is perfect will still develop and grow ... Their increased enjoyment of God will be matched by an increased capacity to know Him. They will be perfect but always moving towards absolute perfection. The pleasures of heaven will be ever fresh and ever richer." (p. 117-118)

Roberts further clarified this to me in saying "But the greater our enjoyment of God the greater, in return, will be our love for Him. It is this factor of ever-increasing delight in God and our ever-increasing love for Him, as we come to appreciate His fulness more and more, that constitutes moral progress. After all, what is morality but a reflection of our creaturely relationship to God who is our Maker and our Redeemer?"

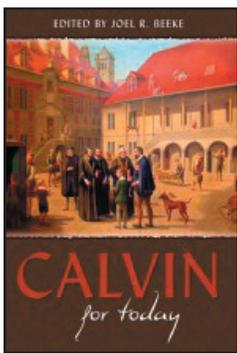
Another issue concerned some statements that at first seemed speculative to me. The first was "*Had Adam not sinned, the human race would have*

passed without intervention of death from an earthly to a heavenly condition in God's good time." (p. 23) I thought this was speculative since Scripture nowhere states this would be the case. Additionally, this was never going to happen in God's plan anyway. However, keeping in mind the cases of Enoch and Elijah and the fact that God created Heaven before the fall, this seems to be a worthwhile implication of Scripture.

One final issue I had was a statement regarding the meaning of spiritual death. Roberts writes, "*Spiritual death means the removal of the gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God from man.*" (p. 25) Of course, we know that the death spoken of to Adam and Eve was more than physical death, since they did not die physically on the day they ate of the fruit. We believe that a spiritual death occurred as

well. My problem with the statement was the removal of the Holy Spirit as part of that death. I guess I never thought of Adam and Eve having the Holy Spirit indwelling them so that He could be removed. I think again that this could be reasonably implied from Scripture now that I have had cause to pause and reflect.

Over all, I found the book to be highly readable. It was not just a statement of doctrine about heaven, but an engaging look into what it will be like for the saved in Christ once we depart from this place. It raised my thoughts heavenward, and more importantly God-ward. This book puts Heaven in its proper perspective, not just as a place for the forgiven, but as the place where we will be with God in Christ Jesus. Amen.



Calvin for Today. Edited by Joel Beeke. 2009. Reformation Heritage Books. 279 pages. Reviewed by Rev. Howard Sloan.

Calvin for Today is a compilation of the addresses from Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary's Calvin 500 conference last year. Contributors include

David Murray, Jerry Bilkes, Joseph Pipa, Derek Thomas, Cornelis Venema, Donald Sinnema, Neil Pronk, Michael Haykin, Ligon Duncan, Nelson Kloosterman, and Joel Beeke. The intent of this collection is to provide a well-rounded look at the life and thought of John Calvin with a view to understanding his impact on the church today. The book is broken down into Calvin and the Bible, Calvin the Theologian, Calvin and the Church, Calvin the Ethicist, and Calvin and His Contemporary Impact.

Since I did not have the opportunity to attend the conference itself, I was glad to have this collection available. It is well worth the read. Even if you are very familiar with Calvin's life and theology you will benefit from this book. Calvin for Today is not just a review of facts and quotes regarding Calvin, it sets up Calvin as a mirror by which we can evaluate our ministries and theology. Each chapter contains practical insights and thoughts that will challenge and sharpen us. Let me provide just a few examples.

In the chapter Calvin on the Holy Spirit, Dr. Joseph Pipa says:

No doctrine is more encouraging to the gospel enterprise than that of the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. When we recognize that conversion is completely the work of God, we are liberated to evangelize; we become bold. Moreover, we learn to plead with God for the lost. Regardless of one's theology of conversion, when one prays for conversion, he follows the teaching of Calvin. (p. 63)

Dr. Pipa sets Calvin's doctrine up for the church to drive them to prayer for and evangelization of the lost. While we can rightly say this is following Calvin's teaching, it is really following the teaching of holy scripture.

Another example comes in Cornelis Venema's chapter on Union with Christ.

"...the necessity of sanctification stems from the nature of the gospel itself: sanctification is as much Christ's and the Spirit's work as is justification. For this reason, the 'motivation' for believer's sanctification is not simply 'gratitude' for what has been received in justification. The principal basis for the believer's sanctification is that it belongs to God's gracious purpose in Christ to renew the believer in holiness." (p. 112)

This challenged me because I have often presented sanctification as being rooted in gratitude rather than also being rooting in God's gracious purpose.

All in all, I found this book very readable. I think both pastor and layman would find value in reading this work.