

The Sum of Saving Knowledge - Heads

by David Dickson

The sermon explains the four heads of the sum of saving knowledge: the woeful condition of man, the remedy provided in Jesus Christ, the outward means appointed to make the elect partakers of the covenant, and the blessings that are effectually conveyed to the Lord's elect.

Scripture: Hosea 13:9, Matthew 22:14, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:30, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 2:8, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 9:15

Topics: "Covenant Theology", "Salvation Grace"

Description

David Dickson preaches on the four heads of The Sum of Saving Knowledge: the woeful condition of all men by nature due to breaking the covenant of works, the remedy provided in Jesus Christ through the covenant of grace, the means appointed for believers to partake in this covenant, and the blessings effectively conveyed to the elect through these means. The sermon emphasizes the eternal decrees of God, the covenant of works, the covenant of redemption, the threefold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King, the outward means of the covenant of grace, and the inward change and blessings experienced by the Lord's elect.

Transcript

The Sum of Saving Knowledge may be taken up in these four heads:

1. The woeful condition wherein all men are by nature, through breaking of the covenant of works.
2. The remedy provided for the elect in Jesus Christ by the covenant of grace.
3. The means appointed to make them partakers of this covenant.
4. The blessings which are effectually conveyed unto the elect by these means. Which four heads are set down each of them in some few propositions.

HEAD I.

Our woeful condition by nature, through breaking the covenant of works. Hos. xiii. 9. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.

I. The almighty and eternal God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in the one and the same undivided Godhead, equally infinite in all perfections, did, before time, most wisely decree,

for his own glory, whatsoever cometh to pass in time: and doth most holily and infallibly execute all his decrees, without being partaker of the sin of any creature.

II. This God, in six days, made all things of nothing, very good in their own kind: in special, he made all the angels holy; and he made our first parents, Adam and Eve, the root of mankind, both upright and able to keep the law written in their heart. Which law they were naturally bound to obey under pain of death; but God was not bound to reward their service, till he entered into a covenant or contract with them, and their posterity in them, to give them eternal life, upon condition of perfect personal obedience; withal threatening death in case they should fail. This is the covenant of works.

III. Both angels and men were subject to the change of their own free-will, as experience proved, (God having reserved to himself the incommunicable property of being naturally unchangeable:) for many angels of their own accord fell by sin from their first estate, and became devils. Our first parents, being enticed by Satan, one of these devils speaking in a serpent, did break the covenant of works, in eating the forbidden fruit; whereby they, and their posterity, being in their loins, as branches in the root, and comprehended in the same covenant with them, became not only liable to eternal death, but also lost all ability to please God; yea, did become by nature enemies to God, and to all spiritual good, and inclined only to evil continually. This is our original sin, the bitter root of all our actual transgressions, in thought, word, and deed.

HEAD II.

The remedy provided in Jesus Christ for the elect by the covenant of grace. Hos. xiii. 9. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.

I. Albeit man, having brought himself into this woeful condition, be neither able to help himself, nor willing to be helped by God out of it, but rather inclined to lie still, insensible of it, till he perish; yet God, for the glory of his rich grace, hath revealed in his word a way to save sinners, to wit, by faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, by virtue of, and according to the tenor of the covenant of redemption, made and agreed upon, between God the Father and God the Son, in the counsel of the Trinity, before the world began.

II. The sum of the covenant of redemption, is this: God having freely chosen unto life, a certain number of lost mankind, for the glory of his rich grace, did give them, before the world began, unto God the Son, appointed Redeemer, that, upon condition he would humble himself so far as to assume the human nature of a soul and a body, unto personal union with his divine nature, and submit himself to the law, as surety for them, and satisfy justice for them, by giving obedience in their name, even unto the suffering of the cursed death of the cross, he should ransom and redeem them all from sin and death, and purchase unto them righteousness and eternal life, with all saving graces leading thereunto, to be effectually, by means of his own appointment, applied in due time to every one of them. This condition the Son of God (who is Jesus Christ our Lord) did accept before the world began, and in the fulness of time came into the world, was born of the Virgin Mary, subjected himself to the law, and completely paid the ransom on the cross: But by virtue of the foresaid bargain, made before the world began, he is in all ages, since the fall of Adam, still upon the work of applying actually the purchased benefits unto the elect: and that he doth by way of entertaining a covenant of free grace and reconciliation with them, through faith in himself; by which covenant, he makes over to every believer a right and interest to himself, and to all his blessings.

III. For the accomplishment of this covenant of redemption, and making the elect partakers of the benefits thereof in the covenant of grace, Christ Jesus was clad with the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King: Made a Prophet, to reveal all saving knowledge to his people, and to persuade them to believe and obey the same; Made a Priest, to offer up himself a sacrifice once for them all, and to interceed continually with the Father, for making their persons and services acceptable to him; And made a King, to subdue them to himself, to feed and rule them by his own appointed ordinances, and to defend them from their enemies.

HEAD III.

The outward means appointed to make the elect partakers of this covenant, and all the rest that are called, to be inexcusable, Matt. xxii. 14. Many are called.

I. The outward means and ordinances, for making men partakers of the the covenant of grace, are so wisely dispensed, as that the elect shall be infallibly converted and saved by them; and the reprobate, among whom they are, not to be justly stumbled. The means are especially these four. 1. The Word of God. 2. The Sacraments. 3. Kirk-government. 4. Prayer. In the Word of God preached by sent messengers, the Lord makes offer of grace to all sinners, upon condition of faith in Jesus Christ; and whosoever do confess their sin, accept of Christ offered, and submit themselves to his ordinances, he will have both them and their children received into the honour and privileges of the covenant of grace. By the Sacraments, God will have the covenant sealed for confirming the bargain on the foresaid condition. By Kirk-government, he will have them hedged in, and helped forward unto the keeping of the covenant. And by Prayer, he will have his own glorious grace, promised in the covenant, to be daily drawn forth, acknowledged, and imployed. All which means are followed either really, or in profession only, according to the quality of the covenanters, as they are true or counterfeit believers.

II. The covenant of grace, set down in the Old Testament before Christ came, and in the New since he came, is one and the same in Substance, albeit different in outward administration: For the covenant in the Old Testament, being sealed with the sacraments of circumcision and the paschal lamb, did set forth Christ's death to come, and the benefits purchased thereby, under the shadow of bloody sacrifices, and sundry ceremonies; but since Christ came, the covenant being sealed by the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, do clearly hold forth Christ already crucified before our eyes, victorious over death and the grave, and gloriously ruling heaven and earth, for the good of his own people.

HEAD IV.

The blessings which are effectually conveyed by these means to the Lord's elect, or chosen ones. Matt. xxii. 14. Many are called, but few are chosen.

I. By these outward ordinances, as our Lord makes the reprobate inexcusable, so, by the power of his Spirit, he applies unto the elect, effectually, all saving graces purchased to them in the covenant of redemption, and maketh a change in their persons. In particular, 1. He doth convert or regenerate them, by giving spiritual life to them, in opening their understandings, renewing their wills, affections, and faculties, for giving spiritual obedience to his commands. 2. He gives them saving faith, by making them, in the sense of deserved condemnation, to give their consent heartily to the covenant of grace, and to embrace Jesus Christ unfeignedly. 3. He gives them repentance, by making them, with godly sorrow, in the hatred of sin, and love of righteousness, turn from all iniquity to the service of God. And, 4. He sanctifies them, by making them go on and persevere in faith, and spiritual obedience to the law of God,

manifested by fruitfulness in all duties, and doing good works, as God offereth occasion.

II. Together with this inward change of their persons, God changes also their state: for, so soon as they are brought by faith into the covenant of grace, 1. He justifies them, by imputing unto them that perfect obedience which Christ gave to the law, and the satisfaction also which upon the cross Christ gave unto justice in their name. 2. He reconciles them, and makes them friends to God, who were before enemies to God. 3. He adopts them, that they shall be no more children of Satan, but children of God, enriched with all spiritual privileges of his sons. And last of all, after their warfare in this life is ended, he perfects the holiness and blessedness, first of their souls at their death, and then both of their souls and their bodies, being joyfully joined together again in the resurrection, at the day of his glorious coming to judgment, when all the wicked shall be sent away to hell, with Satan whom they have served: but Christ's own chosen and redeemed ones, true believers, students of holiness, shall remain with himself for ever, in the state of glorification.

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