

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of theology today by completing our examination of the six loci of reformed theology. Dr. Spencer, how would you like to proceed?

Dr. Spencer: I want to begin where the Bible itself begins. Genesis 1:1 says “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”¹ All true theology begins with that statement. It puts man in his place. We are creatures. We are part of God’s creation. Only God exists eternally, necessarily and independently. We, along with the rest of creation, are contingent. God *made* us. And that is a profound statement that deserves serious meditation. The Creator/creature distinction is essential to true, biblical Christianity.

Marc Roby: And we have noted many times in these podcasts that God created everything for his own glory.

Dr. Spencer: That’s right. And all of creation declares the glory of God. We are told in Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” But God’s glory is made manifest in its most amazing brilliance in his work of redemption. Creation was accomplished by fiat. God simply spoke and it can to be.

Marc Roby: But redemption required the incarnation and substitutionary sacrifice of God’s eternal Son!

Dr. Spencer: And that is what makes it the most incredible revelation of God’s glory. Throughout the Bible we are given the story of God choosing to save a people for himself. The story is told in stages, with more and more information being given over time, but the focus remains on God choosing a people and preparing them to come into his presence. Man was created entirely good, but he sinned. God then had to do a mighty work in order to redeem those whom he chose to save and restore them to a right relationship with him.

Marc Roby: Which can only be accomplished by having our sins atoned for by Jesus Christ, the only Savior.

Dr. Spencer: And one of the clearest Old Testament declarations regarding this salvation is in the prophecy of Isaiah. He first presents the people with their serious problem. Their sins have separated them from God and will result in their bondage. He prophesied about the coming Babylonian captivity of the people of God, which would come roughly 100 years after his prophecy. In Chapter 40 and the following chapters he then speaks about God restoring his people from captivity, but they are not ultimately, or primarily, speaking about restoration from the Babylonian captivity. As as E.J. Young noted in his wonderful commentary on Isaiah, these chapters, “see the people of God in human bondage, yet they go far deeper and look to the people

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as being in bondage spiritually, subject to the taskmaster sin. From this bondage there is to be a deliverer, the Servant of the Lord.”²

Marc Roby: And that Servant – often referred to as the suffering Servant – is, of course, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. And let me read Isaiah 40:1-5. These verses say, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Marc Roby: And most of our listeners will recognize that this speaks, ultimately, of John the Baptist. For we read in Matthew 3:1-3, “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.””

Dr. Spencer: And E.J. Young notes that in this passage from Isaiah, “Jerusalem represents the Church, the elect of God.”³ And Young says that “Isaiah’s command is addressed to the *my people* of verse 1. They are to prepare the way for the Lord, and this they are to do by means of repentance.”⁴ The only true comfort available for sinful human beings – and that includes all of us – is that God has paid for our sin. But that payment was not made for everyone. It was only made for those to whom God would grant the gift of repentance and faith.

Marc Roby: And salvation is truly a gift. In Ephesians 2:8-9 the apostle Paul wrote, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Dr. Spencer: And the first command of John the Baptist was always, “Repent”, as we just saw in the verses you read from Matthew 3. And the message of Jesus Christ was the same. In Matthew 4:17 we read, “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”” But repentance is only half of the story. In Mark 1:15 we read that Jesus said to the people, “The time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Marc Roby: And the good news is, of course, the gospel message that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. And to repent means to change one’s mind, to turn away from our sins. But we must turn *to* Jesus Christ in faith. Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. We also

² E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, W.B. Eerdmans Pub., reprinted 1997, Vol. 3, pg. 17

³ *Ibid*, pg. 21

⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 28

see this, for example, in the first sermon Peter gave, which was on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:38 we are told that Peter preached, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is a public declaration that you have placed your faith in Christ. It indicates that you have trusted in his atoning sacrifice on the cross.

Marc Roby: And if we do that, we are united to Christ by faith as Paul explains in Romans Chapter Six.

Dr. Spencer: And we then become recipients of the glorious double transaction described in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” And because Christ took our sins upon himself, the justice of God is satisfied and he can pardon us and remain just at the same time. Paul explains that in Romans 3:22-26, where he wrote, “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. ... he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”

Marc Roby: Praise God!

Dr. Spencer: Yes, we must praise God. There is no other way of salvation. The bad news is that every single human being is born a sinner and practices sin every day. But Jesus Christ became sin for us and paid for our sins on Calvary. And he then gives us his perfect righteousness and as a result, God declares us just *in Jesus Christ*; meaning in union with Jesus Christ. And that union is brought about by our placing our trust, or faith, in Jesus Christ alone. That is the good news.

Marc Roby: And God then goes even further and adopts us as his children!

Dr. Spencer: And he promises us eternal life in his presence. All of this is taught in the Bible. And in these podcasts we have now gone through an introductory treatment of what are called the six loci of reformed theology. As we noted way back in Session 49, a locus is a central point or focus of something, so the six loci are the six main headings under which we can organize all of systematic theology. The first locus is, theology proper, which means the study of God.

Marc Roby: And, as you noted, God is the proper focus of all theology.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, he is. And the second locus is anthropology, which means the study of man. That comes second because the whole point of theology is for man to understand God and, most importantly, to know how to be saved and how God wants us to live.

Marc Roby: And to be saved requires a redeemer since man cannot possibly pay for his own sin.

Dr. Spencer: Which is why the third locus is Christology, which means the study of Jesus Christ the Redeemer. And then the fourth locus, soteriology, means the study of salvation; in other words, how sinful men can be saved.

Marc Roby: From our perspective as sinners in need of salvation, that is clearly the heart of the gospel.

Dr. Spencer: And, having been saved, we are all made part of God's church. So the fifth locus is ecclesiology, which means the study of the church. And then, finally, the sixth locus is eschatology, which means the study of last things.

Marc Roby: And prior to these six loci we studied what is called the prolegomena, meaning the topics that form the introduction to the six loci. That discussion included the very important topic of the infallible Word of God, which is sometimes listed as a seventh locus.

Dr. Spencer: And the Word of God is incredibly important, which is why it comes first in the Westminster Confession of Faith and why it shows up prior to the six loci. The Word of God is the only place we can learn about how we can be saved. And it is our ultimate standard for truth and the only guide for both faith and conduct.

Marc Roby: We have covered a lot of material in 250 sessions! It's hard to believe it has been almost five years of doing these weekly podcasts.

Dr. Spencer: That is hard to believe. And there is certainly a great deal more that could be said about each and every topic we have discussed, but if a Christian has a reasonable grasp of the material we have presented, then he or she has a solid foundation on which to build an overcoming Christian life. And that is the purpose for which we started these podcasts. It has been our hope from the beginning that they would lead people not just to a better intellectual understanding of the gospel, but to a deeper relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And that the result of that deeper relationship would be a closer walk of obedience, which will bring glory to God, greater assurance and joy to the believer, and will help to lead others to Christ.

Marc Roby: And it sounds like we are finished with the task we started.

Dr. Spencer: We are. We may still do more podcasts in the future, I certainly have some ideas for things we could do that I think would be profitable, and I encourage our listeners to send in their own ideas, but we are going to stop after today for at least a time. I encourage our listeners to sign up for our email list if they aren't already on it and they will then receive a notice in advance of any new podcasts. There is a link to sign-up for updates at the bottom of the homepage at whatdoesthewordsay.org.

Marc Roby: Do you have anything else you would like to say to our listeners before we sign off?

Dr. Spencer: Yes. I very much appreciate the comments and questions we have received and I will certainly do my best to continue to answer new ones if they come. So I want to thank our listeners for their time and attention. And it is my hope that they will go to the website and make use of the topical index, the scripture index, the list of references and the list of podcasts and go back through these. I know that I have learned a great deal putting them all together, and we have covered a great deal of material, so review is a good thing!

Marc Roby: I know that I need review.

Dr. Spencer: And so do I. And then, I'd like to read what the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:6,16-18 to encourage all of our listeners. Paul wrote, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. ... Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Marc Roby: Those are encouraging words indeed. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank our loyal listeners: you are the reason we have published these podcasts for the past five years!

And then I want to especially acknowledge and thank you, Dr. Spencer, for the many, many hours you have spent researching, writing, praying over, and recording these podcasts we have all enjoyed so much. I have personally found this work to be edifying and stimulating and I intend to re-listen to the archives in the coming months. I invite our listeners to do the same. And, perhaps, if it is God's will, we will return to do some more podcasts in the future. To God be the glory!

Dr. Spencer: Yes, to God be the glory! I opened this session with the first verse of the Bible, so let me close it with the last verse of the Bible. We read a wonderful, short doxology in Revelation 22:21, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."

Marc: Amen to that. And I will remind our listeners one last time that they can send questions or comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org. We would still love to hear from you and will do our best to answer.