

Dr. Meredith Kline, Kingdom Prologue, Lecture 11

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Student Question:

Kline's response: You would say that the relationship of the Father and the Son clearly does involve justice. I think this is right. Jesus certainly saw that his role was in terms of the satisfaction of justice. In his high priestly prayer on the night of his crucifixion: "Father I have glorified you. [I've fulfilled my covenant. I've earned it.] Now glorify me. Glorify me with the glory that we had before the worlds began." But Jesus there articulates clearly the whole principle. "I have done it, I've earned it, I've glorified you, now you glorify me."

The Law Covenant

Let's move from that up to the covenant with Adam, up to the law covenant, now once again. I've said that there's lots of biblical evidence for this. Let us quickly look at it. What we're looking for now are places especially in the teaching of Paul, where Paul compares the gospel with the law, with the Old Covenant. The comparison becomes one of strong contrast between the two.

The New Covenant: Jeremiah 31

So we'll be looking primarily at Paul, but let's start with Jeremiah. This is the classic prophesy in the Old Testament about the coming of the New Covenant. So let's turn to Jeremiah 31. You know it's a very frequently quoted verse in the New Testament, in Hebrews and so on. "The time is coming," Jeremiah 31 verse 31, "declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.'" Parenthetically and quickly, there's the whole question here of prophetic idiom where the prophets use the contemporary covenantal situation in order to depict the corresponding realities of the New Covenant. As we know, in the light of the New Testament, the New Covenant is one that is made with what we call the church. It is not made with the literal house of Israel and the house of Judah. This is then part of the whole hermeneutical thing that we can't stop and develop. So clearly in the light of the New Testament

quotations this covenant is the covenant that the Lord Jesus Christ administers to the community that we know as the church.

Now then the Lord says the day is coming when he's going to make this New Covenant, and right away he draws a contrast between that and the Old Covenant. "It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took their hand to lead them out of Egypt." So Jeremiah says: the New Covenant will not be like the Old Covenant.

There's a big difference between them. What's the difference? He goes on to say, "which covenant of mine they broke." Then you have a little textual problem whether he says, "even though I was a husband to them, even though I was faithful to them, they were unfaithful to me." Or there are other possible readings "which covenant of mine they broke and I turned away from them" or some other thing. But clearly the thought is that the Old Covenant was one that could be broken, and that they did break. Of course, as we know the result was the exile and ultimately the destruction of the people.

So the New Covenant is not going to be like that, the Old Covenant was, a breakable covenant, one that could be and was broken. "'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord, 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.'" Back up a few verses (Jer. 31:32): "It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them."

Now we have to clarify "breakable" in what sense are covenants breakable? Here's this bottom line in which Christ is administering his grace through the ages. When we have already said that it is a covenant that is made with the church and yet the church does not consist solely of the individual elect. So we have said that covenant is a broader line and election is something within it and that's true throughout, okay? That's true in the New Testament too, not everyone who is in the New Covenant organization of the church, is elect. There are some within that

arrangement who can break the New Covenant. Individuals can break the New Covenant. Think in terms of Romans 11. Here is the tree, the olive tree, you Gentiles have been grafted in. Don't get too cocky. You can be broken off if you don't come through. Individuals can be broken off from the New Covenant, just as individuals could be broken off from the old one.

What then is Jeremiah saying? He's saying that there is a sense in which the Old Covenant was breakable and the New Covenant is not breakable, what is it? Well look, individuals can be broken off from the church but the whole New Covenant order does not fail. The gates of hell do not prevail against the New Covenant order as such. The church goes on to be consummated in glory.

Now here is the Old Testament order of the Mosaic economy, the Israelite people. Not only was it the case there that individuals were broken off but the whole community including even those who were individually elect got broken off. The whole order as such got terminated in judgment in the Babylonian exile. Think for a moment: the Babylonian exile. Who went into exile? Only the reprobate? No, Daniel went into exile, along with Ezekiel and the whole nation. This had nothing to do with individual election. This corporate community became "not my people" anymore and that was the end of it. Once again then after they were brought back, as we said, by a second act of grace, and were once again put under the principle of works, and once again they failed, 70 A.D. "Not one stone upon another"--they are desolated. That's the end of that whole order.

Individuals may be saved but the order as such comes to an end. Now that's what we're talking about, that national election, that typological kingdom, that corporate reality. That was under the principle of works. Jeremiah says the New Covenant will be different. It will not fail, the grace of God principle is operating there and therefore it will be consummated.

Jeremiah to Paul (Romans 10)

Alright now, what Jeremiah foretold comes to pass. Paul looks at the situation of his own day, and he looks back at the Torah covenant and he analyses

it for us in a whole series of passages that start with Romans 10. We'll do just a couple of spot passages in Acts 13 verse 39, "Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses." So here there is a declaration that through Christ there is justification whereas through the law of Moses there was not such justification.

But let's turn then on to Romans 10, a longer, more substantial passage. Just where to begin we might begin at the beginning. Let's begin at the fourth verse. It is very interesting and as the question there speaks about, "Christ is the *telos*, the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." I think the proper understanding that is that there is a principle operating during the law, namely the principle of works with the coming of Christ, that's the end of that. Now it's salvation, justification through faith.

But in any case, verse 5 continues. According to Moses, now "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law." So notice now, this is one of the quotations then from Leviticus 18:5, the other one's in Galatians that we'll look at in a moment. But, mind you, Paul is not saying here is some understanding of the Old Testament that some mistaken Judaizers have come up with. He's saying this is what Moses says in the Scripture and he quotes from the Bible to describe what was going on there. Moses describes in this way," the righteousness that is of the law, the man who does these things will live by them." That's the works principle, "do this and you will live"--earn it, it's works.

Then he goes on and he says in verse 6 in contrast with that, "the righteousness that is by faith." In other words, in terms of the gospel that Paul is preaching, the righteousness that is by faith says: "and now do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven." Here now he proceeds to quote from this passage in Deuteronomy 30, which is another New Covenant passage like Jeremiah 31. So right from within the law of Moses, Paul is able to find passages which describe the principle that was going on under the Old Covenant: "do this and you will live." He's also able to find a passage like Deuteronomy 30, which he

interprets as presenting the thought, that we needn't earn this for ourselves. It isn't that we have to bring Christ down from heaven, or that we have to bring him up from the dead because in his sovereign grace he has come to us from heaven. He has come back from across the sea of death to us. So that now it is a matter of believing in our hearts and it's a matter of faith as he goes on to expound it. But already then in verses 5 and 6 we get the basic thought of a stark contrast between the law and between faith. The law says, "do this and you will live," the righteousness that is by faith, the gospel I'm preaching says something else which is the principle of faith. So he sees not a continuum or an identity, certainly. He sees a contrast between the two.

Now right away what's Paul doing? He's speaking about the law. We have suggested that the only way we can properly think of this is if we keep in mind the two levels. Individual salvation up here, the grace principle; and the typological kingdom up there, the works principle. Here's Paul and he looks at that and it's really surprising to us that he does it. But he describes this whole complex situation just in terms of the second level. Now Paul could never say that the law didn't have the principle of grace in it. He very well knew that the law as we were saying in the cultic sacrifices, in the word of the prophets, and so on, he knew very well that that whole Mosaic economy had this bottom layer which was the message of salvation by grace, which has been the message right from the beginning. Paul knew that that was there. Yet he looks at the Old Testament law and he sort of just let that be eclipsed for a moment and he looks at that in terms of that upper layer and he finds that there, there was a principle operating that was different from the gospel.

You wouldn't want to interpret him as saying that there was no grace anywhere in the Old Testament, he wasn't a dispensationalist. He was a covenant theologian. So he had to be ready to recognize certainly that there was grace, and yet at the same time he is able to say that there was law. It must be therefore, I submit to you, that analysis of it is the only way that you're going to get through

this thing and make sense of it.

Now the same sort of thing comes up in one more word about this. In what sense is the New Covenant new? It isn't new in terms of the bottom line the message of the gospel of grace has been there since before the fall on. So what's going on here. It isn't new in that sense, it's more of the same. It's new vis-à-vis that second layer of the Old Covenant, that's the thing that had been so prominent now for centuries and over against that, the gospel comes through as something new.

Galatians 3 and the covenants

Alright, let's turn also then to Galatians 3, where you have essentially the same point being made.

Student observation: Just out of curiosity, I know your time is limited, but I'm also wondering if you were toying with Dr. Gordon's article of translation on that, Romans 9:32. Once you bring in that other possibility there it sheds a lot of light on what's going on right before then, coming into Romans 10.

Kline's response: In that article he shows how the word that wasn't in the Greek text has been the one that they've been putting all the emphasis on. Yeah, when I first read that, in fact, I mentioned it inside a footnote of something I wrote, appealing to that Romans 9:32 article of David. Whether there's some other way of handling it which is also consistent with this I want to think a little bit more about it. I don't know whether David's done any more thinking about it.

Galatians 3:11-18, as I just said, "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." There's the law and the works principle again. "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law." Now that's pretty clear stuff. "No one is justified" which is pretty much what that first verse we read in Acts 13:39. Now under the gospel you are justified by these things from which you could not be justified by the law. You hear he's saying the same thing, justification isn't found under this law arrangement. Why not? Because "the

righteous will live by faith,” that’s the way people will live. But the law is not based on faith. How much clearer does anyone want to get it? “The law is not based on faith. On the contrary,” he now quotes again from Leviticus 18:5: “the man who does these things will live by them.” That’s all you have, you have the faith principle and you have the works principle, it’s not a continuum, it’s a contrast—a law and gospel contrast. There is no justification for fallen man, for fallen man, mind you, under such terms, “do this and you will live.” It is only in terms of faith in Christ who’s done it for you.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, “for it is written ‘cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’” “He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit” (Gal. 3:14). “Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case” (Gal. 3:15). Now he takes us back to Abraham, “to whom God gave the promises, and the promises were spoken to Abraham ‘and to his seed.’ The Scripture does not say, ‘unto seeds’ meaning many people, but ‘to your seed’ meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: the Law introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise” (Gal. 3:18).

Now notice here, he sees that the Abrahamic covenant here was one of promise that comes before the law. It is precisely because he sees that being involved in the law was the opposite of promise. He sees that the principle of works was operating here, which is the opposite of promise. It is precisely because Paul sees that this opposite principle is working here that he has a problem. What does the introduction of this opposite principle of works do to the previously given promises of God? Does this annul that? That’s his problem. And of course, he says no, God doesn’t take back his promises even when he introduces this new arrangement, which involves the promises, he doesn’t annul the promises. “For if

the inheritance depends upon the law, then it no longer depends on the promise.” Again he contrasts gospel and law as opposite. “If it depends on the law then it no longer depends on the promise, but God and his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.” So notice the dynamics of this thing.

He certainly is insisting on a big contrast between these two. Yet he insists that the covenant of works principle later on does not annul that. How could he say that? Isn't he's contradicting himself? If the opposite is superimposed on this than he has annulled the promises, hasn't he? No, because as we said before, Paul is a covenant theologian. He does recognize that there is this bottom layer down there.

What he recognizes is that the promise has to do with individual election, and the works principal has to do with Israel's national election. So they're not dealing with the same thing. If the works were dealing with the same thing as the promise than the works would annul the promise. But the works principle is not dealing with individual election, it's dealing with the corporate thing. Corporate Israel was involved in the covenant arrangement involving the typological kingdom, which could be and was broken. But the Abrahamic promises of salvation in Christ that was by grace and that could not be broken.

Judaizer's confusion of national works and individual grace

Sure Moses was a covenant theologian, that's the only kind of good theologian. For example, when Paul wants to illustrate the idea of justification and forgiveness by faith, he begins by grace. He quotes from the Psalms, that blessedness of the man whose sins are not imputed. So from the Mosaic revelation including all the prophets who are under Moses and so on, the message of salvation certainly comes through. To answer your question earlier we were saying that the cultic sacrifice was proclaiming that. Now how much individuals understood of all of this is problematic and maybe it's because of confusion along this line that by the time you come to the Judaizers, they're confusing these two lines. Isn't that their problem? The Judaizers come along and they take this principal of works, which was supposed to do only with the national election, and

they're applying it to individuals. So the problem with the Judaizers was not that they recognized that there was a works principle in the Old Testament, because there is one. Their problem was that they were applying it where it didn't belong down here. So that's what Paul is clarifying. What's going on down here he says is faith and grace, that's the opposite of what's going on up there.

Student Question:

Kline's response: To the extent that they did this with understanding in the light of such revelation as they had, this would certainly be enough. But there was a lot of misunderstanding along the way as is evident from the business of the Judaizers. In our day when this kind of argument is presented, these verses are presented to people in the Fuller school they will be trying to tell you all Paul is doing is dealing with some people who were misinterpreting the law, though it did involve that. Paul is only repudiating a misinterpretation. I leave it to you, read these verses. This is what the law itself says, not someone else's misinterpretation of what it said.

2 Corinthians 3 and the Old and New Covenant

In that connection then there are some of the other verses I wanted to bring to your attention. For example, in 2 Corinthians 3:6-9, here Paul is drawing a contrast between the glory of the Old Covenant and the glory of this New Covenant ministry. He acknowledges that each has its measure of glory. Notice how he paints the difference. The Old Covenant is one of the letter, one of condemnation, one of death and bondage. Whereas the New Covenant is one not of the letter but of spirit, not one of condemnation but of justification, not of death but of life. You couldn't get a more radical contrast than Paul who is plainly expressing his own views and not describing some misinterpretation. He's expressing his own view and you couldn't get a stronger contrast than he paints there in 2 Corinthians 3.

Galatians 4

Take Galatians 4, we looked at Galatians 3 previously. Now turn over to

Galatians 4, and again you get Paul's own contrasting analysis, where he says the Old Covenant is represented by Hagar, the slave woman, because the Old Covenant was one of bondage. The New Covenant was represented by the free woman, Sarah. So Paul's own view of these things, is that there is this strong contrast between the two which adds up to the fact then that it's not grace, not something half-like grace and half-like works, but plain stark works. The opposite of faith and grace was operating there under the Old Covenant in that very limited sphere.

Now, of course, as we said earlier if God then could use the principle of works there that, of course, also confirms the fact that Fuller and company are wrong in saying that God would never anywhere use the principle of works. He did use it there. Of course, he did use it with Adam and, of course, he did use it up there. We can thank God that he is dealing with us in grace and Christ by his obedience has merited for us these things.

Well, it's time by the old village clock to stop. Those who are taking this for credit according to the syllabus will have the privilege of having some sort of little take home exam that will be in a couple of weeks. I'll say more about it in the next week or two. But those who are not taking it for credit but who would like to just to try their hand at the exam are free to write out the exam and I'll be glad to read those exams. If you would like to take the other exam later on and do the work of the course and maybe by the time you've done that, and seen how wonderful you do on the exams, you might even want to change your status from non-credit to credit before the end of the week.