



Chronicles of Diversity

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The Audacity of Christ

The Audacity of Christ: A Path to Good News

I hope you all had a wonderful Reformation Day at your house. This house does not participate in Halloween, Harvest Parties, or even the ritual of All Saints Day. In the light of Dr. Martin Luther posting his 95 Theses on the church door at Wittenberg 489 years ago, what modern evangelicalism needs to do is to get back to the doctrines that brought about the Reformation.

Contrary to all the modern anathema to the contrary, evidence clearly shows that Christ centered doctrine unites Christians. It is the lack of clear gospel doctrine that divides the church and has produced the mess this country now faces. Again contrary to the general understanding, most Christians are personally Bible illiterate and know little to nothing about the Reformation or what it did for western culture and the church. Even the Roman Catholic church.

However, a new or restored Reformation was far from my mind when I made a drastic mistake Sunday morning. No it wasn't that I forgot to set my clocks back an hour as daylight savings time was dismissed for the winter. Since my internal biological clock was set for daylight time, even though I tried to get an extra hour of sleep, I was wide awake an hour early. Instead of actually doing something productive, I decided to turn on the television to see the early morning TV preachers.

Well I guess it wasn't really all bad news, I learned that to be a Christian missionary you no longer need to go to Russia, or Africa, or Asia. Perhaps the greatest mission field today is the Post Modern United States of America. The sad thing is that most Americans believe in God and think that when they die they are going to heaven for eternity.



As I wrote a couple of weeks ago, most Americans are good people in the common grace sort of way. In fact, I do not personally know of anyone personally who doesn't fit that category. Many of them consider themselves to be fine upstanding Christians also. However, with very few exceptions they all live in bondage. They live in bondage to themselves through sin that they cannot overcome.

In John 8:36, *Jesus himself makes the statement: Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

Galatians 5:1 states: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

Before we go on we need to make a distinction between the two quotations above.

John 8:36 is an indicative statement. An indicative is a statement of fact: Jesus the Son of God sets you free from the laws of sin and death. That is an absolute statement of truth, that you can not alter. You can accept it or reject it but you can not alter that truth.

Galatians 5:1 is an imperative statement. An imperative statement is an exhortation to live by the absolute truth of Jesus as stated in John.

So how do you carry out the imperative? You can't do it. Period. Because simply when you attempt to carry it out, you by your very nature attempt to take on the nature of Christ and therefore you lose your indicative freedom. "Let go and let God." is a popular statement. But notice even in this you are the one in control of the situation, your freedom is contingent upon your own level of security.

If that is not tough enough, how about this imperative from Romans 12: 1,2: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

We will come back to this verse later, but to paraphrase Emeril on the Food Network, that kicks up the Galatians passage a notch or two, or three .

So which comes first the Old or the New Testament? Before you answer that, carefully ponder what your definition of first is.

Does first mean chronologically, or does first mean primary or most important.

Herein lies the great anathema of Post Modern evangelicalism. Post modern evangelicalism makes the Old Testament first, both in chronology and literal importance. Reformation and historical Christianity obviously understands the chronology, but makes the New Testament scriptures primary. Before you object to this reasoning, let me continue. Reformation and historical Christianity states that the New Testament scriptures are the finished standard. In the larger sense the New Testament is the indicative standard. The Old Testament is the imperative, again in that larger sense. Therefore, the Truth of the New Testament the finished work of Christ is the way that the exhortations of the Old Testament must be interpreted.

These exhortations center around the imperative Mosaic Covenant made by God with the children of Israel on Mount Sinai, but they go back to the creation of the earth and the garden and how sin and death entered the world. However, there is a lot more to the canon of scripture than the rules of the Torah. Beginning with the primacy of the New Testament you can easily see without any formal education in theology, but just a basic understanding of the Bible, an unfolding indicative of redemption that begins before the creation of time and runs consistently and truly until eternity future.

That indicative is a universal absolute generally called the Covenant of Grace, begins in Genesis 3:14 and continues through Revelation 22:21 if you are a Christian, and essentially Malachi 4:6 if you were a Jew. That Covenant of Grace is the prophetic promise of a coming Messiah that will redeem God's children from the curse of sin and death. The fundamental difference between Christians and Jews should be that Christians recognize that this Messiah has come in the bodily presence of the God man Jesus of Nazareth. Jews however are still expectantly waiting for his appearance. This has nothing to do with denominations, sects, or other religious divisions, but is the mainstream of Judeo Christian religious thought throughout recorded history.

This universal truth of God's grace is further explained by the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 15. Therein, we find that this Covenant of Grace is apprehended by faith alone in God's holiness, not by some works of righteousness performed by human hands.

This quickly brings us along the actual time line to the Exodus from Egypt and God giving the law to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. Did God change his mind after Abraham and decide that man could save himself by his works, has mankind evolved to a higher level? That of course is just wishful thinking of all humanity throughout all time, and made a particularly self righteous idol in our day. The primacy of all the New Testament writers shows that the Law was given so that humanity might understand the righteousness of God's holiness and man's unworthiness to fulfill even the smallest portion of these perfect imperatives.

This is further expounded as the New Testament Sermon on the Mount of Matthew Chapter 5. Only in our day could the faithful indicatives of the beginning of these imperatives be converted to the Be happy humanly achievable attitudes, but that gets us too far advanced for now.

Back to the unfolding plan of redemption. Jeremiah 17:9 gives us the indicative statement of fact, *The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*

Now it could be well argued that this statement is true from Genesis Chapter 3 through Revelation and the return of Jesus Christ, with the ensuing redemption of the earthly body. However, modern evangelicalism has cut this universal truth from God out of the cannon of scripture. Once I ask Jesus into my heart and am saved, I have been transformed by God's regenerative power into one who's heart is now pure, and I can also keep the Mosaic covenant by those same mysterious powers.

Too bad the Apostle Paul wasn't aware of this enlightenment. If that was the case he would have never had to write the Book of Romans. That part from Romans 12: 1,2; it really is just a unneeded burden of the Christian inner light of the heart in love with God. Lest we forget: *I*

beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Then it was that same Book of Romans that transformed the complete personality of Dr. Martin Luther, so much that through the preaching and teaching of God's word alone, was the known world of church and state so drastically changed that we are still living in the Reformation's fruits. Furthermore, by God's grace, Luther died quietly in his sleep rather than be martyred for his achievements.

The renewing of your mind, the desert wasteland of modern evangelicalism. The renewing of your mind is the one concept that truly separates Christianity from all the other so called religions and cults. That's indicatively true because it is only possible through the covenant of grace, not through the Mosaic covenant and law, not through Islam, Buddha, Confucius, Joseph Smith, or other human religious leader. Why, because as instruments of man's impure heart, they are bound by entropy, sin, and death, all natural and spiritual indicative universal laws.

This brings us back to the miraculous works accomplished by the great men of the Old Testament, how did they pull it off? After all if they were under the law, they must have been able to pull it off under the law. Ergo if we want to do great works for Jesus we must follow in the steps of Moses, Rahab, Joshua, Gideon, Ruth, Samuel, Ester, David, and others. We must follow hard after God just like they did. We must go back to Sinai.

What they don't teach you in church today in America and pretty much around the world, is that they did the great works under the indicative of faith alone, by the Covenant of Grace alone, in the coming of Messiah, for the Glory of God alone, not theirs. They understood all this by the renewing of their mind through the total cannon of revelation of God in the scriptures, the torah of God they had available. This is basic Reformation theology.

In other words, they knew that God's Word was true, because they lived it by intellectual faith. If you truly understand the freedom you have in Christ,

you can only wish to change the world for God. There is no option in that service, because not to serve Him, who gave you such a free gift of pure freedom and eternal life is completely illogical. I understand, logic is one of those mind renewing things again. In other words, you don't have to go to Sinai to keep the law and do good works, you need to trust in faith the finished work of Jesus the world's Messiah. Don't go back to Sinai! What part of don't, don't you understand!

The cushy life of modern, sloppy agape Christianity of the heart works, because it has never been tested in the fires of suffering, tribulation, poverty, and depravation. In fact, it has never been seriously tested at all. It is the Christianity of the warm fuzzies, books, CDs, DVDs, and seminars. It is Christianity of the theology of glory, not the theology of the suffering servant. It is truly a Christianity of indulgences more heinous than any Luther ever faced, because it placates the indulgent self. At least the indulgences pedaled by John Tetzel were used to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and to spring a loved one from the grips of purgatory. Today these indulgences for the most part only serve to build individual ministries and foster your own materialistic slothfulness.

This is also why today common grace and natural law gives a better view of the reality of life than does what is called a Christian worldview. And I will graciously add, that much of American society would rather face the eternal judgement without Christ, for they know within the whole of their personality that they can not trust most of the so call truths they have been taught in church. And furthermore they do not on their own have the discernment to understand the difference between the indicatives and the imperatives of scripture.

The conversion power of creation is widely evidenced by the rapidly increasing numbers of creation scientists. Most of them believe in a young earth of thousands not millions and billions of years. These men and women all have come to realize that the evolutionary teaching of their upbringing creates millions and billions more problems than it solves. Furthermore, pretty much the world we see around us can

be described by Biblical creationism. However, this synergism is not found in intelligent design concepts. People with developed logical thinking choose Christ, and are scorned by their colleagues. They have chosen to take a stand and can not do otherwise. Sounds like a basis for Reformation to me.

So how do you view the Bible? As a covenant of grace, showing an unfolding plan of redemption of God's chosen people, from the beginning to the end of this age? Or do you see it as a series a economic plans, tried by God to bring people into His kingdom by His manipulative powers of humanity's limited understanding? Can both views be equally true?

My guess is that you never really thought about it seriously. You probably have accepted what you were taught in the church were you grew up, or were saved, or you wandered in one Sunday morning. Heaven knows, the grace of God may be such that you now are a pastor at one type or the other of these churches. That should move you beyond warm fuzzies in a hurry.

If you were to seriously desire to look at the alternatives, we may be talking about the same Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but you are talking about some very different characteristics of that God. You are also looking at very different ways of interpreting indicatives and imperatives.

May the grace of God and the audacity of Christ be with you all.

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