

THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL

The following statement was adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland on 13 June, 1995, as a statement of its position in relation to the Gospel offer.

Whereas the following statements are found in the subordinate standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland :

Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 7 paragraph 3

Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the Covenant of Grace : whereby he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they might be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.

Larger Catechism, question 32.

Q. How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant?

- A. The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him; and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces; and to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thankfulness to God, and as the way which he hath appointed them to salvation.

Larger Catechism, question 63.

Q. What are the special privileges of the visible church?

- A. The visible church hath the privilege of being under God's special care and government; of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies; and of enjoying the communion of the saints, the ordinary means of salvation, and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved, and excluding none that will come to him.

Larger Catechism, question 68.

Q. Are the elect only effectually called?

- A. All the elect, and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the Spirit; who for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.

Shorter Catechism, question 31.

Q. What is effectual calling?

- A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

Shorter Catechism, question 86.

Q. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

- A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

(Although it is not a confessional standard, "The Sum of Saving Knowledge", which is often printed alongside the Westminster Confession and the Catechisms Larger and Shorter, faithfully applies the confessional teaching on the gospel offer.)

In the light of the position stated in our subordinate standards, Synod reaffirms the statement in the Testimony adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland in 1901, found in chapter 6 paragraph 3, as follows :

In the gospel there is an exhibition of the plan of salvation by a Redeemer, and a call, invitation, or offer, addressed to all who hear it. The obligation to believe is not made void by the sinner's disinclination and spiritual inability, nor is the universality of the gospel offer inconsistent with, or contradictory to, the particular purposes of God or the limited extent of the redemption of Christ. Man's inability is of a moral nature, and does not arise from external physical restraint.

In consequence we reject the following statements as incompatible with our standards, witness and testimony :

1. The gospel message contains nothing more than an exhibition of truth and a command to obey.
2. When the gospel is preached it does not contain a sincere and well-meant invitation from God to all who hear to turn to Christ for salvation.

GLENMANUS REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PORTRUSH

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