

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM. If you need more information, please contact Mr. Vautour. See the bottom of the bulletin the contact information.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI, please see the international website at www.gci.org. On the left-hand upper side of the screen, you will see 3 short lines. You simply need to click on it. A drop down menu will appear. Click on **"PARTICIPATE"**.

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, please contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or email.

Certainly, we all need to realize, during this time of crisis, that even if situations appear bleak and evil appears strong, God is still the ruler yet. Jesus sustains all things we are clearly told in Colossians. We could not be in more loving hands! Although we may go through temporary troubles, we have to always keep in mind the hope we have in Jesus.

We need to pray for our civil leaders, those in high positions as well as Christian religious leaders to give appropriate leadership as we traverse difficult periods. God tells us to pray for all people and to do good to everyone especially those of the household of God. (**"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior," (1Ti 2:1-3 ESV)**)

We all need to remember that this fallen world system will one day be replaced by the fullness of the kingdom of God. Only God knows when Jesus will return to the earth. **"3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."** (Ga 1:3-5 ESV)

For prayer requests, please see www.worshipim.ca under "Members Only". If you have forgotten password for this section only, please contact Mr. Vautour.

There will be a Bible study Thursday, April 2. Topic: 1st John. Anybody is welcome to join. We will use the Zoom platform to do this. Mr. order will send you the link early next week. This week, we will begin with the introduction of this letter and begin to look at chapter 1.

Offerings: you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7S1 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God's church, his body.

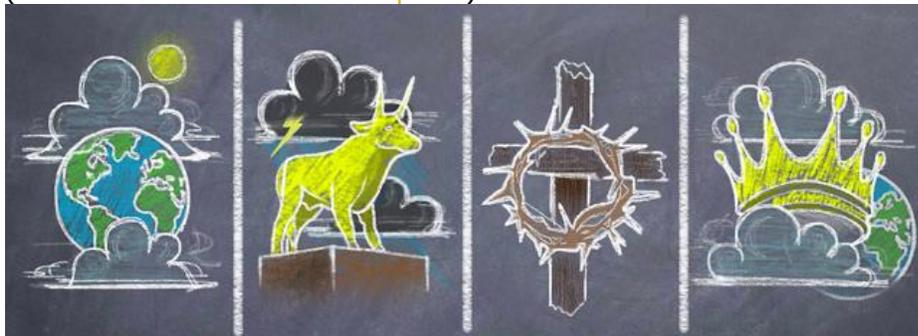
From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director “Our office here in Saskatoon will remain open during regular business hours. I’m self isolating for a couple of weeks, but Kathleen will be available. We will continue to process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using the donate button on our website www.gcicanada.ca We are waving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend.”

A THEOLOGICAL ETHIC, part 2

By Ted Johnston - March 19, 2020

This is the second post in a series adapted from the lecture "What is a Theological Ethic?" by Dr. Gary Deddo, president of Grace Communion Seminary. For part 1, see <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2020/03/theological-ethic-1.html>

There is a tendency to approach obedience to God's directives and instructions in one of two misguided ways. The first is *legalism* -- seeking through obedience to earn God's favor, thus overlooking the reality that God's grace underlies all of God's commands. The second misdirected approach is *antinomianism* -- treating God's commands as arbitrary and thus subject to being re-worked or entirely dismissed. Both approaches undermine true biblical obedience, which the apostle Paul calls *the obedience of faith* (or *the obedience that comes from faith*) (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Legalism and antinomianism both arise when the commands of God are detached from their biblical context -- their grounding in the grand narrative of God's plan for humanity with its four scenes: Creation, Fall, Reconciliation and Redemption (illustrated below and detailed in [part 1](#)).



A theological ethic carefully accounts for the entirety of this grand narrative, including our part in it via a living, grace-based relationship with God through Christ. It is within this grace-based, gospel-shaped context that we see God's commands not as onerous (the fruit of legalism) or as arbitrary (the fruit of antinomianism). Instead we see his commands as *imperatives of grace* (how we are to live in Christ) that flow from the *indicatives of grace* (who God has made us to be by grace, in and through Jesus). We arrive at his understanding when we rightly interpret the Word of God, which includes understanding its ontological center, which is the being and act of God in Jesus Christ.

Concerning obedience and disobedience

Let's now look at why obedience to God's will (including his commands, directives and instructions) is always good. We begin by noting that, in all instances, disobedience to God's will has negative consequences of one sort or another, to one degree or another. Why is this so? Because God's will for us always conforms to the real nature and purpose of things -- the moral order that God has placed within the cosmos of his creation. Disobedience (sin), in one way or another, always is out of sync with this reality. It always is a violation of the God-ordained moral order of reality.

When a person acts in a way that is not in accordance with this moral order, some kind of harm results, some relationship is damaged, some fruitfulness is hindered, some deceit is reinforced and

spread. Note that this damage done through disobeying God's commands does not require the consent of the sinner. Sin is like a disease that damages whether the disease is diagnosed or not. The disease certainly won't be cured by denying its presence or by insisting that it is health, rather than disease.

Some justify disobedience to God's commands by labeling disobedience an expression of love. This approach typically involves reducing love to kindness. But love cannot be reduced to mere kindness. Love is concerned for the actual health of the object of love, and seeks to avoid or at least minimize damage to that object (including oneself). Such love can be risky, in that it risks offending the pride of the one being loved. On the other hand, kindness risks little, typically being concerned primarily with avoiding offense.

The point here is that *disobedience to God has consequences*. When people give into temptation to disobey God, they are colluding with evil, buying into the lies of the Evil One. When that occurs, damage always results. Sin, you see, is not a mere "no-no," nor is it merely the ignoring of a rule arbitrarily given by a god who enjoys controlling and manipulating people.

The pitfalls of a modern worldview

Living in accordance with a theological ethic inevitably brings us into conflict with the modern western worldview -- a mindset that declares humans to be entirely free in their own existence. They are seen as free to do whatever they want, and free to avoid unwanted consequences, since consequences are mostly, if not entirely, in the mind -- imagined, not real.

According to this mindset, right and wrong, obedience and disobedience, are entirely *subjective* (personal) matters. We humans are thus free to relabel things in any way we choose, so as to align them with our personal preferences; our subjective sense of what is right and wrong. In short, we can do anything we want. According to this worldview there are no limits to the subjective powers of the human individual.

The truth, however, is that sin has a real *objective* side to it. Sin has real consequences that are not subject to human minds or free will escapes. Much suffering in the world occurs because many people have bought into the lie that their actions and choices do not or should not have unwanted consequences -- the view that everything can be easily fixed or worked around. But then reality steps up and bites us and we don't understand why life is so hard, so unfair, so lonely, so anxious, so guilt-ridden, so full of shame. So we try to eliminate these unwanted consequences of sin through sheer willpower. We imagine that we should be unaffected by such things. If we are, then someone else is surely to blame! Someone else is trying to make us feel guilty, make us feel ashamed, make us unhappy or unfulfilled. Such people are thus seen as our enemy -- surely the problems we are experiencing could not be something about us!

On dealing with sin and its consequences

Try as we might, the consequences of sin are unavoidable. That's reality. That's the bad news. However, there is good news -- sin can be acknowledged and forgiven. There is healing -- a movement toward wholeness by the grace of God, which is available to all. But experiencing that wholeness down to its very roots depends upon recognizing sin for what it is, then going to the Real Source of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. Attempting to get rid of guilt and shame by simply denying there is sin and evil does not work.

One of the most regularly promoted ways of dealing with guilt and shame is to blame others. Others make me feel guilty or ashamed, it is claimed. I'm innocent, we protest. That too, is a lie. Yes, there is false (unwarranted) guilt and shame. Sadly, there are those (most notably the Evil One) who use guilt and shame as a weapon to control and manipulate others. These situations must be discerned and dealt with. But blaming others, even when they are to blame, does not bring much healing and restoration. That takes a much deeper work by the Word and Spirit of God. This is what the church uniquely has to offer -- getting down to the root of the problem and the real solution even if the fullness of healing is not experienced in this life.

The church's responsibility

Out of agape love (which goes far beyond mere kindness), the church warns about sin, not to manipulate or control, but because sin has consequences -- it does damage. And so the church warns individuals and warns human authorities. It attempts to shape organizations and institutions around the moral order of things as revealed in Scripture.

Though the church must never use coercive power to try to force obedience on individuals or groups, it should, in love, inform, persuade and influence by lawful means concerning what is good and right in relationships. Moreover, the church, again in love, should, when necessary, use church discipline with its own members. Numerous biblical passages indicate just this, and tell us something of how to go about administering discipline. It would be less than loving for the church to stay silent -- like a doctor knowing a patient is seriously ill, but not saying so because it might offend the patient, or might lead to some suffering in order for the patient to be healed.

The New Testament is clear that the church, at times, must make judgments and take action. But how this is done is critical. Unfortunately, there have been times in which the church has bought into the false idea that it does not matter how it treats sinners as long as it's sure sin is present. This amounts to the false idea that one can treat a sinner sinfully. No! Scripture is clear on how sinners are to be treated. Warning and correction must be carried out with gentleness, patience, and by giving incremental warnings with compassionate persuasion. Church discipline is to be administered with hopefulness in Christ, because the love of Christ will be what compels and guides it. See the book of Philemon for a good example of this.

Love the sinner but hate the sin?

In reaction to the times the church has treated sinners sinfully, some object to the church taking any action in response to the presence of sin. It's common for them to object to the often-stated maxim that Christians are to "love the sinner but hate the sin." What about that idea? Make no mistake about it, Scripture does make it clear that we are to hate what is evil. In **Romans 12:9-10** Paul shows us that love and hating evil fit perfectly together. For Paul, evil is diabolical, deceitful and damaging and so must be repudiated. Moreover, we are to hope for the day when evil will be no more.

Were it absolutely impossible to both love the sinner and hate their sin, there could be no salvation, for God will either have to love us and love the sin too, or hate us as well as the sin. Or God would have to deny there is such a thing as sin and evil and so leave everything just as it is, and cease to be good himself.

Grace is the definition of God's hating the sin and loving the sinner and so rescuing him or her from the guilt of sin and the power of evil. If we are our sinful actions and we cannot be separated from them, then there is no salvation. Grace condemns the sin (judges it for what it is) cuts us apart from it, and rescues us sinner from it, cleansing, freeing and redeeming. That is what salvation is! That is why Paul so emphatically states that grace never means that sin should continue and abound. Grace makes no exceptions to sin. It's all got to go. Can you imagine what our eternal state would be if grace just made exception after exception to let sin in with us into his eternal kingdom? What would that be like? I think you know. So if there is salvation, there has to be a real difference between sin and the sinner.

Perhaps it's important to make one qualification here. We don't have to use the word "hate" when thinking or attempting to explain this, even though the Bible does. *Hate* in the biblical context does not always have the connotations that modern western people insist it must have. Hate does not mean to wish evil upon someone, have ill will, to justify treating someone in any way one pleases including physical harm, verbal attacks, etc. Rather, it means to reject or separate oneself totally from the sin, to not come under its influence or to be obligated in any way to it or be controlled or dominated by it. To hate sin is to repudiate association with it. So, we can modify what we might say and instead say something like this: "God rejects the sin and while loving and forgiving the sinner." I have often put it this way: "God in his grace accepts us wherever we are, to take us where he is going. In his transforming love he never simply leaves us where he found us, for that isn't truly loving." Isn't that in line with what Jesus said?: "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more" (**John 8:11**).

Next time in this series, we'll explore more about what obedience to God (in accordance with a theological ethic) looks like. Stay tuned.

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshipim.ca, www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton; For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.

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