

Reformed:

It is not uncommon for people to ask me, "What does it mean to be Reformed?" What would you say if someone asked you? An interested student at a local Bible college asked me to write my answer down for him. This is what I wrote.

I. THE BIBLE ALONE

Reformed Theology amounts to one principle applied to three areas. The principle is *the Bible alone*. More specifically, what is not prescribed or inferred from God's Word is absolutely forbidden. The three areas to which this restrictive principle is applied are *doctrine, worship, and church government*. No man-made doctrinal speculation. No man-made elements of worship, but what we find in the NT. And no form of government but what the Apostles set up in the NT. This was liberating during the Reformation era because Christians had been weighed down by the Catholic church to superstitious doctrine, ritualistic idolatrous ceremonies, and an abusive unholy church government. By binding the church officers' hands to Scripture, Christians were free from ecclesiastical tyranny!

II. COVENANT THEOLOGY, REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE WORSHIP, & PRESBYTERIAN

What does this look like? The system of doctrine that grew out of this is called *Covenant Theology*. The type of worship that grew out of this is called *Regulative Principle*

Worship. And the type of government that grew out of this is *Presbyterianism* (not without exceptions).

III. COVENANT THEOLOGY

Very generally, here are some high points of *Covenant Theology*.

A. Three Acts of Imputation: Adam's guilt was imputed (credited) to his descendants when he fell, not to mention his corruption also (Rom. 5). The guilt of sinners was imputed to Christ when he died on the cross as a substitute (Gal. 3:13). The righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers in justification (Phil. 3:9).

B. Federal Headship: All people are either in Adam who is the head of a covenant of works, or in Christ who is the head of a covenant of grace (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15).

C. Continuity: There is continuity between the people of God in the OT and the people of God in the NT (Gal. 3:29).

D. The Sovereignty of God: God is absolutely sovereign over all things (Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:11).

E. Total Depravity: Fallen man is dead in sin, and unable to save himself (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 9:16; Jn. 1:13).

F. Justification by Faith Alone: "We maintain that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom. 3:28).

G. Holiness: "Do we then nullify the law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). For the best summary of Covenant Theology, I recommend the Westminster Confession of Faith.

IV. REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE WORSHIP

Regulative Principle worship is simple, reverent, joyful, God-centered, and Bible-centered. Nothing fancy. Just prayer, singing, reading, preaching, praying, an offering, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. No innovations are allowed, because God dictates how he is to be worshipped (remember Lev. 10!), and because man's heart always leads him into idolatry.

V. PRESBYTERIAN

Presbyterianism can be summed up in two principles: elder rule, and connectionalism. Qualified elders rule the church with the help of deacons (1 Tim. 3). No church is an independent island, but is governmentally connected to other churches for accountability (Acts 15).

-Pastor Ferry