

Class 5 Scope, Limitations, and Mystery (Studies in Christian Logic)

Introduction:

When studying Christian logic, it is very important to know how logic works in the Christian context, how limited logic is in the Christian experience, and how to maintain a healthy and worshipful appreciation for and balance with logic and transcendence.

So, tonight we will break down our talk into three segments: (1) the legitimate scope of logic, (2) the limitations of human logic, and (3) the mystery that remains beyond logic in transcendence.

We certainly need to balance the proper focus on mental and spiritual understanding, while at the same time rightly perceiving our limitations to understand in areas of mystery.

Why are these things important? We are considering a thesis that we will consider in two parts.

1. It is important to understand that logic is not the whole fabric of faith and human experience in salvation. Why is this important?
 - a. Let us remember that logic is vital to Christian faith because:
 - i. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God, which includes:
 - ii. Divine revelation is our compass for Christian living, and we need logic to understand divine revelation.
 - iii. Discipleship is learning truth and putting truth into practice; thus, we need logic to be disciples.
 - b. But logic is not the sum and substance of faith:
 - i. Over emphasis on the mind and logic results in a number of problems:
 1. It leads to intellectualism.
 - a. Intellectualism requires that we believe that the mind can understand all of reality.
 - b. Which means that intellectualism asserts that the essence of reality is material, meaning that intellectualism is materialism.
 - c. Intellectualism does not value love, and intellectualism always leads to disrespect of others who are not considered intellectual.
 2. It leads to pride.
 - a. Knowledge alone always leads to pride.
 - b. Pride of knowledge is idolatrous.
 - c. Pride is sinful.
 - d. Pride is not loving.
 3. It misses the heart and the soul.
 - a. The mind is the gateway to the heart and soul, but the mind without the heart and soul does not lead us to the truth.
 - b. Truth is meant to be felt, experienced, and obeyed; thus, the heart and the will must also be involved.
 - c. Heartless and soul-less intellectualism is shallow and cannot change anyone's life. Nor does it honor the Lord; in fact, it dishonors the Lord.

- ii. Faith utilizes the mind to believe the truth and rest upon truth; this requires understanding and trust based on the facts and truth.
 - 1. Faith rests upon understood truth, but it also embraces God and eternal realities in areas where we do not have the grasp of understanding.
 - 2. Worship begins when:
 - a. Understanding truth brings us to worship God.
 - b. Worshiping God takes us to a higher heart place based on the truth.
 - 3. Walking with Christ in a faith relationship based on the gospel, includes both truth information about Jesus and His saving work, saving faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, and it enables us to love Jesus from our hearts and obey Him in joy. This forms the context of the Christian's comfort, peace, and joy, especially when the mind does not fully grasp the substance of truth as it may apply to life.
2. The human mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit and informed (taught) by the Scriptures, becomes the gate through which God works in the heart, leading us to holy mystery, which is beyond what we can intellectually understand and embrace. (Mystery is important for the Christian life, and it is vital that we understand and implement the interplay between logic and mystery in the Christian experience; it is only in this way that the Christian is able to maintain worship, joy, and hope.)

We will divide this thesis into three categories: 1) Worship, 2) Joy, and 3) Hope.

- a. Worship, mystery, and logic (thinking aright about worship and worship experiences)
 - i. Worship and gospel
 - ii. Worship and the soul
 - iii. Worship and adoration and praise of God
 - iv. Worship and spiritual growth
- b. Joy, mystery, and logic
 - i. Joy and heart affections for God
 - ii. Joy and divine covenantal promises
 - iii. Joy and soul fulfillment
 - iv. Joy and eternal life
 - v. Joy and love
 - vi. Joy and victory in spiritual battle
 - vii. Logic embraces truth to enable:
 - 1. Truth to run deeply to the heart
 - 2. To engage the affections of the heart
 - 3. Unto godliness and joy in Christ
 - 4. Even in the midst of heartache
 - 5. Thus, logic is key:
 - a. To stabilize us when we hurt and are afraid
 - b. To guide us when we are disturbed or uncertain
 - c. To support us with God's strength through grace
 - viii. Holy joy takes off on the platform of holy logic, resulting in:
 - 1. Courage and strength to keep going
 - 2. Living hope nurtured in truth and faith

- c. Hope, mystery, and logic
 - i. Hope and human passion (human God-given passion needs God's hope)
 - ii. Hope and God's promises in Christ (gospel)
 - 1. The gospel becomes the bridge of hope to believers.
 - 2. The gospel becomes the platform of hope for believers.
 - iii. Hope and the destiny of God's people
 - 1. Hope brings the power of our destiny to today's hurts and struggles.
 - 2. Hope focuses our attention today on the destiny, which overcomes all.
 - iv. Hope and life's lies
 - 1. Lies of earthly and present possibility
 - 2. Lies of human power
 - 3. Lies of human glory without God
 - 4. Lies of self-doubt
 - 5. Lies of non-reality

Application: Practical Application of the Thesis to Life

1. The **Scope, Limitations**, and Mysteries of Logic (human epistemology)

- a. A brief overview of human epistemology as it relates to logic
 - i. Pre-fallen humanity had a much greater actualization of mental capacity.
 - ii. Sin robs the human mind of its:
 - 1. Mental ability as God created it
 - 2. Reasoning of relating all of reality to ultimate reality (God) is warped
 - 3. Mental orientation of life is wrong (total depravity)
 - 4. Clarification:
 - a. People can think, people do think, but people don't think rightly.
 - b. Because of sin people do not possess the right desires and orientation of life for mental processing. Sin makes people see everything through a selfish and false lens.
 - iii. Redeemed humanity experiences a restored mental capacity correcting the problems of fallen intellectual abilities.
 - 1. Regeneration transforms and empowers our mental abilities.
 - a. Intellectual capacity and use relates to more factors than just spiritual.
 - b. Intellectual reasoning and function in regeneration is tethered to the truth of God's Word and Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Sanctification utilizes the mind in its proper role:
 - a. The Bible impacting the human heart and life renews the mind and transforms the life through understanding and application of the truth.
 - b. The Holy Spirit enlightens the Christian's mind for all aspects of the Christian life.
 - 3. Glorification in heaven will give the Christian full actualization of mental capacity for the glory of God. All true knowledge is and will be holy to the glory of God.
 - iv. In the practical realm, the Christian must see all of life through the teaching of the Scripture, seeking to live in the light of the Word for God's glory. In doing this the Christian must be cautious of deception and false thinking.
- b. The **limitations** of logical pondering alone (**intellectualism**) (three aspects)
 - i. Logic limited in **perception** (perception = the beginning point of pondering; what we think we perceive to be real)

1. Perception reveals our spiritual and mental status.
 2. Perception reveals our relationship to God.
 3. Perception reveals our concept of reality.
 4. Perception reveals our presuppositional bias.
 5. Our past experiences that frame what we are and how we think.
 6. The limitations of human perception include:
 - a. How much we know.
 - b. The significance of what we know.
 - c. The truthfulness of what we think we know.
- ii. Logic limited in **understanding** (understanding seeks to **make sense** of perception)
1. Understanding is perception that leads to acceptance and agreement.
 2. If the perception is warped, then the understanding by necessity will be warped, as well.
 3. The **significance** of mental understanding includes:
 - a. The understanding asserts the foundational basis of reality.
 - b. The understanding asserts the compass of morality.
 - c. The understanding asserts the grid for societal structure.
 4. The limitation of understanding includes:
 - a. Limitation of understanding may not see the real essence of a thing or idea.
 - b. Limitation of understanding may not see the real purpose of a thing or idea.
 - c. Limitation of understanding may not see the real consequence of the implementation of a thing or idea.
- iii. Logic limited by **experience** (human epistemology includes experiencing knowledge)
1. The difficulty of differentiating what is from what ought to be because of our experience (experience driven knowledge and understanding)
 - a. We must never seek to understand life or situations solely on past experiences.
 - b. We must not allow logic to be driven by past experience.
 2. Logic in human experience / the use of holy logic (what does holy logic cause us to think as we live life in the light of the Scriptures and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ?)
 - a. The utilization of logic in times of **doubt**
 - i. The Scripture and absolute truth (plain and main teachings)
 - ii. Doubt and the...
 1. problem of **pain**
 2. problem of **circumstance (tragic)**
 3. problem of **aging**
 - iii. Doubt and the relationship of the Christian with God
 - b. The utilization of logic in times of **trouble**
 - i. What has the Scripture said about God's trustworthiness?
 - ii. What has the Scripture said about life in a sinful dimension?
 - iii. What has the Scripture said about sanctification and troubles?
 - iv. What has the Scripture said about the Christian and eternity?
 - c. The utilization of logic in times of **despair**

- i. Despair and human loss (grief)
- ii. Despair and fear
- iii. Despair and loneliness
- iv. Despair and insecurity
- v. Despair and uncertainty (categories of divine promises in Christ)
 - 1. Divine presence
 - 2. Divine provision
 - 3. Divine protection
 - 4. Divine predestination

d. Applied:

- i. **Never allow yourself to think about a circumstance purely on the basis of how you feel.**
- ii. **Always seek to understand the plain/main teaching of the Bible, and try to apply it as relevant to your situation.**
 - 1. **Orient yourself and your heart to the gospel of Jesus.**
 - 2. **Rest your fears and hopes on gospel promises**
- iii. **Seek to do the best you can for the high call of God in Christ Jesus, and do not allow your situation to dictate and dominate you in your life.**
- iv. **Allow yourself time to adjust; wait on the Lord.**

2. Logic, Contradictions, and Conundrums (Christians must distinguish between these two) (mystery)

- a. Logic and conundrums (paradoxes, surface appears contradictory, but is complicated and possible consistency and truth may be contained inside of the conundrum or paradox. Although some would distinguish paradox and conundrum, I am using them synonymously in this case)

- i. Conundrums are those ideas that may contain truth without truth being apparent.
- ii. Conundrums are paradoxes that cannot easily be unraveled.
- iii. Conundrums may need more information.
- iv. Conundrums may need a new orientation to the information
- v. Conundrums may be solved by more experience and growth.
- vi. There will be conundrums about which the Christian will never in this life come to full resolution.
- vii. Christians living with conundrums:
 - 1. **Do not presume to understand all reality, even the reality you truly understand. Leave room for humility and further growth.**
 - 2. **Seek to be a purveyor of truth to others.**
 - 3. **Seek to inspire others to think, even when thinking they may be disturbed at times.**
 - 4. **When unable to get resolution, smile with the joy of the Lord; show His grace in strength.**

- b. Logic and contradictions

- i. Contradictions are assertions that include two or more parts which certainly cannot each equally in the same way be true.
- ii. Contradictions include ideas that predispose the falsity of some part of the contradiction.

- c. Important understanding with regard to conundrums and contradictions:
 - i. These two are not the same.
 - ii. Life has both.
 - iii. The means of differentiating the two include the following:
 - 1. Understand an idea at its base.
 - 2. Unlayer the presuppositions of the idea.
 - 3. Unlayer the assumptions of the idea.
 - 4. Question: is the difficulty in human understanding?
3. The Use of Logic in **Transcendent Thinking** (Can logic be useful as we ponder transcendence?)
- a. Yes, because:
 - i. God created the mind to primarily think about transcendent realities.
 - ii. God renews the mind in salvation to think aright.
 - iii. God calls the Christian to think in true and godly ways.
 - 1. To fight off false thinking (See 2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
 - 2. To discipline the mind unto godliness (See Philippians 4:8)
 - 3. To focus on and follow Jesus (See Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 12:2)