

What I learned from Tom Hamilton – by Thailer Jimerson

God saved me in the fall of 2009. Like flipping on the switch, God spoke “Let there be light!” and there was light in my darkened, hardened, inner man, when I first heard the gospel. I was baptized for forgiveness soon after. Unfortunately, though, my first few years of church experience was, among other things, spent on cutting my teeth on anti-Florida College sentiments.

It was at Brownsburg that I first began thinking positively about them. I would hear stories of Bible scholar after Bible scholar; of the great college escapades and wading through the strict nature of FC rules; of the traditions – Dave Roberts, Josh Webber, and even Bob Buchanon, would be beaming while recalling their favorite folkloric heroes that have sauntered across the famed Hutchinson chapel stage, prepared to elucidate some enigmatic passage.

Understandably then, I was quite surprised when we actually pulled into the FC campus. Believe it or not, there are no massive edifices that cumulatively result in Christ’s earthly castle. From the outside looking in, it’s really nothing special – just a few stucco lecture halls and dorms that house roughly 500 students per year. And yet. And yet somehow the modest private Christian college is able to capture some of the paradoxical nature of the gospel, meaning, you can’t accurately assess its importance simply by judging its appearance: there is great biblical insight found within, taught by those who love Jesus and his gospel.

One lecture that I loved in particular was taught by Dr. Tom Hamilton. Despite entitling the lecture with a (forgivable) typical click-bait title “5 Well-known (but False) Facts About the Psalms,” there was much to learn. And I want to share with you one thing in particular. The third (false) fact he shared was “Since the Psalms are in the Old Testament and that’s nailed to the cross, therefore it is no longer applicable for Christians.” From here, he began to articulate something Amber and I have always believed and thought about, but never could quite vocalize correctly.

Here’s the gist of what he said. You have heard it said that we no longer obey the OT, that, in fact, if we obey any of the commandments in the Decalogue, it is not because they originate in the OT, but rather because they’re repeated in the NT. But Tom Hamilton tells us that is complete nonsense because the NT writers – in action, thought, and writing – apparently didn’t get the memo of the OT’s completely defunct nature. In fact, the apostles and authors of the NT used the old scriptures extensively. For example:

- In that oft-quoted verse, 2Ti.3.16, Paul says the scriptures (a word denoting the OT) are able to make one wise for salvation by equipping us for every good work.
- All of the sermons in Acts are based on OT passages, many of which are psalms.
- Jesus himself says that he did not come to destroy the Law and Prophets but to fulfill them in Mt.5.17, and they would not fade away until all was fulfilled (and at this point Tom makes the great point that not all has really been fulfilled since we ourselves are awaiting the resurrection).

How, then, does one reconcile the passages like Co.2.14 and Ep.2.16 where they state that the OT ordinances were “nailed to the cross” and thereby removed? I’m glad you asked, since, of course, Dr. Hamilton covered this rebuttal. Here’s the answer, the only way he can reconcile the two: One MUST distinguish between the Old Covenant and the Old Testament writings. In other words, the covenant (with all its national-scale stipulations) made between God and the Israelite nation was done away with, replaced with the New Covenant between Christ and his church. But this does not leave the OT writings irrelevant. No, rather, in Christ we’re able to understand them on the fullest terms, realizing that all of the 39 culminates in Jesus Christ (Lk.24.27).

Tom’s nutshell passage to explain the need to distinguish between the two is Romans 3.21: “But now part from **the law** the righteousness of God has been revealed, declared by **the Law and the Prophets.**” What Paul is basically saying, then, is that **the law** (the Old Covenant made with Israel) has nothing to do with righteousness, and we learn about that *from* the **Law and the Prophets**, aka the Old Testament.

Needless to say, I had a great time learning a thing or two about a thing or two at Florida College. I’m looking forward to future lectures.