

John Frame's *Salvation belongs to the Lord*

Salvation belongs to the Lord - 1

It's not often that I find myself excited in Friday afternoon meetings of the faculty but last Friday I did. My copy of John Frame's "Salvation belongs to the Lord" had arrived!

I'm losing all sense of the purpose of published book reviews in these days of Amazon comments and billions of blogs. So whether what follows counts as a "review" or not I don't know and I don't care. Four posts to come - this one and three others

1. general comment on Frame's book
2. a few quibbles
3. highlights for me
4. some other juicy quotes

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John Frame, *Salvation belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006); 380pp.

What a wonderful book! It goes next to Packer's *Concise Theology*, Milne's *Know the Truth*, North's *Unconditional Surrender*, and Sproul's *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* as a clear, readable, balanced, comprehensive, biblical introduction to the fundamental doctrinal positions of orthodox Christianity.

As you would expect from John Frame, the book is wise, charitable, eirenic, gracious, judicious, deep, measured, and always, always submissive to Scripture. Like Packer's *Concise Theology*, every paragraph could be a chapter and every sentence a paragraph, and yet it is conversational in style and a pleasure to read.

Those who know Frame's work will be unsurprised that he is happy to decline some questions, to remain undecided on others, and to sit loose to the particular words and formulations for which others will go into battle, for example, the order of the decrees, the mode of baptism, the nature of our relationship with Adam, and specific words used in the doctrine of the Trinity. This book provides a powerful demonstration of the usefulness and demand of Frame's threefold perspectives, developed from and in relationship to the triad of God's attributes as covenant Lord (control, authority, presence) and yet Frame is happy to speak about the perspectives as a pedagogical device (p.x, p.330).

This doesn't mean that Frame is mealy-mouthed or timid. He nails his colours to the mast over providence, reprobation, prophecy, postmillennialism, infant baptism, limited atonement, women elders, compatibilism, and the everlasting conscious punishment of the wicked, to give just a few examples.

Following the example of his teacher John Murray, Frame's method is always implicitly and sometimes explicitly that of drawing systematic conclusions from careful study of the text of Scripture and so, along the way, we get some gorgeous insights into particular passages, such as Proverbs 8, John 17 and I Cor 8 (pp.139-40) and I John 2.2 (p.155).

The book, which consists of lectures given in 2004 for a "Foundations of Systematic Theology" course written up for publication, has 25 chapters and is divided into two parts. The first part covers God, the Word of God, Theology, Man, Sin, Covenant, the person and work of Christ and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The second part covers the *ordo salutis*, Church, Mission, the last things, and ethics. The last chapter is a tour de force in which Frame summarizes the teaching of entire book, chapter by chapter, in relation to his three perspectives.

This would be an ideal book to give as preparatory or first term reading to seminarians; it could be used as a group study book by those in local churches wishing to explore the faith more systematically; and it would be ideal to work through in a one-to-one reading programme with keen and bright young Christians who would then have a splendid foundation for deeper studies. It is well sign-posted and nicely presented, chock full relevant but not unnecessary Bible references. It would great to have a study guide to go with the book.

## Salvation belongs to the Lord - 2

John Frame's *Salvation belongs to the Lord is a great book*.

I have a few quibbles:

p.5 – is Exodus 3 really “the real beginning of the biblical doctrine of God”?

p.29 – “the Father certainly suffered...” I’m not sure

p.34 – I’m also still not sure that if the persons of the Holy Trinity are to be lined up with the three perspectives then the Son should be control and the Father authority. I think, Father – control; Son – authority; Spirit – presence.

p.36 – is there no subordination in the ontological Trinity? It depends what you mean by subordination.

p.40 – the standard line that Augustine starts with (and overeggs) “oneness” is falling apart (under pressure from Mike Ovey’s brilliant work)

pp.93-94 – I agree about not separating the “faculties” of intellect, will, and emotions as though they are component parts of a human person rather than the one person as a thinking person, the one person as a deciding/acting person and so on. Nevertheless, since Frame states that all three faculties are to be subject to the Word of God, then it still seems right to me to recognize that there is a certain ordering to the faculties. Although the Word of God deals with will and emotions, it does so as grasped by the intellect.

Chapter 8 – as to be expected, given his discussion of the matter in his *Doctrine of God*, Frame does not draw upon the tradition of discussing evil in terms of *privatio boni*. I think a real something is to be gained from this tradition in spite of Frame’s well-expressed reservations about it.

pp.142-43 – “That is the paradox of the two natures. At every point he is both man and God. As man he grows in wisdom; as God he has all wisdom. That’s hard to understand but no harder than the fact that as man he grew in strength but as God he has all power.” No harder? I think it’s harder because although Chalcedonian orthodoxy asserts that the one person has two centres of consciousness (two “minds” and two “wills”), there is something about consciousness which places it nearer to the idea of “person” than to the idea of “nature”. I agree with Chalcedon (!) but I do think that Christ’s human ignorance is a more difficult phenomenon to explain realistically than his human physical weakness.

p.149, 203 – the idea that we are at zero, that sin takes us below zero, that Christ’s passive obedience (his sufferings and death) brings us back to zero and that his active obedience then place us in credit seems nonsensical to me. If I have not sinned then I am not at zero, I am “positively” righteous because to have not sinned means that I have loved God with every fibre of my being and loved my neighbour as myself. The idea is also altogether too impersonal to do justice to that union with the history of Jesus which is at the heart of an individual’s restoration.

Chapters 13-17 - my single biggest disappointment with the book is the very low profile given to union with Christ. There are important and positive things said on pp.186, 215, 276, and especially 277, but no section devoted to it, no mention of it in the beginning-of-chapter summaries, and little practical sense of its utter centrality to our understanding of the *ordo salutis*. Additionally, of course, union with Christ is the very "place" where biblical theology, narrative theology and systematic theology meet with such mind-blowing, heart-warming, life-changing, theology-expanding gospel power. Given that Frame is working in the Vos, Murray, Gaffin tradition as well as the Calvin, Bavinck, Van Til tradition, the relative absence of *historia salutis* is a real pity. Even with the acknowledgement that the *ordo* is a pedagogical device (p.183), this section of the book feels (in the negative sense) as though it could have been written anytime in the last 400 years.

Chapter 15 - whatever Frame thinks about the New Perspective on Paul, it is surprising and disappointing that it was not introduced in the way that some other developments in theology are reported elsewhere in the book.

Chapter 16 – I think that the discussion of assurance is somewhat unreal. In particular, it is worth noticing how *what* we are being assured of changes from the truth of the gospel to the authenticity of our experience as the discussion proceeds. This is confusing.

pp.245-46 – Frame does not hold to *de jure divino* presbyterianism whereas (I think) I do.

p.278 – “we must take issue with the Roman Catholic notion that baptism is the new birth, or *with any other idea of baptismal regeneration.*” (italics mine) Well, the BCP, the work of Sadler, the work of Lusk, and others, have convinced me that this is an overstatement. (Looking back at p.178 where Frame asserts that “In this historical sense, then, some people who are elect, chosen, may be finally lost”, shows that he has a category into which *a certain sort of baptismal regeneration* would easily fit.)

### **Salvation belongs to the Lord - 3**

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These are a few of my favourite things (move over Connie):

God is known by

- his acts
- his authoritative descriptions - names; images; attributes
- a glimpse into his Trinitarian inwardness

Love is allegiance, action, affection (pp.23, 195)

God's attributes may be organized as attributes of love, knowledge, and power (and eternity and immensity are attributes of power – they speak of God as Lord of and over time and space).

The Word of God is divine: “So the word is God, and God is the word. Where God is, the word is, and vice versa. God's word is not only powerful and authoritative; it is the very presence of God in our midst. ... Another way to see the unity between God's word and God himself is to say ... that God's word, his speech, is an attribute of God. And, of course, God's attributes are never separate from him. When we come in contact with God's righteousness, or his love, or his wisdom, we are coming in contact with God. His attributes are not abstract qualities that could exist apart from him. They are his own personal qualities. So when we encounter God's speech, we encounter him. ... Don't seek to know God apart from his Word or read the Word without realizing that you are in the presence of God.” (p.49)

The relationship between the word of God and the Bible – the whole of chapters 4 and 5.

The reason we don't have a perfect text of Scripture – p.67

How we and others do and don't know God – pp.73-77

Theology as application – pp.79-80

The relationship between the cultural mandate and the great commission – pp.98, 250, 336

Degrees of sin, of punishment, and of reward – pp.101-2, 298, 295-96

Definition of covenant: “Covenant is a relation between the Lord and a people whom he has sovereignly consecrated to himself. He rules over them by the sanctions of his law and fulfills in and through them the purposes of his grace.” p.115

How I Cor 8.6 advances the argument for the deity of Christ. Once you recognize the power of the word “lord” then you might paraphrase, “there is one creator – God”, “there is one almighty, sovereign, rightful ruler of all things, redeemer of his people – the Lord Jesus Christ”. p.140

Extra-biblical revelation as simply part of God's situational lordship: “Nor do I want to say that God cannot reveal himself in unusual, surprising ways. I've heard of believers dreaming of some great disaster coming just in time to warn others to avoid a real disaster. Could that be of God? Certainly. He is sovereign over our dreams and subconscious, just as he is sovereign over the workings of our eyes, ears, and noses. Every event in some way reveals him, as we saw in chapter 4. All I am saying is that the only place we can go to find supremely authoritative *words* of God is to the Bible.” (p.168)

The relationship between faith and hope – p.194

The way that faith and repentance relate – pp.197-98: “Faith and repentance are the same thing, viewed positively and negatively ... Does this mean that repentance, as well as faith, is necessary for salvation? In a word, yes. But it’s not as if there are two different things that are necessary. Faith and repentance are two names for the same heart attitude.” (This thought goes to some very interesting places!)

Future justification – p.209 – “Justification is ours already, but one day we will be pronounced righteous before the Father’s throne. So there is a past justification and a future justification, as there is a future adoption.”

Present glorification – p.230

Distinguishing between election and covenant: “Those who trust Christ for salvation can never lose their salvation. But only God knows our hearts. We do sometimes see people who seem to embrace Jesus but later fall away. These people have never embraced Jesus with a true faith. So, as with the covenant of works, Scripture declares blessings to those who by faith obey God’s commands (John 15:10; rev. 22:2) and curse to those who do not (Heb.6:4-6; 10:26-31). It warns us to examine ourselves, lest on the last day God finds us to be hypocrites ( 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).” (121) .... “We may also say that the visible church today is historically elect. That is to say, church members belong to Christ in a special way, as Israel belonged to God. That gives them great privileges. Hebrews 6:4-6 says that church members “have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come.” Nevertheless, some of them rebel against the Lord, and the writer says that it is impossible to restore these to repentance. Like Saul, Judas, and unfaithful Israel, they will be lost. In this historical sense, then, some people who are elect, chosen, may be finally lost.” (178) ... “The nonelect are covenant breakers not covenant keepers; but they, too, are in the covenant. They are branches in the vine of Christ that one day will be broken off ... Are those unbelievers “in” the church? In one sense, no, for they are not united to Christ in a saving way. So, we say that they are not part of the *invisible* church. But in another sense, yes, because they have taken vows. They have become part of the covenant relation with God. God will hold them accountable, even those who take the vows fraudulently. They are members of the covenant but covenant breakers, not covenant keepers.” (235-36)

Marks of the church – p.242 – worship, love, and the great commission all properly and fully understood.

Law-gospel: “The gospel, then, is the coming of the kingdom; that is, the coming of the King to make things right. Incidentally, there is no dichotomy here between gospel and law. The coming of the King means that he will enforce his law in the world, that he will bring righteousness. That is the gospel, the good news. It is important for us to distinguish between salvation by grace and salvation by works, but I don’t think Scripture justifies a sharp distinction between law and gospel.” (p.248)

Church and kingdom: “The church, then, is – to maintain the military metaphor – the headquarters of the kingdom of God, the base from which God’s dominion extends and expands.” (p.249)

The task of the church: worship, nurture, witness. pp.253ff

Women and office: “It is important to distinguish in Scripture between what is called the general office and the special office. In the case of teaching, there is a sense in which all Christians are called to teach ... that is the general office. ... But there is also the special office. When we talk about the office of the teaching elder, we are talking about the special office. That is an office that doesn’t belong to every Christian. That office has special qualifications ... that office, I believe, is limited to men and, of course, not to all men but to men specially qualified. How does special-office teaching differ from general-office teaching? They differ chiefly in that special-office teachers are approved and set apart to speak in the name of the church. But this distinction does not prohibit general-office teachers (including women) from addressing the church when the elders of the church think it wise.” (p.258) I’d want to add thoughts about which different occasions and functions, too, but the basic thought is usable.

Prayer – the whole section, pp.267-73, is wonderful. Perspectives on why we should pray: normative – because God says so; existential – to get to know God better; situational – to change things. The spheres of prayer (in Christ’s name, in the Spirit, in the will of God, in faith); the qualities of prayer (humility, persistence, earnestness).

Sacraments – three perspectives: “We see three main aspects of a sacrament: signs, divine actions, and means of divine presence, which I assign to the categories normative, situational, and existential. .... Normatively, the sacraments are signs in that they are authoritative divine communications, revelations to us. ... Situationally, the sacraments are God’s actions on our behalf. A sacrament is not just our doing something in God’s presence; it is his doing something for us. ... The sacraments, existentially, are locations

of God's presence." (p.275)

Heaven as the intermediate state, the new heavens and new earth as the ultimate home for believers – pp.288-89

Postmillennialism promoted – pp.306ff

Preterism discussed calmly – pp.308ff

Chapter 24 – wonderfully clear and concise description of the application of the perspectives to ethics.

Summary of perspectives as they flow from the Lordship attributes and are applied to what we can know. Standard (and wonderful) John Frame:

The word Lord connotes especially three ideas. There is his *control*, or *power*, over the whole universe, so great and comprehensive that he works "all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph.1:11). Then there is his *authority*, his right to be obeyed by all his creatures. Finally, there is his covenant *presence*, in which he takes creatures to be his own and promises to be with them: both geographically near to them and near to them as the one who cares enough about them to bless, and, indeed, sometimes to curse.

In chapter 6, I generalized this pattern to say that anything in God or in the world can be viewed from three perspectives. To view it *situationally* is to view it in relation to God's controlling power, which brought the world into being and maintains it by his providence. Whenever we look at a situation, a fact, a state of affairs, we are focusing, in effect, on God's power, for it is God's power that brought into being and made it what it is. The situational perspective includes everything. Everything is part of my situation, my environment. But the situational perspective focuses on the world as a set of realities under the control of God's lordship.

But there are other perspectives, other ways to look at everything. One is the *normative* perspective, which is to view everything as an expression of God's lordship *authority*. Here we are asking what we can learn from everything in creation about God's will for us, his commands, his desires, his norms, his rules or laws. Just as everything is part of the situational perspective, so everything is part of the normative perspective. That is to say, everything reveals God's norms. We have an obligation to live in the world according to reality, according to truth, according to everything there is. That is why theologians distinguish between special revelation, general revelation, and what I call existential revelation but most theologians call illumination. Those three categories cover everything, so everything is normative. Of course, the Scriptures, the written Word of God, have a preeminent place among all the norms, for God has given them to us as the written constitution of the church and as the message of grace that corrects our repression of the truth we receive from other sources.

Then there is the *existential* perspective. In this perspective, we look at everything as an experience of the self. Everything we know, everything we encounter, is part of that experience. In this perspective, we consider everything especially in relation to God's lordship attribute of *presence*. For to think of ourselves rightly is always to think of ourselves in intimate relation to God.

But remember: each perspective on reality includes the whole of reality; and each perspective therefore includes the other two. You cannot understand your situation without the right norms for thought and without your own mind working right. You can't understand God's norms without understanding how they apply to situations and to yourself. And you can't understand yourself without understanding your relationship to your situational environment and to God's normative revelation." (pp.328-29)

Perspectives on the incarnation: "We may think of his deity as normative, his humanity as the situation into which his divine person comes to us, and his person as the subjective intimacy of the two natures in one person." Wow! (p.334)

## Salvation belongs to the Lord - 4

John Frame's ***Salvation belongs to the Lord is a great book.***

Here are some gems which Frame scatters along the way:

p.7 – “So we may say that “god is Lord” is the fundamental confession of the people of God in the Old Testament. The fundamental confession of the New Testament people of God is “Jesus is Lord.” That is a way of summarizing the main content of the Bible: “God is Lord” is the message of the Old Testament; “Jesus is Lord” is the message of the New Testament.”

p.7 – “Matter, motion, space, time, and chance are, ultimately, tools used by one great Person to organize and run the universe he has made.”

p.17 – “There is no sharp distinction between extraordinary and ordinary, between miracle and providence.”

p.42 – “When God reveals himself, he does so as the Lord. His word is his powerful, authoritative self-expression, in which he comes personally to be with us.”

p.70 – “People sometimes say that Scripture is sufficient for theology but not for other areas of life, such as science, history, politics, and car repairs. But that idea misunderstands the sufficiency of Scripture. Remember always: Scripture is sufficient as the *Word of God*. It gives us all the words of God we will ever need. So Scripture contains all the Word of God we need for theology – and also for ethics, politics, the arts, and car repairs.”

p.72 – “Theology is the application of Scripture to all areas of human life.”

p.75 – “You grow in knowledge of God as you know him more and more as Lord, as King. First, he is the one who controls all things. You will grow in your knowledge of God as you see more and more things as under his control: the present, the future, your own life, your sin, your salvation. Perhaps you think now that there is some part of your life where you are in control. You will grow in your knowledge of God when you come to see that ultimately there is no part of your life that is controlled by anyone other than God, even that little part of your life. Second, you come to know God as the one who speaks with such authority that you must obey – in every area of your life: your social life, your moral life, even your intellectual life. You will grow in your knowledge of God when you come to bring every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Third, you come to know God as you sense more and more his presence in your life. You can’t ever escape from him. You can’t do anything that he doesn’t see. And nothing shall ever separate you from his love.”

pp.79-80 – “If Scripture is already in a proper order, then we don’t need theology to put it in such an order. Then why *do* we need theology? Here is my suggestion: we need theology for the sake of people. Theology is the application of the Word by persons to the world and to all areas of human life. We need theology not because there is something wrong with the Bible, an improper form perhaps, but because there is something wrong with us. The Bible is fine, just as it is. The problem is that we are slow to grasp it, both because of our weakness and because of our sin. So the theologian, like a good preacher, takes the biblical text and explains it to us.”

p.86 – (Image of God ... glorifying God) “Clearly, God expects great things from us.”

p.88 – “People sometimes object to saying that the image of God is physical, because God doesn’t have a body. But that is short-sighted. God doesn’t have a body, but our bodies certainly reflect his power.” (JF discusses official and ethical dimensions of the image of God too)

p.105 – “Adam, then, was also faced with two contradictory words: the word of God and the word of his wife. He chose the latter. As head of the race it is his sin, not Eve’s, that Scripture says infects us all. Adam was our representative, so that when he sinned, we all sinned (Rom. 5:12).”

p.106 – “So Karl Barth says that creation and fall are simultaneous. In saying this he agrees with many non-Christian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and many secular philosophies that teach that sin is just an aspect of who we are ... The Biblical teaching is very different. God created Adam fully human but *not* sinful. God’s design for man did not include sin, and it still does not *necessarily* include sin. Sin is not part of the definition of a human being. Jesus was fully human, though he did not sin. We are still human, even when Jesus takes our sins away. And when we stand sinless in glory, we will still be fully human.”

p.112 – “Total inability is not physical or psychological. We are physically and mentally able to believe in Christ. The inability is moral, an inability to do the right thing. That is an inability for which we are

responsible. It cannot be used as an excuse.” (DF – “I *can't* eat slugs”)

p.117 – “Love and law are not opposed to one another, as some would like us to believe. Love is a command, a law, the fundamental law.”

p.118 – “Notice that God’s blessings come in two places within the covenant structure: under the historical prologue and among the sanctions. God gives us blessings before we have done anything to please him; he gives us more as we live lives of obedience.”

p.125 – “The covenant with Moses is God’s way of fulfilling the covenant with Abraham.”

p.144 – “Remember that his actions are not actions of a nature but of a *person*. Natures don’t do anything; persons do. When he suffers, it is his person who suffers. That person is the second person of the Trinity, who has taken on a human nature. So, in a real sense, it is God, a divine and human person, who hungers and thirsts, who suffers and dies for us.”

p.151 – “If Jesus died merely to encourage us to do the same thing, he is encouraging suicide ... Unless Jesus is a substitute for us, his death is a demonstration of injustice, not justice.”

p.152 – “If you believe in a universal atonement, you must hold a weaker view of what the atonement is .... Those who say the atonement has an unlimited extent believe that it has a limited efficacy ... So everyone believes in some kind of limitation.”

p.161 – “When you present the gospel to others, think of Samson tearing that lion in pieces. The same Spirit is present in you.”

p.235 – “There are some Christians, called dispensationalists, who believe that Israel and the church are two distinct peoples of God. ... Paul ... teaches that there is to be no dividing wall in the church between Jews and Gentiles ...”

p.251 – “The Great Commission must be the focus of everything the church does. Indeed, it must be the focus of the life of every believer.” (DF – understood in JF’s terms – not just soul-snatching evangelism).

p.266 – “The Bible doesn’t ask us in an abstract way to divide our resources among all the millions of people throughout the world who are in need. Rather, what Paul has in mind in Galatians 6:10 is being ready to help those whom God brings across our path. When we have resources that can be used to help someone, we should be generous; that’s all.”

p.276 – “Baptism is, first, the rite of entrance into the visible church .... It is baptism that gives us the right to be recognized as Christians, unless or until we are excommunicated.”

p.290 – “Contrary to the way we usually think, the saints in the intermediate state are not perfectly happy and satisfied. They long for the completion of God’s plan.” (JF then refers to Rev 6.10-11 and even if these verses are primarily about the martyr-saints’ longing for AD70 vindication, he has made a good point. He also wonders, on the next page, about some sort of special but temporary embodiment for saints awaiting the general resurrection real thing.)

p.294 – “Our existence in the new heaven and new earth will be spatial and temporal.”

p.319 – “In summary, Scripture motivates us to do good works by the history of redemption, the commandments of God, and the work of the Spirit within us, corresponding to God’s lordship attributes of control, authority, and presence.”

pp.321-22 – Factors in Ethical Judgment – see separate post, “Further thoughts on Counselling – 3”

## Further Thoughts on Counselling - 3

John Frame's ***Salvation belongs to the Lord is a great book***. Here's an extract from pp.321-22 from which we get help for counselling. (See the last few posts for comments on and extracts from this book).

### Factors in Ethical Judgment

Imagine that you are a pastor or counselor, and someone comes to your office with an ethical problem. Basically, there are three things you will need to discuss: the situation, the Word of God, and the inquirer himself.

Normally, we ask first about the situation: "What's your problem? What brings you to see me?" This question is ultimately about God's lordship attribute of control, for God is the one who brings situations about.

Then we ask, "What does God's Word say about the problem?" This discussion invokes God's lordship attribute of authority.

Third, we focus on the inquirer, asking how he or she needs to change in order to apply God's solution to the problem. At this point we are thinking especially about God's presence within the individual. If the person is a non-Christian, then evidently he needs to be born again by God's Spirit before he can apply the Word of God to his life. If the person is a believer, he may need to grow in certain ways before he will be able to deal with the issue before him.

We note in such conversations that each of these subjects influences the other two. We may start with a *presentation problem*: "My wife is angry all the time." But as we move to a focus on God's Word, gaining a better understanding of Scripture, we may gain a better understanding of the problem as well. For example, Scripture tells us to remove the log from our own eye before trying to get the speck out of another's eye (Matt.7:3). The inquirer may come to see that his wife is angry because he has provoked her. So, the problem now is not only in her but in him as well. Reflection on God's Word has changed our understanding of the problem.

But this new understanding of the problem pushes us to look at more and different Scripture texts than we considered in the beginning. As we understand the problem better, we understand better how Scripture relates to it. Scripture and the situation illumine one another.

When we move to the third question and ask the inquirer to look within, he may see even more things in himself that have provoked his wife's anger. So, the problem, the Word, and the inquirer have all illumined one another. Evidently, you cannot understand your problem or yourself adequately until you have seen it through what Calvin called the "spectacles of Scripture."

And you can't understand the problem until you see yourself as a part of it. And you can't understand God's Word rightly until you can use it, until you see how it applies to this situation and that. This is a more difficult point, but I think it is important. If someone says he understands "You shall not steal" but has no idea to what situations that commandment applies (such as embezzling, cheating on taxes, shoplifting), then he hasn't really understood the biblical command. Understanding Scripture, understanding its meaning, is applying it to situations. A person who understands the Bible is a person who is able to use the Bible to answer his questions, to guide his life. As I argued in chapter 6, theology is application.