

Grace Reformed Baptist Church

PO Box 4385 • Palmerston North • New Zealand

www.grbc.org.nz

School of Theology

3rd to 7th August 2009

The School of Theology organized by the Grace Reformed Baptist Church was again held in Palmerston North on the North Island of New Zealand from 3-7 August 2009. Dr Jim Renihan of the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies at Westminster Seminary in California USA was once again the speaker, this time presenting material from his 'Distinctives of Reformed Baptist Theology' course.

From lunchtime on Monday through to late Friday afternoon thirteen men from Reformed Baptist churches in New Zealand and Australia met together with Jim Renihan to go through this course material. There were three men from the Palmerston North church; three men from Grace Baptist Church in Christchurch; two men from New Plymouth; and one each from Shore Baptist Church in Auckland, and the Trinity Reformed Baptist Church in Hamilton. Three men from Australia, including two brethren originally from Kenya and Zambia, joined us.

Many of us had been looking forward to this week for a long time, and we were not disappointed! Opportunities for concentrated input of this quality from a clearly Reformed Baptist perspective are very rare in this part of the world, and we were eager to make use of the time. We certainly covered a lot of ground!

After some helpful introductory material on what it was to be Reformed and Baptist, and on the Reformed 'pedigree' of the 1689 Confession of Faith, we worked our way through five main units of study. The first unit was on the role of special revelation in the Church. Here we were presented with a detailed look at 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, and were taken through this key passage in context. We were challenged to be 'whole Bible' Christians and to use the whole canon in the work of training in righteousness.

The second unit addressed the issue of continuity and discontinuity in Scripture, and we saw that there is both organic unity and intentional progress in biblical revelation. While there is a kind of theological priority we must give to the New Testament writings, this does not negate the importance of the Old Testament, which should be read theologically and redemptive-historically in the light of the New. In unit three we were presented with a survey of

New Testament theology. Particularly helpful here was the call to preach and teach a proper, apostolic and biblical view of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Unit four centred on the idea of the covenant in Reformed Baptist theology. We explored the understandings of covenant theology contained in the Westminster Confession and the 1689 Baptist Confession; considered the Covenant of Grace; and looked at the historical covenants of Scripture. We were reminded that we do believe in salvation by works, but it is *Christ's* works, not ours. In this context Dr Renihan reminded us of the words of Scott Clark: "On the last day all I want to do is hide behind Christ."

The fifth and final unit concentrated on baptism. We spent a lot of time working through key New Testament passages, allowing the text of Scripture to speak for itself. All in all, this week was one of clear and challenging biblical exposition, encouraging us to a deeper, more intelligent and heartfelt commitment to "the things most surely believed among us."

As usual the hospitality provided by the Grace Reformed Baptist Church was outstanding. Our brethren opened their homes and their hearts to us, and we were well fed and well looked after all week, enabling us to concentrate on our studies and enjoy the time of extended fellowship.

We greatly appreciate the prayerful and practical support of the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies, and our sister churches in ARBCA, for making these visits possible. We particularly value the tireless labours, genuine concern, godly sincerity and warm fellowship of our dear brother, Jim Renihan. We pray that these opportunities will make a significant contribution to the life and gospel witness of the Reformed Baptist churches here in New Zealand, and that they be increasingly used to raise up men of deep and clear conviction to glorify Christ and serve His Church now and on into the future.

A report by Pastor Rob Harrod

Grace Baptist Church, Christchurch

The members of Grace Reformed Baptist Church wish to acknowledge and thank Jim Renihan, Escondido Reformed Baptist Church, the trustees of IRBS and the churches of ARBCA for the various ways – by practical assistance and prayer – in which they helped to make our hosting of these studies possible.

