

A grayscale photograph of a person in a suit holding a book, with a red brushstroke across the middle.

# Credo

## "I Believe"

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# 1

## **We Believe . . . Ten Tenets of Biblical Orthodoxy**

The Bible defines, defends and declares biblical orthodoxy.

Every January our world thinks of new beginnings. “Let bygones be bygones” and let us start fresh, plot new courses, and become something different or better than what we were. Many, like us, have little thought of New Year’s resolutions. We do not believe the old nature is “cleanable” or the new nature “corruptible.” However, we do believe we can grow in grace. We agree with the following definition of Christian growth by Pastor Tullian Tchividjian from his work, *One Way Love*.

“So Christian growth does not involve becoming stronger and stronger, more and more competent every day. It involves becoming more and more aware of how weak and incompetent we are and how strong and competent Jesus was and continues to be for us.”<sup>1</sup>

Within a family, members of that family share similar traits and characteristics since they share common DNA. However no two siblings (unless identical twins) share identical DNA. There are nuances that make each person unique. Over the next several studies, we would like to celebrate what we are as a local church and as part of this one global church family, what we are as an individual personality within this one

family. The following WE BELIEVE studies will help us understand our theological DNA more precisely. Some of our DNA we hold in common with all Evangelical Christians. Nevertheless, there are things about us that make us uniquely us, even within the larger context of what makes us Christians.

We enjoy the thought of “We believe.” It comes out of the word “creed.” “[Creeds] are carefully considered and *usually* thoughtfully worded responses to various issues, heresies and historical situations that have troubled the Church and the world over the centuries. Creeds are statements of faith that are true and authoritative insofar as they accurately reflect what Scripture teaches.”<sup>2</sup>

“What is a Creed? The word ‘Creed’ is derived from the Latin word *credo*, meaning ‘I believe.’ The Creeds therefore, are summaries of belief. Particularly in the first few hundred years after the death of Christ, the church faced the problem of differing views over such subjects as whether he was truly God and also whether he had both a human or divine nature. Out of these disputes the church formulated statements of belief, which to this day form an important part of how Christians express their faith.”<sup>3</sup>

Here is how we will approach this short reading. We will work from the largest ideas placing us inside the family of God, and then to our unique personality within the family of God. There are others like us, but we have no identical twins, yet we do find we have some fraternal twins. We are closer to some siblings in our characteristics and beliefs than we are to others.

The following ten tenets are what most evangelical churches would agree on, but wrapped inside of *Story* language.

The study, like a box of Popsicles, consists of various flavors. They are all Popsicles or they would not be in the box. However, depending on what one enjoys will determine the one taken. Sometimes we might enjoy another flavor, but when asked, “What is our favorite,” we reply “grape.” As long as the Popsicle is in the box, it is okay. We did not create these ten tenets defining biblical orthodoxy. We did however give you our favorite flavor, which is one *Story*, with Jesus at the center.

Think of the study as a Tootsie Pop. They come in various flavors and one might be our favorite, but every one of them has a chewy chocolate center. Some people patiently lick their way to the center and others crunch to the middle. Nevertheless, the middle is always the same. Theologies have various flavors. Tootsie Pops are Tootsie Pops because they have a Tootsie Roll in the middle. Biblical orthodoxy is like a Tootsie Pop. At the center of biblical orthodoxy must be the delicious “chewy chocolate center,” Jesus. If a theology does not have Jesus at the center, it is not biblical. For us, our favorite flavor is to view the Bible as one *Story*, with Jesus at the center.

We will state each primary premise without much elaboration. From this primary premise, we will offer two conclusions. The ten tenets considered are essentials of orthodoxy, of evangelicalism as a whole. Although more could be said, this much must be said. We as a local church within Christendom, hold to these beliefs without wavering.

They are essential to being “Christian.” With this in mind, let us begin.

First, we believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word from God and tells a single *Story* with Jesus at the center ([BIBLIOLOGY] John 16:12-13; Matt. 5:18; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

<sup>14</sup> “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing the Bible, unlike any other book, is given by God (2 Tim. 3:16).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing the Bible unlike any other book is without any single error in the original text and when properly read will not lead the reader astray (Ps. 19:7).

Second, we believe there is only one God -- eternally, immutably, self-existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit -- who wrote the *Story* ([THEOLOGY PROPER] Deut. 6:4; 2 Cor. 13:14).

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” (Deut. 6:4).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing the God described and declared in the biblical *Story* is the only God and all other “gods” are false (Isa. 43:10; 45:5).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing He is the only unchanging absolute and against Him all things and everyone are judged (Exod. 20:4-6).

Third, we believe this God in Trinity created everything outside Himself for His glory and their joy ([COSMOLOGY] Gen. 1:1; Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:19-20).

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Ps. 19:1).

<sup>19</sup> “because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:19, 20).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing this God in Trinity has purpose behind everything that exists in matter and event (Gen. 50:11; Job 1:21; Rom. 8:28).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing everyone will one day stand before this triune God for judgment followed by either joy or condemnation (Matt. 10:15; 2 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 20:11-15).

Fourth, we believe humanity in particular, is the direct creation of God and designed by God so that they might know and experience the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit ([ANTHROPOLOGY] Gen. 1:26-28).

<sup>26</sup>“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ <sup>27</sup>God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen. 1:26-28).

God did not create us and save us because He needed us. He created us and saved us for our joy. He did not act out of poverty, but from passion.

Therefore, we make no apology for believing humanity is the pinnacle of the created order setting him above all other created things (Gen. 2:20).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing humanity’s highest joy can only be found in knowing and experiencing God as Trinity (Isa. 11; 25; Ps. 16:11).

Fifth, we believe humanity rejected God’s invitation for joy and sought their own path whereby separating themselves from Him forever ([HAMARTIOLOGY] Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:11-18; Rom. 3:10-18; Eph. 2:1-3).

<sup>16</sup> “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup> but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’” (Gen. 2:16, 17).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing everyone, everywhere and at all times has rejected God’s invitation for joy resulting in his or her eternal demise (Rom. 3:9-18, 23).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing no one is able to save himself or herself from his or her eternal demise apart from divine intervention and provision (Jer. 17:9; Acts 16:30).

Sixth, we believe Jesus is the second member of the Trinity and is the centerpiece of the biblical *Story* through whom the provision for sin has been fully and finally addressed for the glory of God and the joy of His people ([CHRISTOLOGY] John 1:1-2, 14; Luke 1:34-35; Matt. 1:21; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Acts 1:9-10; Col. 3:1; Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:25; Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2).

- We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men.
  
- We believe the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that he makes sure our justification by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead.

- We believe the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our Mediating High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate.

<sup>12</sup> “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. <sup>13</sup> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup> For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, <sup>20</sup> and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (Col. 1:12-20).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Seed Promise is the sole blood sacrifice and mediator between God and humanity (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing the only means whereby anyone, anywhere at any time can be delivered from his or her eternal demise is in the person and work of Jesus the Christ (John 14:6).

Seventh, we believe humanity's rebellion against God is only addressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ through which their debt is paid, their transgression is forgiven, their

animosity is reconciled, and His justice is appeased ([SOTERIOLOGY] Eph. 2:8-10; John 1:12; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; John 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1, 38-39; 1 Cor. 1:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:4-5; Rom. 6:13, 8:12-13; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9; Rom. 7:18; Gal. 3:3).

- We believe salvation (justification, sanctification, and glorification) is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins.
- We believe all the redeemed, once saved are eternally secure, kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. The believer is to place no confidence in their flesh for the outworking of their sanctification.

4"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup>so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing that apart from Jesus, there is no hope (John 6:68).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing Jesus is humanity's only hope.

Eighth, we believe the realization that this *Story* is true and the application of this *Story* to our story and standing before the Father to the individual is only possible by the power of

the Holy Spirit ([PNEUMATOLOGY] John 16:8-11; Titus 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 5:18; Eph. 1:13; 1 John 2:27).

- We believe the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all New Testament believers into the body of Christ, indwelling, filling, sealing, and illuminating them unto the day of redemption.
- We believe He fully and continuously abides within all true believers beginning at the time of salvation. (Eph. 1:13-14). We believe the Triune God is faithful to sustain His people and complete in them His will (Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24).

<sup>7</sup>“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. <sup>8</sup>And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; <sup>9</sup>concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup>and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; <sup>11</sup>and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged” (John 16:7-11).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing no one can come of their own effort (2 Cor. 4:3, 4; Eph. 2:1-3).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing the Holy Spirit enlightens and enables belief and is the initiating power without which none would come to faith in God’s *Story*.

Ninth, we believe God saves individuals for community formation through which His Mission is carried out in fulfilling His Vision for Creation ([ECCLESIOLOGY] 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22-23, 5:25-27).

- We believe Christ gave the local church two ordinances for the believer, the practice of believer's baptism and the regular celebration of the Lord's Table, neither of which has any merit for salvation.
- We believe Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer: in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 8:38; Rom. 6:1-7).
- We believe the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The elements speak the gospel. We should continue to remember Him in this way until He comes. (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing local churches are geographically defined assemblies with overseeing Elders and serving deacons.

Therefore, we make no apology for believing these kinds of local churches are necessary and essential for Christian formation and are to multiply through the making and maturing of disciples.

Tenth, we believe life will culminate with the finishing of God's original design for creation whereby He will dwell with His people for His glory and their joy ([ESCHATOLOGY] Zech. 14:4-11; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9; Rev. 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6).

- We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29, 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-6, 12-13).
- We believe the souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:4-6)
- We believe the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment (Matt. 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15).

- We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal joy of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.
- We believe the bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God -- the righteous to rest with Him and the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised.

<sup>1</sup>“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:1-3).

Therefore, we make no apology for believing Jesus fulfills God’s *Story* and continues to unfold in time even as His people wait for its fullest and final disclosure.

Therefore, we make no apology for believing in the imminent return of Jesus whereby He will gather His people for their joy and judge the wicked for his or her eternal demise.

God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, the righteous, into everlasting life.

It is always possible to drill down deeper into any one of these subjects, but we stand together in confessing these biblical affirmations. On these points we are asking you to openly confess with us as we seek to “be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord [we] may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5, 6).

# 2

## **We Believe . . . The Bible Reveals the One *Story* From Which All Stories Flow**

The Bible tells/reveals a single *Story* and Jesus is at the center of it.

Our preceding study considered, “The Ten Tenets of Biblical Orthodoxy.” Almost without exception, most professing Evangelicals affirm these ten tenets in one form or another. Yet is it possible to affirm the ten tenets and still have no idea as to what they speak. If the ten tenets appear “coded” and abstract, then we desire to make it even clearer as we push toward the center of the biblical storyline.

It is important to keep three thoughts in mind as we push toward our theological “DNA,” the nuances that make us unique within the one Church yet still solidly Evangelical.

First, the storyline of the Bible does not have you or your happiness at its center. The biblical storyline has God as Trinity at the center.

Second, the storyline of the Bible is not primarily redemptive. Redemption is the means God establishes to celebrate His greatness through our joy. Thus, our redemption is not the end. Our redemption is a means to the end. His glory is the

end. What is glory? God's glory is the fullness of His being. It is all He is as God. It is what exists when He is present. Glory emanates from His being. God created from the overflow of His glory. He created so His people would know and experience the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. His glory presupposes His presence and in His presence, there is fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11).

It is important to remember how we are gravitating toward the edge of a wedge. We started with the ten tenets all Evangelical Christians embrace and now we are narrowing the conversation to what we as a local church specifically embrace.

The Bible may appear to be a collection of random stories. Yet on a higher level, a unity appears. What is God saying through all the individual stories?

This is where we encounter the word **meta-narrative**.<sup>4</sup> At its most basic meaning, the word means "**Big Story**." The meta-narrative of the Bible is its *Story* about God. It is the one *Story* holding all other stories together. We can define this single *Story* by Six Acts: God, Creation, Rejection, Redemption, Re-Creation and Joy through Worship. Others have defined it in similar terminology.

The Bible tells one unfolding story of redemption against the backdrop of creation and humanity's fall into sin.<sup>5</sup> As N.T. Wright notes, "**the divine drama told in Scripture offers a story which is the story of the whole world. It is public truth.**"<sup>6</sup>

Thus, it is impossible to understand our own stories until we place them within the grand *Story* of God. With this in mind, let us consider the following six acts.

First, we believe God is fully satisfied within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [GOD].

22 “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. 24 **The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26** and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ 29 Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:22-30).

Therefore, God needs nothing for His joy to be full. **God did not create out of poverty, but out of plenty.** It was not an inherent shortcoming, but an astonishing bounty that compelled Him to create. His only need was the lavish

overflow of His being to share the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with His creation.

Therefore, knowledge, understanding and wisdom are only fully known in God. Everything outside of God is finite and thus constrained. It is for this reason the idea of human autonomy and freedom of the will is limited as to what it actually means. Often our thoughts of human autonomy are so small. Do we actually believe anyone or anything is out there doing his or her own thing without God's oversight and engagement?

Therefore, we should invite others to see God as the beginning and ending of every conceivable story.

Friends, we do not deny the lack we feel as finite beings, but we equally cannot deny the only source of sufficiency and joy we might ever experience in this life and in the life to come is only in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The issues we are dealing with on a personal level always come from our failure to find joy in God as Trinity.

Listen to Pastor John Piper of Bethlehem Baptist Church expresses this thought:

“After the question: **‘Does God exist?’** to which God answers, ‘I Am’ (Exodus 3:14), the next question that has shaped us most deeply at Bethlehem is: **Why did God create the world? The short answer that resounds through the whole Bible like rolling thunder is: God created the world for his glory.** When the first chapter of the Bible says, ‘So God created man *in his own image*, in the *image of God* he created him; male and

female he created them' (Genesis 1:27), what is the point? The point of an image is to image. Images are erected to display the original. Point to the original. Glorify the original. God made humans in his image so that the world would be filled with reflectors of God. Images of God. Seven billion statues of God. So that nobody would miss the point of creation. Nobody (unless they were stone blind) could miss the point of humanity, namely, God. Knowing, loving, [and] showing God."<sup>7</sup>

Second, we believe God's joy is so immeasurable and His essence so lavish that He created a world and a people group whereby His people could know and experience the joy He has within Himself as the outworking and expression of this copiousness [CREATION].

"Everyone who is called by My name, and **whom I have created for My glory**, whom I have formed, even whom I have made" (Isa. 43:7).

Although our knowledge of creation is limited, we can note the following as true. Within the vast expanse of our known universe, there are innumerable galaxies. Within these innumerable galaxies, there are countless solar systems and within these countless solar systems, there are planets.

Inside of our own galaxy, the Milky Way, we have a solar system, and within our solar system, there is a planet we have called Earth. On this particular planet, God created a Garden in Eden in which He placed the first man and woman. He did all this so that we might know His joy. This is "almost" incomprehensible. When we meditate on such things, it

reveals how vast our capacity for joy is. Moreover, it also shows how easily we are “pleased” with lesser joy.

It is for this reason C.S. Lewis made the following observation.

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, creation is a platform to see His glory.

“**The heavens are telling of the glory of God;** and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Ps. 19:1).

The earth is not our equal. The earth is our resource to be stewarded by the grace of God for the glory of God. Creation as a whole is simply a stage whereby we know and see the glory of God.

Therefore, creation is not primary but secondary in God’s design for His glory and humanity’s joy.

Therefore, creation cannot do for us what can only be done by God. Creation, the shadow, can only point; it cannot provide. **All of the emptiness of shadow pursuit ends in soul ache.** All those things we pursue to scratch this itch are husks devoid of life. The homosexual or drug addict or Facebook

junkie or perpetual adrenaline risk taker are all in pursuit of something that can only be satisfied in God.

Therefore, we should invite others to see how God's provision and not in the working of their own hands fulfill their desire for joy.

**"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).**

Third, we believe God designed humanity to know and experience this joy, but they rejected His invitation for joy and choose their own, thus separating themselves from Him and damning themselves to eternal unrest [REJECTION].

**"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).**

Therefore, humanity is inherently alienated from God. Although we are designed for God's joy, we will not seek Him independent of His first cause.

Therefore, humanity is universally in need of God. There is no one anywhere that is not in need of God's provision in the person and work of Jesus the Christ.

Therefore, we should invite others to see their inherent need of God's provision in the person and work of Jesus the Christ.

Fourth, we believe God graciously intervened in order to restore their joy through the provision of His Son and the power of the Holy Spirit [REDEMPTION].

<sup>7</sup>“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. <sup>8</sup>They heard the sound of the **LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day**, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, **‘Where are you?’**” (Gen. 3:7-9).

Therefore, all of this is foreshadowed in a Seed Promise and in a Blood Picture.

<sup>15</sup> “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And **between your seed and her seed**; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel . . . <sup>21</sup> **The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them**” (Gen. 3:15, 21).

**Everything written from Genesis through Malachi is a lesser shadow cast by the greater substance. All of the biblical narrative is a smaller type of the larger antitype.**

Jesus is the seed promised in Genesis 3 that would ultimately crush the serpent. He will conquer sin and death and undo the consequence of sin. However, accomplishing this victory must be through sacrifice, illustrated by the slaying of the animal to clothe Adam and Eve. Jesus would become the ultimate and final sacrifice.

Therefore, Jesus the Christ fulfills and completes all of this. The “shadow” only has significance by its fulfillment and completion in Jesus the Christ. **Jesus is the point.**

Therefore, we should invite others to see Jesus the Christ as the fulfillment of the Seed Promise and the completion of the Blood Picture.

Fifth, we believe the gospel restores the believing for joy [RE-CREATION].

**“You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Ps. 16:11).**

**“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).**

Therefore, all shadow joy is empty as an end.

Therefore, all shadow joy foreshadows full joy in God.

Therefore, we should invite others to find their ultimate joy in God.

Sixth, we believe this joy has its fullest expression in the biblical worship of Him [JOY THROUGH WORSHIP].

Let us read Revelation 4, 5, 21 and 22. In its reading, can we not see how we are coming back to the original design for the Garden?

Therefore, we believe we are waiting for the final and fullest expression of this joy in the encroaching future. Without denying present joy, the best is still yet to come and its fulfillment is looming. Friend, life is hard and relationships are complicated, but as Christians, we can still have joy today.

Therefore, we believe through shadow joy we can taste and see that God is good. Creation is not intrinsically evil or bad.

We should embrace shadow joy for what it is. All of our earthly human physical passions are but foreshadows of the fullest substance. Our frustration and struggle against shadow happens when we look to it to do for us what can only be done in the substance, Jesus the Christ. Listen to how graphic Isaiah the prophet speaks to this idea in Isaiah 25.

**<sup>6</sup> “The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine. <sup>7</sup> And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations. <sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. <sup>9</sup> And it will be said in that day, ‘Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation’” (Isa. 25:6-9).**

For me, the idea of a carnal Christian is one who fails to see the shadow for what it is. **A carnal Christian is one who is stuck on shadow, and fails to see beyond the shadow, to the substance.** Abusing creation makes one a slave to creation. I find it unfortunate when the shadow becomes our enemy. We can never taste and see God is good if we are always fighting against the shadow.

Therefore, we should invite others to prepare for the final and fullest expression of this future joy by believing the *Story* God has written concerning His Son and our relationship to Him.

We all go through periods of frustration. We often evaluate why we are frustrated. Our frustration is in our own failure

simply to believe Jesus is enough in this life and in the life to come. We want something from the shadow that the shadow cannot provide. Friend, we are citizens of another country that find ourselves in a land of shadow.

Friend, we continue to move our theology toward the soft, chewy, chocolaty center (our last study used the Tootsie pop to illustrate how there can be different flavors on the surface but the main point is JESUS).

Broadly speaking we are going from who God is, to what He has done, and finally who we are in Him.

We will never understand or appreciate who we are until we see who He is, and what has been done by Him for us.

# 3

## **We Believe . . . Jesus in His Person and Work is the Gospel**

The gospel is the Biblical *Story* where Jesus is center stage.

“Probably most of us have bought something, convinced of its great value, only to discover with time and observation that it was not all we expected it to be. **Even when purchasing a new automobile, before signing the contract the salesman persuades us to buy an extended service policy. Before the car is even driven off the showroom floor, we must begin to worry about the car breaking down! There is only one exception—the gospel of Jesus Christ.** The gospel of Jesus Christ promises men the forgiveness of their sins and the certainty of a relationship with God that will last through all eternity. Once we have entered into this relationship with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, we discover a whole new world of blessings we had not anticipated, all flowing out of our justification by faith.”<sup>9</sup>

“There is a vast difference between the ‘hype’ of our world and the ‘hope’ of the gospel. This world’s ‘hype’ always lets us down. But the hope of the gospel only grows. Paul’s words in these verses [Rom. 5:1-11] offer some of the most comforting words a Christian will ever hear.”<sup>10</sup>

“If Jesus said we're free, we ought to accept His declaration at face value and run with it. It ought to help us define ourselves. But it doesn't. Christians will do almost anything to get away from the simple meaning of the word and the wonderful experience of freedom.

Something about freedom scares us to death. We continue in our bondage and that is a major tragedy. It's a tragedy because Christ went to so much trouble to set us free. It is a tragedy because *there is so much more to being a Christian than obeying rules, doing religious things, and being 'nice'*. And it is a tragedy because our heritage is freedom...<sup>11</sup>

**We believe the gospel that saves us is the gospel that sanctifies us.** The gospel is Jesus. He defines our conversion and our Christianity.

Here we will consider Jesus as the definer of our conversion. Without Jesus, we have nothing. What I find of interest is our head assent to these ideas, but very little “in time” significance. We do not live as if it is true.

There are two thoughts controlling the magnitude of the gospel. First, who Jesus is controls the magnitude of the gospel, and second, what Jesus did controls the magnitude of the gospel.

“Too many Christians blandly accept the clichés of the faith (*Jesus loves me, this I know...*) without dealing with the complexity.”<sup>12</sup>

First, who is Jesus? The short answer is this; Jesus is the

fulfillment of the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15).

“As powerful as sin is, the blood of Christ is more powerful still. In Christ, the chains of our captivity have been broken, and the light of His grace has shone the way of freedom. But how has He freed us? Christ has secured our freedom because, in the shedding of His blood, He operated in the divinely ordained *munus triplex*, the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. This is why He is called ‘the faithful witness’ (as Prophet); ‘the firstborn of the dead’ (as Priest); and ‘the ruler of kings on earth’ (as King) in Revelation 1:5. In the threefold office of Christ, we are granted our freedom from sin.”<sup>13</sup>

Let us note those three offices.

- As Immanuel, He is the fulfillment of all “shadow”  
PROPHETS.

The Gospel of John identifies Jesus as **God dwelling with His people** and through whom **God speaks to His people**.

“As Prophet, Jesus pronounced an end to all our sin. In the Old Testament, the prophet was the mouthpiece of God to the people. In fact, the prophet often prefaced his words by saying, ‘Thus says the Lord.’ As God’s mouthpiece, the prophet spoke the words of indictment against the people for their sin (Isa. 1:4) and called them to repentance (v. 18). The prophet pronounced the forgiveness and pardon of God (Isa. 40:1–2). Jesus, as the final and sufficient Prophet, has done all of these for us. He came not just proclaiming the Word of God; He is the Word of God (John 1:1). He came to the world

because of sin (Matt. 1:21). He proclaimed our need to repent and believe on Him (Mark 1:15). And He proclaimed our pardon and forgiveness for sin (Col. 1:14)."<sup>14</sup>

- As Jesus, He is the fulfillment of all "shadow" PRIESTS.

"The priests were the ones in the Old Testament who offered sacrifices to God in order to cleanse of sin."<sup>15</sup>

The Book of Hebrews speaks of Him as our GREAT HIGH PRIEST. He is the GREAT HIGH PRIEST who brings the one sacrifice satisfying the justice of God against sin and sinners. According to 1 John, He is our one and only ADVOCATE before the Father's wrath.

"As Priest, Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for all our sin. In the Old Testament, the high priest was the mediator between the holy God and His sinful people. As mediator, the high priest entered the Holy Place and offered a sacrifice to God on behalf of the people once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:34). He sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat 'because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins' (Lev. 16:16). This he did year after year after year. Christ, as our Mediator and High Priest, not only *offered* the sacrifice (once and for all), but He *is* the sacrifice. Like the high priest of old, Christ entered the Holy Place, but unlike the high priest, He entered to offer Himself. He had to enter only one time, for He sprinkled His own blood on the mercy seat. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us:"<sup>16</sup>

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:11-14).

- As the Messiah He is the fulfillment of all “shadow”  
KINGS.

The Gospel of Matthew identifies Him as the King of Israel and the Book of Revelation reveals Him as the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

**Because of who He is in His person, the work accomplished by Him is infinite in nature.** He does for His people what no one and nothing else can do. It is for this reason the apostle Paul can write, “But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 5:20, 21).

“As King, Jesus rules in such a way as not to allow sin to reign over us any longer. In the Old Testament, the monarchy was established for the peace, prosperity, and welfare of the nation. The prototype king was David. No king was ever as beloved as he was. He was God’s vice-regent among the people. With David on the throne, the nation of Israel could say, ‘All is well.’ Few things comfort a nation more than

having a ruler of righteousness and strength sitting on the throne of power. It was said of David that he ‘reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people’ (2 Sam. 8:15). However, we have a King greater than David. Christ came in the line of David as David’s son and yet also as David’s Lord (Matt. 22:42–45). He is ‘the ruler of kings on earth’ (Rev. 1:5) and ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’ (19:16), including David. He rules with perfect justice and equity. As our King, He has fought our battles and now rules in such a way that sin never can reign over us (Rom. 6:7–14).”<sup>17</sup>

It is because of who Jesus is that what He does is of infinite value. **Only the Son of God could appease the wrath of God against the people of God.**

Second, what did Jesus do? Jesus is the completion of the Blood Picture (Gen. 3:21).

As the Seed Promise, Jesus completes the Blood Picture. In His sacrifice, there are six notable consequences.

- Jesus in His person and work **redeems** us from sin’s debt.

Redemption says, “Paid in full.” Redemption uses currency to cancel debt and the currency of biblical redemption is the blood of Jesus Christ.

“Finding its context in the social, legal, and religious customs of the ancient world, the metaphor of redemption includes the ideas of loosing from a bond, setting free from captivity or

slavery, buying back something lost or sold, exchanging something in one's possession for something possessed by another, and ransoming."<sup>18</sup>

**"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people"** (Luke 1:68).

**"Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"** (Rom. 3:24).

**"So that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"** (Gal. 4:5).

**"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"** (Eph. 1:7).

**"In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"** (Col. 1:14).

**"Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds"** (Titus 2:14).

**"And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption"** (Heb. 9:12).

Because Jesus paid it all, we will never again answer for our sin before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Did you hear this? We will never again answer for our sin before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**"102. Q. Which are the chief effects of the redemption?**

**A.** The chief effects of the redemption are two: the satisfaction of God's justice by Christ's sufferings and death, and the gaining of grace for men. An effect is that which is caused by

something else. If you place a danger signal on a broken railroad track the effect will be preventing the wreck of the train, and the cause will be your placing the signal. Many effects may flow from one cause. In our example, see all the good effects that may follow your placing the signal -- the cars are not broken, the passengers are not killed, the rails are not torn out of their places, etc. Thus the redemption had two effects, namely, to satisfy God for the offense offered Him by the sins of men, and to merit grace to be used for our benefit."<sup>19</sup>

For those that believe Jesus is the promised Savior whose person and work saved them from their sin, the following thoughts are true.

First, we are no longer obligated to sin.

Second, we have no sin debt before the Father.

Please read this carefully because the idea is difficult -- God will not hold us accountable for our sin. Jesus Christ fully addresses our sin issue. This is what the entire *Story* is telling us. Redemption is the platform for all other benefits.

- Jesus in His person and work **propitiates** the justice of God against the sinner.

**“Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.** This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed” (Rom. 3:25).

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so

that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, **to make propitiation for the sins of the people**" (Heb. 2:17).

"and **He Himself is the propitiation for our sins**; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins**" (1 John 4:10).

Because Jesus satisfies the sentence of God against us, God will never be mad, disappointed, frustrated or displeased with us again.

"What is the difference between 'expiation' and 'propitiation'?" "The prefix *ex* means 'out of' or 'from,' so expiation has to do with removing something or taking something away. In biblical terms, it has to do with taking away guilt through the payment of a penalty or the offering of an atonement. By contrast, *propitiation* has to do with the object of the expiation. The prefix *pro* means 'for,' so propitiation brings about a change in God's attitude, so that **He moves from being at enmity with us to being for us. Through the process of propitiation, we are restored into fellowship and favor with Him.**"<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, we are no longer the objects of God's wrath.

Please read this carefully because the idea is difficult -- God does not chasten His children. He does not punish us for our sin. He is never sad or mad with us. When bad things happen to us, it is because of sin's intrinsic demerit. It is not God punishing us for something we might have done or imagine doing.

Therefore, we are now under the good pleasure of God.

God designed us to know and experience the joy He has within Himself, and His Son secures that end. Why would God go to such incredible lengths to secure for Himself a people of joy only to be mad with them over the very things He sent His Son to address?

- Jesus in His person and work **forgives** us from sin's transgression.

God **forgives and forgets** your sin because of what His Son has done.

**"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"** (Eph. 1:7).

**"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you"** (Eph. 4:32).

**"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions"** (Col. 2:13).

**"I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake"** (1 John 2:12).

Because Jesus answers our sin debt and the Father's just sentence against our transgression, we are forgiven of all our trespasses against Him. We will never need to be forgiven by Him again.

Therefore, we are no longer in violation of God's Law.

Please read this carefully because the idea is difficult - we never have to ask God to forgive us of sin. We will readily confess our sin and have no delusion as to the rottenness of our own old nature, but we never have to worry whether or not God has forgiven us.

Therefore, we are now in conformity to God's Law.

Friends, when we look at the Ten Commandments, we do not see violation, but conformity. We obey the Law. We live a life of obedience. Obedience is not perfection and our obedience is not a work generated by us. Like our justification, our obedience is the work of another.

- Jesus in His person and work **justifies** us from sin's guilt.

**"Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"** (Rom. 3:24).

**"Therefore, having been justified by faith,** we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

**"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood,** we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Rom. 5:9).

**"Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified"** (Gal. 2:16).

**"So that being justified by His grace** we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

Because the Father declares us not guilty due to His Son's work, we will never be guilty before Him again. If Jesus is for us, who can be against us?

Therefore, we are no longer guilty before God.

Please read this carefully because the idea is difficult -- we never have to have feelings of guilt before God. Guilt says, "I was wrong and thus culpable for my transgression." Jesus addresses this idea fully. We cannot do it, so He did.

Therefore, we are now blameless before God.

It is because of who He is and what He does we can enter into the very Holy of Holies and come before His throne with boldness and confidence.

- Jesus in His person and work **reconciles** us from sin's alienation.

"Namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Because the death of Jesus removes our alienation and provides our reconciliation, the Father will never removes us from His love. If God loves us because of His Son, who can separate us from His love?

Therefore, we are no longer at war with God.

God is no longer our enemy but our friend.

Therefore, we are now at peace with God.

- Jesus in His person and work **adopts** us, removing us from sin's separation.

*"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"* (Rom. 8:15).

*"So that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"* (Gal. 4:5).

*"He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will"* (Eph. 1:5).

God adopts us into His family because of Jesus. Nothing I do can undo my son-ship.

Therefore, we are no longer separated nor ever be separated from the family of God.

Nothing we do can undo what God has done.

Therefore, we are now children of God.

Credit cards enable us to live in a fool's paradise. Credit cards have the power to separate reality from fantasy. Loans have that same power. Yet what Jesus promises in His person and work, that He delivers. He is the one thing that never disappoints.

Friends, the idea that Jesus is the Son of God has tremendous

implications. What He did on the cross has unprecedented blowback. Do you know Jesus? Do you really know Jesus? Friends, let us not stop in our pursuit of Him. Jesus really does make a difference both in this life and in the one to come.

# 4

## **We Believe . . . “Nine Marks of Gospel Living”**

The gospel is the Biblical *Story* where Jesus is center stage.

**We believe the gospel that saves us is the gospel that sanctifies us.** The gospel is Jesus. He defines our conversion and our Christianity.

Neither our conversion nor our Christianity are about us, but about Him. **The entire franchise rests on Him. He is the foundation and He built the structure now resting on it.** If it were possible for us to have done anything to merit the good graces of God, then God would not have had to send His Son to be our Savior and Advocate. **Jesus is not the divine enablement, but the divine answer. We cannot work up; He must reach down. We were not resuscitated as if we fainted; we were resurrected for we were dead.**

Here we will consider how Jesus defines our Christianity. Because Jesus is sufficient in who He is and what He does and there is nothing we could do that He has done, our issue with sin and its intrinsic demerit has been fully and finally addressed.

Yet just how wonderful is this message of grace? Consider the following quote as it relates to the “rediscovery” of the singular truth “salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.”

“The Reformation was a time when men went blind, staggering drunk because they had discovered, in the dusty basement of late medievalism, a whole cellarful of fifteen-hundred-year-old, two-hundred proof Grace – of bottle after bottle of pure distillate of Scripture, one sip of which would convince anyone that God saves us single-handedly. The word of the Gospel – after all those centuries of trying to lift yourself into heaven by worrying about the perfection of your bootstraps – suddenly turned out to be a flat announcement that the saved were home before they started... Grace has to be drunk straight: no water, no ice, and certainly no ginger ale; neither goodness, nor badness, not the flowers that bloom in the spring of super spirituality could be allowed to enter into the case.”<sup>21</sup>

That is what we are endeavoring to be as a gospel-saturated, gospel celebrating community of faith. To drink deeply the grace of God and to lose our minds on Him. Yet what does this look like?

“The church should be a place where we can say anything and know we won't be kicked out, where we can confess our sins knowing others will help us, where we can disagree and still be friends. *It ought to be the one place in the world where we don't have to wear masks.* Allow me to let you in on a secret: NOBODY fits the mold & most of us wear masks to cause others to think we do. The greatest tragedy of the church is

that, in many cases, the most dishonest hour of the week is the hour we spend at church.”<sup>22</sup>

How might we drink deeply from the chalice filled with the grace of God? We have worked ourselves to this point. We have gone through THE TEN TENETS OF BIBLICAL ORTHODOXY and then considered THE BIBLICAL STORYLINE IN SIX ACTS. From there we examined and celebrated THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE GOSPEL. Now we consider NINE MARKS OF GOSPEL LIVING. All created beauty pales in comparison to Him who alone is lovely.

For those who are new to this thought, we want you to know and understand just how wonderful Jesus is and how much in love we are with Him and His Church. We believe God in Trinity is so wonderful as to sanctify that which He saves.

In light of all we have considered, please note with us our final nine marks. We are working from the foundation of God’s lavish all-invading redemptive work on behalf of sinners.

First, because the work of God is so all consuming, there is nothing we can do to undo what God has done (1 Thess. 5:23, 24; Jude 24, 25).

<sup>23</sup>“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>**Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass**” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

**24 “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,** <sup>25</sup> to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24, 25).

We believe our position in Christ changes our performance. Moreover, our performance can never change our position in Christ. We cannot undo what God has done. Therefore, no matter how poorly we perform we cannot stop God from finishing what He began. Therefore, no matter how well we behave our acceptance before Him is not on us, but in His Son.

Second, because the work of God is so all consuming, what we receive by grace we cannot maintain by works (Gal. 3:1-3).

**1 “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? <sup>2</sup> This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”** (Gal. 3:1-3).

Nothing we do can add to the finished work of Jesus. Any activity or thought that adds to or subtracts from the person and work of Jesus Christ diminishes the glory of God. It must always be by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Therefore, we cannot strive to reform the old man but strive to rest in the new man.

Everything about the Christian life is counter-intuitive. In this physical world, we desire to see our children mature and become self-reliant, but in the Christian world, we mark maturity by complete dependency on the grace of God in

Christ Jesus. Thus, we are not interested in becoming self-sufficient or self-reliant. We desire to live each moment completely dependent on Jesus, for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). We desire to live our life in the context of community with an attitude of inter-dependence.

Third, because the work of God is so all consuming, our acceptance by God is based on position, not performance (Heb. 4:12-14).

<sup>14</sup> “Therefore, **since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.** <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16).

Because of who He is, what He has done and who His people are in Him, our acceptance before the Father is safe and secure. If performance is the basis [platform] of our acceptance by God and not position, then we never know if we have done enough. When performance reigns over position, we live a tentative, scared, “walking on egg shells” existence. We all know what this feels like: always afraid we might do or say the wrong thing and the person we are seeking to please snaps at us or criticizes us or judges us. Grace removes fear in relationship.

Fourth, because the work of God is so all consuming, the Christian life is one of liberation, not legislation (Matt. 12:10-12).

<sup>10</sup> “And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’ --so that they might accuse Him. <sup>11</sup> And He said to them, ‘**What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?**’ <sup>12</sup> How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:10-12).

Rules are necessary. It makes society, homes, and life function, but life is not about rules. **Life is about relationships and Christianity is about Jesus.** When we read Luke 4:18, we read a declaration of liberation not one of legislation.

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE **GOSPEL** TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM **RELEASE** TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO **SET FREE** THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED” (Luke 4:18).

“The good news is that Christ frees us from the need to obnoxiously focus on our goodness, our commitment, and our correctness. Religion has made us obsessive almost beyond endurance. Jesus invited us to a dance...and we've turned it into a march of soldiers, always checking to see if we're doing it right and are in step and in line with the other soldiers. We know a dance would be more fun, but we believe we must go through hell to get to heaven, so we keep marching.”<sup>23</sup>

Just as Jesus was, so also we are. What He was, we are. Christians are no longer under the reign of sin and death, but live as citizens under the reign of grace. If we default to “does this mean I can live an immoral life or go out and get drunk

or talk about people behind their backs under the guise of ‘prayer requests’ or cheat on our taxes or not go to church or basically live a selfish life,” then we are probably still in bondage and have yet to know and experience the glorious gospel found in the person and work of Jesus the Christ.

“While God’s victory over sin produces people moving toward holiness, good deeds or a holy lifestyle cannot save you. Jesus saves you – the result of that rescue is holiness. You can NEVER be righteous enough to save yourself. JESUS IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. God sees the merit of Jesus when he looks at those who receive him by faith.”<sup>24</sup>

Those who find themselves in addictive behavior do not disgust us. It saddens us because they are slaves to their appetites and are not finding Jesus to be enough in those areas of need. Those needs, by the way, are all the same. Regardless of our crazy behavior, we are simply scratching the same itch. We are failing to see how Jesus is the sole means of finding joy. For the joy we seek is the joy God has within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The issue is finding Jesus to be enough in this life and in the life to come. When we find Him to be the “every” in everything, then the “no” in nothing loses its grip.

The Bible is not a rulebook, but a revelation. **It is not a manual filled with legislation; it is a message filled with liberation.** If we do not understand this, we will read the stories of the Bible as things to be replicated and focus on the various characters within the *Story* instead of reading the *Story* as one *Story* with Jesus as the center.

Fifth, because the work of God is so all consuming, the Christian life is one of festivity, not despondency (Matt. 11:28-30).

<sup>11</sup> "And He said, 'A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. <sup>13</sup> And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. <sup>14</sup> Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup> And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. <sup>17</sup> But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."' <sup>20</sup> So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; <sup>23</sup> and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate. <sup>25</sup> Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered and said to his father,

'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; <sup>30</sup> but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' <sup>31</sup> And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> **But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.**'" (Luke 15:11-32).

Listen to the words of a friend as he commented on this story.

"I do want to say one more thing. You needn't worry that you are the pharisaical older brother. God only has one kind of loser kid. Pick your bucket of slop out in the world or in the sloppy church. There is only one kind of child that God has to choose from - lost sorry suckers. All of us walking this tired old earth are the same. We either prove we are lost by spending our Father's inheritance on self, or we prove we are lost by not spending our Father's inheritance and thinking it says we are better than our wasteful younger brothers. Let's smash the mirrors we gaze into and head to Dad's house for the party. It's all paid for."<sup>25</sup>

Steve Brown, author of *A Scandalous Freedom*, said, "You ought to live your life with such freedom and joy that uptight Christians will doubt your salvation."<sup>26</sup>

Life is hard, but Christianity is not. Life is hard, but Jesus is not. We never need worry as to whether or not we have done enough. Jesus is our Great High Priest who brings the sacrifice. Moreover, He is the sacrifice removing forever the veil of separation. His people, because of who He is and what

He has done, have unfettered access before the Father for their joy.

Friend, we need not wonder if we have done enough, or gave enough, or served enough, or any number of mind numbing, body exhausting, soul stealing activities. Jesus is enough. He finished the work. We have not done enough, so we must push past such ideas. Your best for Jesus is to keep your story inside of His *Story*.

“The only people who get better are people that know that, if they never get better, God will love them anyway ... God will not only love you if you don't get better, He'll teach you that getting better isn't the issue; His love is the issue.”<sup>27</sup>

Stop worrying whether or not your life is one of “wood, hay or stubble” (1 Cor. 3:12) and simply focus on Jesus. Learn to live a life of looking to Jesus and not become a “navel gazer.” One leads to festivity and the other ends with despondency.

Sixth, because the work of God is so all consuming, the devil is a defeated foe (Heb. 2:14), a disbarred judge (Rev. 12:10), an exiled despot (Rom. 5:20, 21) and a sore loser.

Stop running around scared. We are not defeated nor a part of a losing team or battalion or army. We are on the winning side. In fact, we are on the side that already won.

Satan is always attempting to pick a fight, but do not sweat it (1 Pet. 5:8). No one enjoys being pecked on, but the devil is a defeated foe and we need to get on with it. When we find ourselves under assault, we need to pray and turn our attention toward God.

Seventh, because the work of God is so all consuming, we are no longer defined by our calamity, but by our identity.

<sup>1</sup> “But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup> Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, <sup>4</sup> they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. <sup>5</sup> Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?’ <sup>6</sup> They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. <sup>7</sup> But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ <sup>8</sup> Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. <sup>10</sup> Straightening up, Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ <sup>11</sup> She said, ‘**No one, Lord.**’ **And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.’**” (John 8:1-11).

We do not know what this woman did after this, but we believe she lived a free life. You cannot outspend God.

“On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, **‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.’**” (Luke 10:35)

Listen carefully to the following quote. For many, such statements sound irresponsible, but it shows just how incredible a life in Christ is.

“You are really and truly and completely free. There is no kicker. There is no if, and, or but. You are free. You can do it

right or wrong. You can obey or disobey. You can run from Christ or run to Christ. You can choose to become a faithful Christian or an unfaithful Christian. You can cry, cuss, and spit, or laugh, sing, and dance. You can read a novel or the Bible. You can watch television or pray. You're free...really free."<sup>28</sup>

What we once were, we no longer are, but still have. Our failure is never fatal. What is often meant and seen as evil, God means for good. God has created everything for Himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil (Prov. 16:4). Sin has an inherent demerit and every choice has a consequence, but who we are in Christ defines who we are before the Father.

Eighth, because the work of God is so all consuming, nothing we do will stop God from doing what He does.

<sup>31</sup> "What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> **Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> **who is the one who condemns?** Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> **Who will separate us from the love of Christ?** Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, 'FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.' <sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:31-39).

The end of the *Story* is not in jeopardy of fulfillment. God is not in heaven wringing His hands. If God is not worried, why are we?

All of that “stuff” we have sitting on our plate will not stop God from fulfilling His purpose in the immediate. **In fact, it is not despite our failure but because of our failure, the gospel is glorious.** The things we fret over are the very things for which Jesus died.

The Bible often uses the word victory to describe the Christian. As we ponder this, we believe we misunderstand what this means. Victory is not beating something down, but resting in who God is, what He has done and whom we are in Him. That is biblical victory.

Friends, there is such rest in knowing Jesus and seeing our story inside of His *Story*. The very thing we need Him to do, He did. He answers forever our sin issue. The Gospel is God’s answer to our problem. This leads us to our final thought.

Ninth, because the work of God is so all consuming, we serve Him freely from desire and not debt.

<sup>15</sup> “They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the “legion”; and they became frightened.

<sup>16</sup> Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. <sup>17</sup> And they began to implore Him to leave their region. <sup>18</sup> As He was getting into the boat, **the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him.** <sup>19</sup> **And He did not let him, but He said to him, ‘Go home to your people and report**

**to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you” (Mark 5:15-19).**

We are debtors, but debtors who are incapable of paying anything back. In fact, when we work to return we are diminishing the nature of the gift. “Christian” service, our work, is not a wage we are giving back to God, but a gift we have received from God.

When God is the object of our affection and energy, life becomes Christian service.

Listen to how Pastor Tullian Tchividjian of LIBERATE defines biblical preaching and biblical worship.

“The litmus test that I use for myself is that if people walk away from my sermons thinking more about what they need to do than what Jesus has already done, I’ve failed to preach the Gospel. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus has done for me what I could never do for myself. And a lot of preaching these days is ‘do more, try harder,’ like you said. It’s behavior modification. We come to church expecting God to give us a to-do list or the preacher to give us a to-do list. As long as we are given a to-do list, we maintain some measure of control over our lives. Just tell me what to do. This message of radical grace, that ‘it is finished,’ is difficult for the human heart, the sinful heart to grasp because we’re so afraid of control being wrestled out of our hands. So we come to church saying, ‘Pastor, my marriage is in trouble...my children are going off the deep end...my business is failing...I’m coming to you as the expert to tell me what to do to fix my own life...’ And as a result, our lives get

worse, not better, because we're taking matters into our own hands. So my job at the end of every sermon – and this is the grid by which I preach – I preach God's law, and then I preach God's Gospel. Both are good. The law diagnoses my need and shows me that my best is never good enough. **So I'm always trying to help our people realize that they're a lot worse than they realize, and they're a lot more incapable than they think they are. But the good news is that God is more than capable, that He's already done everything we need for Him to do. He's already secured in Christ everything we long for. So my job at the end of every sermon is to, in some way, shape, or form, encourage our people by saying, 'Cheer up. You're a lot worse off than you think you are, but God's grace is infinitely larger than you could have ever hoped or imagined. It is finished.'**"<sup>29</sup>

Although the quote is lengthy, let us continue with this thought.

**"Preachers these days are expected to major in 'moral renovation.' They are expected to provide a practical 'to-do' list, rather than announce, 'It is finished.' They are expected to do something other than-more than-lift up before their congregation Christ's finished work, preaching a full absolution solely on the basis of the complete righteousness of Another.** To be sure, preachers need to 'load their guns with the best powder when aiming at unrepentance', but far too often a preacher's final word to Christians is law and not Gospel. **To finish a sermon asking 'What would Jesus do?' instead of announcing 'This is what Jesus has done!' is to betray the final word God speaks over Christians.** 'Life is a web of trials and temptations', says Robert Capon, 'but only one of them can ever be fatal-the temptation to think it is by

further, better, and more aggressive living that we can have life.' Given this sobering statement, it would seem that many preachers unwittingly lead their congregations 'into temptation' by implying that you can live your way to life. The fact is, however, that you can only 'die your way there, lose your way there...For **Jesus came to raise the dead. He did not come to reward the rewardable, improve the improvable, or correct the correctable; he came simply to be the resurrection and the life of those who will take their stand on a death he can use instead of on a life he cannot.**' After our preaching of the law rightly pushes people under water, we all too often lead them to think that they must 'save' themselves by giving them swimming lessons: 'Paddle harder, kick faster.' I want the last word I speak over Christians when I preach to be the last word God speaks over Christians-'Paid in full.' The Gospel always has the last word over a believer. Always. When it's all said and done there are two types of sermons: Jesus + Nothing = Everything or Jesus + Something = Everything. **May God raise up a generation of bold preachers who storm the gates of works-righteousness in all its forms with nothing more and nothing less than, 'In my place condemned he stood, and sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah, what a Savior.'**"<sup>30</sup>

Friends, this is what we do here at this assembly, this fellowship, and this church. Do you believe this? Will you seek to live in conscious awareness of His *Story* whereby your story is His *Story*? The story we find ourselves in is not our story, but His. Our desire is to know who He is, what He has done, and who we are in Him. Our collective desire is to take this good news as far and as wide as God will allow us.

Friend, let us together pursue Him and invite others to join this crazy band of gospel-saturated and gospel-celebrating worshippers. Friends, we are together for the gospel. In Christ alone, Amen.

# Endnotes

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## Chapter One:

<sup>1</sup> Tullian Tchividjian, *One Way Love: Inexhaustible Grace for an Exhausted World* (David Cook, 2013), 223.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.creeds.net/creed.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://christianityinview.com/creeds.html>

## Chapter Two:

<sup>4</sup> “A **metanarrative** is a grand narrative common to all. The term refers, in critical theory and particularly in postmodernism, to a comprehensive explanation, a narrative *about* narratives of historical meaning, experience or knowledge, which offers a society legitimation through the anticipated completion of a (as yet unrealised) master idea.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metanarrative>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.globalopps.org/training/articles/onestory.htm#note6>

<sup>6</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 41-42.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/why-did-god-create-the-world>

<sup>8</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*.

## Chapter Three:

<sup>9</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/8-benefits-justification-romans-51-11>

<sup>10</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/8-benefits-justification-romans-51-11>

<sup>11</sup> Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom*, 38.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/jesus-christ-our-prophet-priest-and-king/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/jesus-christ-our-prophet-priest-and-king/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://carm.org/prophet-priest-king>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/jesus-christ-our-prophet-priest-and-king/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/jesus-christ-our-prophet-priest-and-king/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/redeem-redemption.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://catholic.net/index.php?option=dedestaca&id=3435&grupo=Church%20Teaching%20QA&canal=Catholicism%20101>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/two-important-words-good-friday-expiation-and-propitiation/>

## Chapter Four:

<sup>21</sup> Robert Farrar Capon, *between noon and three*, pages 114–115.

<sup>22</sup> Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom*, 113, 108.

<sup>23</sup> Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom*.

<sup>24</sup> <http://radicalcall.wordpress.com/2007/09/09/jesus-the-fulfillment-of-scripture/>

<sup>25</sup> **From:** Kermit Kapp [mailto:kermitkapp@hotmail.com] **Sent:** Monday, July 01, 2013 7:49 AM **To:** Pat Griffiths **Subject:** Hope.

<sup>26</sup> Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom*.

<sup>27</sup> Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom*, 68, 69.

<sup>28</sup> Steve Brown, *A Scandalous Freedom*.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-how-to/157465-does-your-preaching-pass-the-grace-test.html>

<sup>30</sup> Tullian Tchividjian, Now I See That Which Is Done Posted: 23 Jan 2014 06:09 AM PST [web@thegospelcoalition.org](mailto:web@thegospelcoalition.org)

### Back Cover:

<sup>31</sup> <http://christianityinview.com/creeds.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.christianity.co.nz/church10.htm> this is an excellent article well worth the read. It deals primarily with denominationalism, but has much good in it.

**“What is a Creed?”** The word “Creed” is derived from the Latin word *credo*, meaning “I believe.” The Creeds therefore, are summaries of belief. Particularly in the first few hundred years after the death of Christ, the church faced the problem of differing views over such subjects as whether Jesus was truly God and also whether He had both a human or divine nature. Out of these disputes the church formulated statements of belief.”<sup>31</sup>

The purpose of a Doctrinal study is to put in writing the basic elements of Biblical truth. Since the times of the New Testament, those who believe its special revelation have intentionally articulated the ideas of Scripture in precise words. The intent is never to add to Scripture, but to be exact and precise. It is also to make available to the inquirer what a voluntarily assembled group of like-minded people believe in common.

We believe the biblical Story is one of inclusion and not exclusion. We believe biblical studies have as their end the unity of God’s people in sharp contrast to the disunity existing in the world of unbelief. Why is such inclusion so essential? “Firstly, the Trinity longs to see it. Secondly, the world needs to see it. Thirdly, the enemy hates to see it. Disunity grieves the Trinity, confuses the world and gladdens the enemy.”<sup>32</sup>

It is with this in mind that this study is offered as an attempt at living out the prayer offered by our Great High Priest in the Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of His vicarious and voluntary offering for the sins of His people (John 17).

## Waukesha Bible Church



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