


# Core Christianity

Please read pages 1-23. April 4<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

# Could you explain, if you were asked, the reason for your faith in God? Why is that important?

- ▶ *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15)*
- ▶ We study and pursue what interests us and what we care about.
- ▶ What we love is most important to us.
- ▶ Our spiritual health is just as important as our physical and mental health. It permeates all aspects of our personal, professional, and relational lives.
- ▶ We don't care about or build close relationships with people we do not know. It's no different with God. The more we know about Him, the more confident we are in the truth of His Word, the more we can appreciate, love, and enjoy a relationship with Him. Only then does His Word become transformative in our hearts and our lives.
- ▶ The Bible is built on historical accounts from eyewitnesses to the events (particularly the events of the New Testament). Historical events are true regardless of whether they "work for me" or not. Have confidence in the Word.

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- ▶ **DRAMA:** Christian doctrine grows out of real history. Christ ties together the biblical story of redemptive history. All events of the Bible point first to Christ. God orchestrated redemptive history to lead to Christ.
  - ▶ **DOCTRINE:** God teaches us through His Word and Acts of revelation so that we can learn more about Him (His nature, attributes, wisdom, purposes, requirements of us, His plan for mankind). God is bringing us into His story.
  - ▶ **DOXOLOGY (Praise):** The more we know about God—how He loves us and what Christ has done for us—the more we respond with gratitude, love, and praise for Him.
  - ▶ **DISCIPLESHIP:** When we begin to respond to God, we start thinking outside of ourselves. We begin to see the world the way God sees it. We begin to love as God loves. This inner transformation expresses itself through our outer works. It reshapes our priorities and gives us perspective on our place in His story.

# Why is it not enough to just “do what feels right”?

- ▶ “There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.”  
Proverbs 14:12
- ▶ Remember: Sin will always influence our emotions, perceptions, intuitions, desires, ambitions, etc. This is called the “noetic effect of sin”. We need to be rooted in what God says is right.
- ▶ God has many ways of revealing Himself to us. “General revelation” are the things that every human can discern about God by observing the world—which falls into the “what feels right” description. But God gives us His Word (known as His “special revelation”) so that we can truly know Him better. Sin cannot influence God’s Word, so His Word will never lead a man astray.

# *What is the difference between Theology and Doctrine? (p. 16)*

- ▶ THEOLOGY IS THE STUDY OF GOD
- ▶ From “theos” (God) and “logos” (word) = “The Word About God” or “The Study of God”
- ▶ The study of all things relating to God is called “Theology Proper”.
- ▶ Theology explores how doctrines are understood and expressed in the Christian faith
- ▶ DOCTRINES ARE THE BELIEFS, TENENTS, DOGMAS OF CHRISTIANITY
- ▶ From “doctrina” (Latin) or “didache”/“didaktos” (Greek) meaning teaching or Instruction
- ▶ Essential doctrines are beliefs upon which ALL Christians must agree.
- ▶ Secondary doctrines are beliefs that vary by church denomination.
- ▶ BEWARE: Man-made doctrines not found in the Bible create false theologies and false religions. God’s Word is the **final** word on what is right and wrong, what’s true or false.

## Some Examples of Theology

- 1) **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY:** “Big Picture”. It forms a coherent system for organizing the various doctrines or teachings of the Bible.
- 2) **PRACTICAL THEOLOGY:** “Where the rubber hits the road”. It explores how beliefs and doctrines are to be put into action by Christians.
- 3) **BIBLICAL THEOLOGY:** Explores God’s progressive word and act revelations throughout biblical (redemptive) history.
- 4) **HISTORICAL THEOLOGY:** Explores how Christians throughout the centuries understood the Bible.
- 5) **CHRISTOLOGY:** The study of all things related to Jesus Christ.
- 6) **SOTERIOLOGY:** Explores the doctrines on biblical salvation.
- 7) **ESCHATOLOGY:** Explores the doctrines of the last things (end times).

## Some Examples of Doctrine

- 1) The Deity of Christ
- 2) God the Father
- 3) Christ the Son
- 4) The Holy Spirit
- 5) The Holy Trinity
- 6) The Bible is God’s Word
- 7) Salvation by God’s Grace
- 8) The Resurrection of Christ
- 9) The Message of the Gospel
- 10) The Apostles’ Creed
- 11) The Nicene Creed
- 12) Justification by faith alone

## *The Nicene Creed*

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true  
God from true God, begotten not made, one in being with the Father.*

*Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;*

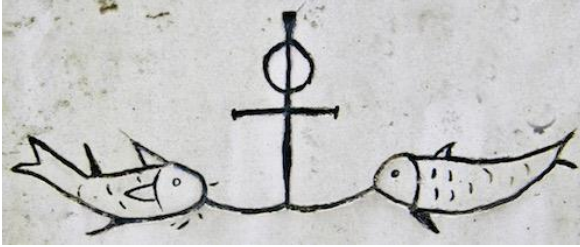
*by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and  
became man.*

*For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered, died, and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.*

*We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

## *The Apostles' Creed*



**FOOTNOTES:** In the early days of the Christian faith, believers would recognize one another when the first would say: “He is Risen” and the second would respond: “He is Risen indeed!”

The anchor became a symbol of Christ in these early days of the church, when believers were suffering Roman persecution. It reminded them that Jesus is the anchor for the faithful (Hebrews 6:19).

Fish (Ichthus) were also common symbols of Christians. It was Jesus who promised to make His Apostles into “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). The fish represents both Jesus and His followers. These symbols helped Christians recognize one another.

*I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the  
dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
Amen.*



# *What does it mean to live as God's free people? (pg. 20)*

- ▶ We are no longer slaves to sin but can move into the full life that God has planned for us. We are free to choose whether to walk in the ways of Christ or to remain enslaved to sin.
- ▶ To open our hearts to His will for our lives and to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us.
- ▶ Through the Spirit, to be full of the desire to seek God's Word and seek His presence in our lives.
- ▶ We open our hearts to receive God's gracious forgiveness of our past so that we gives us a new beginning. We escape the shame for what we've done and receive the hope for eternity with Him and hope for abundant lives here on earth thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us.
- ▶ To persevere in obedience to God's Word as we accept the gifts He has given us.

# What does it mean to be a “living sacrifice” for God? (Romans 12:1-21)

Being a living sacrifice to Christ means that we are to walk in His ways, conducting our lives with the knowledge that we are already living in the New Kingdom. When we walk as Jesus, we allow His light to shine in our personal and professional spaces and relationships.

This means reflecting the qualities highlighted in Romans 12. We are to be honest, but with the intention of guiding and building up rather than to tear one another down. This means mastering our tongue against gossip, coarse language, cruelty. This means walking in the hope of Jesus, confident in our redemption and trusting in the Lord. It means that in everything we do--from caring for our family to our jobs, from the most mundane of tasks to the most critical of projects--we are to do everything as though we are working for God Himself. We are to demonstrate kindness and empathy to all people, for it is not our place to decide who is worthy of our caring and who is not. We regard every man, woman, and creature as a special creation of God and our brethren in Christ. My pastor would say that with some people, there is “extra grace required”, but that’s okay. Remember, sometimes people are showing US extra grace as well.

We are to be generous with our time and our resources, for all that we have was given to us by God to use for His purposes on Earth. I have no church to collect tithes, so you know that I am not saying this to remind you to tithe (though you should tithe to your church as you are able). It means that anything you give selflessly for the work of the Lord brings glory to the Lord and builds His kingdom on earth. It models compassion and caring to others, which shines the light of Christ. We are God’s hands and feet in this world, and with every hour and every penny we put towards God’s work, we are worshipping Him.

Finally, we are to walk in the peace and humility of Christ, submitting our desires to the welfare of others when we see a need or when the Spirit moves us to do so. Remember: There will be times when you may require the sacrificial care of another. The Holy Trinity lives in a relationship of mutual caring and submission to one another. As God’s image on earth, we can do no less. Let us bring the peace and hope of Christ to others in all that we do.

## A Living Sacrifice

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

## Humble Service in the Body of Christ

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your<sup>[a]</sup> faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,<sup>[b]</sup> do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

## Love in Action

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.<sup>[c]</sup> Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”<sup>[d]</sup> says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## BOOK OF ROMANS CHAPTER 7

In case you thought you were the only person who has difficulty overcoming bad habits, the only one who ever made wrong choices, the only one who “just can’t get it together”, then read how even people like the Apostle Paul wrestled with the same problem.

When you begin to dive into God’s Word, you will discover His law, His standards for holiness. Keep this in mind: **GOD KNOWS THAT NOBODY IS PERFECT. GOD KNOWS THAT A MAN OR WOMAN ON THEIR OWN CAN’T LIVE UP TO THE LAW.**

And that’s why Christ did the job for us.

Obedying the law will not save you. God gave us the law to make us recognize sin and to understand that we cannot overcome it without His help. **YOU ARE WORTHY TO RECEIVE GOD’S LOVE NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU’VE DONE, OR HOW FAR YOU’VE FALLEN.** *Is there something that is making you feel unworthy of God’s love or preventing you from receiving the fullness of life with His love, salvation, and Spirit?*

### No Longer Bound to the Law

Now, dear brothers and sisters<sup>[a]</sup>—you who are familiar with the law—don’t you know that the law applies only while a person is living? <sup>2</sup>For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. <sup>3</sup>So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

<sup>4</sup>So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. <sup>5</sup>When we were controlled by our old nature,<sup>[b]</sup> sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. <sup>6</sup>But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

### God’s Law Reveals Our Sin

<sup>7</sup>Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, “You must not covet.”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>8</sup>But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. <sup>9</sup>At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, <sup>10</sup>and I died. So I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. <sup>11</sup>Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. <sup>12</sup>But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.

<sup>13</sup>But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God’s good commands for its own evil purposes.

### Struggling with Sin

<sup>14</sup>So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup>I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate. <sup>16</sup>But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup>So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

<sup>18</sup>And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.<sup>[d]</sup> I want to do what is right, but I can’t. <sup>19</sup>I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. <sup>20</sup>But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

<sup>21</sup>I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. <sup>22</sup>I love God’s law with all my heart. <sup>23</sup>But there is another power<sup>[e]</sup> within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. <sup>24</sup>Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? <sup>25</sup>Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION:

A personal theology usually includes the following items:

- 1) The beliefs we take from God's Word (our "orthodoxy")
- 2) The way we apply God's Word to our lives (our "orthopraxis")
- 3) Our feelings towards both God and to other people, including love, empathy, sympathy, generosity or---conversely---doubt, envy, suspicion, apathy,etc. (our "orthopathos").

For your own personal reflection, consider: What are some beliefs and feelings you have about God, the Bible, towards other believers or unbelievers? How are you living your life in response to what you believe? Are your beliefs coming from God's Word (the Bible) or from your own intuition and assumptions about God? What do you hope to learn about God and about yourself through this Bible study?

# RESOURCES FOR THIS LESSON

- ▶ *“From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology”*, T. Desmond Alexander, Kregel Academic, 2008
- ▶ *“Unleashing Hope: Hope for Your Relationships”*, Pastor Ron Thompson, Twin Cities Church, April 3, 2022