

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines

Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24

1 | Introduction and the Purpose of Theology

## **Why Theology? Its Beauty, Purposes, and Dangers**

### **Why Theology?**

*Rom. 12:1-2 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

#### **1. To Know God**

1. What's the difference between knowing *about* God and knowing God?
2. "It would be odd if we told our spouse or other loved ones that we wanted to spend time with them and experience their fellowship regularly but did not want to know anything about them - their characteristics, accomplishments, personal histories, like and dislikes, and plans for the future." - Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*

#### **2. To Love God**

1. Jesus Christ came not merely as a teacher of Truth, but as the Truth Himself! Compared to the Greek concept of philosophical knowledge, "the biblical idea is to have the reality of something practically interwoven with the inner experience of life. Hence 'to know' can stand in the biblical idiom for 'to love,' 'to single out in love.' Because God desires to be known after this fashion, he has caused his revelation to take place in the milieu of the historical life of a people. The circle of revelation is not a school, but a 'covenant'. To speak of revelation as an 'education' of humanity is a rationalistic and utterly unscriptural way of speaking. All that God disclosed of himself has come in response to the practical religious needs of his people as these emerged in the course of history." - Horton

### 3. To Discern the False from the True Gospel

1. *2Tim. 1:12-14 - "But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. 13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you."*
2. Consider all the times that Paul's main concern is right doctrine! Why would he be so passionate about it?

### 4. To Glorify God

1. *Col. 3:16-17 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

### Our Challenge - Applying our Theology

*1Cor. 8:1-3 - "Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. 2 If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. 3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God."*

- **How can we grow in knowledge without growing in pride?**
- **How can we grow in knowledge while also growing in love and prayer?**
- **How can we be theologically deep yet also relationally connected and vulnerable?**

## WHERE ARE WE GOING? THE BIG PICTURE

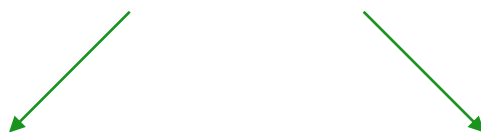
### Part 1 - Doctrine of Revelation and God's Being

1. **The Knowledge of God** and Apologetics - How Could the Finite ever Know the Infinite?
2. **Who is God** and Why Exactly Does That Matter?

### Part 2 - Doctrine of Creation and Anthropology

1. **What is this World** and How Does it Relate to God? - Creation
2. **Who is Man**, Why is He Here, and "What have you done?!"? - Humanity and sin

### Part 3 - Doctrine of Redemption - How does God save humans?



#### 1. Redemption Accomplished

1. *Eternal Decrees*
2. *Christ our Mediator*
  1. Person of Christ
  2. Work of Christ
    1. Christ's Life and Death -  
Substitutionary  
Atonement
    2. Christ's Resurrection
    3. Christ's Ascension/  
Pentecost

#### 2. Redemption Applied

1. *New Nature*
2. *United to Christ our Mediator*
  1. Means of Grace
    1. Church
    2. Private Disciplines
  2. Justification
    1. Repentance and Faith
  3. Sanctification
    1. Sanctifying Faith and  
Repentance
    2. Good Works/ The Law/  
Freedom/  
Perseverance
    3. Calling and the Three  
Spheres
  4. Glorification



## 2023-24 Schedule for “What We Believe: Knowing and Loving Our Doctrines”

### Of God & His Revelation

1. Sept. 17 - Intro, Prologomena, Epistemology
2. Sept. 24 - Revelation - General and Special
3. Oct. 1 - Special Revelation, Biblical Interpretation
4. Oct. 8 - Biblical Interpretation, cont.
5. Oct. 15 - Doctrine of God - Attributes & Trinity
  1. Oct. 22 - *[Special SS on Christian Formation]*
6. Oct. 29 - Doctrine of God - Attributes & Trinity, cont.
7. Nov. 5 - Doctrine of God

### Of Creation & Humanity

8. Nov. 12 - Creation & Providence
9. Nov. 19 - Humanity
10. Dec. 4 - Original Sin
11. Dec. 10 - Original Sin, cont.

### Of Redemption Accomplished

12. Jan. 7 - Review & Preview thru Biblical Covenants
13. Jan. 14 - Person of Christ
14. Jan. 21 - Person of Christ, cont.
15. Jan. 28 - Work of Christ (Incar. and Atonement)
16. Feb. 4 - Work of Christ, cont. (Resurrection and Ascension)
17. Feb. 11 - Consummation & Judgment [it's so connected to the work of Christ!]

### Of Redemption Applied - Where?

18. Feb. 18 - Means of Grace - Total Christ & the Church
19. Feb. 25 - Means of Grace - Church as Communion & Institution
20. March 3 - Means of Grace - Church Power
21. March 10 - Means of Grace - Sacraments

### Of Redemption Applied - How?

22. March 17 - Effectual Calling & Regeneration
23. March 24 - Saving Faith & Repentance
24. April 7 - Justification & Adoption
25. April 14 - Sanctification
26. April 21 - Assurance & Perseverance
27. April 28 - Good Works, the Law of God, Christian Liberty; Church & State issues
28. May 5 - [Evac drill] Calling & Spheres
29. May 12 - Sexuality & Gender
30. May 19 - Sexuality & Gender, cont.

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2 | Knowledge of God & Apologetics

### How Could the Finite ever Know the Infinite?

**Revelation** - from the biblical terms 'to uncover', 'to strip away'. What do those definitions alone tell us about revelation?

*Romans 1.18-23 - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth**. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his **eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived**, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are **without excuse**. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."*

**Westminster (WCF) 1.1** - "Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. **Therefore** it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased."

*See Rom 2:14-15; Rom 1:19-20; Ps 19:1-4; Rom 1:32-2:1; John 17:3; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 Cor 2:13-14; Heb 1:1-2; Luke 1:3-4; Rom 15:4; Matt 4:4,7,10; Isa 8:20; 2 Tim 3:15; 2 Pet 1:19; John 20:31; 1 Cor 14:37; 1 John 5:13; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 1:1-2; Heb 2:2-4*

Notice how there are already a number of issues at stake - creation,

original sin, salvation, and continuing revelation. But we have to start somewhere, and will come to those in due time!

**Belgic Confession 2** - The Means by Which We Know God - "We know him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God: his eternal power and his divinity, as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. All these things are enough to convict men and to leave them without excuse. Second, he makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own."

### Unpacking General or Common Revelation

1. **What is it?** How God reveals Himself through nature or natural reason.
2. **Who has it?** Everyone!
  1. "Men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him... He has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory, so clear and so prominent that even unlettered and stupid folk cannot plead the excuse of ignorance." - John Calvin
3. **What does it get right?**
  1. Certain general aspects about God
  2. Penultimate knowledge and wisdom across all disciplines
  3. *Why should this matter? Surprised by common ground!*
    1. No person, viewpoint, society is so utterly evil that it is pure evil. There is always hope for redemption, a glimmer of goodness, or worthy desire in the darkest of evils.
4. **What does it get wrong?**
  1. Revelation of God in nature is "slight, obscured, mingled with error, and besides is not valued highly... The world is a concealment as well as a revelation of God (Rom. 1.20-3)." - Herman Bavinck
  2. Insufficient in itself for salvation

3. Condemns us - Because of sin, general revelation at its best can only condemn us. See Rom. 1.32a, 2.1, 2.12, 2.15-6. Note the similarities with the power of the law, that it reveals our need for a Savior.
4. *Why should this matter? Not surprised by sin!*
  1. We should not be surprised at the depths of sin! Everyone apart from God is always starting from a fundamentally wrong position.
5. **Where do we see general and special revelation differentiated in Scripture?**
  1. Common Grace is God's preservation of the world, whereas Special Grace is God's saving revelation to Israel and the Church.
    1. Everyone is always governed by and aware of God's general revelation, but a special line emerges, from Seth to Noah, and then from Abraham to Israel, to which God reveals Himself in a redemptive fashion.
    2. After the Fall, our condition is "one in which wrath and grace, punishment and blessing, judgment and long-suffering are mingled with each other.... God is continually manifesting His wrath and yet, by reason of His own good pleasure, is always again revealing His grace also." - Bavinck
    2. They're both grace, but "The great difference between this *speaking* on God's part in the general revelation and that in His special revelation is that in the first **God leaves it to man to find out** His thoughts in the works of His hands, and that in the second He **Himself gives direct expression** to those thoughts and in this form offers them to the mind of man." - Bavinck
6. **Finding both common and uncommon ground**
  1. A Christian can be both a sympathetic insider at times as well as a critical outsider, depending on the context and beliefs. The task of apologetics is discerning when and how to be either sympathetic or critical in the right moment, critically analyzing what are the assumptions that either Christianity affirms or challenges.
  2. "When we enter a culture, we should be looking for two kinds of beliefs. The first are what I call 'A' beliefs, which are beliefs people already hold that, because of God's common grace, roughly correspond to some parts of biblical teaching...However, we will also find 'B' beliefs



—what may be called ‘defeater’ beliefs—beliefs of the culture that lead listeners to find some Christian doctrines implausible or overtly offensive....In Manhattan, what the Bible says about turning the other cheek is welcome (an ‘A’ belief), but what it says about sexuality is resisted (a ‘B’ belief). In the Middle East, we see the opposite—turning the other cheek seems unjust and impractical, but biblical prohibitions on sexuality make sense.” - Tim Keller

**7. What are some of the dangers of either underestimating or overestimating common grace?**

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**

Remember, the Church is the evangelist most fully, which is still definitely relevant in apologetics.

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 3 | Special Revelation & Biblical Interpretation

## WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

### 1. Inspired Word of God; God's sufficient self-revelation to His people

1. **2Tim 3.16** - *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." See also 2Pet. 1.19-20*
2. **Heb. 1.1** - *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."*
3. **WCF 1.1** - *"Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased."*
4. **WCF 1.6** - *"The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture...."*

### 2. Inerrant Word of God

1. Consider Jesus' belief of Scripture as God's Word
2. If God is the Author, He cannot make mistakes
3. **Important qualification: Understanding Author's Intent** - *"It is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses"* (Chicago Statement) - For

example: Exod. 15.6-8, did God's "right hand" or "nostrils" literally work in this way?

### 3. Established Rule of Faith (Canon)

1. Canon from "reed" as a tool for measurement... that which is the "rule" or "ideal standard" against which all things can be measured—"rule of faith and practice"
2. Lost Scriptures and Gnostic Gospels? From Dan Brown, Elaine Pagels, etc.  
- are the Scriptures merely a product of man, not God, produced by men with a political agenda to solidify their power?

#### 3. Orthodox Response

1. **Recognized** vs. Conferred by Church
2. **Test of OT Witness:** "the prior rule of faith" already implied by 1st century and the Marcion Controversy settled in mid-second century
3. Bottom Up vs. Top Down—the battle was waged not in the fourth century but in the middle of the second century, wherein the "winners" were not the politically advantaged
4. Canon mostly "settled" by 200 AD and formally ratified ecumenically in 350 AD at the Synod of Laodicean

#### 4. Deposit of Apostolic Foundation and Succession - Passing down the gospel

1. *Acts 2.42 - "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."*
2. *Eph. 2.18-22 - "For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."*
3. *2Thess. 3.6 - "Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us."*
4. *1Cor. 11.2 - "Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you."*

5. **2Thess. 2.15** - *"So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter."*
6. **2Tim 1.13-4** - *"Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you."*
7. **Rev. 22.18-9** - *"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."*
8. **2Peter 3.15-16** - *"And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures."*
9. **Special Note:** The development of things like the "Apostle's Creed" or statements like them in Scripture itself (Rom. 10:9; 1Cor. 15:3-4; Phil. 2:6-10; 1Tim. 3:16), to serve as a summary statement against which all authority could be measured.

#### 4. "Perspicuous" or clear enough for salvation

1. **Intimate self-revelation** - wouldn't it be strange if God sought to reveal Himself in an intimate way to His people, and then made it inaccessible?!
2. **Clarity vs. Easy** - See 2Peter 3.15-6

#### 5. Complete & Sufficient - Do we have to believe ALL of it?

1. Remember - WCF 1.1 - "...those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased."
  1. WCF 1.6 - "... unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."
2. "There cannot be other facts than God-interpreted facts. In practice, this means that, since sin has come into the world, God's interpretations of

the facts must come in *finished, written form and be comprehensive in character*. God continues to reveal himself in the facts of the created world but the sinner needs to interpret every one of them in the light of Scripture. Every thought on every subject must become obedient to the requirement as he speaks in his Word....If God is really self-contained and if he has really causally created this world and if he really controls it by his providence then the revelation of himself and about this world must be that of *fully interpreted fact*. All facts in the whole of created reality are then God-interpreted." - Cornelius van Til

1. In other words, we don't only need God to do something, we need Him to interpret what He does as well! This interpretation must also be comprehensive and finished, lest we lose any objective revelation from God to us, and become lost in competing subjectivities. If we don't believe in Scripture as sufficient, complete, and infallible, we don't have an objective basis on which to know God. **Only God can reveal God.** Only an infallible Scripture ensures that it really is *God* doing the revealing. If we pick and choose, we're not reading God's Word, we're reading ours.
3. How does this connect to the sufficiency of Christ's work?
4. Our ultimate authority is the written Word of God, but why is it insufficient for a church to simply say "we believe in the Bible and nothing more"? This is a setup for next week.

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**

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 4 | Biblical Interpretation, cont.

## HOW DO WE INTERPRET THE BIBLE?

### 1. Only God Reveals God - Word of God and the Spirit of God at work in revealing who God is

1. WCF 1.5 - "We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, ... yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the **Holy Spirit** bearing witness by and with the **Word** in our hearts."
2. WCF 1.6 - "...we acknowledge the inward illumination of the **Spirit of God** to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the **Word**..."
3. WCF 1.10 - "The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the **Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture**."
4. The Bible is by God, about God, interpreted by God, for the church of God. Notice the full work of the Trinity. Packer described the Scriptures as "God the Father preaching God the Son in the power of God the Holy Spirit." Why is this important for how we interpret?
  1. Notice that the Bible, then, is not a static document just written thousands of years ago. We're not deists!
  2. If you're not transformed by the Spirit, then you can't understand the Word. See 1Cor. 2.9-10 and Heb. 4.12.

### 2. To Whom does God Reveal Right Interpretation?

1. **Just to Individuals?** - **No!** Lest we're subject to the whims of every individual.
2. **Just to Every Local Community?** **No!** Surely there's still too many blind-spots and biases even there.

3. **With Greater Church of all ages** - still fallible, but transcending individual and local biases
  1. To preserve the apostolic foundation - see last week for Scripture references on apostolic foundation
  2. Done in different ways - often with a common consensus, which for CPC is Westminster Confession of Faith.
    1. The purpose of Creeds and Confessions are *never* to replace Scripture or compete with Scripture, but to *preserve* the authority of Scripture in the language of a new generation. Those who say "we believe in no creed but the Bible" have never met a real heretic! Heretics quote Scripture too!
    2. Notice how this also reflects what the Bible is - by God for God's community.

### 3. How Can We Pursue Right Interpretation? - "Good and Necessary Consequence"

1. **WCF 1.6** - "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is *either expressly* set down in Scripture, or by *good and necessary consequence* may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."
  1. "Elements" vs. "Forms" - "Necessary" vs. "Some circumstances"
  2. "Regulative Principle"
2. **We want to avoid *adding to or subtracting from the Word of God***. So, we need a very high standard in order to be able to conclude that the Word truly teaches it. It must not only be a "good" or "reasonable" inference from the text, but also a "necessary" one. It must be the binding inference from the text.

1. For Example: *Eph. 5.18* - "*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*".

1. What's really at stake here?

### 3. Genre and the Author's Intent

1. "Scripture is without error *in all it intends to say*" - the question is what does it *intend* to say?
2. We must understand God's purpose in Scripture according to the *genre* in which it is written:
  1. Compare Exodus 14 - the narrative account of the exodus - with Exodus 15 - Moses' song in celebration of the exodus. In what sense are 15.6, 8-10 true? In what sense are they not true? See also Judges 4 & Judges 5. (Examples taken from Tim Keller's "Creation, Evolution, and Christian Laypeople")
  2. Ps. 104.22 reads, "When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens." Does the sun rise? What's the point of the psalm here?

### 4. Two Overall Tasks in Reading:

#### 1. THEN - What it meant: Exegesis and Original Intent

1. "aim of good interpretation is not uniqueness. Unique interpretations are usually wrong. . . aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at the 'plain meaning of the text,' the author's intended meaning" (Fee & Stuart)
2. We really have to fight against our cultural assumptions here, where new and edgy is automatically prized
3. **Context:** Historical and Literary

#### 2. NOW - What it means: Exegesis has to control hermeneutics/ application

1. "A text cannot mean what it could never have meant for its original readers/hearers." (Fee & Stuart)
  1. Book of Revelation only relevant to 2,000yrs later?
  2. 1Cor. 12-14 on spiritual gifts in the context of unity, NOT disunity toward two levels of Christians

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**



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5 | Doctrine of God - Beholding the Attributes of God

## BEHOLDING WHO GOD IS

**"We are all starved for the glory of God,** not self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem. Why do we go? Because there is greater healing for the soul in beholding splendor than there is in beholding self... The point is this: We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God's glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center." - John Piper

### Getting Started - Qualifications to Help Us Discuss the Being of God

1. *Order of Knowing* - Note that we must learn the attributes NOT from what we know, say, about love and then apply that to God; but rather learn what love is from God, and then apply that to what we know. The order or direction is crucial, lest we define God according to our categories, rather than the other way around! Only God can reveal God. Only God can define who and how God is.
2. *Our language of God is always, as humans, analogical.* It is not univocal - we don't know God as God knows Himself; but neither is it equivocal - as if our use of "good" is so unlike how God is "good." Praise God that He chose to reveal himself in a true way, yet in a way humans can understand!
3. *Properly approaching God as incomprehensible mystery* - "The true goal of theological inquiry is not the resolution of theological *problems* but the discernment of what the *mystery* of faith is. Because God, who can never be fully comprehended, lies at the heart of all theological enquiry, theology by its nature is not a problem solving enterprise, but rather a mystery

discerning enterprise.” - Thomas Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*

1. Major heresies always try to resolve the problem as if the mystery can be dispelled and God can be comprehended.

#### 4. *Posture of Receiving Truths Passed Down*

1. Innovative ways of thinking about God - similar to innovative interpretations of Scripture - are almost always wrong. We seek to receive what has already been declared to be true and, if necessary, explain in a way that's more understandable. For example, the early Church didn't *invent* the concept of the Trinity, they discovered that it was there all along revealed in Scripture, and needed to be explained in light of new misunderstandings.

5. *Never Forgetting the Trinity* - we must always remember the centrality of Christ sent by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. These discussions are not meant to be vain philosophical speculations apart from the revelation of God in Scripture. Let us keep Jesus Christ always in mind.

6. *The Thrilling Romance of Orthodoxy* - “[Christianity makes one] more angry with theft than before, and yet much kinder to thieves than before. There was room for wrath and love to run wild. St. Francis, in praising all good, could be a more shouting optimist than Walt Whitman. St. Jerome, in denouncing all evil, could paint the world blacker than Schopenhauer. Sometimes this pure gentleness and this pure fierceness met and justified their juncture; the lion lay down with the lamb. But remember that this text is [often] too lightly interpreted, that when the lion lies down with the lamb the lion becomes lamb-like. But that is brutal annexation and imperialism on the part of the lamb. That is simply the lamb absorbing the lion instead of the lion eating the lamb. **The real problem is--Can the lion lie down with the lamb and still retain his royal ferocity?** THAT is the problem the Church attempted; THAT is the miracle she achieved. . . . People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. The orthodox church never took the tame course or accepted the conventions; the orthodox Church was never respectable. It would have been easier to have accepted the earthly power

of the Arians. It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. . . . **It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands.** To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect." - GK Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

### **The Attributes of God - let us read this devotionally!**

WCF II.1. There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal, most just, and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

II.2. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.

- A Key Text - Exod. 34.5-9 - *"The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 The LORD passed before*

him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." 8 And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. 9 And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

- Notice the context of the biblical text is not a sterile lesson of defining who God is, it is revealing Himself to Moses in the context of salvation from Egypt and establishing His presence with His people

### The Attributes of God

1. **Incommunicable Attributes** - belong only to God alone, they make him God and he does not share ("communicate") them with his creatures. "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1 Tim. 6:15-16).
1. **Simplicity**: God is not made up of different "parts." His attributes are identical with his being. On the one hand, his attributes are not the same: his love is not his justice. On the other hand, you cannot rank God's attributes: his love is not greater than his sovereignty, for example.
  1. How can we reconcile section 1's statements concerning God's "most loving...forgiving iniquity" and God's "most just and terrible judgments...by no means clear the guilty"? The Cross!
  2. "If God should be composed of parts—of components that were prior to Him in being—He would be doubly dependent: first, on the parts, and, second, on the composer of the parts. But God is absolute in being, alone the sufficient reason for Himself and all other beings, and so cannot in any respect derive His being from another. Because God cannot depend on what is not God in order to be God, theologians traditionally insist that **all that is in God is God**. In His essence, it is not one thing to be good, another to be

wise, another to be powerful, and so on. Properly speaking, God is good by virtue of God, not goodness. The distinctions we make among the attributes in our God-talk follow from the manner in which God's perfection is **revealed**, not from the manner in which it exists in Him. Each attribute, in its distinction from all others, enables us to glimpse a sliver of the perfect fullness of God's being. The *manner* in which we know and talk about His perfection does not—indeed, cannot!—correspond univocally to the way God is in Himself. Rather, **in revelation He refracts through the prism of creation and history His perfect fullness of simple being**. What is simple in Him thus appears to us under the form of a spectrum of distinct virtues." - James Dolezal

2. **Aseity**: God is self-existent. In short, God doesn't need the world, yet the world needs God. The world is not necessary for God's happiness. "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3)
  1. How can this be good news? What does it tell us about his love?
  
3. **Unchangeability**: If we define change as either improvement or loss, God cannot be eternally perfect and change.
  1. What are we to do with passages that seem to show God reacting or being affected? God relents when Nineveh repents (Jonah 3:10). God regrets having made Saul king (1 Samuel 15:11).
  2. God's unchangeability does not mean that he is untouched or unprovoked. He isn't distant or removed from his creation like the Stoic or Deistic god. Yet, he is not overcome by surprise or anger. Why is this good news?
  3. "[It's not] that *despite* God's impassability he is nonetheless loving and kind, but rather precisely *because* he is impassible that he is loving and kind. I want to argue in this study that *only* an impassible God, and not a passible God, is truly and fully personal, absolutely and utterly loving, and thoroughly capable of interacting with human persons in time and history." - Thomas Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*
    1. In other words, because God is wholly unlike us and wholly transcendent, can He be utterly near and compassionate. The wonderful mystery is that the very same God who is unchanging

and impassible became fully human. One is not like the other because God's nature does not compete with human nature on the same "plane." [we'll come back to this in the Trinity and Person of Christ]

4. ***Eternal and Omnipresent:*** God transcends both time and place. God can be present with us and for us in all circumstances.

1. God is a Spirit (John 4:24)...He does not have a body like humans.

What implications does this have for us?

1. Note: Scripture will use images to help us relate to him (God has a listening ear, mighty arm, powerful hand).

## 2. **Communicable Attributes**

1. G.I. Williamson explains that this distinction is like a person and her mirror image. There are some things that are communicated, but others that belong only to the real person.

2. God is a being (Ex. 3:14), wisdom (Ps. 147:5), power (Rev. 4:8), holiness (Rev. 15:4), justice, goodness, and truth (Exod. 34:6-7).

3. We know these attributes more intimately than the incommunicable, yet God has all of these in an unlimited degree, and He sets the terms for what they mean *first*.

## 3. **Remembering the Purpose for all this - Praise!**

1. "I never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise. The world rings with praise — lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game... Men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: "Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?" Indeed we can't help doing it...because praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation." - C.S. Lewis

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines  
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 6 | Doctrine of God - Beholding Who God Is, cont.

## BEHOLDING WHO GOD IS

### Reviewing Last Time

1. Getting Started - Qualifications to Help Us Discuss the Being of God:
  1. Order of Knowing - Only God can define who and how God is.
  2. Our language of God is always, as humans, analogical.
  3. Properly approaching God as incomprehensible mystery, rather than a problem to be solved and comprehended
  4. Humble Posture of Receiving Truths Passed Down
  5. Never Forgetting the Trinity
  6. The Thrilling Romance of Orthodoxy

### Attributes of God - Read WCF 2.1-2

#### 1. Incommunicable Attributes

1. *Simplicity* [more on last week's handout]
2. *Aseity*: God is self-existent. In short, God doesn't need the world, yet the world needs God. The world is not necessary for God's happiness. "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3).
  1. How can this be good news? What does it tell us about his love?
3. *Unchangeability*: If we define change as either improvement or loss, God cannot be both eternally perfect and change.
  1. What are we to do with passages that seem to show God reacting or being affected?
  2. God's unchangeability does not mean that he is untouched or unprovoked. He isn't distant or removed from his creation like the Stoic or Deistic god. Yet, he is not overcome by surprise or anger. Why is this good news?
    1. In other words, because God is wholly unlike us and wholly transcendent, can He be utterly near and compassionate. The wonderful mystery is that the very same God who is unchanging

and impassible became fully human. One is not like the other because God's nature does not compete with human nature on the same "plane."

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## BEHOLDING THE TRINITY

### Summarizing the Doctrine:

**WCF 2.3** - "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

### **WLC 9-10**

Q. 9. How many persons are there in the Godhead? A. There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

Q. 10. What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead? A. It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity.

### - **Key Ideas:**

1. Substance vs. Persons - Christ is "*homoousion*" (of one essence or substance) with the Father
2. Equal in Power and Glory - there is no hierarchy
3. Distinct in "personal properties" or "relations" - yet there is no Father without a Son, no Spirit without a Father and Son, etc.
4. **From the Nicene Creed:**
  1. Lord Jesus Christ - "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."
  2. Spirit - "Lord, the Giver of Life, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified"

### Key Fundamentals in Scripture for How the Church came to Articulate the Trinity

1. God is One - The "Shema" - "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your*

*soul and with all your might.” (Deut. 6.4-5)*

2. Jesus is worshipped by monotheistic Jews!
3. Jesus does things only the God of the Old Testament would / could do -  
forgives sins, walks on water, calms the storm
4. The NT ascribes to Jesus and the Spirit actions and prerogatives that belong to God alone, yet there are also distinctions within the unity
  1. 2Cor. 3 - *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*
  2. John 1 - *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*
  3. 1Cor. 8.6 - *“for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”*
  4. Heb. 1 - *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”*
  5. 2Cor. 13.14 - *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*
  6. Matt. 28.18-20 - *“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*
  7. Rom. 10.9-13 - *“because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord . . . for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” [quoting Joel 2]*
5. Jesus is opposed and condemned for claiming to be God
6. Jesus claims eternal and unique communion with the Father and the Spirit
  1. See John 14-17

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines  
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24  
 7 | Doctrine of God - Beholding Who God Is, cont.

## **BEHOLDING WHO GOD IS: More on the Trinity**

### **Review from Last Week**

#### **1. Key Ideas in the Doctrine:**

1. Substance vs. Persons - Christ is "*homoousion*" (of one essence or substance) with the Father
2. Equal in Power and Glory - there is no hierarchy
3. Distinct in "personal properties" or "relations" - yet there is no Father without a Son, no Spirit without a Father and Son, etc.
4. Begotten - as opposed to "created" like the rest of creation or humanity
5. ***From the Nicene Creed:***
  1. Lord Jesus Christ - "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."
  2. Spirit - "Lord, the Giver of Life, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified"

#### **2. Key Truths from Scripture that Lead to Understanding God as Trinity**

1. God is One - The "Shema" (*Deut. 6.4-5*)
2. Jesus is worshipped by monotheistic Jews!
3. Jesus does things only the God of the Old Testament would/could do - forgives sins, walks on water, calms the storm
4. The NT ascribes to Jesus and the Spirit actions and prerogatives that belong to God alone, yet there are also distinctions within the unity (*2Cor. 3.17-18; John 1.1; 1Cor. 8.6; Heb. 1; 2Cor. 13.14; Matt. 28.18-20; Rom. 10.9-13*)
5. Jesus is opposed and condemned for claiming to be God
6. Jesus claims eternal and unique communion with the Father and the Spirit
  1. See especially John 14-17

## Common Misunderstandings of the Trinity

### 1. The Trinity is not an attribute of God; it describes God's personhood as a being.

1. We don't say "God is Father, Son, and Spirit" in the same way that we say God is loving, just, wise, etc. The Triune God is loving, just, wise, and every person of the Trinity is fully His attributes. It's not like the Father is righteous, and His Son convinces the Father to also be loving!

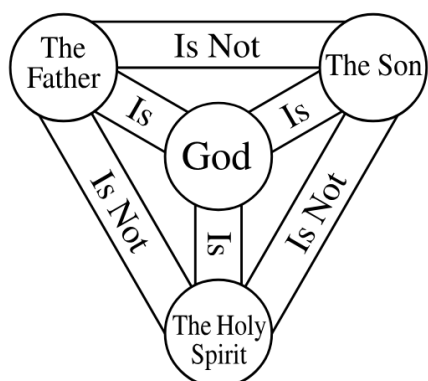
### 2. Avoiding both Tritheism or Modalism

1. Tritheism - 3 gods, as if they're not really united or equal in divinity
2. Modalism (or, Sabellianism) - as if they're not distinct enough, but merely "modes" of one God. They have to be distinct because of the way Scripture describes their actions, most clearly seen in the Incarnation.
3. *Proper orthodox understanding of the Three in One* - "No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of anyone of the three I think of him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. When I contemplate the three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light." - Gregory Nazianzen (c.390)

### 3. Overemphasizing one or the other

1. "It is not surprising that **liberalism** reduced the Trinity to the **Father** (as in... "the universal fatherhood of God and universal brotherhood of man") and therefore has had little interest in redemption by a divine Savior...The tendency to focus on **Christ** apart from the Father and the Spirit has also led to a **reductionistic** view of redemption that is disconnected from creation and consummation. Placing the **Spirit** at the center—often in reaction against these other tendencies—one can easily treat the Spirit as a **freelance operator** rather than the one whose mission is to shine the spotlight on the Father's word concerning his Son's work." - Michael Horton

This may be a helpful picture, but what's one clear way in which this picture lends itself to a heretical understanding?



### Why We Should Love the Doctrine of the Trinity!

1. **Guards how to properly understand that *salvation* is by God, in God, and through God** [we'll expand on this when we get to the Person of Christ]
2. **Expresses how we can, literally, say "God is love"**
  1. "The Father... Son... and Holy Spirit glorify each other... Self-giving love is the dynamic currency of the Trinitarian life of God. The persons within God exalt, commune with, and defer to one other... Each harbors the others at the center of his being. In constant movement of overture and acceptance each person envelopes and encircles the others. [So] Creation is neither a necessity nor an accident. Instead, given God's interior life that overflows with regard for others, we might say creation is an act that was fitting for God... In creation God graciously made room in the universe for other kinds of beings. God's splendor [glory] becomes clearer whenever the Son of God powerfully spends himself in order to cause others to flourish... Jesus Christ's pattern of life in the world reproduces the inner life of God." – Cornelius Plantinga
  2. "What we have, then, is a picture of God whose love, even before the creation of anything, is other-oriented. This cannot be said (for instance) of Allah... There has always been an other-orientation in the very nature of God... We are the friends of God by virtue of the intra-Trinitarian love of God that so worked out in the fullness of time that

the plan of redemption, conceived in the mind of God in eternity past, has exploded into our space-time history at exactly the right moment."  
 – D. A. Carson

3. **Expands our view of worship as communion** - We worship the Father, in Christ, by the power of the Spirit; in other words, we worship God, while being in God, according to the power of God
  1. "Christ is presented to us as the Son living a life of union and communion with the Father in the Spirit, presenting himself in our humanity through the Spirit to the Father on behalf of humankind. . . . He receives the Spirit from the Father for us, vicariously, in his humanity, that out of his fullness he might baptize the church by the Spirit at Pentecost into a life of shared communion, mission, and service." - James Torrance
  2. See John Owen's *Communion with God*
  
4. **Deepens our understanding of God's glory**
  1. "God's goal [in all he does] is his glory, but this is easily misunderstood. The glory that is his goal is a two-sided, two-stage relationship. It is a conjunction of a) revelatory acts on his part whereby he shows us his glory, with b) responsive adoration in which we give him glory for what we have seen and received. In this conjunction is realized the fellowship of love for which [we] were made." – J.I. Packer

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines  
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 8 | Doctrine of God the Creator

## DOCTRINE OF GOD THE CREATOR

**Review:** The Story We've Told So Far -

How do we know anything? => General & Special Revelation

Revelation in Scripture => God Revealing God

Who God is => What God Does

**Remembering our Doctrine of Scripture:**

- **Interpretation:** WCF 1.6 - "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."
- **Purpose & Genre:** Reading Scripture according to God's intended purpose, so that we may not speak more or less than what God's Word says.

### The Importance of God as Creator, Outside of Genesis

1. **Job's Response to God:** Job 40:4, 5; 42:2-6. Why is God as Creator significant?
2. **Psalms** - especially Ps. 8, 19, 29, 33, 65, 104 & 139.
3. **In Christ** - *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."* (Col. 1.15-17)
4. WCF 4.1 explains, "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good".
  1. **This is "doctrine of the Creator" first, before any "doctrine of creation."**  
 Aquinas described God as "the all-embracing cause of existence entire" and creation as "the introduction of being entirely." Basil of Caesarea



(4th C.) writes, “It is he, beneficent nature, goodness without measure, a worthy object of love for all beings endowed with reason, the beauty most to be desired, the origin of all that exists, the source of life, intellectual light, impenetrable wisdom—he it is who ‘in the beginning created heaven and earth.’”

2. We need to be sure of who God is in order to rightly understand creation. See previous lessons on God as all-sufficient goodness. He does not need creation. Hence, “pleased” and “manifestation” in WCF 4.

### **The Creation Account Itself**

Read **Gen. 1-2.3** - try to hear it as if for the first time.

#### ***1. Historical Background***

1. *Aspects unique among contemporary Canaanite religions*
  1. Universal Creator and Ruler over all
  2. Morals based in creation
  3. We are not divine or semi-gods
2. *Literary Context* - Written by Moses when Israel was in the wilderness, so he is defining their nation and mission over against others – that is, not written by a philosopher or scientist abstractly.
  1. **“Each day of creation dismisses an additional cluster of deities.** On the first day, the gods of light and darkness are dismissed. On the second day, the gods of sky and sea. On the third day, earth gods and gods of vegetation. On the fourth day, sun, moon, and star gods. The fifth and sixth days take away any associations with divinity from the animal kingdom. And finally human existence, too, is emptied of any intrinsic human divinity – while at the same time *all* human beings, from the greatest to the least, and not just pharaohs, kings, and heroes, are granted a divine likeness.” - B. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*
3. There are an interesting number of similarities with other contemporary creation narratives (like *Enuma Elish* from Babylon), but also significant differences in theology. This is to be expected, since the biblical writers are human and part of their context just as the non-biblical ones could discern naturally some truth. Think Romans 1 on the knowledge of God.

2. *Covenant of Creation as part of a "Suzerain-vassal" treaty* comparable to other treaties from 1st and 2nd Millennium BC:
  1. A "suzerain" was a lord or master over a weaker party, the vassal. When these two parties entered into a treaty, it took the form that has been discovered as similar to that of the Pentateuch. The form had three main parts:
    1. *Preamble*: would include the name and titles of the suzerain, as well as a *historical prologue* on just how much the suzerain has done to protect and establish the vassal.
    2. *Stipulations*: what you are to do and not do - i.e. don't eat the tree
    3. *Blessings and Curses*: if...then... - i.e. have life if obey or death if disobey
    4. Thus, Gen. 1.1-2.3 should be read as the preamble of a treaty between God and humanity. Gen. 2.4 begins the stipulations and then blessings and curses.
  
3. *Eden as a Temple*
  1. Represents heaven or utopia – God walks there, its water supplied the whole earth
  2. "Garden" simply means enclosed or protected area designed to produce food and symbolizes blessing and well-being
  3. Set apart from the rest of creation as a unique place (v. 2.8), where humanity can enjoy God
  4. Where humans are designed to live
  5. A Temple – God is uniquely present here unlike elsewhere
    1. Sanctity protected by cherubim (see Exod. 26.1-2, 2Chron. 3.7)
    2. Solomon's Temple is designed to reflect the Garden – God's unique presence (1Ki. 8)
    3. Paradise in Rev. 20-21 is a Temple, where God dwells with humanity
  6. "Eden" means luxuriance – the garden as the supply of the world's water and symbolizes a land of bliss
  7. Tree of Life – source of immortality – it's a good thing we couldn't eat of it after the Fall!

#### 4. *God's Work*

1. Creation is depicted as a personal and good God works with no opposition
2. All very planned out and according to God's design
3. All performed with ease, emphasizing His might and total control
4. "Created" is unique to God – the verb is not used of humans, which would be "made". Hence, creation out of nothing.
5. Progress from "*Kingdom/Form*" to "*King/Fill*"
  1. *Day 1* - Light *Day 4* - Lights
  2. *Day 2* - Sky/Seas *Day 5* - Birds/Fish
  3. *Day 3* - Dry Land, Veg. *Day 6* - Animals, Humans
  4. "Therefore if we are to read Gen. 1 right - it is a covenant theology concerning the kingdom of God - that under God there is appointed many 'servant-kings' who are then to rule on God's behalf and for his glory!" - Preston Graham
    1. There are kings, and then there is the King of Kings
6. These "Day-Frames" provide a structure and order to creation, but their exact length (i.e. 24 hrs or more) is left ambiguous, and thus Scripture does not bind us either way to a strict, literal 24hr. 6-day creation. (see Excursus below)

#### 5. *God's Rest – Gen. 2.1-3*

1. Was He tired?? No!
2. **Unique day:**
  1. Only day God blessed – done so because His 'rest' marks His **completion**
  2. Has **no evening** to end it, symbolizing no death – thus we get a foretaste of the resurrection, of the world to come – Rev. 22.5! (Isa. 60.19).
3. "**Resting**" in this literary context also means He is seated on His throne after His work is complete, like a King, and now He reigns
4. In the Ten commandments we see the command to imitate God in His rest; and Deut 5.12-15 writes that the Sabbath is a reminder of Israel's

release from slavery – thus, God’s creation has a liberating aspect, God’s controlling sovereignty frees us as He brings order out of chaos, as opposed to other myths where the god(s)' control is oppressive or punitive.

## 6. Evolution - What's the Problem?

1. So far, nothing has been said for or against evolution. That fact alone is important! The whole point of Gen. 1-2 as part of a treaty between God and humanity was to show forth just how great and sovereign is Yahweh!
2. American Christianity is unique in its hangup on evolution, and it really stems from the cultural and historical trends that grew out of the Scopes trial in 1925.
3. See excursus below on "Views Acceptable in the PCA" and Keller's article, "Creation, Evolution, and Christian Laypeople".
4. Remember also, from our study of the knowledge of God, that there are two "books" that tell us who God is - Scripture and Nature (or Reason, Logic, etc.) - and they should not conflict! So if we think there is a conflict, our interpretation of one or the other is mistaken, not the book itself.
5. **Non-negotiables** (probably not as many as we think!) according to many places of Scripture, not just Gen. 1-2:
  1. Historical work of the Triune God
  2. Ex Nihilo, or out of nothing - meaning nothing existed before God's act of creation. Nothing is co-eternal with God.
  3. Humanity as uniquely created in the Image of God
  4. Historical Adam as our Covenant Head
  5. Historicity of Adam and Eve
    1. Aside from these non-negotiables, especially if we are to read Gen. 1.1-2.3 as poetic with a different intent from that of a scientific textbook, there are many uncertainties on which Scripture is silent.
6. *Beyond the grasp of evolution* - "Does the scientific theory of evolution include, not merely the idea that the living world has been produced by a process in which natural selection is the chief mechanism, but the

*vastly more ambitious* idea that this process has been unsupervised, unplanned, unintended by God or any other intelligent agent? That hardly seems to be an appropriate part of an empirical scientific theory. It looks instead like a metaphysical or theological add-on." - Alvin Plantinga

1. In other words, whatever we say about evolution, science itself cannot say - by its own standards! - that it is "random" or "unguided", but merely it seems that way to empirical science. What is more, Plantinga gave a talk at Yale a few years ago, where he takes it a step further and says that if evolution is totally random, we have no reason to trust the faculties with which we use to discover evolution - reason, science, etc. - since they are themselves products of a random process geared toward adaptability and survival, not truth. Thus it collapses under its own foundation. Evolution needs God to trust that its own tools can be trusted!
2. Conclusion - what we say about evolution either way does NOT impact our view of biblical creation, God's existence, or the trustworthiness of Scripture!

**\*\*\* Excursus: Acceptable Views on Creation in the PCA \*\*\***

*This is excerpted from a position paper put together by the PCA denomination as options, all of which are understood to be within the bounds of Scripture and the teaching of WCF.*

*“Acceptable” means in the sense that an ordinand could believe any of these options and still not be considered as taking an exception to WCF.*

**A. The Calendar-Day Interpretation**

- The Bible teaches that God created of nothing all things in six days, by which Moses meant six calendar days. This view is often called the literal view, the traditional view, or the twenty-four-hour view.

**B. The ‘Day-Age’ Interpretation**

- The ‘Day-Age’ interpretation of the creative days in Genesis 1 has taken various forms in its contemporary expressions, and those which have been held within conservative Reformed circles are outlined below and contain certain common features.
- The ‘six days’ are understood in the same sense as in that day of Isaiah 11:10-11 -that is, as periods of indefinite length and not necessarily of 24 hours duration. There are other similar uses of the Hebrew word for day (yôm) in Scripture to support this view of periods longer than 24 hours including that in the very context of Genesis 2:4. Another argument for this approach is that the seventh day in Genesis 1 is not concluded with the boundary phrase, and there was evening, and there was morning as with the other days, and therefore it continues, as indicated by Hebrews 4:1-11's quotation of Psalm 95:11.
- The six days are taken as sequential, but as overlapping and merging into one another, much as an expression like the day of the Protestant Reformation might have only a proximate meaning and might overlap with the day of the Renaissance. While exponents of this view might be willing to concede a rough parallel between day one and day four, day two and day five, day three and day six, they would tend to deny that this is an intended parallel by Moses as author, as is commonly claimed in the Framework interpretation.
- The Day-Age interpretation claims that the narrative of Genesis 1 is from the point of view of the earth as being prepared for the habitation of man. In this context, the explanation of day four is often that the sun only became visible on that day, as atmospheric conditions allowed the previous alternation of light and darkness to be perceived from the earth to have its source from the position of the previously created sun and other heavenly bodies. However day four is understood, the point is made that only on that day is the diurnal cycle of days governed by the sun begun, so that it is difficult to know the nature of the first three days.

### *C. The Framework Interpretation*

- There are a number of versions of the Framework interpretation. Here we discuss the position which has arguably influenced the PCA most, that of Meredith G. Kline and Mark D. Futato. In Genesis 1:1-2:3: Exegesis indicates that the scheme of the creation week itself is a poetic figure and that the several pictures of creation history are set within the six work-day frames not chronologically but topically. In distinguishing simple description and poetic figure from what is definitively conceptual the only ultimate guide, here as always, is comparison with the rest of Scripture.
- In other words, the distinctive feature of the Framework interpretation is its understanding of the week (not the days as such) as a metaphor. Moses used the metaphor of a week to narrate God's acts of creation. Thus God's supernatural creative words or fiats are real and historical, but the exact timing is left unspecified.
- Why the week then? Moses intended to show Israel God's call to Adam to imitate Him in work, with the promise of entering His Sabbath rest. God's week is a model, analogous to Israel's week. The events are grouped in two triads of days. Days 1-3 (creation's kingdoms) are paralleled by Days 4-6 (creation's kings). Adam is king of the earth and God is King of Creation.

### *D. The Analogical Days Interpretation*

- The days are God's work-days, which are analogous, and not necessarily identical, to our work days, structured for the purpose of setting a pattern for our own rhythm of rest and work.
- The six days represent periods of God's historical supernatural activity in preparing and populating the earth as a place for humans to live, love, work, and worship.
- These days are broadly consecutive: that is, they are taken as successive periods of unspecified length, but one allows for the possibility that parts of the days may overlap, or that there might be logical rather than chronological criteria for grouping some events in a particular day.
- Genesis 1:1-2 are background, representing an unknown length of time prior to the beginning of the first day: verse 1 is the creatio ex nihilo event, while verse 2 describes the conditions of the earth as the first day commenced.
- Length of time, either for the creation week, or before it or since it, is irrelevant to the communicative purpose of the account.

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 9 | Doctrine of Humanity

## WHAT IS A HUMAN?

### Common answers today to “what is a human?”:

- Material - just star dust
- Means to an End - economic, social, ecological, etc. defines our work.
- Equal to an animal
- Equal to a computer
- Others?

### What is a human? Look to Jesus first!

- The Image of God - *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation”*
- His entire life and death was fully human yet without sin!
  - Lived in communion with God
  - Died to himself that he may glorify God and save others
  - *“The unassumed is the unhealed”* - an ancient church statement that means whatever Christ did not “assume” to his human nature is not redeemed. Ours is a holistic salvation.
- We are (re-)created in Jesus - *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* (Eph. 2.10)
- Made to be “blessed” according to Jesus’ words, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn . . . the meek . . . those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. . . the merciful . . . the pure in heart . . . the peacemakers . . . those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake”* (Matt. 5.3-10).

### What is a human according to our given essence?

**WCF 4.2** - After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female (Gen. 1:27), with reasonable and immortal souls (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 12:7; Luke 23:43; Matt. 10:28), endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true



holiness, after his own image (Gen. 1:26; Col 3:10; Eph. 4:24); having the law of God written in their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15), and power to fulfill it (Gen. 2:17; Eccl. 7:29); and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change (Gen. 3:6,17). Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God (Gen. 2:17; Gen. 2:15-3:24), and had dominion over the creatures (Gen. 1:28; Gen. 1:29-30; Ps 8:6-8).

### 1. A Human is Created

1. Not self-sufficient or self-made
2. Derivative in our essence
3. Dependent from the start

### 2. WITH. A Human is Created With:

1. Reasonable and immortal souls
2. Knowledge, righteousness, and holiness
3. The law of God written on their hearts
4. Freedom - WCF 9.1-2 - "I. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it."
  1. We were people on trial, not yet either sinful or confirmed in righteousness, but the devil is introduced as a test – *this is never again true of humans*
    1. **Covenant of creation** - WCF 7.2, "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."

### 3. FOR. A Human is Created For Communion with God

1. Pre-Fall we had an intimate, but conditional presence with God – it's God's garden and He walks there
2. WSC 1 - "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."
3. Created for relationship and mutual love - we cannot define humanity

without also at the same time including God.

#### 4. IN. A Human is Created in the Image of God

1. What is an "image"? Remembering back to the creation story, and Eden as a special Temple presence of God, what is present in every temple?! Thus, our calling is to reflect, mirror, or image our Lord and Creator!
2. *Image includes purpose and worth* - to spread God's glory, care for the earth, and reflect the Creator.

#### 5. TO. A Human is Created to Work

1. *Kingly* (ruling the land) and *priestly* (serving and guarding the Temple; and reflecting God's glory) role over the land
  1. *Gen. 1.28, 2.15 - "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. . . . The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."*
  2. Specific words used for "work it and keep it" of the Garden are only ever used again in combination with the duties of the Levite priests in Num. 3.7-8, 18.5-6.
  3. "Royal priesthood" is what humanity is made to be and is precisely what the new humanity in Christ becomes - *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1Peter 2:9); "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." (Rev. 1.6)*
  4. "Humanity is presented not merely like God but as his chosen stewards who are to carry out 'the royal-priestly vocation of representing God's rule on earth by their exercise of cultural power.' They function like 'idols' of God himself, that is, to cause those who see and dwell with humans to have a vision of the Creator King." - Kelly Kopic
2. Adam and Eve had work to do! So the original creation and Garden of Eden were without sin, but not "perfect" in the sense of being complete.
  1. We'll expand on this when we get to vocation and our callings, but we are all "called" to this calling as a king and priest.

## 6. AS. A Human is Created as an Embodied Soul

1. *Gen. 2.7 - "The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."*
2. Unique to humanity - breath of life from God himself, and the designation "living creature", or "living person," "living soul", "living being."
3. Hard to distinguish where our soul stops and body starts and vice versa. Rather than "having" a soul, we are embodied psychosomatic souls.
4. Male or Female
  1. Sexuality is clearly embedded into our created nature, bestowed upon us
  2. Not something to be denigrated or discarded
  3. Though we know the animals are also male and female, it's only mentioned with respect to humans

### General Implications:

#### 1. Dignity

1. Every human has a dignity that cannot be taken away or discarded
  1. Hundreds of social, political, and other implications
  2. Basis for modern human rights

#### 2. Purpose

1. We don't have to discover it or create it, but simply receive, recognize, and follow

#### 3. Framework

1. This doctrine gives our whole lives a way to interpret our lives and make decisions

#### 4. Natural world and physical bodies

1. This doctrine, plus the bodily resurrection of Jesus, informs how we view the physical world and our physical bodies. Since they are created by God, and seen by Him as good, we should care for them.

### How else ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?

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 10 | Doctrine of Original Sin

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE?!

**Intro - What does Jesus, in both his teachings and crucifixion, reveal to us about sin?**

### What Happened in the Fall?

#### **Pre-Fall Folks – Their lives then**

1. **People on trial**, not yet either sinful or confirmed in righteousness, but the devil is introduced as a test – *this is never again true of humans*
  1. **Covenant of creation: WCF 7.2** "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."
  2. **Intimate, but conditional presence with God** – it's God's garden and He walks there!
  3. **Kingly** (ruling the land) and **priestly** (serving and guarding the Temple; and reflecting God's glory) role over the land

#### **Nature of the Fall - Gen. 3.1-19**

- We're not given the spiritual source of the Serpent – "evil is not created by God nor is it outside of God's power"
- What are the general steps or the movement of the Fall?
  - Speaks *about* God and whether or not He said it, diverting Eve's attention
  - Changes the command into a question
  - Doesn't mention the free gift to eat of every other tree, but only the one prohibition
  - Distorts motive as if God is restricting Eve out of self-interest
  - Denies the truth of the statement
- If humanity were to be king and priests, we failed in both in the Fall
- WFC 6.1 - "Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was

pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory."

*Protoevangelium* – 3.15 – first promise of the Gospel

### Post-Fall Folks – Our Lives Now

1. **Sinful people**– now it's impossible for us to fulfill the covenant of works, since we are all "in Adam" as our public representative or covenant head (Rom. 5:12-19, 8:20-23)
  1. In need of a new covenant - *Covenant of Grace to come* [WCF 7.3]
    1. Although the Covenant of Works/Life/Creation is not abrogated, but fulfilled also in Christ
  2. **Lack of immediate presence** (Gen. 3:23-24) and even fear in His presence – Cherubim guard the garden now, not humanity
  3. **Distorted relationships** - to the land (Gen. 3:15-19) and to each other (they lack intimacy by needing clothes, they blame each other, and have distorted communion)
  4. **God still provides common grace** (Gen. 3.21), yet He *must* expel them (3.22) lest they enter eternal life stained and corrupted.

### Original Sin

WCF 6.2 - "By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body."

WCF 6.3 - "They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation." Cf. WLC 22.

*Cf. Rom 3:23; Eph 2:1-3; Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9; Titus 1:15; Rom 3:10-19; Rom 5:12,15-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22,49; Ps 51:5; John 3:6; Gen 5:3; Job 15:14; 2Tim. 3:2-4*

**Covenantal Solidarity in Adam:** "We are not only guilty *for* Adam's sin; we are guilty *as sinners in Adam*." (Horton) We share an identity with Adam, we have a corporate, covenantal solidarity with Adam. Though foreign to modern democracies, Scripture treats us corporately in many more ways than we

realize.

Yet we are responsible for being "in Adam." It's not that we *can't* obey God, it's that we *won't*. It's not that we have a natural or physical inability, we have a spiritual inability. There is a mystery here, but Scripture clearly teaches both that humans are by nature sinners and wholly responsible for their sin.

**Remember**, infants die. We need a theology that accounts for that simple fact.

**Test Case: What if, instead, each person started as a blank slate?** If each person started in a pre-Fall state, and had a chance to fulfill the original covenant of obedience? What would that make Christ's work of redemption into?

- **"The peculiar individualism of the Pelagian view** of the world comes out strongly in their failure to perceive the **effect of habit on nature itself**....After each act of the will, man stood exactly where he did before: indeed, this conception scarcely allows for the existence of a "man" - only a willing machine is left, at each click of the action of which the spring regains its original position, and is equally ready as before to reperform its function. In such a conception there was no place for **character**: freedom of will was all. . . . Keeping man in perpetual and hopeless equilibrium between good and evil, they permitted no growth of character and no advantage to himself to be gained by man in his successive choices of good. . . . To the Pelagian, Adam was a man, nothing more. . . . And this carried with it the corresponding view of man's relation to Christ. He could forgive us the sins we had committed; He could teach us the true way; He could set us a holy example; and He could exhort us to its imitation. But he could not touch us to enable us to will the good. . . . **Man needs something more than to know the right way: he needs to love it, or he will not walk in it**; and all mere teaching, which can do nothing more than bring us knowledge of what we ought to do, is but the letter that killeth. What we need is some inward, Spirit-given aid to the keeping of what by the law we know ought to be kept. Mere knowledge slays: while to lead a holy life is the gift of God." [This also led Pelagians to believe that physical death was part of man's nature. Why?] - B.B. Warfield
- Christian orthodoxy, as is often the case, gives us a far more profound understanding of human nature: "We all know from experience that a sinful action is not external to us, like a dirty garment which can be taken

off and laid aside; rather, it is intimately connected with our inner nature and leaves ineradicable traces upon it. After each sinful act we are no longer what we were before." - Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*

**What "Total Depravity" does NOT mean:** "1. that every man is so thoroughly depraved as he can possibly become; 2. that the sinner has no innate knowledge of the will of God, nor a conscience that discriminates between good and evil; 3. that sinful man does not often admire virtuous character and actions in others, or is incapable of disinterested affections and actions in his relations with his fellow-men; nor 4. that every unregenerate man will, in virtue of his inherent sinfulness, indulge in every form of sin" - Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*

- "What is meant by 'total' is that the whole nature of humanity, not only the body and its desires but the soul, mind, heart, and will, is corrupt." - Horton
- We are incapable of any *saving* good, yes, but are capable of penultimate good.

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines

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11 | Doctrine of Original Sin, cont.

## IMPLICATIONS OF ORIGINAL SIN

**Review** - after the Fall, we are all born sinners “in Adam”, worthy of death and in need of redemption.

**Intro** - Let us always make sure to focus on God and the cross of Jesus Christ when discussing sin.

### 1. Could Original Sin be good news? On Humanity, Dignity, and Responsibility

1. Sin, though it is present in us now by nature, is **still the invader!** Original sin makes this clear because we weren't created sinners, we're only born sinners now after the Fall. To say "well, everyone's human" is an excuse that is foreign to the Bible. Human's were created with great dignity and integrity, and although the grace of the gospel makes it clear that sin is pervasive and should not surprise us, it is also not a part of God's ultimate purpose for us.
2. "The Bible takes sin seriously because it takes man (male and female) seriously... To say that somebody 'is not responsible for his actions' is to demean him or her as a human being. It is part of the glory of being human that we are **held responsible** for our actions." - John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*
3. **Sin and evil are not "creative"**, meaning they don't do anything on their own. Evil is merely a privation of good, sin distorts God's purposes, it doesn't add anything of its own. Why is this important? What are implications of this view?
  1. **Look to Jesus** - he was FULLY human, yet without sin
  2. This point is also grounded in our **doctrine of creation**. God alone creates out of nothing, and when he had created, it was all good. Whatever the devil does, he's merely working with what God provided. Thus, common grace says that no human being this side of hell is 100% purely sinful.



4. Not only does Original Sin highlight the dignity of humanity, it also **casts us upon the mercy of God**, which also comes through a covenant representative, Christ.
  1. One incredible feature of the Great Awakening was the deep conviction of sin that forced them to see their need for God's mercy and love.

## 2. Original Sin and other sins: distinguishing between symptoms and essence

1. WCF 6.4 - "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."
  1. "Neither the language of medicine nor of law is adequate substitute for the language of [sin.] Contrary to the medical model, we are not entirely at the mercy of our maladies ...the choice is to enter into the process of repentance... Contrary to the legal model... the essence of sin is not the violation of laws but... a wrecked relationship with God, one another, and the whole created order. "All sins are attempts to fill voids," wrote Simone Weil. Because we cannot stand the God-shaped hole inside of us, we try stuffing it full of all sorts of things, but... only God may fill (it)." – Barbara Brown Taylor
  2. What happens if we forget Original Sin and focus merely on "sins", especially as merely individual behaviors and thoughts we can change?
2. "It is just as possible to avoid God as Savior and Lord by keeping and obeying the laws of God as by breaking them" - Keller
3. How do these words help us think about sin?
  1. alienation
  2. distortion
  3. falling short
  4. rebellion
4. How could differentiating between sins and Sin help us in dealing with our own sin?

## 3. On talking about sin in the world, from Tim Keller

1. For example, if most people hear you say that people who have sex outside of marriage are sinning, they will immediately believe you look down on them, that you think they are lost because of that behavior,

that you are one of the good people who don't do things like that, and so on.

2. Even if you don't mean any of that, others will believe you are saying that because they have a completely different grid or paradigm in their minds about how anyone can approach and relate to God. This is why Christians with a good grasp of the Biblical view of sin will try to avoid public pronouncements on particular behaviors as sinful and will try to get people to hear the radical message of the Bible about the true nature of sin and its universality. **They will show that people are lost only if ultimately they are too proud to see they are lost and needful of a Savior who saves by sheer grace, just as a drowning person offered a life-preserver will only die if he won't admit he needs it.**
  
4. *Christians are still sinners* - WCF 6.5: "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin."
  1. Cf. Rom. 7; 1Jn. 1.8-10; Gal. 5:17; as well as the assumption underlying every moral exhortation to believers ("Though you're in Christ, stop acting like you're in Adam!"); if this wasn't true, moral exhortation would be nonsense because Christians wouldn't struggle with sin anymore.

**Faith vs. sin** - "Faith is: that the self is grounded in God. Sin is faith's opposite. Sin is... wanting to be one's own self, instead of a self whose specifications and identity are the outcome of one's relationship to God." – Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*

**Pride** - "Many have overcome cowardice, or lust, or ill-temper by learning to think that they are beneath their dignity. The devil laughs. He is perfectly content to see you becoming chaste and brave and self-controlled provided he is setting up in you the Dictatorship of Pride — just as he would be quite content to see [the corns on your foot] cured if he was allowed, in return, to give you cancer. **For Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or common sense. In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself.**

Unless you know God as that — and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison — you do not know God at all. He wants you to be delightedly humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all the silly nonsense about your own dignity which has made you unhappy and restless all your life. Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel we are good — above all, that we are better than someone else — I think we may be sure that we are being acted on not by God but by the devil... If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed." – C.S.Lewis

**Sloth as the other side of the coin of pride** - The *humility* of the Son of God unmasks our *pride*. On the other hand, the *exaltation* of the Son of Man unmasks, in turn, our *sloth*. "As reconciling grace is not merely *justifying*, but also wholly and utterly *sanctifying* and awakening and establishing grace, so sin has not merely the heroic form of pride but also, in complete antithesis yet profound correspondence, the quite unheroic and trivial form of sloth. In other words, it has the form, not only of evil action, but also of **evil inaction**; not only of the rash arrogance which is forbidden and reprehensible, but also of the tardiness and failure which are equally forbidden and reprehensible. It is also the counter-movement to the elevation which has come to man from God Himself in Jesus Christ. The sinner is not merely Prometheus or Lucifer [prideful]. He is also a lazy-bones, a sluggard, a good-for-nothing, a slow-coach and a loafer. **In the one case, he stands bitterly in need of humiliation; in the other he stands no less bitterly in need of exaltation.**" - Karl Barth

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12 | Review and Preview thru the Lens of Covenant Theology

## THE STORY OF REDEMPTION AND COVENANT THEOLOGY

### 1. "Covenant" of Redemption - Starting with God as Trinity

#### 1. AKA *Pactum Salutis* or the "Covenant" between the Father and the Son

1. John 17 - *"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. 6 "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me."* (See also John 10, Eph. 1, Ps. 2, 110, Isa. 53)

2. WCF 3.5 - *"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace."*

2. Common Grace Covenants (they apply to all people at all times, and serve as a foundation upon which God initiates special grace covenants)

1. **Covenant of Creation** - Gen. 1.1-2.3 - covenant of works, requiring perfect obedience - including "salvation" in the presence of God

1. In anachronistic terms, you could say that creation originally included common and special grace or “church and state” relations in one, but after the Fall they’re divided (see below)
2. WCF 7.1-2 - “The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”
2. **Covenant with Noah** - Gen. 9.1-17 - re-establishes covenant of creation after the Flood, not to destroy the earth again until the final consummation, but doesn’t offer salvation and immediate presence of God like the covenant of creation
3. **Covenant of Grace** - WCF 7.3 - “Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.” (WCF 7.3)
  1. **Before Christ** - “This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the old testament.” (WCF 7.4)
  2. **After Christ** - “Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and

administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the new testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.” (WCF 7.6)

### 3. **Special notes:**

1. The Covenant of Creation or “Works” is still in effect, but Christ fulfills the covenant of creation and in its application to His people becomes the Covenant of Grace. The two covenants only compete if we try to fulfill the Covenant of Works on our own.
2. Anyone who is saved is saved by Christ - either in Christ to come or in Christ who has come.

### 4. **Special Grace Biblical Covenants** (apply to the elect only), begun in proto-form in Gen. 3.15

1. **Abrahamic Covenant** - Gen. 15.1-18 (cf. Gen. 12, 17, 22) - *Unilateral, unconditional promise* - promises the Mosaic, Davidic, and New covenants - numerous offspring, conquest/land, nations (i.e. Gentiles!) will be blessed
2. **Mosaic Covenant** - Exod. 3-Numbers 36 (Ex. 20-24.11 is the majority of it) - *Bilateral, conditional law*, yet still based on the gracious promise of the Abrahamic covenant, with the intent of highlighting God’s holiness, humanity’s sin, and what it should look like to be God’s chosen people. They weren’t saved by following it, they were already saved, and this explained what “saved people” should look like if they were to live in the promised land.
  1. WCF 19.1-2 - “God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man”

3. **Davidic Covenant** - 2Sam. 7.1-17 - *unilateral, unconditional promise* - to build David's "house" and sustain his dynasty as God's Anointed King over Israel
4. **New Covenant - fulfills all of the above**
  1. **Christ in the Old Testament** – Our starting point will always be Christ as the fulfillment and fulfiller of the Old Testament – see Mt. 5.17-20 and Lk. 24.13-34
    1. We need Christ in order to interpret the Old Testament properly – it's not meant to be read on its own
    2. The Old Covenant is a "shadow" (Heb. 10.1, Col. 2.16-17) to the "reality" of the New Covenant; or as "copies" are to "substance" (Heb. 9.23-28); or, as promise is to fulfillment (Gal. 3).
    3. It's not complete until the New Covenant church – Heb. 11.39-40, 1Cor. 10.6, 1Pet. 1.10-12.
  2. **Test Case: The Exodus and the Transfiguration – Lk. 9.28-36**
    1. Jesus' "exodus", the literal definition of Gk. word "departure" (v. 31)
    2. Isaiah 43.16-21 – the new exodus – that is, the hope of Israel was a new exodus, like a new creation, to do the what the first one did, but better
    3. Jesus as the True Passover Lamb, that redeems the New Israel (the Church), and Jesus also as the True Israel to whom we are united, who undergoes our purification (thru the Red Sea) on our behalf, so that we may follow God in the "wilderness" of this world until we reach the Promised Land
  3. So, to fully understand the Exodus, we have to look at both the OT stories and Jesus.

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**

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 13 | The Person of Christ

### The Person of Christ - Who is Jesus?

#### Reminder of how we started our discussion on the Doctrine of God:

1. **Mystery is appropriate** - "The true goal of theological inquiry is not the resolution of theological *problems* but the discernment of what the *mystery* of faith is. Because God, who can never be fully comprehended, lies at the heart of all theological enquiry, theology by its nature is not a problem solving enterprise, but rather a mystery discerning enterprise." - Thomas Weinandy
  1. Major heresies always try to resolve the problem as if the mystery can be dispelled and God can be comprehended.
  2. Much of our definitions are "negative" - not that, not that either...
2. **Posture of Receiving Truths Passed Down**
  1. Thank God for the Church's wrestling with the Trinity and Christology!
3. **The Thrilling Romance of Orthodoxy** - "It would have been easier to have accepted the earthly power of the Arians. It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. . . . **It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands.** To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect." - GK Chesterton

#### **The Person and Work of Christ are inseparable**

Though we have to start somewhere, let's keep in mind that *who Jesus is* always informs *what he did*, and *what he did* shows us *who he is*. The Incarnation points to the Atonement, and the Atonement saves because of who Jesus is in the Incarnation.



### **What the Church Fought Against that Led to their Conclusions:**

1. **How Could God be Human? Docetism** (from the Greek, *dokeo*, to seem) - *Jesus wasn't human* - Docetists claim that Jesus wasn't truly human, but only *seemed* to be human, as if on the cross he was wearing a human mask or illusion. The intent was to guard Jesus' divinity (which they affirmed) because becoming human and dying on the cross is so shameful a thing for God to do!
  1. Muslims actually say something similar in that such an end would be dishonorable for a prophet, so they don't believe he was crucified.
  2. This often comes with a denial of creation and the Old Testament, because the goal is to escape the body, which the Son of God didn't really inhabit anyway. Often called "gnosticism."
  3. *Returns today* in forms of New Age Spirituality that emphasize the "spiritual" to the exclusion of the physical.
    1. TV "church" or megachurches are often docetic or gnostic in practice - why? Physical, bodily presence is not valued or appreciated.
  
2. **How Could a Human be God? Arianism** (named after its fiercest proponent, Arius) - *Jesus wasn't divine* - Arians believe that Jesus was perhaps semi-divine (or not divine at all, simply the best human) but was not fully divine, on par with the Father. "There was a time when he was not" was their rallying cry, to show that Jesus was a creature, not eternal. This belief was meant to guard the monotheism that is so clearly biblical, so they couldn't imagine a Trinity without losing monotheism.
  1. This often comes back throughout history because it seems more "reasonable." Modern examples are Jehovah's Witnesses or Unitarians.
  2. This was the most significant debate the church faced, and we can be thankful to many saints of the church for fighting it.
  
3. **How Could the Divine and Human Natures be in One Person?**
  1. **Apollinarianism** - *Jesus wasn't human all the way down* - in trying to make sense of how two natures could exist in one person, one proposal that the Church rejected was considering his body as human but his soul as

divine.

1. The Church's response: "what is unassumed is unhealed" - if Jesus didn't assume or take on some part of our humanity, then that part can't be saved.
2. This is docetism or gnosticism lite, recognizing that Jesus was obviously human, but not willing to believe he was fully human.
2. **Eutychianism** - *Jesus was not fully human like he was fully God* - this led the Church to clarify that Jesus is not some kind of mixture between God and humanity, thus becoming a "third thing" (*tertium quid*). In this case, Jesus isn't actually human at all, but is some kind of monster, not truly human and not truly God.
  1. Hence, WCF below "So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were **inseparably joined** together in one person, **without conversion, composition, or confusion**. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ."
  2. Distinct but never separate is the key!
  3. Notice what this says about humanity and divinity when it comes to agency! They don't compete on a zero-sum level, so that we can say that God and I do one and the same thing, which is key in sanctification.

What is wrong *practically and pastorally* (aside from biblical and theological reasons) with these heresies? If we believed them, how would that change the story of Christ's accomplished redemption?

Which heresies do we tend toward in our emphases and practices if not in our creeds?

Note also that every heresy had a "half-truth", so they thought they were being faithful.

### Where the Church Landed in Describing Who Jesus is:

#### Nicene Creed

". . . And we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from

heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human;”

**WCF 8.2:**

“The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. **So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.**”

**Key phrases throughout church history:**

1. Christ's divine nature is *of one being/essence (homoousios)* with the Father and Spirit
2. Two natures (human and divine) in one person
3. Each nature is *distinct, but never separate* from the other

\*\*\* There are several texts that make Jesus' divinity clear (John 1; Phil. 2.5-10; Rom. 1.3-4; 1Jn. 5.20), others where the obvious implication must be that Jesus is divine (i.e. instances where an OT passage is cited that only applied to Yahweh and now applies to Christ, or where Jesus Himself is saying as much); then there are additional texts where what is claimed could only be claimed by someone who is divine; and all of these being in the Jewish context where monotheism was a bedrock truth, and yet they start worshipping Jesus!

“If in Jesus Christ humans do not encounter God directly, then they cannot confidently embrace God’s reconciling love. Furthermore, worrying that God hides behind an emissary, humans treat salvation as reaching toward God via this quasi-divine intermediary instead of receiving divine grace.” - Daniel Treier

If Jesus is truly human and truly divine, what does that do to our assurance of

his revelation? Our trust in His power? Our doubts about our own insufficiencies?

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### **Where the Church Landed in Describing Who Jesus is:**

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3. Each nature is *distinct, but never separate* from the other
4. “Begotten, not made” - “only God” in John 1.14, 18 is “only born/begotten/generated God” - *monogenes*

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**On God Being Unchangeable, yet Loving; or, Foundations for a Christian Theodicy in the Incarnation**

“The person of Christ is not an amalgam of two natures, but rather is the eternally divine person of the Son who has taken a human nature into personal union.” - Robert Letham

**Relations between the Human and Divine nature - Communication of Idioms - WCF 7.7** - “VII. Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.”]

\*\*\* Notes from Thomas Weinandy’s book, *Does God Suffer?* \*\*\*

**Does God really relate to us?** “As Creator, he is in no way limited. The term Creator specifies both the relationship between Yahweh and his creation and simultaneously his radical distinctiveness from creation. It is the very otherness of God, as Creator, which allows him to be so close and intimate.” -

**Does God need to be so transcendent and holy?** - "The whole significance of Yahweh's presence and activity, expressed in his love, care, and compassion, is predicated precisely on the truth that it is **actually God, in his wholly otherness as God, who is present and active**. To make God less than wholly other in order to promote or protect his presence and activity is to undermine the very importance of his presence and activity. If it is not the wholly other God who is acting in time and history and forming personal relationships with his people, then the whole significance of this activity and these relationships is lost." - 54-5

**Does God change his mind?** - "The very language that is used, being 'sorry,' 'relenting,' 'repenting,' and 'changing' of mind seeks to express Yahweh's **unswerving and unalterable love which is expressed** in his compassion, mercy and forgiveness, and equally, that he is adamant in his demand for goodness and justice. Yahweh then is sorry that he appointed Saul not just because Saul had changed, but he is equally sorry because he, as God, has not changed. The sorrow is an expression of the fact that 'the Glory of Israel will not recant or change his mind; for he is not a mortal that he should change his mind.' The All Holy God consistently demands righteousness and this very consistency is expressed in his sorrow." - 61

**Can God have compassion if He doesn't change?** - "God is, for Irenaeus, 'total sympathy and total love' precisely because his mercy and love are not predicated of a changeable being. For God to be impassible and immutable is not to deny love and compassion of him, but to establish in his unchangeably perfect being a love that is **absolutely and utterly passionate**." - 94

"Eternally God is immutably and impassably adapted to every situation and circumstance, not because his love is indifferent and unresponsive, but because his love, with all its facets, is **fully in action**, and so he is supremely and utterly responsive to every

situation and circumstance.” - 162

**Does God Suffer?** - “No, God in himself as God does not suffer. . . . Since God does not suffer, his **love becomes absolutely free in its expression and supremely pure in its purpose**. If God did suffer, it would mean that God would need not only to alleviate the suffering of others, but also his own suffering, and thus there would be an inbuilt self-interest in God’s love and consolation. However, since God does not suffer, his care for those who do suffer is freely given and not evoked by some need on his part.” - 153, 160

**So what happens in the Incarnation?** - “It is *truly* the Son of God who *truly* is man and so suffers *truly* as man. . . . If the Son of God changed in becoming man, it would no longer be the Son of God who is man. . . . Who is it who truly experiences the authentic, genuine, and undiminished reality of human suffering? **None other than the divine Son of God!** He who is one in being (*homoousion*) with the Father. What is the manner in which he experiences the whole reality of human suffering? **As man!** It is actually the Son of God who lives a comprehensive human life, and so it is the Son who, as man, experiences all facets of this human life, including suffering and death.” - 175, 201

**So did God suffer?** - “He who is impassible as God actually is passible as man. The Impassible suffered. To say, in accordance with Cyril and the Christian tradition, that ‘**the Impassible suffers**’ is not, then, to be incoherent, but to state the very heart of the incarnational mystery. First, the term ‘the Impassible’ guarantees that it is **actually God, in all his wholly transcendent otherness as God, who suffers**, and not ‘God’ in some mitigated or semi-divine state. The fact that God does not lose his wholly transcendent impassible otherness in so suffering **enhances to the extreme the import of**



**the suffering**, for it means that the Son who is incapable of suffering as the wholly other God is precisely the same one who is **actually suffering as man**. But it is at this juncture that those who advocate a suffering God miss the logic and so the heart of the communication of idioms. The communication of idioms, secondly, equally ensures that it is **truly human suffering** that the Son of God experiences and endures. Even if one did allow the Son of God to suffer in his divine nature, this would negate the very thing one wanted to preserve and cultivate. For if the Son of God experienced suffering in his divine nature, he **would no longer be experiencing human suffering** in an authentic and genuine human manner, but instead he would be experiencing 'human suffering' in a divine manner which would then be neither genuinely nor authentically human. If the Son of God experienced suffering in his divine nature, then it would be God suffering as God *in a man*. But the Incarnation, which demands that the **Son of God actually exists as a man and not just dwells in a man, equally demands that the Son of God suffers as a man** and not just suffers divinely in a man. . . . Within the Incarnation the Son of God never does anything as God. If he did, he would be acting as God *in a man*. This the Incarnation will never permit. **All that Jesus did as the Son of God was done as a man** - whether it was eating carrots or raising someone from the dead. He may have raised Lazarus from the dead by his divine power or, better, by the power of the Holy Spirit, but it was, nonetheless, as man that he did so. . . . If the Son of God, as God, were deprived of some good which would cause him to suffer as God, it would mean that he is actually no longer God. Strange as it may seem, but not paradoxically, one must maintain the unchangeable impassibility of the Son of God as God in order to guarantee that it is actually the divine Son of God, one in being with the Father, who truly suffers as man. As man the divine Son of God was deprived, as are we, of human goods which did cause him, like us, to suffer." - 203-5

"Even if we were to suppose the impossible situation that in Christ God

suffers as God in his divine nature, his suffering would then have little to do with us, **for we do not suffer as God, but as humans.**" - Dodds

**Hallelujah! God himself suffered as a human!**

**What are some of the manifold implications that we can draw from these wonderful truths?**

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 15 | The Work of Christ

## The Work of Christ

### Considering Two Overall Distinctions:

1. The Work of Christ AND the Person of Christ - they both inform the other and they both need to remain our focus. What are dangers of losing the incarnation or the crucifixion, emphasizing one to the exclusion of the other?
2. Redemption Accomplished AND Redemption Applied
  1. The key distinction - something historically happened in Christ and *then* it needs to be applied by the Holy Spirit to God's people.

### How does Christ execute the office of a Mediator?

*See Heb. 1.1-4*

#### **Christ Fulfills Three Offices in "Two Estates"**

... to execute the offices of prophet, priest, and king of his church, **in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.**" - WLC 42

#### **Humiliation:**

- Q. 47. How did Christ humble himself in his conception and birth?** A. Christ humbled himself in his conception and birth, in that, being from all eternity the Son of God, in the bosom of the Father, he was pleased in the fullness of time to become the son of man, made of a woman of low estate, and to be born of her; with divers circumstances of more than ordinary abasement.
- Q. 48. How did Christ humble himself in his life?** A. Christ humbled himself in his life, by subjecting himself to the law, which he perfectly fulfilled; and by conflicting with the indignities of the world, temptations of Satan, and infirmities in his flesh, whether common to the nature of man, or particularly accompanying that his low condition.
- Q. 49. How did Christ humble himself in his death?** A. Christ humbled himself in his death, in that having been betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, scorned and rejected by the world, condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors; having also conflicted with the terrors of death,

and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God's wrath, he laid down his life an offering for sin, enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross.

**Q. 50. Wherein consisted Christ's humiliation after his death?** A. Christ's humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day; which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, He descended into hell.

### **What Happened on the Cross?**

*Rom. 3.21-6 - "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*

#### **1. Father's Love - The Father sent the Son - v. 25 (also John 3.16, etc.)**

1. Jesus does not have to "twist the arm" of the Father to convince him to love us; it was the Father's idea in the first place!

#### **2. Son's Voluntary Obedience**

1. Jesus wanted to do it and had the authority to do it

#### **3. God's Wrath is poured out upon sin**

1. "God did not sit down, deliberate carefully, and then decide that on balance he should hate evil. Nor is his freedom circumscribed by some law of retribution external to himself, like some human judge bound, even when he disapproves of them, by the laws passed by his national legislature. 'Just' is what God *is*. "Angry with sin" is what he *is*. It is his whole nature, his very being, to recoil from it and condemn it. It is unimaginable that he should place idolatry, blasphemy, murder, rape, child abuse, greed, deceit, and exploitation outside the law, ignoring the pain they cause and the havoc they wreak. No human society

places evil outside the law, and it is one of the paradoxes of this whole discourse that those who cry out most loudly for justice are often the very ones who deny the Almighty any judicial function.” - D. Macleod

#### **4. Punishment - Sin is Punished - v. 25 - the Cross is “penal”**

1. God no longer counts our sin! So the cross was directed to God, not just humanity - 2Cor. 5.19-21; Rom. 5.6-11
2. *“the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief.”* - Isa. 53.6, 10
3. *“Propitiation”* - in Rom. 3.25, it’s actually *“mercy seat”*, such that Jesus is seen as the bloodied mercy seat where sin is punished

#### **5. Justice - The Righteousness/Justice of God Satisfied by Punishing Sin**

##### **1. We are justified by "works" ;)**

1. Remember the covenant of creation - or the demand of God’s holiness to dwell in His presence - must still be fulfilled! Jesus fulfills it in his *“humiliation”* in our place, which we receive as participants in the covenant of grace, by faith.

#### **6. Substitution - The Second Adam takes our place**

1. Importance of Substitution: *“The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.”* – John Stott

#### **7. Forgiveness & Redemption - ransomed from the wrath we deserve**

#### **8. Human Evil at work and unmasked**

1. *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”* - Acts 2.22-23

#### **9. Satanic Evil at work and unmasked**

1. *“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by*

*triumphing over them in him.” - Col. 2.15*

### **How the Bible describes Christ's work on the cross - objective and subjective benefits (from Tim Keller)**

- **Sacrifice** - removing the shame barrier
  - Sin is impurity, a defilement that makes us unfit for community. This creates shame and a sense of being unacceptable.
  - But on the cross Jesus was shamed and excluded (Matt 27:46; Heb 13:11-13) so that we could be purified and cleansed from sin (Heb 1:3, 9:13-14).
- **Debt** - removing the debt-barrier
  - Sin is a broken obligation (cf. Matt 6:12). When we cannot pay our debts this entails slavery (in ancient cultures) or bankruptcy (today).
  - But on the cross Jesus paid a ransom (Mark 10:45) so that we could be redeemed out of bondage (1 Tim 2:6; 1 Cor 6:20).
- **Battle** - removing the power of evil over us
  - Sin is an evil force of self-centeredness and power-accrual that works in the world and in our hearts.
  - But on the cross Jesus unmask and disarms evil powers (Col.1:12-14, 2:14-15; Jn 12:31-33) by a complete reversal, through self-sacrifice and service (1 Cor 1:18-31).
- **Relationship** - removing the hostility-barrier
  - Sin is a broken relationship, refusing God his rightful centrality in our hearts. God is alienated from us and us from him (Rom 5:10).
  - But on the cross Jesus removes God's anger from us (Heb 9:5; Eph 2:3-5; 1 Jn 2:1-2) and turns our hearts to him as Mediator and Advocate.
- **Law** - removing the guilt-barrier
  - Sin is a violation of God's righteous character and law. This creates guilt.
  - But on the cross Jesus stood in our legal place (Is 53:11, 12; cf. Lk 22:37) and took the judgment we deserved (1 Pet 3:18; Rom 3:21-26; Gal 3:13) so we can get the treatment he deserved (2 Cor 5:21).

Niebuhr's caricature of the liberal Protestant church is still a warning for us - "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."

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 16 | The Work of Christ, cont.

### **The Work of Christ - Resurrection, Ascension, and (Coming) Judgment**

*Last Week - Christ's Humiliation - in his birth, life, and death*

**Exaltation, in 5 ways:**

**Q. 52. How was Christ exalted in his resurrection?** A. Christ was exalted in his resurrection, in that, not having seen corruption in death, (of which it was not possible for him to be held,) and having the very same body in which he suffered, with the essential properties thereof, (but without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life,) really united to his soul, he rose again from the dead the third day by his own power; whereby he declared himself to be the Son of God, to have satisfied divine justice, to have vanquished death, and him that had the power of it, and to be Lord of quick and dead: all which he did as a public person, the head of his church, for their justification, quickening in grace, support against enemies, and to assure them of their resurrection from the dead at the last day.

**Q. 53. How was Christ exalted in his ascension?** A. Christ was exalted in his ascension, in that having after his resurrection often appeared unto and conversed with his apostles, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and giving them commission to preach the gospel to all nations, forty days after his resurrection, he, in our nature, and as our head, triumphing over enemies, visibly went up into the highest heavens, there to receive gifts for men, to raise up our affections thither, and to prepare a place for us, where himself is, and shall continue till his second coming at the end of the world.

**Q. 54. How is Christ exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God?** A. Christ is exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God, in that as God-man he is advanced to the highest favor with God the Father, with all fullness of joy, glory, and power over all things in heaven and earth; and doth gather and defend his church, and subdue their enemies; furnisheth his ministers and people with gifts and graces, and maketh intercession for them.

**Q. 55. How doth Christ make intercession?** A. Christ maketh intercession, by his appearing in our nature continually before the Father in heaven, in the merit of his obedience and sacrifice on earth, declaring his will to have it applied to all believers; answering all accusations against them, and procuring for them quiet of conscience, notwithstanding daily failings, access with boldness to the throne of grace, and acceptance of their persons and services.

**Q. 56. How is Christ to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world?**

A. Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world, in that he, who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness.

**\*\*\*THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST\*\*\***

from N.T. Wright's *Surprised by Hope*

**What did the word "resurrection" mean in the ancient world?**

**To the ancient world:** "the ancient world - with the exception of the Jews - was adamant that dead people did not rise again; and the Jews did not believe that anyone *had* done so or that anyone *would* do so all by themselves in advance of the general resurrection." - 35

- **Ancient pagans:** "the road to the underworld ran only one way" - 35
  - Resurrection, to them, "was used to denote new bodily life *after* whatever sort of life after death there might be. . . whether to deny it or to affirm it [resurrection always meant] a **two-step** narrative in which resurrection, meaning new bodily life, would be preceded by an interim period of bodily death." - 36 - always meant Life *after* life after death.
  - "Everybody knew about ghosts, spirits, visions, hallucinations, and so on. Most people in the ancient world believed in some such things. They were quite clear that that wasn't what they meant by *resurrection*. . . **Resurrection meant bodies.**" - 36
- **Ancient Jews** - most, except the Sadducees, believed God would raise his people on the last day, as a form of vindication.



## 7 Ways in which "Resurrection" gets Re-defined in Christianity

1. *E Pluribus Unum* - of all the backgrounds of those who became Christian, and of all the other debates, Christians were totally unified and unanimous on what resurrection meant, and that it occupied "not just center stage, but the whole stage" - 42
2. **From circumference to the center** - there is no Christianity without it
3. **From a vague prediction to sharpened certainty** that it will be a "transformed body"
4. **The Split** - the coming of "the end" happened "to one person in the middle of history in advance of its great, final occurrence, anticipating and guaranteeing the final resurrection of God's people at the end of history." - 45
5. **Collaborative** - "to work with Jesus and thereby to anticipate the final resurrection, in personal and political life, in mission and holiness, transforming the present, as far as they were able, in the light of that future." - 46
6. **New Metaphor** - not of the restoration of Israel as it was used before, but now of new life and the renewal of human beings in general - along with the return from exile
7. **Messiah because of Resurrection** - the Jewish Messiah was expected to battle against wicked pagans, rebuild or cleanse the Temple, and bring God's justice to the world - and it seemed that all of these had failed....until the resurrection

## What Exactly Happened at the 1st Easter?

### **Four distinct features of the Easter accounts that argue for historicity:**

1. No biblical echoes
2. Presence of the women
3. Portrait of Jesus - transformed, and yet not magically transfigured, or shining like a star. No OT predictions saw a transformed body in this way.
4. No mention of believers' future hope - it's about Jesus reigning now, in this world!

### **Other possible explanations?**

Nobody expected this type of resurrection, and they had other ways to

make sense of other experiences - like hallucinations or ghosts - none of which would have been confused with a resurrection.

**Notable occurrences:**

1. Jesus' grave did *not* become a shrine, as expected of a martyr
2. Early church's emphasis on the first day of the week
3. Disciples acted on a belief they could never have dreamt up, and that only brought them suffering and death.

Thus, "**the crucifixion of Jesus was the end of all their [Jewish disciples'] hopes.** Nobody dreamed of saying, 'Oh, that's all right - he'll be back again in a few days.' Nor did anybody say, 'Well, at least he's now in heaven with God.' They were not looking for that sort of kingdom. After all, Jesus himself had taught them to pray that God's kingdom would come 'on earth as in heaven.' What they said - and again this has the ring of first-century truth - was, 'We had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel' (Luke 24:21), with the implication, 'but they crucified him, so he can't have been.' The cross, we note, already had a symbolic meaning throughout the Roman world, long before it had a new one for the Christians. it meant: we Romans run this place, and if you get in our way we'll obliterate you - and do it pretty nastily too. **Crucifixion meant that the kingdom hadn't come, not that it had.** Crucifixion of a would-be Messiah meant that he wasn't the Messiah, not that he was. When Jesus was crucified, every single disciple knew what it meant: we backed the wrong horse. The game is over. . . They knew they were lucky to escape with their own lives." - 39-40

**Six Ways the NT Describes Jesus' Redemption**

1. **Firstfruits (1Cor. 15)** - the offering of the firstfruits signifies the great harvest still to come. . . the point of the firstfruits is that there will be many, many more.
2. **The Victorious Battle** - Jesus, having been raised bodily (remember: that's the only way he defeats death and so can properly reign over the world), establishes his kingdom by subduing all possible enemies.
3. **Citizens of heaven, colonizing earth (Phil. 3:20-1)** - Jesus will come *from* heaven *to* earth to change our bodies and our world, transformed to be like his
4. **God will be all in all (1Cor. 15:28)** - "God intends to flood the universe with himself, as though the universe, the entire cosmos, was designed as a

receptacle for his love.”

5. **New birth (Rom. 8)** - new creation from the womb of the old, to include all of creation
6. **The Marriage of Heaven and Earth** - "The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband . . . It is not we who go to heaven, it is heaven that comes to earth; indeed, it is the church itself, the heavenly Jerusalem, that comes down to earth. This is the ultimate rejection of all types of Gnosticism, of every worldview that sees the final goal as the separation of the world from God, of the physical from the spiritual, of earth from heaven. It is the final answer to the Lord's Prayer, that God's kingdom will come and his will be done on earth as in heaven. . . . This doesn't mean that God will wipe the slate clean and start again. **If that were so, there would be no celebration, no conquest of death, no long preparation now at last complete.**" - 104-5

### The Redemption of our Bodies - What it is and Why it Matters

- **All about Jesus** - "[Early Christians] believed that God was going to do for the whole cosmos what he had done for Jesus at Easter." - 93
  - "The risen Jesus is both the *model* for the Christian's future body and the *means* by which it comes about. Similarly in Colossians 3:1-4: when the Messiah appears, the one who is your life, then you too will appear with him in glory. Paul does not say 'one day you will go to be with him.' No, you already possess life in him. This new life, which the Christian possess secretly, invisible to the world, will burst forth into full bodily reality and visibility." - 149
- **What's "Heaven"?** - "heaven is the place where *God's purposes for the future are stored up*. It isn't where they are meant to stay so that one would need to go to heaven to enjoy them; it is where they are kept safe against the day when they will become a reality on earth." - 151
- **What kind of body? Clarifying 1Corinthians 15** - the problem is not the material, but the source or energy or power of that material. We will lose our currently "corruptible physicality" and inherit an "incorruptible physicality" animated by God's Spirit rather than flesh and blood. Thus, Paul can conclude his discussion on the resurrection (1Cor. 15) by urging them to God's work NOW because they know it is not in vain, it will be reaffirmed

and completed in the future.

- **Resurrection was always closely linked to our doctrines of creation and justice/final judgment. Why?**

### Our Taste of Resurrection Now

- "'God's kingdom' in the preaching of Jesus refers not to postmortem destiny, not to our escape from this world into another one, but to God's sovereign rule coming 'on earth as it is in heaven'. . . . The wonderful description in Revelation 4 and 5 of the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before the throne of God and the lamb, beside the sea of glass, is not, despite one of Charles Wesley's great hymns, a picture of the last day, with all the redeemed in heaven at last. It is a picture of *present* reality, **the heavenly dimension of our present life**. Heaven, in the Bible, is not a future destiny but the other, hidden, dimension of our ordinary life - God's dimension, if you like. God made heaven and earth; at the last he will remake both and join them together." - 19
- "The Christian doctrine of the resurrection, as part of God's new creation, gives **more value, not less, to the present world and to our present bodies**. . . . What we do in the present matters enormously. Paul speaks of the future resurrection as a major motive for treating our bodies properly in the present time (1Cor. 6:14), and as the reason for not sitting back and waiting for it all to happen (1Cor. 15:58)." - 26
- **Motive for courage now** - "[This belief] is far more powerful and revolutionary than the Platonic one. It was people who believed robustly in the resurrection, not people who compromised and went in for a mere spiritualized survival, who stood up against Caesar in the first centuries of the Christian Era. A piety that sees death as the moment of 'going home at last,' the time when we are 'called to God's eternal peace,' has no quarrel with powermongers who want to carve up the world to suit their own ends. Resurrection, by contrast, has always come with a **strong view of God's justice and of God as the good creator**. Those twin beliefs give rise not to a meek acquiescence to injustice in the world but to a **robust determination** to oppose it. English evangelicals gave up believing in the urgent imperative to improve society (such as we find with Wilberforce in the late 18th and 19th centuries) about the same time that they gave up believing robustly in resurrection and settled for a disembodied heaven instead." - 26-7

- *The Opposite of the "Opiate of the Masses"* - "**Resurrection is not the redescription of death; it is its overthrow and, with that, the overthrow of those whose power depends on it.** . . . Resurrection was never a way of settling down and becoming respectable . . . It was the Gnostics, who translated the language of resurrection into a private spirituality and a dualistic cosmology who escaped persecution. Which emperor would have sleepless nights worrying that his subjects were reading the Gospel of Thomas? Resurrection was always bound to get you into trouble, and it regularly did." - 50
- **Already-not yet and the Lord's Prayer** - "The whole book thus attempts to reflect the Lord's Prayer itself when it says, 'Thy kingdom come, on earth as in heaven.' That remains one of the most powerful and revolutionary sentences we can ever say. As I see it, the prayer was powerfully answered on the first Easter and will finally be answered fully when heaven and earth are joined in the new Jerusalem. Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present. . . . Our task in the present . . . **is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, which our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, is a sign of the first and a foretaste of the second.**" - 30

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## LOOKING TO THE END, THROUGH JESUS

### Jesus is our Paradigm for the End

- **The Split** - the coming of "the end" happened "to one person in the middle of history in advance of its great, final occurrence, anticipating and guaranteeing the final resurrection of God's people at the end of history." - Wright
- **Q. 56. How is Christ to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world?**  
 A. Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world, in that he, who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness.

### Heaven, or the Intermediate State

WCF 32 - "The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

See 2Cor. 5 & Phil. 1

### The Final Resurrection and Judgment

WCF 32.2 - "At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the **selfsame bodies**, and

none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.

WCF 33 - "I. God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

**Why?** - WCF 33.2 - "The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

**When?** - WCF 33.3 - "As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen."

### **What else do we know about the return of Christ?**

1. One return, not two such that the final day will come without warning!
2. He will come unexpectedly:
  1. He will come DURING a period of distress for the remnant due to the popularity of apostasy among those who profess to be Christian-- (2 Cor. 11:13-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Matt. 24:10-2, 24). Therefore, conditions today are the conditions spoken of!
3. Personal and visible coming (Acts 1:11)
4. Cataclysmic Coming (2Pet. 3.10)
5. A Glorious Coming (Matt. 24.30; 2Th. 1.10; Rev. 19.16)

*Note 2Peter 3.8-13 - consider how he draws out the implications of the return*



\*\*\* An Excursus on Millennial Views and Why it Matters\*\*\*

**The Return of Christ—Review of Three major views of Rev. 20.1-6**

**1. Post-millennialism:**

1. Kingdom of God is primarily a present reality.
2. Expect conversion of all nations prior to Christ's return.
3. Expect a long period (not necessarily a literal 1,000 yr. period) of earthly peace and Christian goodness to come gradually.
4. At the end of the millennium there will be a time of apostasy and flare-up of evil in connection with the coming of the antichrist.

**2. Historical Pre-millennialism and Dispensational Pre-millennialism:**

1. Earthly reign of Christ initiated by Christ's return.
2. Earthly millennium will be dramatically and cataclysmically inaugurated by the second coming. (rather than gradual)
3. Great tribulation will immediately precede the millennium, which will heighten the effects of the millennium.
4. Two resurrections in Rev. 20:4-6 are distinguished by the participants (believers in first and non-believers in second) but both are physical or bodily. This over against the Post-mil. and a-mil. that only the second resurrection is bodily whereas the first is spiritual)
5. *Hermeneutic:* *Historical Pre-mil.* are more willing to understand scripture less literally and more figuratively when there is Biblical reason from context. *Dispensational Pre-mil.* almost always reads Bible literalistically. (Note: Rise of Dispensationalism paralleled that of the fundamentalist movement over against the modernist such that "non-literal" falsely came to be equated with "liberal")
6. *Present age:* Unlike Historical Pre-mil, the *Dis. Pre-mil* believe that there is no OT prophecies fulfilled within the "church age" (time between Christ's ascension and Christ's return). *Historical Pre-millennialists* are more willing to understand tribulation and millennium as less literal and in part being accomplished now.
7. *Israel:* Unlike the Hist. Pre-mil, the Disp. hold that there will be a virtual restoration of the Old Testament Israel during the Millennium, some Hist.Pre-mil. only hold that there will be some special status of Israel (non-political/geographical). Therefore, the Disp. look for a political

millennial. Unlike Hist. Pre-mil., the Disp. see a sharp contrast between Israel and the church.

#### 8. *Tribulation:*

1. *Dis. Pre-millennialism* holds to a two stage return of Christ with a seven year tribulation in between whereby the church will be raptured prior to tribulation.
2. *Historical Pre-millennialism* holds to a one stage return of Christ whereby the church will remain in the world during the tribulation.

#### 9. *Reasons to reject 2 phase view of Christ's return:*

1. Same words are used in scripture to describe what Dispensationalism divides into 2 events. (parousia, 2 Thess.2:8, apokalypsis 1 Cor. 1:7 and epiphaneia 1 Tim. 6:14)
2. When the NT describes the "tribulation" (period of distress), it does not indicate that the church will be removed from the earth before the distress! (note Mt.24 – warning would not even be applicable)
3. All other passages in NT speak of only one coming. Only Rev. 20 can be interpreted to be a 2 phase coming, yet in context that is highly figurative.
4. Therefore, when Christ returns, THAT'S IT.

### 3. **A-millennialism**

1. *Hermeneutic:* Like both Post-mil. and Hist. Pre-mil., A-mil. holds that a faithful reading of scripture isn't necessarily a literalistic reading of scripture. The "liberal" / "evangelical" distinctive pertains more to our understanding of God within time and space (supernaturalism vs. anti-supernaturalism), rather than a reading of scripture of literal vs. figurative.
2. *Millennium:* Like both Post-mil. and some Hist. Pre-mil., the millennium and tribulation are understood to be symbolic but not necessarily a literal 1,000 year period.
3. *Present age:* consists both of the millennial reign of Christ and the tribulation simultaneously. The kingdom of God has come partially now but is not yet fully consummated. The binding of Satan already is taking place for the gospel to have any progress at all but Satan still is the "prince of this world."

4. *Second Coming*: will inaugurate the final age and state for both believers and non-believers. The general resurrection, judgment and consignment of all to their ultimate future states will happen immediately and with no intervening period of time.
5. *Old Testament Prophecy*: fulfilled both within the history of the church and in the New Heaven and Earth.
6. The Lord could return virtually at any time.

**The Kingdom has come! See Matt. 4.17, 10.34.**

- "The kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history and the consummation at the end of history." - George Ladd

**Why does it matter which view you hold? What are common implications?**

**1. Dispensational/fundamentalists**

1. "Underrealized eschatology" - Tend to see the kingdom of God as totally or mainly future. May lead to pessimism about social and personal change. Leads to a "fortress mentality" of pulling out of the world.
  1. Low view of culture: Rather than being agents through which God can exercise his rule in culture (vs. state), we must isolate ourselves from culture, praying and waiting for the return of Christ.
  2. Radical discontinuity between present and future.

**2. Post-Millennialism/Pentecostal**

1. "Overrealized eschatology" - Tends to see the kingdom exclusively as "already" present. Leads to an optimism about the kingdom to breakdown strongholds of corporate or individual evil and forgetting the incompleteness of the kingdom of God.
  1. Leading to a naiveté regarding the sin in the heart, leading them to trust too quickly in the divine origin of their own impulses.
    1. Naiveté regarding church power

2. Expecting "quick and simplistic fixes" for complex problems, leading to a undeveloped view of suffering
  3. Faith as the catch-all solution
- 3. Mainline/liberal (both Pre-mil., Post-mil. and a-mil.)**
1. Tend to negate that the "kingdom" is "from God" rather than from "man"
  2. Confuses "gradual" with "anti-supernatural"
  3. This together with an optimism about the Kingdom being exclusively present, leads to a strong trust in education or politics to usher in the kingdom.
- 4. A-Millennialism**
1. "Realized eschatology" - tension concerning the present and not yet kingdom of God – the present tribulation and reign of Christ in the present age
  2. The tension characterizes what we commonly call the "signs of the times"
    1. Those events (wars, earthquakes, etc.) that must take place before Christ's second return are happening now and will continue.
  3. The people of God are involved in this tension.
  4. **Suffering** - The kingdom of God now includes the use of suffering as a means towards bringing in the future kingdom. Suffering in the lives of believers is a concrete manifestation of the not yet. Acts 14:22 - "*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God*"
  5. **Culture** - We mustn't equate the kingdom of God with culture, nor should we say that what we do in culture is unrelated to the Kingdom.
    1. There is continuity as well as discontinuity between this world and the next. Grace does not destroy nature but restores it.
  6. **Visible/Invisible?**
    1. Present or future Kingdom of God is not one of invisible or visible, but **impartiality and completeness**, and includes both visible and invisible.
    2. **Now:** Enjoy the rights and privileges of Christ's Laws, government, sacraments and mission as in the visible Church. (albeit imperfect and fallible)
    3. **Not yet:** Consist of "land" and "all peoples"

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 18 | The Church

## WHERE REDEMPTION IS APPLIED: TOTAL CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

**Review** - from Revelation and Who is God... to Creation, Humanity and our Sin... to the Redemption in Christ, secured by His Person and Work through the states of Humiliation and Exaltation in his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and waiting consummation... aka we're moving from Redemption Accomplished to Redemption Applied

### The "Logic" of the Larger Catechism

- **What?** - 57 - "What benefits hath Christ procured by his mediation? **A.** Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption, with all other benefits of the covenant of grace."
- **How?** - 58 - "How do we come to be made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured? **A.**... by the application of them unto us, which is the work especially of God the Holy Ghost."
- **Who?** 59 - "Who are made partakers of redemption through Christ? **A.** Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it; who are in time by the Holy Ghost enabled to believe in Christ according to the gospel."
- **Who else?** 60 - "Can they who have never heard the gospel, and so know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved by their living according to the light of nature? **A.** They who, having never heard the gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of that religion which they profess; neither is there salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the Savior only of his body the church."
- **Who specifically?** 61 - "Are all they saved who hear the gospel, and live in the church? **A.** All that hear the gospel, and live in the visible church, are not saved; but they only who are true members of the church invisible."

### The Visible and Invisible Church

- **What is the visible church?** 62 - “A. The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children.”
  - **63. What are the special privileges of the visible church?** A. The visible church hath the privilege of being under God's special care and government; of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies; and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved, and excluding none that will come unto him.
- **64. What is the invisible church?** A. The invisible church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head.
  - **65. What special benefits do the members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ?** A. The members of the invisible church by Christ enjoy *union and communion with him in grace and glory.*
  - **66. What is that union which the elect have with Christ?** A. The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace, whereby they are *spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband;* which is done in their effectual calling.

### Remembering who Christ is, with whom we have union

#### 1 | The Three Offices [From the Larger Catechism]:

- **Prophet** – “in his revealing to the church, in all ages, by his Spirit and Word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God, in all things concerning their edification and salvation.”
- **Priest** – “in his once offering up himself a sacrifice without spot to God, to be a reconciliation for the sins of his people, and in his making continual intercession for them”
  - OT requirements of a priest included: a man chosen to represent men before God (Aaron always bore before the Lord a breastplate with the

names of all the tribes of Israel – Exod. 28); chosen of God as a special election (Num. 16.5, Heb. 5.4); holy and consecrated to the Lord (Lev. 21.6-8, Exod. 39); must have a right to draw near to Yahweh and to bring near sacrifices (Lev. 16.3-15); must have an acceptable sacrifice to offer (Heb. 8.3)

- **King** – “in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.”
- *He is never only one and not the others* - “When he teaches, he is always a priestly and kingly prophet. When he offers sacrifice or intercession for sin, he is always a prophetic or royal priest”. – AA Hodge

The relevance of these three stretch **from the OT types, to Jesus’ life and into the life of the church**. Just as there is a once-for-all aspect to Jesus' role, there is a continual role. Now we continue to experience Jesus as Prophet through biblical preaching and teaching; Jesus as Priest through sacramental presence and prayer; Jesus as King through church government and Christ's providence and power over our lives.

## ON THE CONTINUED ROLES OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH

### Total Christ Church and Spirituality

Gospel-Centered	Missional
Christ our Prophet (Confessional) - Word	
Christ our Priest (Sacramental) - Sacrament	
Christ our King (Communal) - Discipline	

### Total Christ Church and Spirituality\*

	Gospel-Centered	Missional
<b>Christ our Prophet</b>	Gospel of grace; preaching; revelation; humble submission to Word	Preaching in our language; translation; understandable in context; at all times
<b>Christ our Priest</b>	Once-for-all sacrifice; Jesus intercedes on our behalf; assurance of Presence	Sacramental worship; local and contextualized; participatory with full emotions and Temple
<b>Christ our King</b>	Gracious government, shepherding; overcoming sin; life-on-life discipleship	Mercy; holistic empowerment; ecclesial evangelist

\*Note: this table is meant to show how the marks dynamically interact with one another, but none of them can truly be limited to one box. Hence the dotted lines.



## Thinking through the Covenant-Temple Paradigm

1	<b><u>Covenant (Gospel-centered)</u></b>	<b><u>Temple (Missional)</u></b>
2	Word	Flesh
3	Global	Local
4	Forensic/Legal	Participatory
5	Proclamation	Participation
6	Elements	Forms
7	Justification	Sanctification
8	Work of Christ	Person of Christ
9	Agape	Eros
10	Light	Heat
11	Paradigm	Power
12	Logos	Pathos or Ethos?
13	Message	Medium
14	Dialogue	Dance
15	Structure	Style
16	Pilgrim (Andrew Walls)	Indigenous (Andrew Walls)
17	Redemption?	Creation?
18	Truth	Love
19	Once-for-all	Continual
20	Memorial	Presence
21	Objective	Subjective

\*Note: some of these values are better categorized than others, so this chart is meant to give more of a “feel” for the tendencies of each, rather than strict dichotomies, just as you can never fully separate the Work from the Person of Christ.

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**WHERE REDEMPTION IS APPLIED:  
 THE CHURCH AS COMMUNION, INSTITUTION, AND GOVERNMENT**

**1. The Presence of God in the OT**

1. **Eden and then occasional altars and spaces in Genesis**
2. **Tabernacle - Exodus 40:34-38**
  1. Not just anyone could approach it (Exod. 33.4-6) and this was where Moses spoke to God "face-to-face" (Exod. 33.7-11)
  2. This is what set Israel apart from all other nations - Exod. 33.12-16
  3. Purpose for God's dwelling - Exod. 25.8-9; 29.43-6 - *"I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am The Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am The Lord their God."*
  4. After the heavenly model - Exod. 25.9, 40; Heb. 8.5ff.
3. **Temple - 1 Kings 8:12-24, 27-30**
  1. All the purposes above from the Tabernacle are transferred to the Temple, the 'permanent Tabernacle'

**2. Where is the Special, Saving Presence of God Found Now?**

1. **Jesus and the Church!**
  1. Body of Jesus being the new Temple - John. 1.18 [and the rest of the gospel!], Temple's curtain ripped (Matt. 27.51, Mark 15.38, Luke 23.45), Temple destroyed and raised in 3 days, etc.
  2. If Jesus is the new Temple, and we are joined with Him, we too are becoming the Temple of God - Eph. 1.22-3, 2.19-22, 4.11-16, 1Peter 2.4-9)
    1. 1Cor. 3.16-7 - [divisions in the body led to Paul's rebuke:] *"Do you not know that you (pl.) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you (pl.) are that temple."*

3. "On earth as it is in heaven" is a guiding principle and motivation throughout Scripture (for another example, cf. Jn. 1.51 based on Jacob at Bethel in Gen. 28.12, as well as Heb. 10.19-20)
4. Main Scriptural metaphors for the Church: covenant assembly / gathering, place of mission, people of God, chosen nation, remnant, family, bride, body, building / temple, city, dwelling place of God
5. Note: "you" in plural form ("y'all") is overwhelmingly the use in the NT
6. **You could summarize God's purpose in the world as *not* selecting out individuals to get to heaven, but rather as working to gather a community into His presence on earth as it is in heaven!** (Acts 2.41-2; 1Peter 2.4-10)

### 3. What's the Purpose of the Visible Church? (this is why outside of the church there is "no ordinary possibility of salvation")

1. WCF 25.3 - "Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the **gathering and perfecting of the saints**, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto."
2. 25.4 - "This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them."

### 4. The Church as Communion

#### 1. **Communion of Saints - You can't be united to the Head without also being united to the Body!**

1. 26.1 - "All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public

and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man."

2. 26.2 - "Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

5. **The Attributes of the Church** (from the Apostle's Creed; to be distinguished from last week's discussion of the "marks" of the Church)

1. **One**

1. If it's in communion with Jesus Christ in heaven as His Body, how could it be more than one? See Eph. 4.4-6
2. Unity of the church is a gift from Christ - see John 17
3. Denominationalism is *meant* to preserve unity - we believe that non-Presbyterians are part of the one body of Christ - without demanding strict visible unity on important non-essentials.
  1. We should of course grieve our divisions and work to unite as much as possible.

2. **Holy**

1. "Saints" literally means "holy ones" - so the church is that community that has been made holy by Christ. 1Cor. 1.30 - "*And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption*"

3. **Catholic**

1. "Catholic" simply means universal, which is similar to the Unity, but also expresses its **global** nature.
2. Just as there is no Jew or Greek in Christ, there is no national allegiance in the Church, it is catholic by its very nature because it is connected to the one Head in heaven.

4. **Apostolic**

1. "Reformed churches lodge the apostolicity in the succession of a particular ministry rather than of particular ministers. . . . In the NT,

the apostles had no successors. To them belonged an extraordinary ministry for an extraordinary period of the church. It was the foundation-laying era (1Cor. 3.1; Eph. 2.20) followed by the ordinary ministry of pastors and teachers (2Tim. 2.2). The apostles speak with magisterial authority directly from Christ himself, but they instruct the ordinary pastors who follow in their wake to receive and guard the deposit of truth rather than to add to it (1Tim. 6.20)." - Michael Horton

2. Remember the canonization process - the key test was "is it apostolic?"

## 6. The Church as Divine Institution

1. "*Divine*" - this is God's idea, not a human one
2. "*Institution*" - not a voluntary community like the YMCA or Lion's Club.  
We are a part of the church if we are Christians.
  1. Public profession is not one of choice, but of obligation and command from God - very entrance into life is through a public testimony
3. "**A solitary Christian** is seen to be a contradiction in terms."
  1. "The society of Christians is . . . not an accidental or voluntary union which has grown up of itself: it is a **union designed beforehand**, appointed from the beginning by God, and plainly contemplated and required in every page of the NT. There are **precepts** in the Bible addressed, not to believers separately, but **to believers associated together** into a corporate society; there are **duties** that are enjoined upon the body, and not upon the members of which it is composed; there are **powers** assigned to the community, to which the individuals of the community are strangers; there is a **government**, an order, a code of laws, a system of ordinances and officers described in Scripture, which can apply to none other than a collective association of Christians. Without the existence of a Church, or of a body of believers, as contradistinguished from believers individually, very much of what is contained in the Bible would be **unintelligible, and without practical application.**" - James Bannerman



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## WHERE REDEMPTION IS APPLIED: CHURCH POWER & GOVERNMENT

**Understanding Church Power** [notes from James Bannerman's *The Church of Christ*]

### 1. What Kind of Power?

1. *Spiritual* - as opposed to physical or outward authority of the state, the Church's authority is strictly spiritual
  1. *Dogmatic - [Word]*, or articles of faith - revealed in the Word, the Church is a "divinely appointed witness for God's truth" to those outside the Church, and a witness and teacher to those within
    1. Anything but a spiritual authority is inconsistent with the goal, which is to bring men to faith and obedience - "a compulsory power can never secure my belief"
  2. *Ordinances and Government [Sacraments]* - administrative and declaratory power, as channels through which the Spirit works
    1. No physical influence, or temporal or coercive power, can be used
  3. *Discipline* - admission to and exclusion from the fellowship of the Church
    1. Confirm in their faith and obedience; or convict of sin and recover them by admonition, warning, censure, rebuke or excommunication

### 2. Where does the Power Come From? - The Source

1. "The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church" - *directly from God by* "positive" institution, yet also including voluntary submission of human members. Why?
  1. Christ commands his members to associate corporately
  2. Christ appoints office-bearers after His ascension, and providing for their succession
  3. Christ enacts laws for the conduct of the members and office-bearers
    1. Precepts and promises to officers as rulers, not just teachers

2. Duties of submissions to the office-bearers by the members
  3. Examples of power, “not of advice merely”, such as the “keys of the kingdom of heaven”
  4. Christ is *both founder AND administrator*, not just one or the other
  5. *Not in the Church itself* - “it is not the Church that governs and dispenses ordinances and spiritual graces in His name, and by reason of His original gift and endowment to her, but Christ who, **personally present**, governs and administers ordinances and blessing through the Church. The Church has no store of life apart from Christ being in it”.
3. **How Far Should/Can it Go? - “The Extent and Limits of Church Power”**
1. **Problems to avoid:** 1. *Overrate* - extending it beyond the bounds of Scripture; 2. *Underrate* - church power becomes merely human appointment and advice, not authority
  2. **Extent:** submit to Church power insofar as it is in agreement with the Word of God AND, in a subordinate sense, because it is emitted by the Church, which is itself instituted by God in His Word - lest there be no power that is binding *except for what the members otherwise consent to*.  
**Authority, by definition, cannot be limited by consent.**
    1. Church power is more and better than just a human power that is in agreement with the Word, which is **advice, not authority**.
    2. If the Church is more than just a voluntary, humanly-appointed institution, than it must possess power outside of human consent; otherwise, there would be “laws without authority, ordinances without grace, and discipline without judgment” (239). Compare the judgment of a civil law court, which is pronounced and carried out regardless of the consent of those it applies to.
    3. **If power is only so far as consent goes, then the majority, in effect, becomes the office-bearers**, since the minority must obey the will of the majority.
    4. The “oversees”, “presbyters”, “rulers” and “pastors” are throughout Scripture NOT bound by the consent of the community
      1. “Reprove” and “rebuke” do NOT admit of being limited by the consent of those receiving it, although one would do best to persuade



2. Obeying your elders, submitting to them, does NOT admit of such limits
  3. See Heb. 13.17; Luke 2.51; Rom. 13.1,5; 1Cor. 16.16; 1Cor. 5, 1Peter 5
- 3. Limits:**
1. *Spiritual* - excluding temporal or civil authority, like legal punishments or fines
  2. *By Christ, the Head:*
    1. *Declarative power - The church laws are declaratory*, NOT legislative - meaning they merely explain, apply and declare the laws that Christ has already revealed. The Word of God alone has powers of legislation, enacting laws.
    2. *The powers are ministerial and subordinate* - office-bearers are merely servants with authority *derived* from Christ, carrying out the will of Christ, not their own.[from Ch. 2, pp. 218-221]
  3. *By the Word of God* - forbidding any *addition or subtraction*
  4. **By the rights, privileges, and liberty of the Christian people** - freedom of conscience - see WCF 20

**4. Who and What's it for? - "The End and Design of Church Power"**

1. **To the Church, directly; to the world, indirectly** (Cf. 1Cor. 5.11-13 - where church power is instructed to exclude from its fellowship an unrepentant sinner; but not to impose any restrictions with those in the world outside the church)
2. This does not diminish its mission, but limits its role as an office with power.
3. It has no authority over those outside the Church, in the world, other than to witness for God.
4. For the edification, not the destruction, of the whole body
5. **From our Book of Church Order**
  1. 27-3 - "The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. In its **proper usage discipline maintains**: a. the glory of God, b. the purity of His Church, c. the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners. Discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7); therefore, it demands a self-examination under Scripture. Its ends, so far as it involves judicial action, are the rebuke of offenses, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honor of Christ, the

promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves.

2. 27-4. The power which Christ has given the Church is **for building up, and not for destruction**. It is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath. As in the preaching of the Word the wicked are doctrinally separated from the good, so by discipline the Church authoritatively separates between the holy and the profane. In this it acts the part of a tender mother, correcting her children for their good, that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus. Discipline is systematic training under the authority of God's Scripture. No communing or non-communing member of the Church should be allowed to stray from the Scripture's discipline. Therefore, teaching elders must: a. instruct the officers in discipline, b. instruct the congregation in discipline, c. jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and church courts.
3. 27-5 - Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will. **Proper disciplinary principles** are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed. They are: a. Instruction in the Word; b. Individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1); c. If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matthew 18:16); d. If rejection persists, then the Church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition.

## Church Government

### 1. Biblical Examples

#### 1. *1 Peter 5.1-5*

1. Notice the "not's" and the corresponding exhortations to those who are "elders."
2. Notice also the exhortation to those who are the recipients of church government

#### 2. *Hebrews 13:7-17*

1. Notice how v. 7 and v. 17 are both directed to the recipients of church government
2. So what is the point of v. 8-16 in relation to 7 and 17 do you think?

3. What are the dangers to the gospel that are in view here and that require church government?

3. *It's good news that God has instituted "undershepherds" to hold us to the truth and grace of the gospel. We need help to be set free from our sins and to guard the grace of God in our lives!*

## 2. Christ's Mediated Authority - "On earth as it is in Heaven"

1. **WCF 30.1-2:** "I. The Lord Jesus, as king and head of His Church, has therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. II. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require."

2. **Preface of the PCA Book of Church Order:** "Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government rests (Isaiah 9:6) . . . having all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth by the Father (Matt.28:18) . . . (as) Head over all things to the Church, which is His body; the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23); He being ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things, received gifts for His Church, and gave all offices necessary for the edification of His Church and the perfecting of His saints.(Eph.4:10-12). It belongs to His Majesty from His throne of glory to rule and teach the Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of men; thus mediately exercising His own authority and enforcing His own laws, unto the edification and establishment of His Kingdom."

### 1. **Read Matt. 16.18-19 and 18.17ff.:**

1. "The concept of "keys," is derived from the Old Testament (1 Chron. 9:17-27, Nehemiah 7:1ff) and related to the Temple "gatekeepers" as having the duty of employing keys to open it every morning. The gatekeepers were literally to "guard" (Neh. 7:3ff) the entrance into the Temple. The important thing here is that this image of "keys" is expanded in Isaiah 22:20-22 to foreshadow the ministry of the Messiah." - Preston Graham
2. Calvin - "But the church binds him whom it excommunicates—not

that it casts him into everlasting ruin and despair, but because it condemns his life and morals and already warns him of his condemnation unless he should repent. It looses him whom it receives into communion for it makes him a sharer of the unity which it has in Christ Jesus.”

2. *Apostolic practice as foundation*: Eph.2:20; 1 Cor. 4:18-21; 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:1-10; 7:8-12; 10:2-8; 13:2-10; 1 Tim.1:19-20
3. *Directions given in Scripture for the manner of its exercise*: 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim.2:24-26; Jude 23; Tit. 3:10; 2 Thess.6-14ff
4. *Directions given in Scripture for the manner of its reception*: Hebrews 13:17ff; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 5:5

### 3. What's so Unique about Presbyterianism?

1. The word “presbyterian” simply comes from the Greek, *presbyter*, which means elder or bishop. Presbyterian thus denotes the form of church government where elders form the seat of authority.
2. *Two Offices* - Church government has always been present, albeit in different administrations throughout redemptive history. The office of “teaching/priestly elder” and “ruling elder,” the latter as chosen from “among the people.” Exodus 18:13ff, (cf. 2 Chron.19:8-9).
  1. **Lay-elders** focused upon the governing aspects and grew naturally out of the patriarchic family system and continued through the Mosaic period even into the exile. This office was set apart in its “uniquely representative” nature as a lay-office and was therefore “selected by the people and speaking and acting on their behalf.” (Ex. 17:5-6, 19:7, 24:1-11, Lev. 4:13-15, Dt.21:1-9, 1Sam.8:43, 2Sam5:3, 1Kgs 20:7-8.) The lay-elder office was “regarded by the principle of representation of the whole congregation of Israel.” (Ex.12:3, 6, 21, 1Kgs 8:1, 2, 3, 5, 14, 22, 55, 62, 65. For instance, these lay-elders were seen requesting a king on behalf of the people in 1Sam.8:4, and acting on behalf of Israel in covenant making in 2 Sam.5:3, Ex.24:1ff.). There was “no evidence that the ministry of Word or the teaching of the law was ever assigned to this office or that the ability to teach had any bearing on qualifications for it” (Ezek. 7:26, Jer. 18:18.).
  2. **Pastor-priest** - See Dt. 33:9-10. The pastor-priests (out of the tribe of

Levi) shared with the elders the responsibilities of judgment and rule with special responsibilities for difficult cases which required their expertise in the Scriptures (cf. Dt.17:8-13, 21:5, 1Chron.23:4). And yet, these responsibilities were adjunct to their primary calling as ministers of the word and sacrament and as the superintendents of Israel's worship (Rayburn, p. 225-226. cf. Lev. 1:5ff, Ezek. 7:26, Ezra 7:10-11, Neh.8:7-9, 15:11ff, 1Chron 15:11ff, 16:4ff.). As per the unique role of mediating between God and humanity, the priests were *not* chosen from among the family system, but were set apart by God from the tribe of Levi. They were of a "separate and distinct membership" and therefore "did not share the characteristically representative character of the eldership . . . the priesthood was organized according to a set of regulations which pertained to itself alone." They were, in short, claimed by God as his own ministers in Israel and were granted a direct ministerial authority not assigned to elders ( cf. Num.3:5-13, Num.6:22-27, Dt. 18:2, 5.)

### 3. **Two Offices in the NT** - 1 Tim 3 in relation to 1 Tim 5:17

1. There is some difference of opinion within the reformed tradition about whether the "deacon" in 1Tim. 3:11 is a "servant elder", contrasted with the "bishop elder" as then to correspond to the two types of elders in 1 Tim. 5:17; or, if 1 Tim. 5:17 is describing two types of "elders" as related to the office described in 1 Tim. 3:1-10, as distinguished from a third office of "deacon" in 1Tim.3:11. (Note as well, this would affect what you see happening in Acts 6—the appointment of "elder deacons" or "deacons as distinguished from elders". This is the back story as to why CPC has a "**Servant Leader Board**", rather than a Board of Deacons. We believe in the first option. The important thing is to see the distinction that was also in the NT context between pastor-elders and ruling elders as corresponding to the office of "Priest/Elder" and "Governing Elders" in the OT.
2. See Phil. 1.2 and other addresses, where Paul only ever addresses **two sets of officers**, never three.

### 4. **Several vs. Joint actions**

1. **Several** - officers acting individually as commissioned by the church to preach, administer sacraments, teach, shepherd, etc.

2. **Joint** - jurisdictional rule and order exercised by officers gathered together jointly. No individual elder can declare judgment upon someone.
5. **Church Courts** - "the parts are in the whole and the whole is in the parts. . . all of the courts of the church are essentially equal in power."
  1. Local - "Session" - see 1Cor. 5
  2. Regional - "Presbytery" - see Acts 15
  3. National - "General Assembly" - see Acts 15
6. **Three common forms of government:**
  1. **Prelacy (hierarchical):** administered by archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons and other ecclesiastical offices on a hierarchical system. All things are general. (Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Eastern Orthodox, Methodist, Lutheran).
  2. **Independent (democratic):** Each separate congregation is under Christ subject to no external jurisdiction. All things are local.
    1. Congregational Independency (Baptist, Congregationalism, most "non-denominational")
    2. Representative Independency (Reformed Baptist)
  3. **Presbyterianism (representative democracy, with higher review and control):** Representative government that enjoy jurisdictional/ ecclesiastical connection to other churches within same denomination. Some things are originally local; some are general. Even originally local matters may become general, through review, complaint, or appeal.

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## WHERE REDEMPTION IS APPLIED: SACRAMENTS

### How do we grow close to God?

Shorter Catechism - Q. 88. What are the *outward and ordinary means* whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?

A. . . . are, his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

- The three means of grace are Word, sacraments, prayer - Community is assumed here, why?

### 1 | Sacraments

**WCF 27.1** - "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word." (Rom 4:11; Gen 17:7,10-11; Matt 28:19; 1Cor 11:23; Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12; 1Cor 10:16; 1Cor 11:25-26; Gal 3:27; Exod 12:48; Gen 34:14; 1Cor 10:21; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; 1 Pet 3:21; 1Cor 10:16; 1Cor 5:7-8)

1. **"Signs and seals"** - neither mechanical (Roman Catholic) nor merely memorial (Anabaptist), they are instruments in the hands of a sovereign God who has promised to use them for us by the Spirit through faith in Christ. Literally, *means of grace*, of God coming to us, rather than means of gratitude, where we serve or bring us or others to God
2. **"Immediately instituted"** - God commanded us to do them
3. **Purposes:**
  1. Represent Christ and his benefits
  2. Confirm our interest in him
  3. Put visible difference
  4. Engage us to God's service

27.2 - "There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other." (Gen 17:10; Matt 26:27-28; 1Cor 10:16-18)

### 1. **Sacramental Union** - relation between the sign and thing signified

1. In other words, there's a reason water is chosen for baptism, and bread/wine for Lord's Supper.
2. Consider Gen. 17, the covenant of circumcision (and thus Rom. 4.11), alongside Gen. 15 (the "Old Testament Golgotha") and the ratification of the covenant with Abraham with the animal sacrifices.
  1. Circumcision (sign & seal) is to the "cutting" of the animals (thing signified) as baptism (sign & seal) is to the Cross (thing signified).

### **Covenant AND Temple**

God works through **covenants**, and covenants always have seals or rites through which they are instituted and maintained. What we hear in preaching, we see and taste in the sacraments.

- "'**Presence**, therefore, is not a question of space; it is a relation'. . . As grace is not a question of space but of covenant ratification and assurance. It is here, at the [baptismal] font and the communion table, as well as in the pew as we hear the gospel preached, that the question is finally settled for us: God is present; he is near. And he comes in peace." - Michael Horton
- Importantly, the Spirit is the *agent* of grace, the Church (its officers) *administers* grace, and the sacraments (and preaching) are *means* of grace.

## 2 | **Sacraments, specifically**

### **Baptism**

**WCF 28.1** - "Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world." (Matt 28:19; 1Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27-28; Rom 4:11; Col 2:11-12; Gal 3:27; Rom 6:5; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; Matt 28:19-20)



- **Admission into the visible church**
- **Sign and seal of the covenant of grace**
  - **Ingrafting into Christ, regeneration, remission of sins, and walking with Christ**
- **Is it absolutely necessary or automatic? WCF 28.5** - "Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated."
  - 28.6 - "VI. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."
    - Notice that this flows out of the above understanding of sacraments being made effectual by the Holy Spirit, while also being a covenantal promise of God.
- **Just believers? WCF 28.4** - "IV. Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized." (Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12-13; Acts 16:14-15; Gen 17:7-14; Gal 3:9,14; Col 2:11-12; Acts 2:38-39; Rom 4:11-12; Matt 19:13; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17; Matt 28:19; 1Cor 7:14)
  - **Continuity with Covenant with Abraham:**
    - Acts 2.38-9 - "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*" (Referencing Gen. 17 on circumcision)
    - Gal. 3.8-9 - "*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith*" - If we are in continuity with Abraham, why would Abraham's covenant have an entrance rite, but not the New Covenant? If children were part of the covenant in the OT, why would they not be in the New, which is even grander

and wider? And why no clear indication that there would be such a change?

- Note Rom. 4.11-12 - *“He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”*
- **Household Baptisms in Acts 10, 16 (x2), 18** - not definitive, but in support
- **Jesus welcoming little children**
- Note that in Church History, as far back as we have reliable history, infant baptism is overwhelmingly the majority practice, including Catholics, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.
  - Believer’s-only baptism has a *“cultural fit”* with American values and aligns more with an Arminian system because it more naturally fits with an emphasis on individualistic belief and views of the Church.

### **Lord’s Supper**

Baptism **enters** us into the covenant community (just as circumcision did); and the Lord's Supper **renews** our covenant with him (just as Passover did) and binds our communion with him and one another (1Cor. 10.16-8)

**WCF 29.1** - "Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the **Lord’s Supper**, to be observed in his church, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death; the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him; and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body."(See 1Cor 10:16-17,21; 11:23-26; 12:13)

### **Behold all these wonderful purposes!**

- |                                    |                                |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - Remember                         | - Further engagement in duties |
| - Sealing of his benefits          | - Bond and pledge of communion |
| - Spiritual nourishment and growth | with Christ and each other     |

### What happens in the Supper?

29.7 - "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, *really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive, and feed upon*, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses."

- This is the famous Reformed understanding of "**real, spiritual presence**"
  - Baptists (following Zwingli) omit the "real" part, believing it's simply a memorial. But why such great promises attached to it and warnings to those unworthy?
  - Catholics (and maybe Lutherans) omit the "spiritual" part, believing in transubstantiation such that the elements change physically, thus losing the point of the sacrament and its spiritual relation (which Augustine taught!) since they collapse the two. The Supper isn't "pointing" beyond itself anymore, it simply has become the body and blood.

**Those unworthy** - 29.8 - "Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but, by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto."

**Who should partake of communion?** Those who have been welcomed into his covenant community and made a credible (read: judged credible by the church's officers) profession of faith.

- The Church is meant to be the kingdom of God "on earth as it is in heaven", so the church make's that profession and declaration, and confirms it at the Lord's Table.
- If excommunication is merely declaring to someone they should not partake of the Lord's Supper, can you excommunicate yourself? Why is that

important?

- Note the *wrong* interpretation of Matt. 5.23ff, "*So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,...*" - is about the OT altar, not the Lord's Supper.

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines  
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24  
 22 | Election & Effectual Calling

## HOW REDEMPTION IS APPLIED: ELECTION AND EFFECTUAL CALLING

### PART 1 | Of the Decree of God (WCF 3)

“Decree” includes several decrees (pl. in WLC):

#### 1. General Decree of Creation & Providence

1. **What is it?** “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”
2. **What about sin and freedom?** “yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”
  1. We have to think beyond modern metaphors of “control” or “puppets”. God establishes our freedom and its bounds. Absolute freedom - as if we could be free to become a fish or fly like a bird - is a myth. We have freedom according to what it means to be a human.
  2. Note the combination of sovereignty and responsibility for sin in Acts 2.23 - *“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”*
3. **Not conditional or merely foreknowledge** - “Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.”

#### 2. Special Decree of Salvation

1. 3.5 - “Those of mankind that are **predestinated** unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath **chosen, in Christ**, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, **without** any foresight of faith, or good works, or

perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.”

1. **Not just the end, but the means also** - “VI. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the **means** thereunto.
2. **Some** - “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are *predestinated* unto everlasting life; and others *foreordained* to everlasting death.”
1. **Some Passed by** - “VII. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to **pass by**; and to **ordain** them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”
2. Notice the different terms being used to capture the different ways God acts. It’s simply not the same work of God or need for special divine intervention in saving as in condemning.
3. **Handle with Care, noting its purposes** - “VIII. The doctrine of this **high mystery** of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be *assured* of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of *praise*, reverence, and admiration of God; and of *humility, diligence*, and abundant *consolation* to all that sincerely obey the gospel.”

### Key Passages:

- *John 10.14-26* - “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. . . . you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”
- *Eph. 1.3-11* - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose

*us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. . . . as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will”*

- *Rom. 8:28-30 - “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”*

**See also:** Ps 33:11; Eph 1:11; Heb 6:17; Ps 5:4; Jas 1:13-14; 1 John 1:5; Hab 1:13; Acts 2:23; Matt 17:12; Acts 4:27-28; John 19:11; Prov 16:33; 1 Pet 1:2; Eph 2:10; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Thess 5:9-10; Titus 2:14; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:5; John 6:64-65; Rom 8:28-39; John 8:47; 1 John 2:19

**Note the biblical reasoning: Because God is God and salvation is by grace alone.** Most objections to this doctrine stem from not believing that we are really dead in our sin and/or not believing that salvation is by pure grace. If we don't accept predestination, are we willing to accept salvation by grace alone?

**Note also how this totally reorients us from NOT being the center of the universe!**

## **PART 2 | Effectual Calling**

**“In Due Season, having elected, God effectually calls...”**

“Effectual” means it works; as opposed to merely “outward” or “ordinary.” All who hear a sermon are “outwardly called” but not all are “effectually called.” Effectual calling is the Confession’s language for regeneration, new birth, or conversion.

**WCF 10:**

I. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

**Notice these specifics:**

1. **Who** - the elect (but that's merely a logical deduction, it never diminishes a zeal to preach; if anything, it emboldens it because we know our preaching will serve God's purpose!)
2. **When** - God's appointed and accepted time
3. **What** - effectually to call to grace and salvation, which includes:
  1. Being brought from sin and death by Jesus Christ
  2. Enlightening their minds
  3. New Hearts
  4. Renewed wills that are determined or set upon the good
  5. Drawn to Jesus Christ
4. **How** -
  1. **Divine side** - by God's Word and Spirit, who always work in tandem!
  2. **Human side** - 10.2 - "**enabled** to answer this call, and to **embrace** the grace offered and conveyed in it."

**Outward call is necessary but not sufficient for the Effectual Call** - "IV. Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they do profess. And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested."

See: Acts 13:48; Rom 8:28,30; Rom 11:7; Eph 1:5,11; 2 Tim 1:9-10; 2 Thess



2:13-14; Jas 1:18; 2 Cor 3:3,6; 1 Cor 2:12; 2 Tim 1:9-10; 1 Pet 2:9; Rom 8:2; Eph 2:1-10; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor 2:10,12; Eph 1:17-18; 2 Cor 4:6; Ezek 36:26; Ezek 11:19; Deut 30:6; Ezek 36:27; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:23; John 6:44-45; Acts 16:14; Ps 110:3; John 6:37; Matt 11:28; Rev 22:17; Rom 6:16-18; Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29

### **The Wonderful Benefits!**

**WSC 32** - "They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them."

**Many benefits to come!**

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines

Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24

23 | Saving Faith and Repentance

### HOW REDEMPTION IS APPLIED: SAVING FAITH & REPENTANCE

**Review:** From eternal election to temporal effectual calling; aka, *“he chose us in him before the foundation of the world”* (Eph. 1.4) and *“caused us to be born again”* (1Peter 1.3).

**WLC 66** - *“The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.”* (Eph 1:22; 1 Cor 6:17; John 10:28; Eph 5:23,30; John 15:5; Eph 3:17)

**Union with Christ:** WLC 69 - *“The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him.”*

And what do regenerate, born again sinners united to Christ do? They repent and believe!

#### Saving Faith

Gal. 2.15-21 - *“15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. 17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”* [cf. Rom. 3.21-26; Acts 15.11]

- We'll get to what “being justified” means next week (think: forgiven and made righteous), but **notice here the importance of faith.**

- What does faith “do” according to this passage? How are we justified through faith? What happens to us through faith?
- Why doesn't being justified through faith make me a transgressor of the law or a servant of sin?
  - Notice how important union with Christ is!

**WCF 14.1** - The grace of faith, whereby the elect are **enabled to believe** to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is **increased and strengthened**.

14.2 - By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are **accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone** for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

- WLC 72 uses “assents” as a synonym for “accepts”. If assenting or accepting the truth is not enough, why not? And what is enough?
  - Why is “receiving and resting upon Christ” essential as well?
  - And what is notably *not* added?

Technically we are saved *through* faith, not *by* faith. Why?

### **Repentance unto Life**

Notice “repentance” as often a synonym of “belief”.

- Jesus first public words - *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”* (Mark 1.15)
- Jesus after the resurrection - *“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that **repentance for the forgiveness of sins** should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”* (Luke 24.46-7)
- Peter at Pentecost, in response to the crowds asking, “What shall we do?” -

*“Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2.38)*

**WCF 15.1** - Repentance unto life is an **evangelical grace**, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.

15.2 - By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the **filthiness and odiousness of his sins**, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God; and **upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ** to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.

- Notice that seeing the mercy in Christ is a motivation to repent
- We’re not just aware of the danger (leading us to Hell, God’s displeasure, negative consequences, etc.) of sin, but of what else?
- *There’s no such thing as saving faith without repentance - why?*
  - Notice WLC 72 on “Justifying Faith” includes repentance in its description
    - “Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.”

### **Issues & Controversies with Repentance and Faith**

1. **Don’t make it a work or prerequisite for faith** - “WCF 15.3 - Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God’s free grace in Christ; yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.”
  1. “I do not offer Christ to you on the grounds that you have repented. Indeed I offer him to men and women who are dead in their trespasses and sins. This gospel offer of Jesus Christ himself is for you, whoever

and whatever you are.” - Thomas Boston

2. To ask someone to repent before she has faith is to ask her to do the impossible.
  3. ***Christ died for you because God loves you!*** NOT God loves you because Christ died for you. Otherwise the gospel is distorted, our relationship to the Father is as to an unwilling God, and we’re never quite sure if the Father truly loves us, remaining always suspicious. “How can the elder brother be comfortable at a party when he still wonders if his once-prodigal brother has been sorry enough for his sin and sufficiently ashamed of his faults?” - Sinclair Ferguson
  4. What would be the difference between a legal / religious repentance and a gospel repentance? 2Cor. 7.8-11 - *“For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you”*
- 2. Saving faith does NOT equal perfection** - An indication of the absence of saving faith is NOT sin by itself, but *unrepentant* sin. Why?
1. We’re not in heaven yet!
  2. Note WCF 18.4 on Assurance - “IV. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.”
- 3. Faith w/o Repentance?** What could be the danger of distancing repentance from faith? Or from distancing faith from repentance?

1. Consider the parable of the sower (Mark 4)
  
4. **General Faith vs. Saving Faith** - There's a lot of things we could have "faith" in! What could be signs of spurious conversions?

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines  
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 24 | Justification and Adoption

### APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION

**Romans 3.21-26** - *"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*

**What is Justification?** - WCF 11.1 - "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth:(a) not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them,(b) they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness, by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.(c)"

(a) Rom 8:30; Rom 3:24; Rom 5:15-16

(b) Rom 4:5-8; 2 Cor 5:19,21; Rom 3:22-28; Titus 3:5,7; Eph 1:7; Jer 23:6; 1 Cor 1:30-31

(c) John 1:12; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38-39; Phil 3:9; Eph 2:7-8; John 6:44-45,65; Phil 1:29

In WCF 11.1, there are **three main "negatives"**, which justification is said not to be - what are they? What's the danger in believing that justification would be made up of one of these? What were the writers guarding against?

1. And then, in turn, there are **three main "positives"**, which justification is

said to be - what are they?

2. "To justify" someone is a legal action, its opposite being "to condemn". It is distinct from "to sanctify" or to make holy.
3. Why not 'merely' pardon? Consider the difference between satisfying a just law and waiving its penalty. Which is true here and how so?
4. "The essence of pardon is that a man is forgiven without righteousness. The essence of justification is that a man is pronounced to be possessed of righteousness. . . . It is evident that God must either sacrifice his law, his elect, or his Son. . . The cross of Christ is the focus in which the most intense rays alike of divine grace and justice meet together, in which they are perfectly reconciled. This is the highest reach of justice, and at the same time and for the same reason the highest reach of grace the universe can ever see. The self-assumption of the penalty upon the part of the eternal Son of God is the highest conceivable vindication of the absolute inviolability of justice, and at the same time the highest conceivable expression of infinite love."- AA Hodge
5. What are all the "**positives**" centered on?
  1. What are important ways that our discourse and teaching can lose its emphasis upon Christ alone, even in sympathetic or 'spiritual' ways?
  2. What's the difference between making the **Cross of Christ** the central message of Christianity vs. our conversion or testimony?

**Justified not by a faith that is alone** - WCF 11.2 - "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification:(d) yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.(e)"

(d) *John 3:18,36; Rom 3:28; Rom 5:1*

(e) *Jas 2:17,22,26; Gal 5:6*

Guarding against antinomianism ('no-law') and legalism (too much law), we often tend to one side or the other. Which side do you guard against more? That means you probably lean too far the other way! Do you see how these two sides are being addressed here?

**Justification and Christ's work of *penal substitutionary atonement*** - WCF 11.3 -



"Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.(f) Yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them;(g) and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead;(h) and both, freely, not for anything in them; their justification is only of free grace;(i) that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.(k)"

(f) *Mark 10:45; Rom 5:8-10,18-19; Gal 3:13; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 1:3; Heb 10:10,14; Dan 9:24,26; Isa 52:13-53:12*

(g) *Rom 8:32; John 3:16*

(h) *2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:2; Phil 2:6-9; Isa 53:10-11*

(i) *Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7*

(k) *Rom 3:26; Eph 2:7; Zech 9:9; Isa 45:21*

***God saves a particular people*** - Otherwise "all that God does looking toward salvation is to afford an opportunity of salvation; so that what is actually contended is not that God does not save some only but that he really saves none - only opens a way of salvation and if any are saved they must save themselves. . . Salvation is the right of no man; that a 'chance' to save himself is no 'chance' of salvation for any. . . . If salvation is truly possible for all, and some are not saved, then the distinguishing difference lies in men. [All other options] end always and everywhere by transferring the really decisive factor in salvation from God to man" (B.B. Warfield).

**Justification and our continual sin** - WCF 11.5 - "God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified;(o) and, although they can never fall from the state of justification,(p) yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.(q)"

(o) *Matt 6:12; 1 John 1:7,9; 1 John 2:1-2*

(p) *Rom 5:1-5; Rom 8:30-39; Heb 10:14; Luke 22:32; John 10:28*

(q) *Ps 51; Ps 89:30-33; Ps 32:5; Matt 26:75; Luke 1:20; 1 Cor 11:30,32*

What's the difference between "God's fatherly displeasure" and the state we are before God without our justification? How does this change how we approach God?

**Overall, if justification provides for our guilt, adoption provides for our shame.**

**What is Adoption?** - WCF 12.1 - "All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, (a) by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God,(b) have his name put upon them,(c) receive the Spirit of adoption,(d) have access to the throne of grace with boldness,(e) are enabled to cry, Abba, Father,(f) are pitied,(g) protected,(h) provided for,(i) and chastened by him, as by a father:(k) yet never cast off,(l) but sealed to the day of redemption;(m) and inherit the promises,(n) as heirs of everlasting salvation.(o)

(a) *Eph 1:5; Gal 4:4-5* (b) *Rom 8:17; John 1:12* (c) *Num 6:24-26; Jer 14:9; Amos 9:12; Acts 15:17; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 3:12* (d) *Rom 8:15* (e) *Eph 3:12; Heb 4:16* (f) *Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; Rom 8:16* (g) *Ps 103:13* (h) *Prov 14:26* (i) *Matt 6:30,32; 1 Pet 5:7* (k) *Heb 12:6* (l) *Lam 3:31-32; Ps 89:30-35* (m) *Eph 4:30* (n) *Heb 6:12* (o) *1 Pet 1:3-4; Heb 1:14*

**Gal. 4.4-5** is a key text here. What is the difference between a "son" and a "slave"? Technically speaking, all believers - both male and female - are "adopted as sons".

Why is that important?

Union with Christ undergirds all of this. What does that say about our adoption? If Jesus is the firstborn Son, and the firstfruits of the resurrection, what does that say about those adopted as sons? What is our inheritance?

Adoption underscores our new nature as new creatures with new relations among God and our new family. It is truly an amazing grace!

Is there an aspect of WCF 12.1 that surprises you?

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines  
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 25 | Sanctification

## APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: SANCTIFICATION

**Colossians 3.1-17** - *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore . . . Put on then . . ."*

### **What is Sanctification?**

WCF 13.1 - They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

- What is sanctification differentiated from? And yet no one who is justified is not being sanctified!
- How is it accomplished?
  - What are some bad ways to understand it being accomplished?
  - What is actually being accomplished?

### **Indicative first, then imperative - "If..., then...." OR "Therefore...."**

"I became a Christian once for all upon the basis of the finished work of Christ through faith; that is justification. The Christian life, sanctification, operates on the same basis, but moment by moment. There is the same base (Christ's work) and the same instrument (faith); the only difference is that one is once for all and the other is moment by moment . . . If we try to live the Christian life in our own strength we will have sorrow, but if we live in this way, we will not only serve the Lord, but in the place of sorrow, He will be our song. That is the difference. The 'how' of the Christian life is the power of the

crucified and risen Lord, through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith moment by moment.” – Francis Schaeffer

**“Be who you are”** From DeYoung’s, *The Hole in our Holiness* - “God doesn’t say, ‘Relax, you were born this way.’ But he does say, ‘Good news, you were reborn another way.’”

- You’re on a different team - no longer “in Adam”, you’re “in Christ” - so act like it!
- You’ve been released from prison, so don’t act like you did when you were in, or want to go back in!
- You’re no longer a baby anymore, you’re a ten-year-old, so don’t act like a baby!
- A college student today arriving on a horse, with a quill and candles - you’re in the wrong century!

**On the difference between justification and sanctification:** “Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification **imputes** the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit **infuses** grace, and **enables** to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one doth **equally** free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is **neither equal** in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.” (WLC 77)

- Misunderstanding the distinction here is the most common problem I encounter in Christian counseling issues. Believers are either not convinced they’re justified, because they look at the sanctification for its proof; or they’re discouraged because sanctification is not perfected yet.

**At war – The contradiction within our heart** – WCF 13.2 - “This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”

**Yet we know the victory** – 13.3 - In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of

strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

“Though sin still remains it does not have the mastery. There is a total difference between surviving sin and reigning sin, the regenerate in conflict with sin and the unregenerate complacent to sin. It is one thing for sin to live in us: it is another for us to live in sin. It is one thing for the enemy to occupy the capital; it is another for his defeated hosts to harass the garrisons of the kingdom.” – John Murray

**God’s work in us – see Phil. 1.6, 1Cor. 15.10** – “God’s working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of co-operation as if God did his part and we did ours so that the conjunction or co-ordination of both produced the required result. God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God’s working in us, not the willing to the exclusion of the doing and not the doing to the exclusion of the will, but both the willing and the doing. And this working of God is directed to the end of enabling us to will and to do that which is well pleasing to him. We have here not only the explanation of all acceptable activity on our part but we have also the incentive to our willing and working. What the apostle is urging is the necessity of working out our own salvation, and the encouragement he supplies is the assurance that it is God himself who works in us. The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God.” - John Murray

**Christians work:** “They work to kill sin and they work to live in the Spirit. They have rest in the gospel, but never rest in their battle against the flesh and the devil. The child of God has two great marks about him: **he is known for his inner warfare and his inner peace.**” - Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in our Holiness* [paraphrasing JC Ryle’s “Holiness”]

\*\*\* **On a Common Problem in Sanctification, from *Good News for Anxious Christians: 10 Practical Things You Don't Have To Do*, by Phillip Cary**

**The Problem of "Letting God" do Anything - from *Good News for Anxious Christians***

1. **Vicious cycle of "how do I know?":** "It's as if God's working replaces yours, so you're not doing anything—you're just letting God do it. But that doesn't really work, because then you have to make sure that you're really letting God do it—and so you get all anxious about whether you're really doing that—and 'letting God' becomes one more thing you have to do on top of everything else—and it's the worst of all because it's so inward and psychological and hard to see—and you have to wonder: *how do you know* if you're really letting God do it—or are you still just trying to do it in your own strength?"
2. **It doesn't work!** "We're supposed to give God control, which must mean we're the ones who are in control to start with. That means it's ultimately up to us—God has no control unless we give it to him. It's often put this way: *God can't work in your life unless you let him*. This is an astonishing piece of fantasy. Where in the Bible or anywhere else in God's creation did people get the **idea that God was so helpless?** . . . [If so] then God is not really God, and indeed he is less real than any person we know. After all, you don't have to 'let' real people work in your life." (47)
  1. **Getting out of the cycle:** "As usual, the obsession with 'how do you know?' questions is a sign that something's wrong—there's a false presupposition here. The truth is that **you don't have to know** whether you're really letting God do it, because in fact you're always the one who's doing it. The inner acts of your heart are always your own, even when they're a result of God working in you. The false presupposition is that it's an either/or: either you're doing it or God is, so if you're at work, God isn't." (39).

**Obedience & Control in the Bible**

3. **"Obedience** means doing what God says. 'Giving God control' means letting God do it, not us." It's not about "letting", it's about either cooperating/obeying or fighting/rebelling.

4. *In control of our talents:* “To ‘let go and let God’ is to refuse responsibility, to pretend that the work God has given us is not ours to do. He has let us have a certain number of talents and he expects us to work with them. And like the Lord in the parable, he will require us to give an account of our work in the end. In that sense, he remains ultimately in control. He’s still Lord, ruler of our lives, judge of the whole world. But his judgment of us will concern precisely those things that he has put in our control. So our being in control of our talents doesn’t contradict his lordship over our lives. It’s the **result of his lordship and the basis of his judgment**” (41).
5. *Command vs. Control* - “The notion that God is supposed to control our lives is thus the opposite of the biblical concepts of stewardship, servanthood, and obedience. A servant, even a slave, is not ‘controlled’ but ruled and commanded. **You command persons, you control machines.** . . . There is not even a word for ‘control’ in the Bible, really—which is what you’d expect from a book written at a time when there were not many machines around.”

#### **The Mysterious Work of God’s Grace in Us**

6. *The Both/And* - “His working does not take away from our working but gives it being. It’s not like: the more he does, the less we do. On the contrary, in the great saints he works mightily precisely in the greatness of *their* work. . . . In his redemption **we don’t disappear but become our true selves**, the new selves he has called us to be in Christ.” (53, 56)



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 26 | Assurance & Perseverance

### APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: ASSURANCE AND PERSEVERANCE

*Calvin on Justification, Assurance and Sanctification:* “The grace of justification is not separated from regeneration [or, sanctification], although they are things distinct. But because it is very well known by experience that the traces of sin always remain in the righteous, their justification must be very different from reformation into newness of life (cf. Rom. 6.4). For God so begins this second point in his elect, and progresses in it gradually, and sometimes slowly, throughout life, that they are always liable to the judgment of death before his tribunal. But **he does not justify in part, but liberally**, so that they may appear in heaven as if endowed with the purity of Christ. No portion of righteousness sets our consciences at peace until it has been determined that we are pleasing to God, because **we are entirely righteous before him**. From this it follows that the doctrine of justification is perverted and utterly overthrown when doubt is thrust into men’s minds, when the assurance of salvation is shaken and the free and fearless calling upon God suffers hindrance - nay, when peace and tranquility with spiritual joy are not established. . . . For **faith totters if it pays attention to works**, since no one, even of the most holy, will find there anything on which to rely.” - *Institutes*, 3.XI.11

- Notice how the truths of justification - the basis for which we can stand before God - and assurance are so intimately connected

#### ASSURANCE OF SALVATION - WCF 18

**Key Passages: Heb. 6.13-20; 2Peter 1.3-11; 1John 1.5-2.6**

**It’s Possible!** “18.1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and estate of salvation(a) (which hope of theirs shall perish(b)): yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity,

endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may, in this life, **be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace**,(c) and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.(d)" [(a) *Mic 3:11; Deut 29:19; John 8:41; (b) Amos 9:10; Matt 7:22-23; (c) 1 John 5:13; 1 John 2:3; 1 John 3:14,18-19,21,24; (d) Rom 5:2,5]*

- Just as there are false conversions, there are also those with deceived assurances. The question, of course, is how do we know if we're deceived? There's no magic bullet, you just pursue Christ humbly "in the right use of ordinary means" (see below).

**Infallible Basis - 18.2.** "This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope;(e) but an infallible assurance of faith **founded upon** the divine truth of the promises of salvation,(f) the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made,(g) the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God,(h) which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.(i)" [(e) *Heb 6:11,19; (f) Heb 6:17-18; (g) 2 Pet 1:4-11; 1 John 2:3; 1 John 3:14; 2 Cor 1:12; (h) Rom 8:15-16; (i) Eph 1:13-14; Eph 4:30; 2 Cor 1:21-22]*

- Founded upon:
  - Divine Truth
  - Inward evidence of the promises of salvation, which are repentance and sanctification
  - Testimony of the Spirit

**Not identical to faith, but available to all ordinarily - 18.3.** "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it: (k) yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto.(l) And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure,(m) **that thereby** his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance;(n) so far is it from inclining men to looseness.(o)" [(k) *1 John 5:13; (l) 1 Cor 2:12; 1 John 4:13; Heb 6:11-12; Eph 3:17-18; (m) 2 Pet 1:10; (n) Rom 5:1-2,5; Rom 14:17; Rom 15:13; Eph 1:3-4; Ps 4:6-7; Ps 119:32; (o) 1 John 2:1-2;*

*Rom 6:1-2; Titus 2:11-12,14; 2 Cor 7:1; Rom 8:1,12; 1 John 3:2-3; Ps 130:4; 1 John 1:6-7]*

**Notice the Fruits of Assurance** - as opposed to motivation for "looseness", that is, antinomian (see below).

WCF 16, on Good Works, reads that good works can "strengthen believers' assurance." They are not the basis, but can strengthen it.

**Assurance shaken, but not lost** - 18.4. "True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light:(p) yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived;(q) and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.(r)" [(p) *Ps 51:8,12,14; Eph 4:30-31; Ps 77:1-10; Ps 31:22; Matt 26:69-72; Luke 22:31-34; (q) 1 John 3:9; Luke 22:32; Ps 51:8,12; Ps 73:15; (r) Mic 7:7-9; Jer 32:40; Isa 54:7-14; 2 Cor 4:8-10]*

### **PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS** (Over against the "Perfection of the Saints")

**Definition:** WCF 17.1: They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.(a) [(a) *Phil 1:6; 2 Pet 1:10; Rom 8:28-30; John 10:28-29; 1 John 3:9; 1 John 5:18; 1 Pet 1:5,9]*

**Basis:** WCF 17.2: This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father;(b) upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ,(c) the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them,(d) and the nature of the covenant of grace:(e) from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.(f) [(b) *Ps 89:3-4,28-33; 2 Tim 2:18-19; Jer 31:3; (c) Heb 10:10,14; Heb 13:20-21; Heb 9:12-15; Rom 8:33-39; John 17:11,24; Luke 22:32; Heb 7:25; (d) John 14:16-17; 1 John 2:27; 1 John 3:9; (e) Jer 32:40; Ps 89:34-37; Jer 31:31-34; (f) John 6:38-40; John 10:28; 2 Thess 3:3; 1 John 2:19]*

**Depths through which we're carried:** WCF 17.3: Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins;(g) and, for a time, continue therein:(h) whereby they incur God's displeasure,(i) and grieve his Holy Spirit,(k) come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts,(l) have their hearts hardened,(m) and their consciences wounded;(n) hurt and scandalize others,(o) and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.(p) [(g) Exod 32:21; Jonah 1:3,10; Ps 51:14; Matt 26:70,72,74; (h) 2 Sam 12:9,13; Gal 2:11-14; (i) Num 20:12; 2 Sam 11:27; Isa 64:7,9; (k) Eph 4:30; (l) Ps 51:8,10,12; Rev 2:4; Matt 26:75; (m) Isa 63:17; (n) Ps 32:3-4; Ps 51:8; (o) Gen 12:10-20; 2 Sam 12:14; Gal 2:13; (p) Ps 89:31-32; 1 Cor 11:32]

**Notice also a section on Providence (WCF 5.5)** - "The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave, for a season, his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends."

This should give us both assurance in the face of our own sins and struggles as well as the courage and hope to love other Christians who seem to be stumbling. The grace of God is so deep!

### **Excursus on Antinomianism vs. Union with Christ**

\*From Sinclair Ferguson's *The Whole Christ*

#### **1. Common Root of Legalism and Antinomianism - separating God from His Law or Christ from His Benefits**

1. Begun in the Garden, there was a "divorce between God's revealed will and his gracious, generous character. In Eve's case antinomianism was itself an expression of her legalism! Legalism is simply separating the law of God from the person of God [out of a] distorted view of God as the giver of his law. The 'lie' that we now believe is that 'to glorify God' is not, indeed cannot be, 'to enjoy him

forever,' but to lose all joy."

1. "The more basic issue is: How do I think about God, and what instincts and dispositions and affections toward him does this evoke in me?"
2. It is "too possible to have an *evangelical head* and a *legalistic heart*. . . for one of the diseases the marrow [controversy] exposed was the subtle thought that my growth in holiness strengthens my **justification**. Confirm it? Yes. But strengthen it? Never! Does this sound slightly antinomian? Of course - *but only if one is listening with legalistic ears.*"

## 2. Union with Christ

1. The remedy for legalism is grace, but "it is not 'grace' as commodity, grace as substance (RC heresy). It is grace in Christ. For God's grace to us *is* Christ. Yes, it is the atonement; but not atonement as theory, or as an abstract reality, something that has an identity of its own outside of and apart from the Lord Jesus. For Christ himself, clothed as he is in the gospel work, *is* the atonement - 'He is the propitiation for our sins.'"
2. 'You must first have Christ himself, before you can partake of those benefits by him.' - "otherwise Christ himself ceases to be central and becomes a means to an end"
  1. "This is accompanied by an **increased stress on our experience of salvation** rather than on the grace, majesty, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ."
3. "Boston felt the **sheer graciousness of the Christ** of the gospel was being stifled by a Calvinism that had developed a preaching logic of its own and had become insensitive to the style and atmosphere of the New Testament. In his view God's particular election had too easily been distorted into preaching a doctrine of conditional and conditioned grace. That often goes hand in glove with a form of gospel preaching that is in danger of severing the elements in the *ordo salutis* from 'Jesus Christ and him crucified' - that is from Christ *himself.*"

## 3. Assurance of Salvation

1. "Direct" or "Reflex" act of faith

1. Direct act of faith is justifying faith, which involves some certainty - "accepting, receiving and resting" on Christ himself - "Christ is able to save"
2. Reflex act is assurance of salvation, where the *direct object is the believer, not Christ* - "I am someone who has been saved through faith in Christ"
  1. This is the evidence of our justification, by which we know we are justified, NOT the grounds by which we are justified
    1. Ground for believing vs. ground for believing *that* you have believed
    2. Assurance is "Self-awareness that one has this confidence and is among those when he saves"
    3. "the act of faith contains within it the seed of assurance" but is not identical
2. **Enemies of Assurance:**
  1. Tendency to forget salvation is all grace
  2. Wrong notion of the Father, who sent the Son in love
  3. Forget that Justification is both final and complete - eschaton come early
  4. Confusing the foundation of salvation with the means by which assurance is confirmed and developed - also cannot have self-examination of your own faith apart from the exercise of the faith - **"there is no assurance derived simply by examining our sanctification"** (214)
3. Growing in assurance, through obedience, entails confirming our salvation to ourselves
  1. **But when you doubt your assurance, do not force obedience in order to get assurance**
    1. **False assurance** - don't want to give false means or evidences of assurance - Boston "stressed the importance of *believing giving rise to obedience, not obedience giving rise to assurance irrespective of believing*. Such faith cannot be forced into us by our efforts to be obedient; it arises only from larger and clearer views of Christ. Herein lies the paradox: we want to talk and think about how to get better evidences: Boston is concerned that we **get a better grip of Christ**. Then the

evidences will grow like fruit." - 204

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 27 | Good Works

## APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: GOOD WORKS, THE LAW, AND CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

### What are good works to a Christian?

WCF 16.1 - "I. Good works are **only such as God hath commanded** in his holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention."

16.2 - "These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the **fruits** and **evidences** of a true and lively faith: and by them believers **manifest** their thankfulness, **strengthen** their assurance, **edify** their brethren, **adorn** the profession of the gospel, **stop** the mouths of the adversaries, and **glorify** God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life."

- How do the works relate to faith?
- Why do them? What do they accomplish?
- The gospel working itself out - "Persons who know they are totally accepted already do the right thing out of sheer delight in righteousness for its own sake. Only in the gospel do you obey God for God's sake, and not for what God will give you. Only in the gospel do you love people for their sake (not yours), do good for its own sake (not yours), and obey God for his sake (not yours). Only the gospel makes "doing the right thing" a joy and delight, not a burden or a means to an end." - Keller

**Works accepted in Christ** - 16.6 - "the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unprovable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections."

**Works by non-Christians** - 16.7 - "Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a



right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.”

### **How do we know what works to do? On the Law of God**

WCF 19.1 - “God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.”

Given to Israel - 19.2 – “This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.”

#### ***Three parts to the Law***

1. ***Ceremonial*** [19.3] – connected to sacrifices, temple, etc. – now ceased, why?
2. ***Civil*** [19.4] – connected to Israel as nation-state and body politic – now ceased, but differently from the ceremonial - why?
  1. Church is no longer national or political, but transnational; no longer strictly physical or temporal, but spiritual. For example, 1Cor. 5.13 - Old Testament civil law of execution gets re-applied to the church as excommunication. So it’s not ceased, but transformed.
  2. Hence, no holy wars in the New Covenant now, our battle is spiritual (Eph.6.10ff).
3. ***Moral*** – 19.5 – “The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof.....Neither doth Christ, in the gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation”
  1. ***Three uses of the Moral Law*** [19.6]
    1. **Civil** – curbing evil and injustice in society in general
    2. **Enclectic/Pedagogical** - reveals our sin and need for Christ - this is particularly evident in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus teaches us the full force of the Moral Law in order to show just how far away we are from fulfilling it.
    3. **Didactic (“third”)** – guiding believers in grateful obedience. This is the

so-called “third use of the law” that the Reformed tradition is known for, but other traditions certainly teach similar things.

Notice that the law is a form of God’s love - He loves us enough to tell us what will destroy us and how to avoid sin and pursue righteousness. It would NOT be love, if He left us without a law.

### **But aren’t we freed from the Law?**

[Another devotional-worthy section of WCF!] WCF 20.1 – “The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the **guilt** of sin, the **condemning wrath** of God, the **curse** of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil **world**, **bondage** to Satan, and **dominion** of sin; from the **evil** of afflictions, the **sting** of death, the **victory** of the grave, and everlasting **damnation**; as also, in their free **access** to God, and their yielding **obedience** unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a childlike **love** and willing **mind**. All which were common also to believers under the law. But, under the new testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected; and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.”

-What are we freed *from*?

-What are we freed *to*?

### ***From Luther’s “The Freedom of a Christian”:***

- "Every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that, by virtue of a spiritual power, he is lord of all things without exception, so that **nothing can do him any harm**. . . . The power of which we speak is **spiritual**. It rules in the midst of enemies and is powerful in the midst of oppression. This means nothing else than that “power is made perfect in weakness” [II Cor. 12:9] and that in all things I can find profit toward salvation [Rom. 8:28], so that the cross and death itself are **compelled to serve me and to work together with me** for my salvation. This is a splendid privilege and hard to attain, a truly omnipotent power, a spiritual dominion in which there is nothing so good and nothing so evil but that it shall work together

for good to me, if only I believe. Yes, since faith alone suffices for salvation, I need nothing except faith exercising the power and dominion of its own liberty. Lo, this is the inestimable power and liberty of Christians."

- **"Faith is truly active through love** (Gal. 5.6), that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith...We should devote all our works to the welfare of others, since each has such **abundant riches in his faith that all his other works and his whole life are a surplus** with which he can by voluntary benevolence serve and do good to his neighbor. . . . Hence, as our Heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians. ....Love is true and genuine where there is true and genuine faith. . . . A **Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor**. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By **faith** he is caught up beyond himself in God. By **love** he descends beneath himself into his neighbor."

### Liberty of Conscience

- 20.2 - "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, **contrary** to his Word; or **beside it**, in matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."
- Notice the higher standard when it comes to matters of faith and worship.
  - Notice also the implications for how the church engages with politics. If something is "beside" the Word, then we need not obey it or believe it, no matter how good it may seem to our reason; and the church cannot bind a believer's conscience toward it.

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## APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: A WORLDVIEW OF VOCATION IN GOD'S INSTITUTIONS

### **Another aspect of the Extent and Limits of the Church: Liberty of Conscience**

20.2 - "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, **contrary** to his Word; or **beside it**, in matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."

- Notice the higher standard when it comes to matters of faith and worship.
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### **WCF 23 - Of the Civil Magistrate**

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates, to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good: and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evildoers.
2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto: in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the new testament, wage war, upon just and necessary occasion.
3. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a

manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretense of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.

4. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute or other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less hath the pope any power and jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people; and, least of all, to deprive them of their dominions, or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretense whatsoever.

### **Purposes of God in Creation: The Three Spheres of Family, Church, and State** **Two Types of Callings:**

1. **Christians all share the same first calling!** - God "calls" us to salvation, godliness and discipleship (1Tim. 6.12; 1Cor. 1.9; 2Thess. 2.13-4; 1Pet. 2.9)
  1. This calling defines the *how* of the second calling - for the glory of God and under our desire to be disciples of Christ.
2. **Vocational/Occupational Callings - "Called while in a calling"**
  1. **1 Cor. 7:17, 20** - "Let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has *called* him... Every one should remain in the state in which he was *called*." (cf. Heb.5:4)
  2. God's providence has already been working in your life before, during, and after your conversion; rather than only once we are converted.

3. Note: the first calling makes every Christian a “minister” in a general sense, but some are also called to be a “vocational minister” in the second sense, with additional qualifications and callings on top of the first calling.
  1. So a vocational minister blends his state vocation and church vocation, just as a stay-at-home Mom, for example, blends her family and state vocations.
  2. Everyone is called to each three sphere, but some are more dominant than others in different seasons of life and for different people.

### **"Calling" Applied to Work:**

1. *God is in charge*- “God is the general, appointing to every man (sic) his particular calling and as it were his standing... God himself is the author and beginning of callings.” (William Perkins)
2. *Calling makes work a service to God and Society*
  1. *Psalm 90:16-17* - “Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!”
  2. William Perkins - “A vocation or calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God, for the common good... Every person of every degree, state, sex or condition without exception, must have some personal and particular calling to walk in.”
  3. *Richard Baxter* - “Choose that employment or calling in which you may be most serviceable to God. Choose not that in which you may be most rich or honorable in the world; but that in which you may do most good, and best escape sinning.”
3. *Moderation in Work*
  1. All of life is a career of service to God, not only one’s salaried job. Work is seen in relation to all of life as a career.
  2. Life consists of many important elements, all of which must be balanced toward the obedient service of God and community.
  3. In all three spheres and in various communities we serve and represent God:
    1. Job: Serves common grace community

2. Church: Serves special grace community
3. Spouse/Parent/Child: Serves family community

**4. *Work as a "Mask of God" in Providing for His Creation***

1. Luther - "God's blessings at times come to us through our labors and at times without our labors, but never because of our labors; for God always gives them because of His undeserved mercy... He uses our labor as a sort of mask, under the cover of which he blesses us and grants us what is His, so that there is room for faith."

**5. *Redefining Work according to the Sabbath Principle***

1. Work as a moral duty: "Six days you shall labor, and do all your work" (Exod.20:9; Ps. 104:22-23)
2. Condemnation of Idleness (Prov.6:6-11; 13:4; 19:15; 21:25)
3. Work is to provide for basic human needs (Prov.28:19; 16:26)
4. ***Stamp of Identity*** - "It is commonly agreed that Sabbath... becomes decisive for Israel's faith in the exile. The imperial pressure of Babylon was endlessly demanding of productivity but this counter-provision for regular rest was a visible, public assertion that people of faith would not have their lives defined by [economic] expectation. Thus Sabbath is an act of refusal and resistance, a vigorous assertion of a different identity grounded in God's freedom and enacted as socio economic freedom from every production system and every commodity ideology." – Walter Brueggemann

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## APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: MARRIAGE, SEX, AND GENDER

### On Marriage

*Key Biblical Texts: Gen. 2, Matthew 19:4-6, Eph. 5.21-33, 1Cor. 7*

**What is marriage?** WCF 24.1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.(a) - (a) *Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-6; Rom 7:3; Prov 2:17*

**Why marriage?** WCF 24.2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife,(b) for the increase of mankind with legitimate issue, and of the church with an holy seed;(c) and for preventing of uncleanness.(d)

(b) *Gen 2:18; Eph 5:28; 1 Pet 3:7; (c) Gen 1:28; Gen 9:1; Mal 2:15; (d) 1 Cor 7:2,9*

**Who to marry?** WCF 24.3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent.(e) Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord(f)... (e) *Heb 13:4; 1 Tim 4:3; 1 Cor 7:36-38; Gen 24:57-58; (f) 1 Cor 7:39*

**The Purpose of Marriage - Eph. 5.31-2** - *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* Back in Gen. 2, God had Christ and the Church in mind, which is why marriage is nearly a sacrament, meant to point us to Christ.

- **How the Gospel and Marriage inform each other, from Keller's *The Meaning of Marriage*:**
  - "The Christian teaching does not offer a choice between fulfillment and sacrifice but rather **mutual fulfillment through mutual sacrifice.**"
  - **Deeper love through promising** - "Wedding vows are not a declaration of present love but a mutually binding promise of future love. A wedding



should not be primarily a celebration of how loving you feel now . . . [but] you promise to *be* loving, faithful, and true to the other person in the future, regardless of undulating internal feelings or external circumstances”

- **Truth and Love** - “The one person in the whole world who holds your heart in her hand, whose approval and affirmation you most long for and need, is the one who is hurt more deeply by your sins than anyone else on the planet. When we are first sinned against by our spouses, we use the power of truth. . . . It destroys. When we see how devastating truth-telling in marriage can be, it can push us into the opposite error. . . . Only when I know that my spouse regularly tells me the truth will her loving affirmations really change me. . . . Truth without love ruins the oneness, and love without truth gives the illusion of unity but actually stops the journey and the growth. . . . **Only if we are very good at forgiving and very good at repenting can truth and love be kept together.**” - Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*

**Just Grounds for Divorce:** WCF 24.6. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet, *nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion* as can no way be remedied by the church, or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage:(*n*) wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case.(*o*) [*(n) Matt 19:8-9; 1 Cor 7:15; Matt 19:6; (o) Deut 24:1-4*]

- On remarriage, cf. Rom. 7:2-3 (“as if the offending party were dead”) & 1Cor. 7
- **Divorce is meant to be a grace for a victim**, which is why you “sue” for a divorce. In the eyes of the church, once “grounds” have been established by a church court, the victim is free to pursue legal divorce, but the church will never “prescribe” or even “recommend” divorce; the church will simply judge whether the offender’s actions (adultery or desertion) have taken place, which in effect already have voided the marriage. Thus, the church, “recognizes” that the covenant has been violated and the victim is “free” from his/her vows. The victim, even with just grounds for divorce, is also free in Christ to remain in the marriage.

## What's Sex got to do with it?

### God's Intent for Sex in Marriage

1. **God loves sex and knows how incredibly powerful it is** - that's why He wants us to enjoy it in the right context! Like a sharp knife - in the hands of a surgeon it's a lifesaver; in the hands of a criminal it's a murder weapon. If anything, Christians are called to value sex more, not less, than the culture. An over-sexualized culture cheapens sex, it doesn't make it better. "Casual sex is a contradiction in terms... It may seem casual, but in fact it is always profound." - Lauren Winner
  1. Consider the Song of Solomon, which is more than, but not less than, a sexual book.
  2. God never says "No" without a better "Yes" - it's not "Don't have sex!", it's "Have the best sex you can!". See WLC 138-9 on the 7th commandment. Notice also 1Cor. 7.3-5, where it's a sin to *not* give your spouse their "conjugal rights"!
  3. Sex should be an apologetic for God's existence! If Christians have a "problem of evil", atheists have a "problem of pleasure." Why is life so good and pleasurable if it's all so random?!
2. **God preserves sex for marriage**
  1. Marriage is the one place where we can be *truly "naked and not ashamed"* - in a covenant where you can be truly vulnerable, honest, and assured of unconditional love.
  2. 1Cor. 6 - sex is uniting Christ, who lives in you, to another - so, at the least, it's a huge deal, and, at the most, we can't unite Christ to just anyone!
3. **Sex is meant to naturally consummate or complete an already intimate union** - not the other way around! It's not the first step in a relationship, but the last!
  1. "Sex is a God-invented way to say to another person, 'I belong completely and exclusively and permanently to you.'" - Keller, "The Gospel and Sex"
  2. If marriage is meant to point us Christ's love for the church, so is the sexual act. The gospel should shape *how* we engage in sex with our spouse.

### The Problem: How We Have Corrupted Sex

1. **Sex as Idolatry/ False Savior** - "When a young man rings the bell at the brothel, he is unconsciously looking for God." - B. Marshall

1. Take a step back and try to realize just how profoundly our view and experience of sex is shaped by our culture and media, and nearly all wrong!
  2. Sex cannot bear the weight that we want it to - we invest it with so much hope and expectation, it will only disappoint and destroy us when we do.
  3. "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around 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." - C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory"
2. **Sex as Self-Expression** - Roots in Romanticism, where the most natural desires are the most pure and the closest to who we essentially are
1. An ugly cousin to this symptom is saying that couples need to discern whether they're "sexually compatible" or not. That is a lie.
  2. *Could we be born homosexual in a way that justifies homosexual sex and marriage because it expresses who I am or how God made me?* Notice the assumptions here. If we have a desire that we have not chosen, then it must be good. That is quintessentially "Romantic", as in coming from the 18th Century movement of arts and literature.
    1. A robust Christian doctrine of original sin has much more to add to this debate. We have all sorts of desires that are not of our own personal choosing, that we ought to fight against. So a Christian can believe one is born same-sex attracted, and yet it's still sinful; though of course there are often myriad of factors that shape our sexual desires, like family of origin, personal history, etc.
    2. Note that other "orientations" of sexuality are seen as corruptions of this one-man-and-one-woman creation design, including fornication (e.g., Deut. 22:28-29), adultery (e.g., Deut. 22:22), polygamy (e.g., Gen. 4:19; 1Tim. 3:2), bestiality (e.g., Exod. 22:19), prostitution (e.g., Lev. 19:29), incest (e.g., Lev. 18:6), cross-dressing (e.g., Deut. 22:5), and same-sex intercourse (e.g., Lev. 18:22; 20:13). This does not equate them all as if they're on the same level, it just points out that hetero-sex is the God-given standard. Homosexual sex is not "more heinous" than others. For what makes some sins more heinous than others, see WLC 151.

3. **Sex as Shameful** - Platonic roots, where it's seen as dirty or base - has *wrongly* been seen as the Christian view.
4. **Sex as Manipulation** - Sex outside of marriage is unfair to yourself and your partner - you are automatically using and abusing one another if there is not the covenant of marriage that is meant to guarantee safety and even unselfishness. Sex outside of marriage is always more about yourself than your partner, it's ultimately selfish!
  1. "There must be no physical union unless there is also every other kind - a legal, economic, personal, emotional, and spiritual union. There must not be one unity without all the rest. Likewise, C.S. Lewis likened sex without marriage to tasting without swallowing and digesting." - Tim Keller, "The Gospel and Sex"
  2. "But in my memory...there still live images of acts which were fixed there by my sexual habit. These images attack me." - Augustine, *Confessions*.

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## APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: MARRIAGE, SEX, AND GENDER

### TURNING TO GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION QUESTIONS

#### PART 1 - HOW TO ENGAGE IN OUR WORLD

##### 1. Personally and interpersonally

1. *Love, love, love* - remember the context and the world we live in. Many who struggle with what we'd call sexual sin have only experienced the church through the media or hateful and self-righteous aberrations. We can even think of it as forms of communal repentance that we need to ask for forgiveness for the sins of our Christian brothers and sisters (as the PCA did re:racism).
2. *Prioritize the Gospel* - we may get people to stop any behavior, but they're still in need of Jesus!
3. *Holy Curiosity* - ask questions and get to know their story. No one acts in a vacuum and with no reason/motivation. Don't assume you know the reason for why anyone sins!
4. *Pray for Wisdom and Boldness* - for insight into your own heart, whether you confuse love for cowardice or speaking up for self-righteous virtue-signaling; and for the Holy Spirit to be at work.
5. *Promote the Beautiful Vision of Marriage* - the church has largely lost the "PR" battle, but the biblical view of marriage is not one of drudgery, oppression, and loveless unions. It should be a compelling vision of a life - though not a calling for every Christian - that enables deeper love and grace.

##### 2. Communally in the Church

1. How could we be a church where people feel comfortable exploring Jesus even before they agree on sex and marriage? Or where real sexual sins are confessed and forgiven?

2. Our biblical principles are clear on where we stand, but how can we be consistent in our hatred of ALL sin, not ones we single out, yet radical in our love of ALL people?

### 3. Politically

1. ***Remember the difference between the Church and State!*** They simply have different purposes and callings, which should change our goals for them.
  1. This is partly why uniting Christianity with any political party does damage to the Christian witness. If you can't disagree with any parts of your political party or favorite candidate, you're not listening with biblical ears.
  2. If we prioritize the gospel, we will have lower expectations for the state's ability to be moral or Christian, whatever that would mean. Biblically speaking, there is no such thing as a "Christian nation" since the church alone is called a "holy nation" (1Peter 2) with no particular political state that is closer or further away.
2. ***Promote humility in your own heart,*** especially on issues that you know Christians differ on. Try to ask and genuinely explore how a Christian can be motivated by Christian convictions and yet end up with different political views. Our unity in Christ should VASTLY override our political differences.
  1. For example, a Christian who is orthodox on marriage and sex can believe for common grace reasons that the state should sanction homosexual civil unions, just as a Christian with the same biblical view can believe the state should promote only heterosexual marriage. The difference is not their biblical orthodoxy but their view of the state's purposes, which are much less clear in Scripture.
3. ***Christianity is not a tribe or a civilization to defend.*** There are many non-Christians ways in which Christians now engage in tribalism and virtue-signaling that undermine Christian integrity. In our sound-bite culture, we often just shame and demonize the other side in order to show to those in our "tribe" that we're on the right side.
  1. We are called to die to our self and live new lives of sacrifice and love.
  2. We can certainly be passionate about political causes, but Jesus is not a cause.

## PART 2 - CONTENT OF THE ISSUES

### On Biblical Gender Norms and Roles

1. **Within marriage** - see Eph. 5, Col. 4, 1Cor. 11
2. **Within society universally** - see ???
  1. **WCF** - though our confession clearly defines marriage, it makes no definition of what it means to be a man or woman, or what is universally masculine or feminine. If the Church's confession takes no stance, we ought to be VERY hesitant in making universal declarations.
  2. "Nowhere in Scripture are men or women exhorted to question their gender identity based on tastes and mannerisms—let alone their sexual orientation. A noteworthy biblical example that warns against being over-dogmatic about identifying certain traits with certain genders is provided by the brothers, Jacob and Esau. While Esau was favored by his father and had many "man's man" characteristics and skills, Jacob evidently identified better with his mother and, we are told, was more domestic in his leanings. . . . Men like Jacob and men like Esau have very different personality traits, but biblically they are both equally and thoroughly male." (RPCNA paper). See Gen. 25.

### On Sexual Orientation

1. **By Christian authors who are "affirming"**
  1. If the gospel proclaims "there is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female" (which it certainly does, hallelujah!), why can't that be expanded to include "neither gay or straight, bi or trans"?
  1. What's wrong with this argument?
  2. Another common argument is that "homosexual orientation" or lifelong monogamous homosexual fidelity was unknown to the ancient world, so the biblical prohibitions do not apply.
    1. This is largely false, since ancient authors were aware of natural dispositions for the same sex, and the biblical authors are certainly aware that sexual behaviors are rooted in the heart. Moreover, Gen. 1-2 assume two genders and the natural need for both sexes in procreation.
2. **In Cultural Discourse**
  1. The word homosexuality was originally coined in German (Homosexualität) in 1869 by Karl-Maria Kertbeny to oppose the adoption

of Prussian anti-sodomy laws. The new term was quickly adopted in German discourse, and was brought into English in 1892. (RPCNA)

2. Christians should never naively adopt the world's terminology. We may have various deep desires, but none of them define my identity as a Christian. "Sexual orientation", though it may be valid to use in certain political situations, need not define or override other aspects of who we are as humans or Christians.

## Gender and Transgender

### 1. Understanding the Debate

1. *Let us not lead with hate!* Cultivate humble curiosity, since Christians are always commanded to love, and never meet evil for evil.
  1. We should be very wary of those who are quick to speak and confident in their views on, say, the pronoun debate, but who don't actually have anyone meaningfully in their lives to engage on the other side. Common grace tells us that *every* desire is God-given at its core, so we need to discover and facilitate what that is, even in our political enemy, in order to love them well.
2. *"Transgenderism" is largely just the next step in a consistent worldview* that began in the Enlightenment of the 18th Century. If there is no objective truth, and I belong to myself ultimately, then I should be able to determine what is right for me, including my morality, motivation, and even my body. Note how this should naturally lead Christians to prioritize the gospel over behavior modification.
  1. We largely view nature, including our own bodies, as objects of our control. Especially *post-Industrial Revolution*, we are never content with any limits put on that, but "the body itself is a limit" given by God.

### 2. Questioning Assumptions

1. *Recognizing Power Dynamics in Society* - None of these issues happen in a vacuum, and now the power structures of our society largely wield power through shame against those who question social orthodoxy. Social media largely operates on a honor/shame, rather than right/wrong, dynamic, which has bled into all aspects of society, but is hardly a vehicle for loving, truthful conversation.



1. As Comedian Dave Chappelle put it, "Why was it easier for Caitlyn Jenner to change her gender than for Muhammad Ali to change his name? Because white men started to wanna do it."
2. *Why do we lump "T" in with "LGBT" as if they're the same issue?* They're clearly very different. One could be open and affirming in sexual orientation, but not follow "social orthodoxy" on transgender issues. Likewise, consider those labelled "TERFs" - trans-exclusive radical feminists. If you don't "become" a woman until later in life, are you really able to identify with the unique battles that women face and life issues that they deal with? Feminism's birth of transgenderism has become Oedipal.
3. *Can someone "change sex"?* Changing one's secondary sex characteristics - genital appearance, breast development, etc. - is clearly possible, but does that change one's sex? There are biological and gamete-level differences between male and female that do not change with secondary changes. (see Favale, ch. 5)

### 3. Speaking into the Debate

1. *On the Importance of the Body and Sexual Difference* - "The body reveals the person. Our bodies are the visible reality through which we manifest our hidden, inner life. [Adam and Eve] have not yet spoken; she has not verbally introduced herself. Her body speaks the truth of her identity, and this truth is immediately recognized by the man, who is struck with joy and wonder at the revelation of a person with whom he can—*at last!*—have true communion. Our bodies, then, serve a sacramental function, by revealing and communicating a spiritual reality. *It is not good for the human to be alone.* This lacuna in the created order is mended not by the formation of more generic human beings or by male bonding, but by sexual differentiation. Sexual difference is a particular kind of difference because it is a difference that is arranged purposefully to correspond to the difference of the other. We are not talking about superficial differences here, like hair or eye color. We are talking about a body that this designed to another kind of body, in an entirely unique way. Maleness points toward femaleness, and vice versa. **Our sexed body signals our inherent capacity and need for interpersonal communion....** Only sexual difference is capable of bringing another human being into existence. The

one-flesh union between man and woman is not exclusive, facing inward and closed off to others. Rather, it is expansive and open, because this union alone has the potential to create new life. **Communion and procreation:** this is the twofold potential that is recognized and celebrated in the Genesis text through the man's cry of wonder. . . . The full spousal meaning of the body, outwardly declared by our visible sex characteristic, is the power to express love, to give oneself fully in love to another. This is the true *telos* or purpose of the human being: to become a *reciprocal gift*, to give love and receive it in turn." - A. Favale [Note that marriage only points to this purpose of gifting love, and it's fulfilled, in Christ and the Church, by anyone in Christ.]

2. *Confusing Gender Stereotypes with Gender Paradigms* - many in our culture would agree that it is not inherently masculine to like trucks as a little boy, or feminine to play with Barbie as a little girl; and yet some in the transgender movements describe their identity in similar terms. Some ironically justify the very stereotypes they're trying to overcome by wanting to change their body.
3. *Who is the "I" whose identity is hidden under the "wrong body"?*
  1. There is a strange assumption of something like an immaterial soul that makes up our identity that cannot be defined by our body. So there's metaphysical assumptions, even though we live in a culture that denies that anything immaterial is real.
  2. *We also are left with strange body-soul dichotomies;* for instance, my soul claims that my body is wrong, so I can change my body without changing my soul? Or is my soul always right, such that it dictates what my body must be? But where did my soul come from, if not from God? And how do I know my soul is correct or access it's insight? If I don't have a soul, who/what is the person that needs to change the body? Moreover, we believe in radical equality of the sexes, but they can't be the same, otherwise changing one's body would not be necessary. "If girlness and boyness no longer reside in the body, there is no other ground for these concepts *except* stereotypes." (Favale)

#### 4. *On the Difference between Love and Sameness*

1. Notice that the Christian doctrine of love, and even unity in Christ (“no male or female, slave or free...”), does not mean that we are all the *same*. **Unity** among people who are the same is not unity, it’s *uniformity*. We are called to unity in Christ through love precisely because we’re different. If we were the same, there would be no need for Jesus to overcome boundaries. Heaven will be a place of love where all different peoples, remaining who they were made to be in creation (without sin), will be fully redeemed and worshipping the one Christ.
2. Hence, heterosexual marriage is actually **truly diverse** because it’s about uniting two different types of people, male and female! It’s not a surprise that homosexual couples experience plenty of joy and agreement since there’s less difference to overcome.

**Additional Resources** (certainly not exhaustive, but I recommend them all)

- **On Philosophical and Theological Underpinnings of Modern Sexuality**
  - *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*, by Carl Trueman (2020)
  - *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age*, by Jonathan Grant (2015)
- **On Homosexuality & Sexual Orientation**
  - *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (2016) - wonderfully encouraging in sanctification in general as well as sexuality issues
  - *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, by Rosaria Butterfield (2014) - a former lesbian English professor who converted to Christianity. She has unfortunately become less charitable and humble in her tone and reasoning as compared to this wonderful first book.
  - *Is God anti-gay?* by Sam Allberry (2013)
  - *Born again This Way*, by Rachel Gilson (2020) - former Cru campus minister at Yale, who was a lesbian, and now married to a man
  - *Gay Girl, Good God*, by Jackie Hill Perry (2018)
  - *Still Time to Care: What we can learn from the church’s failed attempt to cure homosexuality*, by Greg Johnson (2021). This is controversial in the PCA,

but a wonderful resource on how to minister lovingly from a pastor who himself is same-sex attracted but committed to chastity.

- RPCNA (sister denomination) paper, “Contemporary Perspectives on Sexual Orientation: A Theological and Pastoral Analysis” (2011)
- **Transgender**
  - *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory*, by Abigail Favale (2022)
  - *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, by Ryan T. Anderson (2018) - on current trends in transgender debate (banned from Amazon)