

Introduction to Redeemer Presbyterian Church
“The Gospel transforming hearts”

Topic

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SESSION 1

What is a Reformed Church? and Doctrine

WHAT IS A REFORMED CHURCH?

There are 6 distinctives:

- 1. Scripture is the Word of God:** 2Tim 3:16-17
- 2. God is sovereign:** Providence Gen 50:19-20, Election Eph 1:3-5
- 3. The Covenant of Grace:**
- 4. The Law of God**
 - used for society in general
 - used to show our need for a Savior
 - used as a guide for Christian living
- 5. The Church**

- **government**
- **sacraments**
- **discipline**

6. The Kingdom of God: the already/not yet

7. The five solas

8.

DOCTRINE

Webster's dictionary defines "**doctrine**" as:

Something taught; teachings. Something taught as the principles or creed of a religion, political party, etc; tenet or tenets; belief; dogma. Doctrine refers to a theory based on carefully worked out principles and taught or advocated by its adherents.

1. Why Study Doctrine?

A. Doctrine is inevitable

*Anything you believe is a doctrine. The Bible's doctrine must be our doctrine.

*Everyone believes things. Is it true?

*Some people claim doctrine is "so dry", or it is "boring".

B. Doctrine is purposeful

Frees one to:

- **know God truly**
- **know oneself truly**
- **know one's origin and destiny truly**

Christian doctrine aims to describe the way things are. It is concerned to tell the truth, in order that we may enter into and act upon the truth. It is an expression of a responsible faith --- a faith which is prepared to give an account of itself, and give careful consideration of its implications for the way in which we live. To care about doctrine is to care about the reliability of the foundations of the Christian life. It is to be passionately concerned that our actions and attitudes, our hopes and our fears, are a response to God, not something or someone making claims to divinity, which collapse upon close inspection.

A church which takes doctrine seriously is a church which is responsible for what God has entrusted to it. Doctrine gives substance and weight to what the Christian church has to offer the world. A church which despises or neglects doctrine comes perilously close to losing its reason for existence, and may simply lapse into a comfortable conformity with the world --- or whatever part of the world it happens to feel most at home with. Its agenda is set by the world; its presuppositions are influenced by the world; its outlook mirrors that of the world. There are few more pathetic sights than the church wandering aimlessly from one "meaningful" issue to another in a desperate search for relevance.

Alister McGrath

SESSION 2
Revelation and Scripture

A. General (natural)

1. Creation

- * Psalm 8 Wonder of creation
- * Psalm 19 Dual speech of nature and God's law
- * Rom 1:19-21 God's deity

2. History

- * Acts 14:16-17
- * Acts 17:26-27

3. Effects

- * Condemnation Rom 1:18
- * Insufficient for salvation

B. Special (supernatural)

God reveals Himself:

1. In His Word (WCOF, Chapter 1, Of the Holy Scriptures)

- a. God speaks directly (orally) to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Prophets

- b. God speaks in the written word (Ps 19; 1Pet 1:10-12; 2Pet 1; 2Tim 3:16)
Word works in 2 ways: 1) as a mirror, 2) as a path of life

1Peter 1:10-12

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven --- things into which angels long to look.

2Tim 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

c. God speaks through the prophet

d. God speaks in His Son (Heb 1:1-2; Jn 1:1,17; 6:33; Matt 17:5)

Heb 1:1-2

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.

John 1:1, 17; 6:33

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Matt 17:5

While He was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"

2. In His redemptive acts

Ex 15:1-2; Rom 10:1-15; Eph 2:11-22; Deut 30:1-14

3. In His coming

* Fulfilled in Christ

Col 1:13-23; Is 40:10-11; Luk 1:67f

* At the parousia

2Thess 1:10; 1Cor 13:12; 1Pet 1:7; Rev 22

15 THESES CONCERNING DIVINE REVELATION

1. If we can say anything about God, it must be on the basis of His self-revelation. Everything else is conjecture and speculation.
2. Divine revelation is for human benefit --- offering us the privilege of communion with our Creator.
3. We do not have as yet an exhaustive revelation of God: we are limited to what He has revealed of Himself.
4. The fact of divine revelation by one self-revealing God assures the comprehensive unity of divine revelation.
5. Not only the fact and purpose of divine revelation, but its content, variety, and nature are God's determination.
6. God's revelation is uniquely personal in both content and form.
7. God's revelation is given not only universally, but also redemptively within external history in unique saving acts.
8. The climax of God's special revelation is Jesus Christ: the personal incarnation of God in Jesus Christ in whom the source and content of divine revelation converge and coincide.
9. The mediating agent in divine revelation is the eternal logos, the pre-existent, incarnate, and now glorified Christ.
10. God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible, conceptual verbal form: in thoughts and words.
11. The Bible is a reservoir and conduit of divine revelation.

12. The Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine revelation in two ways:
 - a. In the inspiration of prophetic and apostolic proclamative writings
 - b. By illuminating and interpreting the inscripturated Word of God
13. The Holy Spirit bestows spiritual life and allows individuals to appropriate divine revelation.
14. The Church approximates the Kingdom of God in miniature: therefore, the Church is to mirror the power and joy of revelation to each succeeding revelation.
15. God will reveal His glory in an end time revelation.

SESSION 3 DOCTRINE of GOD

God and the Holy Trinity (Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 2)

The Sovereignty of God

The sovereignty of the God of Scripture is absolute, irresistible, infinite. When we say that God is sovereign, we affirm His right to govern the universe, which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases. We affirm that His right is the right of the Potter over the clay, viz: that He may mould that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. We affirm that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to any. Sovereignty characterizes the whole Being of God. He is sovereign in all His attributes. He is sovereign in the exercise of His power. His power is exercised as He wills, when He wills, where He wills. This fact is evidenced on every page of Scripture. (A.W. Pink)

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is simply affirming that attribute of God's glorious character that makes God **GOD**; He alone rules the universe, directs all its affairs, is the Most High God, the Almighty, who does whatsoever He pleases, can be thwarted by no person or thing, and accomplishes all that He wills to do, being resisted by nothing.

GOD is SOVEREIGN over:

All things

- Ps 115:3 But our God is in the heavens, He does whatever He pleases
 Ps 135:6 Whatever the Lord pleases, He does
 Is 46:9-10 I will accomplish all My good pleasure
 Phil 2:13 For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure
 Ps 103:19 His sovereignty rules over all

Ps 33:11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever
Prov 21:3 To do righteousness and justice is desired by the Lord rather than sacrifice
Is 14:27 For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it?

All authority

Matt 28:18 All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth
Rom 13:1 For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God
Luke 5:24 But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins

All creation

Rev 4:11 for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their Being
Prov 16:4 The Lord has made everything for its own purpose
Dan 4:35 He does according to His will in the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth
Heb 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible
Rom 4:17 In the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

The animals

Formed them at creation, used them in the plagues, provided quail, spoke through Balaam's donkey, shut the mouths of lions, used ravens to feed Elisha, sent a great fish to swallow Jonah and directed the great fish to deposit Jonah at a specific place on the shore.

The weather

Ps 147:15-18 He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes. He casts forth His ice as fragments. Who can stand before His cold? He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow.
Mk 4:39 And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still". And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

All reality

Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created by Him and for Him.
Heb 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Child-bearing

Gen 30:2 Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

Acts 17:25 And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

Human plans

Prov 19:21 The counsel of the Lord, it will stand.

Prov 16:9 The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.

Deut 8:18 It is He who is giving you power to make wealth.

Prov 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but every decision is from the Lord.

God's enemies

Ps 2:1-4 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather against the LORD and against His Anointed One. "Let us break their chains", they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

Josh 10:10 The LORD confounded them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter.

Sin

Gen 50:20 You meant it for evil, God meant it for good.

Rom 8:28 God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Governments

Ps 22:28 For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations.

Ps 47:8 God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.

History

Acts 14:16-17 And in generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness.

Acts 17:26,31 And He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation.

Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished

proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

Incarnation

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

Crucifixion

Acts 2:23 This man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.

Acts 4:28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Salvation

Acts 13:48 and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Rom 9:16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

Matt 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

1Pet 2:8 And to this doom they were also appointed

The Mystery of God's Sovereignty

Deut 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD ...

Is 55:8-9 My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways ...

Rom 11:33 How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways

SESSION 4 Man and Sin

Who is Man?

Who is asking and Why? (Psalm 8:3-4; Gen 2:7)

Man Biblically defined in relation to:

1. God “in His image” (Gen 1:26)
2. Rest of creation “fill and subdue” (Gen 1:28)
3. Purpose
 - * fellowship with Creator
 - * fruitful activity in creation
 - * fulfilling relationship with co-laborers
4. The glory of man (Ps 8:5-6)
 - * alone in God’s image: honor (5)
 - * only in God’s image: humility
 - rational – emotional – volitional – personal
5. Jesus Christ true humanity (Heb 2:6-9)

SIN

The subject of sin is vital knowledge. To say that our first need in life is to learn about sin may sound strange, but in the sense intended it is profoundly true. If you have not learned about sin, you cannot understand yourself, or your fellow-men, or the world you live in, or the Christian faith. And you will not be able to make head or tail out of the Bible. For the Bible is an exposition of God’s answer to the problem of human sin, and unless you have that problem clearly before you, you will keep missing the point of what it says. Apart from the first two chapters of Genesis, which set the stage, the real subject of every chapter of the Bible is what God does about our sins. Lose sight of this theme, and you lose your way in the Bible at once. With that, the love of God, the meaning of salvation, and the message of the gospel, will all become closed books to you; you may still talk of these things, but you will no longer know what you are talking about. It is clear, therefore, that we need to fix in our minds what our ancestors would have called ‘clear views of sin’.

(J.I.Packer, *God’s Words*, p71)

The Entrance of Sin (Gen 3)

1. A time-space event – **HISTORY**
2. A real fall, with profound implications for both Man (Rom 5:12ff; 1Cor 15:20ff) and Nature (Rom 8:19)
 - God chose Adam as man’s representative of the human race
3. A God-ward phenomena (covenant disobedience) – man deserves death; he comes under condemnation
4. Image severely marred (Gen 5:1; 9:6; Js 3:9; 1Cor 13:12; 1Jn 3:2)

The Essence of Sin (Self Indulgence Now),

- rebellion (Jer 2:11-13)
- hostility to God (Rom 5:10; 8:7)
- idolatry (Rom 1:25)
- deceit (Titus 3:3)
- sin is missing the mark (Ps 32)
- overstepping the bounds (transgression)
- pollution of soul, mind, heart (iniquity)

The Extent of Sin “Total Depravity”

- Man is not as bad as he could be (common grace)
 - There is nothing in man to prompt him to see God
 - There is nothing in man to prompt God to favor him
 - All of the human constitution is tainted by sin (will, heart, mind, emotions, body) (Matt 7:16-20; 12:33ff)
- Key texts: Eph 2:1ff; Rom 3:10ff; Ps 32; Ps 51

The Effects of Sin

- under condemnation (Jn 3:18, 36)
- spiritual death (Eph 2:1-3)
- bondage to sin (Jn 8:34; Rom 6)
- captive to Satan (Eph 2:2; 2Tim 2:26; 2Cor 4:3-4)
- darkened understanding (Eph 4:17-18; Rom 1:21; 3:11; 1Cor 2:14; 1Tim 1:13)
- alienation (social, psychological, physical, spiritual)

Person & Work of Christ

Preface

1. This is not simply a study in theology. We will miss the point if, having studied the nature and accomplishment of Jesus Christ, we do not bow before Him as Lord and humbly receive Him as Savior.
2. In response to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?", Peter said, "The Christ of God." Jesus amplified this by saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." (Mk 10:45) What follows?
3. It is impossible to separate Christ's person from His work. He is the incarnate God who came to redeem His people. "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." (Gal 4:4-5)

Notice the : WHEN, WHO, WHAT, HOW, WHY

JESUS CHRIST

1. His Names:

- a. **Jesus** (Greek from Hebrew Joshua), meaning "the Lord saves"
- b. **Christ** (NT form of OT 'Messiah') meaning "anointed One"
- c. **Son of Man** (Dan 7:13) indicates His humanity but mainly His superhuman character and His future coming with the clouds of heaven in majesty and glory (Matt 16:27-28, 26:64; Luk 21:27)
- d. **Son of God** refers to second person of the Trinity (Matt 3:16-17)
- e. **Lord** – there is only one Lord of all, God, King of Creation, Head of the church

2. His 2 Natures:

Fully God – Fully Man

Jn 8:40

Acts 2:22

Rom 5:15

1Cor 15:21

Yet without sin

Jn 8:46

2Cor 5:21

Heb 4:15

Heb 9:14

1Pet 2:22

It was necessary that Christ should be both God and man. It was only as man that He could be our substitute, and could suffer and die; and only as sinless man that

He could atone for the sins of others. And it was only as God that He could give His sacrifice infinite value, and bear the wrath of God so as to deliver others from it. (Ps 40:7-10; 130:3)

The 2 natures united in one person. Christ has a human nature, but He is not a human person. The Person of the Mediator is the unchangeable Son of God. In the incarnation He did not change into a human person; neither did He adopt a human person. He simply assumed, in addition to His divine nature, a human nature, which did not develop into a n independent personality, but became personal in the person of the Son of God. After this assumption of human nature the Person of the Mediator is not only divine but divine-human; He is the God-man, possessing all the essential qualities of both the human and the divine nature. He has both a divine and a human consciousness, as well as a human and a divine will. This is a mystery which we cannot fathom. Scripture clearly points to the unity of the Person of Christ. It is always the same Person who speaks, whether the mind that finds utterance be human or divine, Jn 10:30; 17:5 as compared with Matt 27:46; Jn 19:28. Human attributes and actions are sometimes ascribed to the Person designated by a human title, Jn 3:13; 6:62; Rom 9:5.

3. States of Christ

a. State of humiliation

Phil 2:6-8

Gal 3:13

1. incarnation (Jn 1:14)

2. Sufferings of Christ (Is 53:3; Luk 9:22; 24:26; 24:46)

3. Death of Christ (Is 53:12; Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13)

4. Burial of Christ (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:27,31; 13:34-35)

b. State of exaltation.

Christ passed from under the law as a covenant obligation:

1. having paid the penalty of sin (2Cor 5:21; 1Pet 2:24)

2. merited the perfect righteousness of law-keeping, thus be crowned with glory and honor (1Jn 2:2)

a) Resurrection (1Cor 15:44-45); 3-fold significance

1. Declaration of the Father that Christ met all the requirements of the law. (Phil 2:9)

2. Symbolized the justification, regeneration and final resurrection of believers (Rom 6:4-5,9; 1Cor 6:14)

3. It was the cause for our justification, regeneration and resurrection. (Rom 4:25; 5:10; Eph 1:20; 1Pet 1:3-4)

b) Ascension (Acts 1:6-11) Christ begins His high priestly work as intercessor at the throne of the Father. (Rom 8:34; Heb 4:14; 6:20; 9:24)

c) Session. Sits at the right hand of God (place of power and glory) to rule the church and govern the universe.

d) Physical return. (1Thess 4:13-17) When He comes in glory to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 1:11; Rev 1:7; 2Tim 4:1)

(Heb 9:14-15)

Jesus Christ – Person

Lord
God- the Son
Prophet
Priest
King
Head & Savior of the church
Heir of all things
Judge of the world
Son of God, Son of man

Jesus Christ – Work as Mediator

Redeemer
One who calls God's people
Justifies God's people
Sanctifies God's people
Glorifies God's people

325 AD Council of Nicea: doctrine of the Trinity established

451 AD Council of Chalcedon: Christ is one person with 2 natures

In order for Jesus to serve as Mediator, the Son of God had to leave heaven and become human. Jesus also had to take on man's nature, just like Adam. Jesus had a human mind, as well as a human body. In other words Jesus had to be human in every respect in order to uphold man's side of the covenant.

The Cross. A human, Jesus of Nazareth, had lived a sinless life, therefore, He, and only He, qualified to offer Himself as a ransom and sacrifice for the sins of man. No one else could qualify to do this. This is what makes the difference between Christianity and other religions.

The Resurrection. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This proved that He was pleased and satisfied with the offering of Jesus' life. Only a sinless person could enter into the presence of God and live. Jesus has ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God. No man was capable of earning his salvation. Jesus work on the cross earned salvation for every child of God. (1Cor 15:44-45; Rom 5:11; 3:25-26)

The Glorification. Jesus has ascended into heaven and has already been glorified. He has gone before us. When He returns, we will join Him in a glorified state throughout eternity.

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Jesus beckons us into a "wave-walking" relationship with Him. (Matt 14:22ff)

However, as His disciples we are to 1) deny ourselves (God-centered rather than self-centered, 2) take up our cross (enter the pain in our lives and others), and 3) follow Christ (He's Lord). (Luk 9:22ff)

Session 6
The Gospel

I. God created you for a PURPOSE.

People search everywhere to find meaning in life. God, the author of life, tells us in His Word that human beings were created to enjoy God and to honor and depend upon Him in every facet of living. The first chapters of Genesis, God's blueprint for life, specifically delineate two purposes for your life:

I. *You are created to enjoy fellowship with God.*

God created you, not an impersonal force called chance. The Bible says... "He gives life and breath to all things...for in Him we live and move and have our being...and in His hands are your life-breath and your ways"... We all know deep within that we have a Creator, that we are distinct from the rest of creation, and thus we possess an innate sense of worth as human beings.

Being made in God's image gives you dignity and value.

Created in God's image means:

- a) You are like God because you have the capacity to be rational (thinking), volitional (willing), emotional (feeling) and personal (relational).
- b) You are not like God because He is distinct from His creation, brought you into being, knows all things, is all-powerful, and is everywhere. He is infinite and independent; we are finite and dependent upon Him.

Do you see that, if you are not created, and are the chance result of the co-location of atoms in the pointless evolution of matter, it is impossible for your life to have inherent dignity? Humans could not ultimately be worth anything if they are merely pieces of matter caught in between insignificant matter (the beginning) and insignificant matter (the end).

2. *You are created to enjoy fulfillment in relationships.*

Just as God made us to have intimate communion with Himself, and to thrive in humble trust and faithful obedience to His will, He also made us to experience profound blessedness in relationship with other people. Human beings are meant to live with one another peacefully, lovingly serving and promoting one another's welfare without fear, shame, or distrust. The unique male-female bond creates "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). God also gave us relationships so that together we can make the earth a wonderful place to live. Genesis 1-2 tells us that the earth was created for our enjoyment and welfare.

"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." (Genesis 2:15)

Are you presently finding the joy of living under God's purposes for your life? Do you thrive on the wonder of living as His image-bearer? Do you experience the freedom of deeply satisfying relationships and activity? If not, please read on...

II. God calls you to view life from His PERSPECTIVE.

We need to ask some hard questions of ourselves, addressing issues we'd naturally rather avoid: How does God see your life? How does God view your morality, motives, and secrets of your heart? Thankfully, the Bible reveals the mind of God on these matters. The Bible clearly teaches that things basically are not right between the Creator and you. We can sum this up in two ways:

1. *You are committed to your own purposes above God's.*

Let's be brutally honest: you love yourself more than you love God. The dearest thing to your heart is ultimately your time, pleasure, reputation, comfort and personal agenda. Your deepest commitment is to your purposes (for finding fulfilling existence) not God's. My how we all want to be the captain of our own ship, the master of our own fate! Rather than trust Almighty God for these things, we naturally distrust the Creator and seek self-sufficiently to find happiness through what is created. The Bible calls this attitude, which is a rejection of God as Creator and Lord over your life, sin. Sin (Self-Indulgence Now) is living in the now to please, ultimately, ourselves. But sin is more than a "heart problem"; it is also a "legal problem", for...

2. *You break God's principles and live by your own.*

While no one would claim to be perfect, many people refuse to admit that sin is the dominant principle in their hearts, and that they fall woefully short of living by God's holy standards or laws. God says that "*all have sinned and missed the mark of His moral perfection*". Not one of us has kept His precepts without blemish, we've all done what we should not (sins of commission) and left undone what we should do (sins of omission). By thought, word and deed we have not sought to please and honor God with every fiber of our being. Rather than keep God's law, we lower His standards, become a law unto ourselves, and do what seems right in our own eyes.

To have God's perspective on your life is to recognize your true guilt. You agree with God that you don't measure up, that you've lived without honest fear of God in your heart, and that you are utterly helpless morally to earn His approval. Indeed, you confess that "*the penalty of sin is death*", and that God, "*whose eyes are too pure to even look upon sin*", and who "*will by no means leave the guilty unpunished*", must righteously judge your life.

So what can you do about your perilous condition? How will you escape God's condemnation on judgment day? Please read on for the "good news"....

III. God graciously made the PROVISION for your sin.

God Himself has provided everything you need to be delivered from your sin predicament. He takes sin so seriously that only the most radical course of action would remedy the problem. As promised in the Bible from ages before: God came to earth Himself, in the person of His only Son Jesus Christ, to live and die for sinners like you and me, since no amount of religiosity could possibly reconcile us to God.

You need two things to be reconciled to God:

1. You need the forgiveness He offers through Christ's death.

The Bible states this in a variety of ways: to be forgiven is to have your sins covered, your guilt washed, your moral corruption atoned for, your heart cleansed, your debt of sin paid. Only forgiven sinners can go to God's holy heaven.

Christ's death on the cross was completely sufficient to satisfy God's just punishment for your sin. Jesus paid the debt in full by nailing to the cross, in His body, your sins, thus bearing the curse of law-breaking (death) in your place.

"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us..."

"And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...For Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust."

To summarize, since you are guilty of breaking God's laws you deserve death. However, Jesus died on the cross and paid the penalty for the sins of those who place their trust in Him. But you need more than forgiveness to stand in His glorious presence, for...

2. You need the perfect righteousness attained by Christ's life.

Only those who are perfectly righteous can hope to stand in God's holy presence in heaven. Where do you find such moral perfection? Certainly not in yourself! The Bible says,

"There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God...there is none who does good...there is no fear of God before their eyes..." The Bible plainly states, *"We all stumble in many ways"*.

But just as Christ died for your sins, he also lived a blamelessly righteous life that He might grant His "perfect record" to any who trust Him.

"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord....that I may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived

from the Law but that which is through faith in Christ,, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith...”

Thus, in Jesus Christ you have all you need for salvation. Jesus, acting in your place, met the whole demand of God’s law by living righteously. He also fulfilled the penalty of the law by dying to purchase your forgiveness. We call this the “Great Exchange”: you give Jesus your sin, which He removes from your “moral record” and nails to the cross, and then He grants you His moral perfection.

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The Bible calls this marvelous transaction “justification”. God declares helpless sinners as totally just in His sight because of the merits of Jesus Christ--and all as a free gift of His grace. Behold the *mercy* of God: He does not give us what we deserve - death. Behold the *love* of God: He gives us what we do not deserve --eternal life!

“...that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested...even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...”

Is it clear that absolutely everything we need for salvation we find in the person and work of Jesus Christ? We need look no farther than this Savior of the world. As one Biblical writer put it,

“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that just as it is written, ‘LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD’”

Just think on these glorious promises of Jesus Himself:

“The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many..”

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

“Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest...”

Now that you see how God graciously made the provision for your sins, what must you do to appropriate this gift? You must realize that...

IV. God calls you to trust in His PROMISE.

If you know yourself to be one who has sinned, who has no personal goodness in which to trust, who he can only plead God's mercy, you should call upon God, through Jesus Christ, with certainty that He will forgive you and grant you eternal life.

“For Scripture says, “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

“Calling upon the name of the Lord” means having faith. How do you recognize true faith?

1. Faith embraces Jesus as Savior of my life.

Faith is trusting the promise of God, taking Him unreservedly at His word, that Jesus died for a sinner like you. Faith is acknowledging, believing and trusting that Christ's death and resurrection were enough to save you, and that you can not add anything to His completed work. Faith looks to the cross and says, “Jesus died in my place, where I rightly belonged, therefore, I am totally forgiven!” True faith simply rests confidently upon Christ's accomplishment, thus leaving no room for boasting.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

Faith is the vehicle by which you receive God's gift of eternal life. In itself it doesn't save you, because God saves you through Christ's merits. Faith is the “empty hands” that reach out to receive what God offers freely. Only by faith do we have peace with God and become His adopted children.

Do you see that faith which saves you is much more than merely acknowledging that Jesus died on the cross? *“Even the demons believe, but they shudder!”* Faith, then, is not just knowing the facts about Jesus (mere knowledge), nor just believing those facts to be true (mere intellectual assent), but it is also trusting and embracing Jesus Christ alone as your personal Savior.

Faith, in other words, is meaningless and unintelligible apart from its object. The object of faith is Jesus Christ; faith unites you to the life of Christ. Having faith means *resting* in His righteousness and *being relieved* by His forgiveness.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that

God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

2. *Faith enthrones Jesus as Lord of my life.*

True faith always changes your priorities. When Jesus takes His rightful place in your heart He comes in to reign. Salvation’s triumphant cry is “He is Lord!” Jesus announced His gospel saying, “Repent and believe the gospel”. All who refused to follow Jesus and to obey His word deemed themselves unworthy of eternal life.” Jesus said faith has a cost: “Take up your cross; follow me; you must die to self.”

Christ’s call for all to repent requires not only a change of mind about who Jesus is, but a resulting change in behavior, as well. Because many only want to pay lip service to Jesus, the scripture warns:

What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ...Even so, faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”

The Bible teaches that true trust in Christ will transform the believer. There will be evidence that new life has taken root in the heart, for all in whom Christ dwells will bear fruit and walk in good works.

“And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

When considered in light of God’s design for your life, His Lordship is a logical imperative: you were *originally intended* to live in humble, obedient reliance upon the Creator, doing all your works for His glory. Now that through faith you are reunited to your Lord, the same pattern of life holds true: you live for His glory! These works do not merit your salvation; they are simply the fruits of it:

“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

“Christ Jesus gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

Faith restores that wondrous relationship. How? The same Spirit that brings to your heart the resurrection life of Christ is the Spirit who also changes the desires of your heart to cause you to want to long for Jesus, His word and His righteousness. The Spirit, using the Word of God, teaches you how to please your Father, and abundantly empowers you to, as well.

“...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all

respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..."

Conclusion

I hope that, having read this brief explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you now want to be reconciled to your Creator and to begin a personal relationship with Him. Remember, the purpose of your life is to know and enjoy God forever. Once you see your life from God's perspective, you see how much you need His wonderful provision in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's gracious forgiveness and righteousness become yours when you trust God's promise to save any who call upon Him through Christ.

The specific way you call upon the Lord, or express your faith-trust in Christ, is through a prayer of repentance and consecration. This simply means telling God in your own words what you need, and asking Him to give you what He freely offers. For example:

Heavenly Father, you made me for Yourself. But I have lived too long now for myself. I have broken your laws, failed to worship you with my whole heart, strength and mind. I know I've been ungrateful for the blessings you have poured upon my life. I am unworthy of your heaven. But Lord, you freely offer in your Son Jesus Christ exactly what I need right now: complete forgiveness for my sins, and perfect righteousness. I believe that what Jesus did was enough, and that he lived and died in my place--for me! So I trust Christ... I receive you Lord Jesus as my Savior- for there is no other. I give you the throne of my heart, for it is your rightful place. Give me the grace to turn from my sinful ways and to live for your glory from now on. In Jesus Name, AMEN.

Let me encourage you to start to grow your newly found faith. Nourish it with everything that God provides:

The Bible: Through which we learn how to please and obey Him, as well as stand on all of His marvelous promises.

Prayer: Through which we express our praise, thanks, confessions, and needs to God.

Fellowship: Now that you belong to Christ you belong to the family of His people-the church. You need the loving support of other Christians, and you'll thrive as you serve others in the body.

Worship: Attending services where the Lord is joyfully praised and His word faithfully proclaimed is essential to your Christian vitality. Don't compromise this key area of commitment. Here in the local church you will also be able to partake of the sacraments.

Witness: By sharing with others in word and deed, you need to demonstrate the reality of Christ's life within you, and thus bear fruit for God.

SESSION 7
Sovereign Grace

Question: What is the nature of salvation?
How did I get in the kingdom of God?

1. Salient issues:

Character of Man
Character of God
Essence of Grace

2. Heart of the Matter:

Does God choose some for salvation and not others?
Or Does God simply know ahead of time who, of their own free choice, will choose God?

3. Understanding Biblical Words:

“elect” “choose” “predestine”

Dt. 7:6-7 – For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

John 6:65-66 – And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.” As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.

4. Caution:

We receive this teaching for comfort.
Distinguish between what we experience consciously
and what the Holy Spirit is working in us unconsciously.

5. An exegesis of Ephesians 2:1-10

Context:

Ephesians 1:3f – “every spiritual blessing”

Ephesians 1:19 – “surpassing greatness of His power”

**v1 And you were dead in
your trespasses and sins**

The Nature of man in sin:

A. “spiritual death”

*meaning? Dt. 29:4; John 5:24;
1 Timothy 5:6, 1 John 3:14

*lake illustration

*no appetite for God Romans 3:10-18

*futility Ephesians 4:17f

*enmity Romans 5:5-8, 8:7,
John 5:18, Romans 1:30

B. total depravity

*not as bad as could be (common grace)

*not seeking God (Ez. 11:19, John 3:19)

*God finds no good in me
(we don't do, desire, understand good)
1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 5:17

C. free will

Garden

Able to sin/
able to not sin

Fall

not able not to sin

Born Again

able to sin
able not to sin

Heaven

not able to sin

Man is a free moral agent, in that he determines his own actions, is conscious of moral obligation, is not coerced to sin, chooses out of his nature, and as such is **TOTALLY RESPONSIBLE** before God.

- He has LIBERTY to choose righteousness or sin (God is not keeping him from it).
- He has NO ABILITY to choose, because the desire is absent.

Is the will, therefore, sovereign or servant?

- The will is a servant, i.e., determined by something else.
- Every choice depends on a preference of one thing over another.
- Desire determines will.

We make “free choices”, but only choose what we want.

*v2 in which you formerly walked
according to the course of this
world, according to the prince
of the power of the air, of the
spirit that is now working in
the sons of disobedience.
Among them we too all formerly
lived in the lusts of the flesh,
indulging the desires of the flesh
and of the mind, and were by nature
children of wrath, even as the rest.*

*v4 But God
being rich in mercy
because of His great love
with which He loved us,
even when we were dead
in our transgressions,
made us alive together with Christ*

Just how free is man?

If this is freedom, who wants it?!

*three bondages:

(world, devil, flesh) 1 John 2:15-16,
John 8:34, 2 Tim. 2:26, 2 Peter 2:19b
*not free to pursue inclinations of heart

*not free to do the ultimate good,
nor to seek God. 2 Corinthians 4:4

The Nature of God:

*God is just

*Owes everyone judgment

If my salvation depended on my
initiative, would I ever be saved?

The Nature of Grace:

*God moves first

(pictures: Israel, Lazarus, Nicodemus)
Dt.29: 4, Hosea 11:1, Matthew 11:27,
John 5:21, 1:13

*”regeneration precedes faith”

1 Peter 1:3, 1 Corinthians 1:26
Titus 3:5, Eph 1:4, 2 Timothy 1:9
2 Thessalonians 2:13-17, James 1:18

Romans 8:28-30

(by grace you have been saved),

foreknew > predestined > called

justified > glorified

(Acts 13:48 But as many as were appointed to eternal life believed)

(Acts 16:14 And the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul)

Now we are ready to see clearly the thoroughly **gracious** nature of our salvation:

Man is dead in sin.

God freely chooses to move in mercy to save.

God efficaciously brings to faith those whom he chooses.

The rest he does not choose to bring to faith, passing over them.

(I Timothy 2:4, 6 “All men” without distinction, not exception.)

He gives them what they want: life apart from Him.

Classic NT defense of this doctrine is Romans 9:15-18:

I will have mercy on whom I choose; I will harden whom I choose.

It does not depend on man who wills, but on God who has mercy.

Is God unfair?

No, He owes no one anything. Why would **any** be saved?!

Who are you to question what God chooses to do for His glory?

*v6 and raised us up with Him,
and seated us with Him in the
heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,
in order that in the ages to come
He might show the surpassing riches
of His grace in kindness toward us in
Christ. For by grace you have been saved*

The Goal of Salvation:

*trophies of His grace

* gift (Acts 5:31; 11:18)

*through faith; and that, not of yourselves,
it is the gift of God; not as a result of works,
that no one should boast. For we are His
workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for
good works, which God prepared beforehand,
that we should walk in them.*

*the excluding of boasting in
the universe

*righteous people

SESSION 8
Presbyterianism

1. Does the form of church government matter?
 - a) No, we can have fellowship with Christians of all varieties.
 - b) Yes, because we want to be as Biblical as possible.
2. What form of government do we understand the NT to portray?
 - a) Individual churches, governed by elders (deacons appointed to coordinate mercy ministries) which met representatively when necessary.

1. Deacons

Acts 6:3 But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

1 Tim. 3:8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain.

2. Elders – 1 Timothy 3

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 11:30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

- **Appoint – to elect by a show of hands**
- **Teaching and ruling – 1 Tim. 5:17** – Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

- **Have charge over the flock – Heb. 13:17** – Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

1 Cor. 16:16 – That you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.

1 Thess. 5:12 – But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instructions.

Matt. 18:17-18 – And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

3. Councils – Acts 15

b) The exercise of discipline

Matt. 18:15-18 – And if your brothers sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

1 Cor. 5:11-13 – But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

James 5:19-20 – My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.

2 Thess. 3:14-15 – And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

1. goals of discipline:

reclaiming a sinner, purity of the church, honor of Christ

2. means of discipline:

admonition, suspension from sacrament, excommunication

2 Thess 3:6, (14-15 above) – Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

1 Cor. 5:4-5 – In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Matt. 18:17 – And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.

Titus 3:10 – Reject a factious man after a first and second warning.

The Biblical View of Church Government

Six Key Principles

1. The principle of popular election

- Acts 1:23 And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.
- Acts 6:5 And the statement found approval with the whole congregation: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

2. The principle that two words (bishop, elder) designate the same office.

- Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacon.
- James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
- Titus 1:5-7 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain.
- 2 John 1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth.
- 1 Peter 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.
- Acts 20:17-28 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he

said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

3. The principle of plurality of eldership

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

4. The principle that ordination was the act of plurality of elders

Acts 6:6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Acts 13:13 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been

brought up with Herod the tetrach, and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

1 Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

5. The principle of the privilege of appeal, and the right of the government exercised

Acts 15:1-2 And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

6. The principle that Jesus Christ is the only Head and Lord of the Church

Eph. 1:20-23 Which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Eph. 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, He himself being the Savior of the body.

**Thanks to Thomas Witherow, [The Apostolic Church: Which is it?](#)