EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS OF LAURELGLEN

BIBLE CHURCH IN BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA,

TO KNOW AND DEFEND SIX FOUNDATIONAL

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS OF LAURELGLEN

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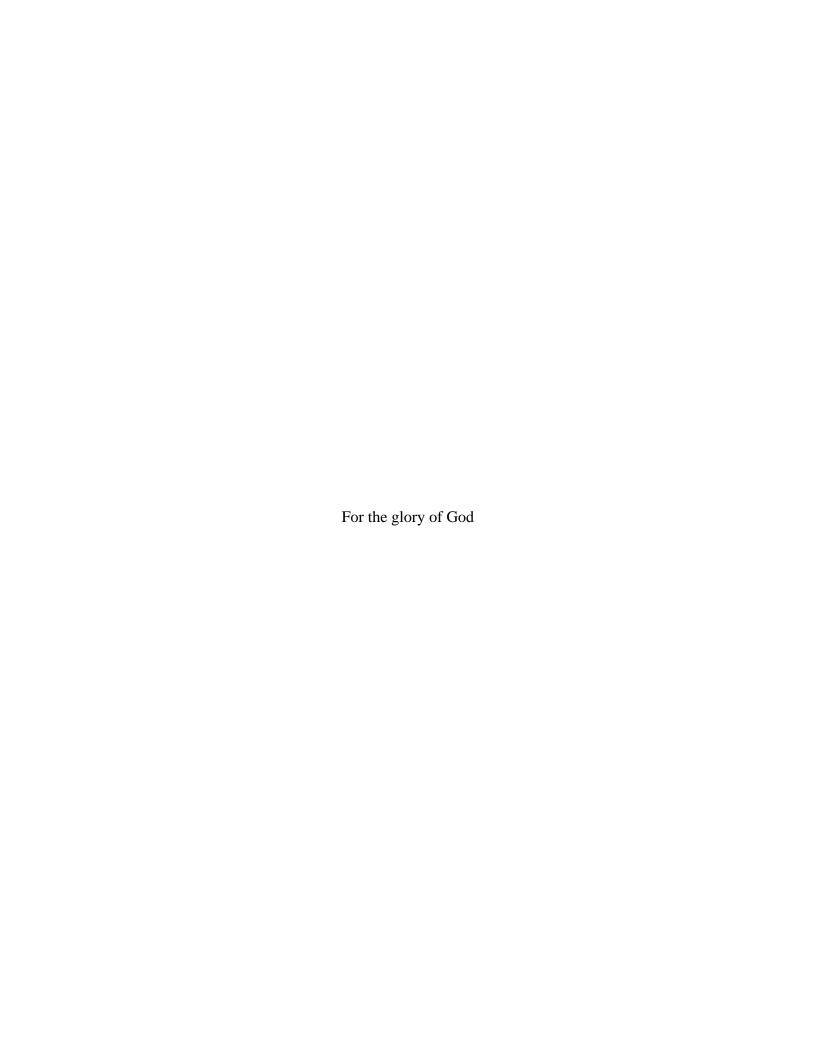
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For the glory of God

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PREFACE

I would like to thank the Lord and many people for making this ministry project possible. First, I thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I thank him for the opportunity to do this project, for giving me the strength, time, and resources to complete it. He answered numerous prayers related to the work and the class I taught. I am grateful to Christ for his inerrant, trustworthy Word, which is the foundation of this project.

I thank my parents for their ongoing support and encouragement of my ministry in general and this project in particular. I am also grateful for their financial help to purchase numerous, much needed books on Logos. I must give a huge thanks to my wife, Edith, for her daily encouragement, support, prayers, and patience with me. I am thankful to our kids for their patience with me when I was not as available to them while working on this project.

I am grateful to my church, Laurelglen Bible Church, for the personal and financial support they gave me to attend seminary and to write do this project. I am also thankful for the sabbatical they gave me, which provided much needed time to study and write. I am grateful to all the small group leaders, Bible study leaders, and Connection Class teachers of Laurelglen Bible Church and specifically to those who took the class I taught for this project.

I am grateful for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for faithfully holding to God's trustworthy Word, not watering it down with the worldviews, opinions, and philosophies of our godless age. I am thankful to Dr. Matthew Haste for his instruction and for answering my many questions. I am grateful to my ministry project supervisor, Dr. Jay Owens, for his guidance, answers to questions, and enthusiastic encouragement along the way. I am thankful to Dr. Timothy Paul Jones for what I learned in his

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<div align="right">Andy Middlekauff</div>

Bakersfield, California

December 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Paul exhorted Timothy to teach sound doctrine and to guard against false teaching in the Ephesian church (1 Tim 3:3–10; 4:6). The lack of sound teaching was damaging to the churches in Ephesus. It was Timothy's task to select godly leaders who understood sound doctrine and could explain and defend it (1 Tim 3:1–2). Like the Ephesian church, the people of Laurelglen Bible Church have been exposed to false teaching and need sound teaching. Like Timothy, the leadership of Laurelglen Bible Church must equip other leaders in the church in sound doctrine so that together with the elders they can explain and defend sound doctrine in their small groups, Bible studies, and classes.

Context

Laurelglen Bible Church (LBC) in Bakersfield, California, has been a joy and a blessing to many people since it was planted in 1978. It has been a church with many strengths such as verse-by-verse teaching with sound doctrine, loving fellowship, and thriving youth ministries. LBC is grateful to the Lord for the strengths of the church and it desires to continue to improve in these areas.

While LBC has many strengths, it has its share of weaknesses. One weakness is that congregants have a limited understanding of sound biblical doctrine and how to explain and defend it with Scripture. This weakness may seem surprising since one of the strengths of the church is the preaching of sound theology from the pulpit. Yet while LBC's pastors teach sound doctrine Sunday after Sunday, people still lack the ability to open their Bibles to the right places and clearly explain and defend these doctrines.

I have had the privilege of being the Adult Ministries Pastor at LBC for thirteen years. Throughout my ministry at LBC, I have had the joy of teaching many classes and leading dozens of Bible studies. As I lead and teach, I discover people's understanding of Scripture and their ability or lack thereof to explain and defend orthodox teaching. I am delighted when I discover people who understand correct doctrine and can explain it better than I expected. More common, however, is that people know less doctrine and can explain and defend it more weakly than I expect. Some even have little understanding of the fundamental doctrines of the faith. Others have some understanding of doctrine but cannot point to specific passages in the Bible that address these doctrines, nor can they clearly defend orthodox teaching.

Another factor that makes sound doctrine a pressing issue at LBC is the concern of the elder board about the conference with which LBC recently disassociated with, the United States Mennonite Brethren (USMB). The conference is allowing some of its churches to teach what is contrary to orthodoxy. The allowance of erroneous teaching has resulted in many conversations between LBC elders and the leadership of the USMB. The elders have communicated these theological issues with the LBC congregants, but some congregants do not understand the issues. LBC leadership must carefully train congregants in correct theology so they can understand the issues the conference is facing.

The primary theological doctrine that the conference is not enforcing is penal substitutionary atonement (PSA). Some pastors and churches in the conference teach that PSA (1) is not taught in Scripture, (2) makes God abusive, and (3) encourages abusive behavior among Christians. The president of the conference and some of the top board members agree that PSA is a biblical teaching. However, they permit churches that are against PSA to continue teaching in opposition to PSA. Part of the problem is that the conference's statement of faith is vague about the meaning of Christ's atonement when it must be clear due to the variety of views about his atonement. The statement about Christ's atonement in their *Confession of Faith* reads, "God reconciled the world to Himself by

the atoning blood of Jesus."[1] While this statement is true, it needs specificity. The people of LBC must understand that while there is some biblical merit to other views of the atonement, PSA is the sound biblical teaching of Scripture.

The *Confession of Faith* of the USMB is also insufficient in its teaching about inerrancy. It reads, "We accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God and the authoritative guide for faith and practice."[2] The LBC elders agree with this statement but believe it should include the concept of inerrancy. The elders have asked the conference to include the concept of inerrancy in the *Confession of Faith*. However, the conference leadership explained that it is doubtful they will make this change. As LBC elders have explained these concerns to the congregation, some understand and are supportive, but others are confused and think the addition of inerrancy is unnecessary. The people of LBC need clarity and understanding about the doctrine of inerrancy.

In addition to the doctrines of Christ's atonement and the inerrancy of Scripture, the people of LBC need to mature in their understanding of other fundamental doctrines. Many in the congregation are from a Roman Catholic background, and therefore need a biblical understanding of justification by faith. Further, there are many Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and a growing number of Muslims in Bakersfield, so the people of LBC must learn to defend the Trinity and deity of Christ. Finally, while the pastors teach much about the atonement of Christ, they spend little time on the resurrection of Christ. I believe God will be glorified and the people of LBC will be brighter lights to the community if they can learn, explain, and defend these six precious doctrines of our faith.

The shutdowns caused by COVID-19 resulted in additional opportunities for training people in correct theology. In 2020, when many churches were meeting virtually because of COVID-19, LBC met virtually for about three months. After three months

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[1] Mennonite Brethren Church, *Confession of Faith* (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred, 2000), 55.

[2] Mennonite Brethren Church, *Confession of Faith*, 23.

LBC returned to meeting in person while continuing a virtual option. When we began meeting in person again, something happened that we did not expect—people from other churches that were only meeting virtually began to attend LBC. Once most churches in Bakersfield started meeting in person again, some of those who began attending LBC during COVID-19 returned to their home churches; however, many remained at LBC.

In 2020, another issue occurred that created additional opportunities for teaching accurate theology at LBC. Many people left a large church in town because it was allowing erroneous doctrine in its teaching and practice. Many from that church came to LBC because of their relationships with people at LBC as well as their hunger for sound biblical doctrine. They greatly appreciate the doctrine in the sermons, and many desire to go beyond being spoon fed and to dig into theology themselves.

In the thirteen years of my ministry to the people of LBC, I have employed a variety of methods to increase their understanding of sound theology and their ability to defend it. In the classes and Bible studies I lead, I often spoon feed people. In other words, I perform most of the research, prayer, and preparation, and the participants listen to and interact with what I have learned. I believe there is some benefit to this method of teaching. However, I have discovered that the people in the groups I lead grow exponentially when they do their own studying, are called to a high level of commitment, and are held accountable to attend the classes faithfully and complete the assignments. Having discovered that giving the students more responsibility in their education process results in exponential growth, I would like to implement these methods in a class designed to help people grow in correct theology.

Equipping the people of LBC in the six doctrines will take a team effort. The elders need others to help them teach these doctrines to the LBC family. To do this, through this project I trained LBC small group leaders and class teachers in these doctrines using the methods that encourage the small group leaders to take more responsibility in

their own education process. When they are trained in these doctrines they can then teach the people in their small groups and classes what they have learned.

Rationale

God highly values sound doctrine. This is true because sound doctrine is rooted in his character. Central to God's character is that he is "the God of truth" (Isa 65:16), his Son Jesus Christ is "the truth" (John 14:6), and his Spirit is "the Spirit of truth" (John 15:26).[3] Doctrine that is sound is doctrine that teaches the truth about who God is, what he has said and done, how a person is saved and sanctified, and how his people can live a life that glorifies him. God wants his disciples to know him and to know him accurately. The fact that God wants us to know him is seen in John 17:3, where Jesus said to the Father, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." J. I. Packer emphasizes God's purpose for people to know him by asking, "What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God."[4] To know God is to know the truth because he is the truth.

God's high value of true doctrine is also evident in that he made certain his prophets and apostles faithfully recorded the truth in the sixty-six books of the Bible. The fact that God had his prophets and apostles faithfully record the truth is seen in 2 Peter 1:20–21, which says, "Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." God had human authors write his Words in human language so that people could know God and understand the truth about God, salvation, and how to live a life that glorifies him. Because God cares about accurate doctrine, he directed his prophets and apostles to write his inspired Word for his people. This does not mean that God dictated the words of

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[3] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

[4] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 33.

Scripture to men who simply acted as secretaries. Rather, as Albert Mohler Jr. explains, "God, through the Holy Spirit, sovereignly superintended the lives of the human authors and made intentional use of their own individuality."[5] God guided the biblical authors so that what they wrote were his precise words through their individual personalities.

The fact that God highly values accurate theology is also seen in Christ's Great Commission. At the end of his earthly ministry, Christ gave his final charge to his apostles, saying: "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19–20). In his commission, Jesus could have simply told the apostles to baptize converts. But Christ's desire is that those who are baptized also know and live by all that he taught his apostles. That is why Jesus also said, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19). Christ taught sound doctrine and his apostles were to pass it on "to the end of the age" until Christ's second coming. When believers study the Bible systematically and faithfully teach it to others, they are obeying Christ's Great Commission. Wayne Grudem explains, "The basic reason for studying systematic theology, then, is that it enables us to teach ourselves and others what the whole Bible says, thus fulfilling the 'teaching' part of the Great Commission."[6] Christ wants his truth to be proclaimed until his return and it is through obedience to his Great Commission that this will occur.

The significance of orthodoxy is also evident in God's establishment of the office of elder in the local church. After the apostolic age, how would God ensure that the teachings of Christ were accurately taught until Christ's return? God did this by installing

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[5] R. Albert Mohler Jr., "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic View of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. James R. Merrick and Stephen F. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 38.

[6] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 9.

elders in every church. A primary responsibility of elders is to teach God's Word accurately and diligently. An essential qualification for an elder given in 1 Timothy 3:2, is that they are "able to teach." Thomas Schreiner says, "What it means fundamentally to be an elder is to teach in accord with orthodoxy, to counter false teaching, and to live in a way that pleases God."[7] In Titus 1:9, Paul informs Titus what an elder must do: "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." Concerning Paul's instruction to Timothy and Titus about elders, Alexander Strauch says, "Paul is crystal clear that the indispensable quality, which incidentally distinguishes the elder from the deacon, is the ability to master Christian doctrine, to evaluate it in others, to teach it, and to debate it with those who teach falsehood."[8] That God established the office of elder and charged elders to teach accurately reveals that sound doctrine is of great significance to him.

The great importance of accurate teaching is also seen in God's charge to all believers. Elders are not the only people who must teach and guard God's truth—every Christian must do this. The fact that all believers are to uphold God's truth is seen in Jude's Epistle. Jude indicates that his letter is to believers in general and not only to elders. This is seen in Jude 1, which says, "To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ." Then in Jude 3, God gives all believers this charge through Jude: "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." Norman Hillyer explains that Jude 3 is "to the people of God as a whole, not just to apostles or to later leaders."[9] Jude tells believers "to contend for the faith."

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[7] Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 92.

[8] Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 24.

[9] Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 238.

Hillyer indicates that "to contend for the faith" means that "Jude's readers are exhorted to engage in a determined and costly struggle to maintain the faith."[10] Hillyer clarifies that "the faith" is "a reference not to the personal faith of the individual . . . but to the body of Christian truth."[11] All believers in Christ must defend sound doctrine, which is "the body of Christian truth."

How then can church leaders and all believers become grounded in the truth so that they can faithfully teach it, guard it, and defend it? It takes training. The apostle Paul tells Timothy to train himself in sound doctrine in 1 Timothy 4:6–7: "If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness." In these verse Paul compares training for godliness to bodily training for athletics. The Greek word for "training" in 1 Timothy 4:8 can be translated as "discipline." Concerning this word, John MacArthur says the word "discipline is from *gumnazō*, from which our English words 'gymnasium' and 'gymnastics' derive. It means 'to train,' or 'to exercise.' The word speaks of the rigorous, strenuous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes."[12] Just as it takes much effort to become physically fit, it also takes much effort to become spiritually fit.

Those who are trained in doctrine do more than passively listen to someone teach God's Word. They dig into the Bible themselves. They read it, study it, memorize it, meditate on it, apply it, and teach what they learn to others. In his classic book *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, John Gregory says that teachers must train students to train themselves. He says, "Make your pupil a discoverer of truth—make him find out for

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[10] Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, 238.

[11] Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, 238.

[12] John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 164.

himself."[13] When one discovers a truth in God's Word for himself, he remembers it longer and is more impacted by it than if someone simply tells him the answer. Gregory puts it this way: "Knowledge is most permanent and best which is dug out by unaided research."[14] While teaching information to students has its place, teaching students how to learn and encouraging them to teach themselves is paramount.

To equip the people of LBC to understand and defend sound doctrine I led a seven-session class for small group leaders, Bible study leaders, and class teachers. For maximum learning, students practiced what Gregory calls "self-activities"[15] to discover God's truth for themselves. They read Scripture and theology books, read portions of LBC's Statement of Faith, memorized verses and recited them in class, wrote their own definitions of key theological terms, and gave a written defense of each of the doctrines studied. The class required a high level of commitment. I asked them to attend the seven classes, to do the assignments, and to read the summarized points of the classes when they were absent.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip ten small group leaders of Laurelglen Bible Church in Bakersfield, California, to know, explain, and defend six foundational Christian doctrines.

Goals

Three goals measure the success of this ministry project's purpose. If each of these goals are achieved, then this project will be considered effective.

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[13] John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (1917; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), 75.

[14] Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, 76.

[15] Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, 74.

1. The first goal was to assess ten small group leaders' knowledge of the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, penal substitutionary atonement, Christ's resurrection, and justification by faith and their ability to explain and defend these doctrines prior to the class.[16]

2. The second goal was to develop and teach a seven-session curriculum to equip the participants to know, explain, and defend these six fundamental Christian doctrines.

3. The third goal was to reassess the participants after the course to determine if they grew in their knowledge and ability to explain and defend these six doctrines.

  A research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these three goals. This methodology is described in the following section.

Research Methodology

  The success of this project depended on the accomplishment of these three goals. The first goal was to assess ten small group leaders' knowledge of, and ability to explain, and defend, inerrancy, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, penal substitutionary atonement, Christ's resurrection, and justification by faith prior to the class. This goal was measured by requiring each participant to fill out a questionnaire.[17] This goal was considered successfully met if a minimum of 90 percent of the participants completed the questionnaire and if I completed the rubric that recorded their understanding.[18]

  The second goal was to develop and teach a seven-session curriculum to equip participants to know, explain, and defend these six fundamental Christian doctrines. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[19] This goal was considered successfully met if a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the "sufficient" level on the curriculum rubric.

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[16] More specifically, prior to the second class, because the first of the seven classes was merely an introduction that did not include teaching on any of the six doctrines.

[17] See appendix 1. All of the research instruments in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

[18] See appendix 2.

[19] See appendix 3.

The third goal was to reassess the participants after the class to determine if they grew in their knowledge of, and ability to explain and defend, these six doctrines. This goal was measured by re-administering the pre-class questionnaire as the post-class questionnaire. This goal was considered successfully met if a minimum of 80 percent of the participants met or exceeded the "sufficient" level on the post-training questionnaire rubric.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in this ministry project:

Inerrancy. Inerrancy means that the Bible, in its original autographs, is fully true and trustworthy. The inerrancy of Scripture is based on the character of God who "never lies" (Titus 1:2) and who inspired the words of his apostles and prophets to faithfully record them in the sixty-six books of the Bible (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21). Grudem's definition is helpful: "The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact."[20] Stated positively, the Scriptures always speak the truth.

Trinity. The Trinity means that there is one God, who is in three eternal, co-equal persons—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue define the *Trinity*: "God is absolutely and eternally one essence subsisting in three distinct and ordered persons without division and without replication of the essence."[21] Scripture is clear that there always has been and always will be only one God (Deut 4:39; 6:4), and he is mysteriously in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16–17; 28:19), and each person is fully God (Gal 1:1; Isa 9:6; Acts 5:3–4).

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[20] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 85.

[21] John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 189.

The deity of Christ. The deity of Christ refers to the fact that the eternal Son of God, who was fully God, took on human flesh and was therefore both truly God and truly man. MacArthur and Mayhue explain, "Jesus was the God-man—truly and fully God as well as truly and fully human."[22] Scripture teaches that the Son of God was truly God for eternity past (Isa 9:6; John 1:1–3), was fully God and human in his incarnation (John 1:14; Col 1:19), and remains both truly God and truly human in his exalted state (Col 2:9).

Penal substitutionary atonement. Penal substitutionary atonement (PSA), means that Christ's death on the cross satisfied God's righteous judgment against humanity's sin and guilt.[23] Furthermore, Christ's death was a sacrifice, offered to God in the place of humanity, resulting in complete forgiveness for all who believe in Christ and repent of their sins.[24] Many biblical passages explain PSA, such as Isaiah 53:5, which says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed." Thomas R. Schreiner explains PSA well: "And yet because of God's great love, he sent Christ to bear the punishment of our sins. Christ died in our place, took to himself our sin (2 Cor 5:21) and guilt (Gal 3:10) and bore our penalty so that we might receive forgiveness of sins."[25] Therefore, PSA proports that because of his great love, Christ died in our place to take the punishment we deserved for our sins upon himself.

Christ's resurrection. Christ's resurrection refers to Christ's body rising back to life after his death on the cross and his burial in the tomb. When his body was raised it was reunited with his spirit to live eternally. Louis Berkhof explains Christ's resurrection:

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[22] MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 255.

[23] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 827.

[24] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 830.

[25] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 73.

"In Him human nature, both body and soul, was restored to its pristine strength and perfection and even raised to a higher level, while body and soul were re-united in a living organism."[26] The Scriptures teach that his body rose again (Matt 28:5–6; 1 Cor 15:4), as the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18), and as a "life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:44–45).

Justification by faith. Justification means that God declares unrighteous sinners as righteous because God has given them the righteousness of Christ as a gift. Paul announces this good news in Romans 5:17: "If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ." Grudem defines justification as "an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight."[27] Christ lived a perfectly righteous life in his incarnation and his death on the cross paid for humanity's unrighteousness. Therefore, God in his amazing grace placed mankind's unrighteousness upon Christ on the cross and gave Christ's righteousness to his elect.

Small groups. A term used throughout this project is small groups. At LBC, *small groups* refers to a variety of groups including Life Groups, men's groups, women's Bible studies, and Connection Classes. These four types of groups have similar goals: to learn and apply God's Word, pray for each other and others, and develop Christian fellowship with one another. While every group has a similar goal, each type of group achieves these goals in a slightly different way. For example, Life Groups usually meet in homes and include men and women. Life Groups study the Scriptures that were preached the previous Sunday. Yet men's groups and women's Bible studies are gender specific and study books of the Bible that are not directly related to the Sunday sermons. Finally,

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[26] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1941), 346.

[27] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 885.

Connection Classes are LBC's adult Sunday school classes. Connection Classes meet on Sunday mornings and study biblical topics as well as books of the Bible. Some of the classes are age and stage related and meet throughout most of the year, such as the young marrieds class. Other classes are open to all ages and stages.

Two limitations impacted this project. First, participants were asked to attend each class. Likely, some participants would not attend all seven lessons. To mitigate this limit, I wrote the main points of what was covered in each session and had the absentees read these. Second, participants were asked to complete the assignments before each class. To mitigate this limit, I gave them more time to complete the work.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, I only invited small group leaders to the class. The reason for this was to equip them to understand, explain, and defend sound doctrine so they could teach what they learned to the people in their small groups. Second, I had planned on involving ten participants in the class. This delimitation provided for more personal interaction between the teacher and student and gave opportunity for each person to participate in the class.

Conclusion

The small group leaders of Laurelglen Bible Church must be able to explain and defend key foundational doctrines. When they do, they will be able to teach them to the people they influence in their small groups. Chapter 2 gives detailed descriptions for each of the six key doctrines from Scripture. Chapter 3 shows how the six doctrines stand up against objections. Chapter 4 details implementation of the assessment and the class. Chapter 5 discusses the success or lack thereof following the seven-session class.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
SIX FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINES

Six passages will be discussed in this chapter, which address the six foundational

doctrines focused on in this project. The six doctrines discussed in this paper are the

inerrancy of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16); the Trinity (Matt 28:19); the deity of Christ (Titus

2:13); Penal Substitutionary Atonement (Isa 52:13–53:12); Christ's resurrection (1 Cor

15:13–19); and justification by faith alone (Rom 3:28). In order to explain, biblically

support, and defend the six foundational doctrines, it is helpful to understand the exegesis

of the following scriptures: 2 Timothy 3:16, Matthew 28:19, Titus 2:13, Isaiah 52:13–

53:12, 1 Corinthians 15:13–19, and Romans 3:28.

The Inerrancy of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16)

The inerrancy of Scripture is a crucial doctrine of the Christian faith. R. Albert

Mohler Jr. asserts, "The centrality of inerrancy has been a core affirmation of evangelical

Christianity as a movement, as evidenced by consensus documents such as the Chicago

Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and the fact that the Evangelical Theological Society has

required an affirmation of the Bible's inerrancy from the society's inception."[1] The

Evangelical Theological Society provides a helpful definition of inerrancy: "The Bible

alone, and the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in

the autographs."[2] In other words, God's Word is fully true. Many Scriptures address

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[1] R. Albert Mohler Jr., "When the Bibles Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic View of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. James R. Merrick and Stephen F. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 29.

[2] Mohler, "When the Bibles Speaks, God Speaks," 29.

inerrancy,[3] but 2 Timothy 3:16 is a primary text for understanding inerrancy because of its great claim: "All Scripture is breathed out by God." In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul asserts that all that is classified as Scripture is from God—and because it is from God, it is inerrant, fully true.

To discover that all Scripture is from God and is therefore fully true, the meaning of the word *Scripture* in 2 Timothy 3:16 must be determined. Greek scholar William Mounce refers to the Greek word for *Scripture* in 2 Timothy 3:16, *graphe*, as "a technical term."[4] Wayne Grudem explains the significance of the fact that *graphe* is a technical term, saying,

> We must realize that the Greek word *graphe* ("Scripture") was a technical term for the New Testament writers and had a very specialized meaning. Even though it is used fifty-one times in the New Testament, every one of those instances uses it to refer to the Old Testament writings, not to any other words or writings outside the canon of Scripture.[5]

Similarly, George Knight explains that *graphe* "was used in the Greek of the day for any piece of writing, but in the NT it is used only of holy scripture."[6] Paul is saying in 2 Timothy 3:16, that only what the New Testament authors label as "Scripture" is "God breathed."[7]

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[3] Examples of scriptures that speak of the truthfulness of the Bible include Ps 12:6; 19:7–9; Prov 30:5-6; and John 17:17. Examples of scriptures that speak of the inspiration of the Bible include Jer 1:9; Matt 4:4; 19:5; and 2 Pet 1:20–21. Examples of scriptures that speak to the fact that God does not lie include Num 23:19; Titus 1:2; and Heb 6:18.

[4] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Dallas: Word, 2000), 427.

[5] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 65.

[6] George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 445.

[7] The term "God breathed" will be explained later in this chap.

A major question is this: does the Bible ever use the word *graphe* to refer to New Testament writings?[8] There are two places in the New Testament that New Testament writings may be referred to as Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:18 and 2 Peter 3:15–16.[9]

The first place a New Testament writing is referred to as *graphe* is in 1 Timothy 5:18, which says, "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" The word *Scripture* in this verse is *graphe*. The first citation Paul refers to as Scripture is "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," which is from Deuteronomy 25:4. This is one of the fifty-one places the New Testament refers to the Old Testament as Scripture, as *graphe*. The second citation Paul refers to as Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18 is "the laborer deserves his wages." This citation is not from the Old Testament, but from the New Testament (Luke 10:7), and is a statement Christ made to his apostles. Speaking of Paul's second citation in 1 Timothy 5:18, Philip Towner says, "In the Greek, the second quotation is an exact replication of the saying of Jesus preserved in Luke 10:7."[10] Some argue that Luke's Gospel had not yet been written when Paul wrote 1 Timothy, so the second citation in 1 Timothy 5:18 could not have been from Luke, but from an oral tradition of Jesus's words that were later recorded in Luke's Gospel.[11] It may be that these were words of Jesus, passed down orally and eventually written in Luke. Knight suggests that these words of Christ could be from the Gospel of Luke: "Since, however, γραφή usually refers to what is written and recognized as scripture and since the words quoted are found verbatim in Luke's Gospel, Paul's dependence on that Gospel is the only alternative that

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[8] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566–67.

[9] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 586.

[10] Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 366.

[11] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 234.

fits all the data."[12] Paul, then, is possibly citing the Gospel of Luke and is calling it *graphe*, as John Stott explains, "It seems evident that Paul envisaged the possibility of a Christian supplement to the Old Testament because he could combine a quotation from Deuteronomy (25:4) with a saying of Jesus recorded by Luke (10:7) and call both alike 'Scripture' (1 Tim. 5:18)."[13] The evidence indicates that the technical term *graphe* may have been used to refer to a New Testament writing.

The second place New Testament writings are referred to as *graphe* is in 2 Peter 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.

Concerning what Peter says about Paul's letters, Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin explain, "Peter used the term γραφάς in reference to the writings of Paul in 2 Pet 3:16. The evidence seems to suggest that he was putting Paul's writing on the level of OT Scripture."[14] Similarly, Stott says, "Peter clearly regarded Paul's letters as Scripture, for in referring to them he calls the Old Testament 'the other scriptures' (2 Pet. 3:16)."[15] Therefore, the letters of Paul are *graphe* and must be included with the books of the Old Testament as Scripture.

Does the fact that Peter refers to Paul's letters as *graphe* and that Paul refers to at least part of the Gospel of Luke as *graphe* have implications for the rest of the New Testament? Speaking of the words *pasa graphe* in 2 Timothy 3:16, Knight comments, "It seems possible, therefore, that Paul by his use of πᾶσα γραφή is expanding the earlier

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[12] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 234.

[13] John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 101.

[14] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 235.

[15] Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, 101.

reference to the OT to include those accounts of the gospel that may have been extant and perhaps also his own and other apostolic writings that have been 'taught by the Spirit.'"[16] Knight also says that if *pasa graphe* applies to the rest of the New Testament then "it would gather together Paul's concern for the preservation and communication of the gospel and the apostolic understanding and application of that gospel and place it on a par with the OT, as 2 Pet. 3:16–17 clearly does."[17] In Mounce's study of 2 Timothy 3:16, he concludes, "Since the early church viewed the words of Jesus as fully authoritative, it would not have been a large step for the early Christians to accept the writings of his apostles as equally authoritative with the OT."[18] Therefore, while *pasa graphe* refers directly to the Old Testament, it also referred to at least some of the New Testament writings that existed when Paul wrote 2 Timothy, and may have referred to the entire New Testament.

Now that the word *graphe* in 2 Timothy 3:16 is better understood, it is necessary to determine the meaning of *theopneustos* in this verse. Second Timothy 3:16 is the only place the word *theopneustos* is found in the Bible. Speaking of the word *theopneustos*, I. Howard Marshall and Phillip H. Towner explain, "This is the earliest known occurrence, and it is possible that the writer [Paul] coined it."[19] *Theopneustos* combines two Greek words: *theos*, which means God, and *pneō*, which means to blow or to breathe on.[20] Knight offers a proper translation of *theopneustos* into English: "The word may be properly

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[16] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 448.

[17] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 448.

[18] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 568.

[19] I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 793–94.

[20] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

rendered 'God-breathed,' though under the influence of Vulgate *inspirata* the more common, but somewhat less accurate, English rendering has been 'inspired by God.'"[21]

To define *theopneustos* it must be determined whether it is passive or active. Towner explains that *theopneustos* is passive: "Some decades ago it was held that the term was to be taken as an active construction, as if Scripture 'breathes God'; but it is generally regarded now as passive in the sense of 'God-breathed.'"[22] Lea and Griffin explain a primary reason *theopneustos* is considered passive: "The Greek word (*theopneustos*) contains a suffix (*tos*), which frequently suggests a passive meaning (e.g., *agapētos*, "loved [by God]," Rom 1:7)."[23] If *theopneustos* is active, then it means Scripture breaths out God.[24] However, if *theopneustos* is passive, then it indicates God is the source of the words of Scripture, that they are his words. Albert Mohler puts it well in saying, "when the Bible speaks, God speaks."[25] Article III of the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* explains, "We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God."[26] The fact that Scripture is *theopneustos* means it is God's Word with God as its source.[27]

A critical question to address when seeking to understand *theopneustos* is this: is it an attributive adjective or a predicative adjective? Towner explains what *theopneustos* means if it is attributive: "If attributive, the sense must be 'every inspired Scripture is *also*

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[21] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 446.

[22] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

[23] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236.

[24] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 446.

[25] Mohler, "When the Bibles Speaks, God Speaks," 29.

[26] International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," 1978, 6, https://www.reformation.net/uploads/1/1/7/6/117618790/the_chicago_statement_on_biblical_inerrancy.pdf#:~:text.

[27] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 447.

useful.'"[28] The implication of taking it as attributive is that some Scripture is not inspired.[29] However, if *theopneustos* is predicative, then it is translated as "all Scripture is God-breathed."[30] Towner explains what it means if *theopneustos* is predicative: "Divine inspiration applies evenly, text by text, to the entire OT."[31] Knight believes *theopneustos* is predicative because "the only other passage with the same word order is 1 Tim. 4:4. There the adjective is a predicate adjective. This tips the scales in favor of understanding θεόπνευστος as a predicate adjective."[32] Because *theopneustos* is a predicative adjective, it indicates that all Scripture, not some Scripture, is inspired by God.[33]

Does the fact that Scripture is God breathed deny the human element in the inspiration of Scripture? The answer is no. The *theopneustos* of Scripture does not deny the human element in the process of inspiration. Stott makes this point by noting, "It is clear from many passages that inspiration, however the process operated, did not destroy the individuality or the active cooperation of the human writers."[34] Towner explains that human involvement was not mere dictation, saying the process of inspiration is "not to be understood in the strict sense as divine dictation, despite instances of dictation in the OT."[35] Rather, Towner states, "God's activity of 'breathing' and the human activity of writing are in some sense complementary (cf. 2 Pet 1:21)."[36]

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[28] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

[29] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

[30] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 568.

[31] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

[32] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 446.

[33] Almost every English translation of the Bible considers *theopneustos* as predicative, not attributive. For example see the ESV, KJV, NAS, NIV, NJB, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, YLT, and LSB.

[34] Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, 102.

[35] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

[36] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

Now that it has been established that all Scripture is God breathed, two implications must be addressed: Scripture is fully true and Scripture is authoritative. First, the fact that all Scripture is *theopneustos* indicates that its words are fully true and trustworthy. Because Scripture comes from God and because God is fully trustworthy and true, then it follows that Scripture is also fully true. As such, Article XV of *the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* is correct, which says, "We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration."[37] In other words, the Bible is fully true because it is breathed out by a God who is fully trustworthy and true. Mounce explains one way that 2 Timothy 3:16–17 indicates the truthfulness of Scripture. He explains that after Paul asserts, "all Scripture is breathed out by God," "Paul goes on to talk about the applicability of Scripture to Timothy's life, and although never stated, the assumption is that because Scripture comes from God, it is therefore true, and because it is true, it is therefore profitable."[38] Central to the argument that the Scriptures are true is the fact that God only speaks the truth. This is seen in Titus 1:2, which says, "God, who never lies." Similarly, Hebrews 6:18 states, "It is impossible for God to lie." Concerning the truthfulness of God, Grudem notes, "Since the words of the Bible are God's words, and since God cannot lie or speak falsely, it is correct to conclude that there is no untruthfulness or error in any part of the words of Scripture."[39] The Scriptures can be trusted because they are from a trustworthy "God, who never lies" (Titus 1:2).

A second implication of the fact that "all Scripture is breathed out by God" is that Scripture is authoritative. Because Scripture is God's Word and is therefore true, it is authoritative and must be obeyed. Marshall and Towner explain the implication of *theopneustos*: "The point of the adjective [God breathed] here is surely to emphasize the

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[37] International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," 9.

[38] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

[39] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 73.

authority of the Scriptures as coming from God and to indicate that they have a divinely-intended purpose related to his plan of salvation."[40] This purpose is seen in 2 Timothy 3:17, which says, "that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Verse 17 begins with the word *that*, which indicates purpose. The idea is that because Scripture is God's true Word, it equips people with the ability to do "every good work."[41]

Having established that the Bible is God's Word, it is appropriate to study God's Word to see what he reveals about himself. God's Word teaches what theologians refer to as the Trinity.

The Trinity (Matt 28:19)

The doctrine of the Trinity is a unique and beautiful Christian doctrine. While the doctrine of the Trinity is taught throughout the Old Testament and especially in the New Testament, Matthew 28:19 is a treasure for Trinitarian theology. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus said to his disciples, "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." Concerning Matthew 28:19, Craig Blomberg claims, "Here is the clearest Trinitarian 'formula' anywhere in the Gospels."[42] R. V. G. Tasker states, "Jesus had spoken much about the Father, himself as the Son, and about the Holy Spirit, but at the end of his life he gave a magnificent summary of all His scattered teaching about the Father, the Spirit, and His own relations to both."[43] The concept of the Trinity means there is one God, who is in three eternal, co-equal persons—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and each person is fully God. In Matthew

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[40] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 794–95.

[41] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570–71.

[42] Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 432.

[43] R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Tyndale Bible Commentaries, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Tyndale, 1961), 276.

28:19, Jesus sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity as a fundamental Christian doctrine. In this verse he succinctly states that there is one God in three persons, and that the three persons are equally God.

The doctrine of the Trinity upholds the truth that there is only one God—not three. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 28:19, when he said, "Baptizing them in the name." Scott Swain points out, "The first thing to observe in Matthew's baptismal formula is that 'the name' into which we are baptized is singular, not plural."[44] Jesus did not say people should get baptized in the 'names' (plural) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but in the *name* (singular) of the three.[45] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison indicate that "in the name" in Matthew 28:19, "can mean 'in the name of the Father and the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit,'"[46] which would imply three names. However, Davies and Allison argue against this, saying, "The difficulty with this, however, is that one might then expect τὰ ὀνόματα,"[47] which is the plural form of the word *name*. The fact that disciples were to be baptized into *the name* (singular) highlights that there is one God. Swain draws the following conclusion about the singular form of *the name* in Matthew 28:19: "The faith into which we are baptized is faith in one God."[48] In speaking of the one name, of one God, Jesus affirmed the truth that was firmly established in the Old Testament that there is only one true God. For example, in Deuteronomy 4:39, Moses said, "Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other." After Christ's ascension, the

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[44] Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction*, Short Studies in Systematic Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 28.

[45] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 748.

[46] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 685–86.

[47] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 685–86.

[48] Swain, *The Trinity*, 28.

apostles carried on his teaching that there is one true God. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:5, the apostle Paul declared, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The fact that Jesus said *the name* in the singular points to the fact that there is one true God, not three.

What name does Christ refer to in Matthew 28:19, when he says, "baptizing them in the name?" He likely refers to the name of God, Yahweh.[49] Swain states, "The name" (singular!) in Matthew's baptismal formula is likely an 'oblique reference' to God's proper name, YHWH. Much like the title 'Lord,' it serves as a 'surrogate' for the tetragrammaton."[50] Similarly, Benjamin B. Warfield, speaking of Christ's mention of *the name* in Matthew 28:19, writes, "This is a direct ascription to Jehovah the God of Israel."[51] That *the name* in Matthew 28:19 is likely referring to Yahweh highlights that Jesus is speaking of the one true God. For the Old Testament repeatedly declares that the name of the one God is Yahweh. For example, in Isaiah 42:8, God says, "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols."[52] Moses declares this to Israel in Deuteronomy 4:35: "To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him." In Matthew 28:19, Jesus spoke of *the name* in the singular to direct his disciples to the one God, Yahweh, besides whom "there is no other."

While Jesus speaks of *the name* (singular) of the one God in Matthew 28:19, he indicates who this God is "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." This communicates a central aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity: the one true God is in three persons. In other

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[49] Some translate the name Yahweh as Jehovah. Yahweh without the vowels is rendered YHWH.

[50] Swain, *The Trinity*, 30–31.

[51] Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, vol. 2 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2008), 153–54.

[52] "LORD" in Isa 42:8 is translated into English from God's name Yahweh.

words, God is one essence or nature while he is in three persons or subjects.[53] Concerning Matthew 28:19, Blomberg observes, "The singular 'name' followed by the threefold reference to 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' suggests both unity and plurality in the Godhead."[54] With regards to *the name* (singular) together with the three persons in Matthew 28:19, sixteenth century reformer John Calvin states, "For this means precisely to be baptized into the name of the one God who has shown himself with complete clarity in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Hence it is quite clear that in God's essence reside three persons in whom one God is known."[55] Swain summarizes the unity of God and the distinction of the three persons: "The three are truly identical with the one God, and they are truly distinct from each other."[56] In Matthew 28:19, then, Christ gives a succinct statement of the Trinity: that there is one God in three persons.

To better understand the doctrine of the Trinity, it is helpful to differentiate it from the heresies of tritheism and modalism. On the one hand, tritheism takes the distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit too far, teaching that they are three distinct gods. However, the Trinity is not three gods, but one God in three persons. Swain explains, "The distinction between the three persons does not amount to a distinction between three Gods: there is *one* Spirit, *one* Lord, and *one* God the Father of all (Eph. 4:4–6)."[57] On the other hand, modalism diminishes the distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It teaches that the one God is sometimes the Father, at other times he is the Son, and at still other times he is the Spirit. Modalism says there is one God with

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[53] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 220.

[54] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 432.

[55] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:140.

[56] Swain, *The Trinity*, 32.

[57] Swain, *The Trinity*, 32.

no distinct persons. Warfield demonstrates how Christ's words in Matthew 28:19 argue against modalism because of the definite article before each member of the Trinity. He says Jesus "asserts the unity of the three by combining them all within the bounds of the single Name; and then throws up into emphasis the distinctness of each by introducing them in turn with the repeated article: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"[58] So, the Trinity is not three gods, nor is God a God without three persons. Rather, God is one, in three distinct persons.

The three members of the Godhead are distinct because of their eternal relations to one another. Swain explains, "The Bible's Trinitarian discourse consistently distinguishes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by their mutual relations, which are 'relations of origin.'"[59] This is seen in Matthew 28:19 by the Father-Son relationship. The relationship of the Father and Son to the Holy Spirit is seen elsewhere in the New Testament, where the Spirit is called "the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:11), and "the Spirit of his Son" (Gal 4:6). Swain explains the significance of the eternal relations within the Godhead:

> The Father eternally begets the Son (Ps. 2:7; John 1:18; 3:16; Heb. 1:5), not vice versa. The Father and the Son eternally breathe forth the Spirit (John 15:26; 20:22), not vice versa. In other words, the personal names of the Trinity distinguish the persons by means of "relations of origin." The Father personally originates from no one. The Son personally originates from the person of the Father. And the Spirit personally originates from the persons of the Father and the Son.[60]

That the Son originates from the Father, and the Spirit originates from the Father and the Son does not mean that the Son was created by the Father or that the Spirit was created by the Father and the Son. For the Son and the Spirit are eternal just as the Father is eternal (Isa 9:6; Heb 9:14).

The doctrine of the Trinity not only teaches that there is one God and that he is in three distinct persons, but it also teaches that each of the persons are equally God.

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[58] Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, 153–54.

[59] Swain, *The Trinity*, 32.

[60] Swain, *The Trinity*, 33.

Matthew 28:19 reveals the equality of the members of the Trinity in three ways. First, as John Feinberg explains, "if the three were inherently unequal, we might expect a consistent order in listing them wherever they are mentioned together,"[61] that is, the order seen in Matthew 28:19. Yet, the New Testament speaks of the three together in various orders.[62] For example, sometimes they are listed as Spirit, Lord (Jesus), and God (1 Cor 12:4–6; Eph 4–6). At other times the three are listed as the Lord Jesus, God, and the Spirit (2 Cor 13:14). They are also listed as the Father, the Spirit, and the Son (1 Pet 1:2). If there was an ontological hierarchy in the Trinity, then it is likely they would always be listed in the same order that is found in Matthew 28:19.[63] A second way Matthew 28:19 indicates that each of the three persons are equally God is that disciples are to be baptized into all three persons. Jesus did not say to baptize in the name of the Father alone, nor in the Father and the Son alone. He said to baptize them in all three. Feinberg writes, "Converts are to be baptized in the name of each because each is fully and equally God. If one or more were of lesser worth or dignity, we might expect the baptismal formula to refer only to the greatest."[64] A third way Matthew 28:19 indicates that the three persons are equally God is by using the coordinating conjunction *kai* between each of the persons. The inclusion of *kai* between each person puts the three on equal ground.[65] So, according to Matthew 28:19 and other Scriptures, the three persons of the Godhead are ontologically equal.[66]

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[61] John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 468.

[62] Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 468.

[63] Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 468.

[64] Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 468.

[65] Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 468.

[66] Some Scholars deny that "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" are authentic words of Jesus. *The NET Bible* says, "Although some scholars have denied that the trinitarian baptismal formulation in the Great Commission was a part of the original text of Matthew. Some argue that Jesus likely

The Deity of Christ (Titus 2:13)

The deity of Jesus Christ is a Christian doctrine of upmost importance. Titus 2:13 is a verse that many theologians look to, to verify the deity of Jesus.[67] It says, "Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Lea and Griffin assert, "In Titus 2:13, Jesus Christ is clearly referred to as 'God' in the phrase 'our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.'"[68] Similarly, speaking about Titus 2:13, the *NET Bible* states, "This is one of the clearest statements in the NT concerning

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did not include 'of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,' but that he simply said something like 'in my name.'" *The NET Bible, New English Translation* (n.p.: Biblical Studies, 2003), 1744. The reason given is that this is what is seen in the rest of the New Testament. However, there are several reasons to see Matt 28:19 as the authentic words of Jesus. First, *The Greek New Testament* does not list any variants for Matt 28:19. Barbara Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, D-Stuttgart, 1998), 116. Second, *The NET Bible*, speaking of those who deny the trinitarian baptismal formulation, says, "There is no MS support for their contention. F. C. Conybeare, 'The Eusebian Form of the Text of Mt. 28:19' ZNW 2 (1901): 275–88, based his view on a faulty reading of Eusebius' quotations of this text." *The NET Bible*, 1744. Third, W. D. Davis and Dale C. Allison indicate, "Perhaps the commandment, which supplies an aetiology of Christian baptism, should be interpreted in the light of 3:13–17 as a following of the example of Jesus," where each member of the Trinity was involved: the Father called Jesus his Son and anointed him with his Spirit (Matt 3:16–17). Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 685. Fourth, Michael Green writes, "Eusebius had exactly the same text before him in the fourth century." Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 323. Fifth, Green also says, "In the Acts there is often baptism into the name of Jesus, but that phrase may be a summary" of what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19 (323). Sixth, John MacArthur explains, "'in the name of' is not a sacramental formula as seen in the fact that the book of Acts reports no converts being baptized with those precise words. Those words are rather a rich and comprehensive statement of the wonderful union that believers have with the whole Godhead." John F. MacArthur Jr., *Matthew*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 344. Seventh, France notes, "It is not impossible that Jesus did mention Father, Son and Holy Spirit together, perhaps originally not to lay down a liturgical formula so much as to spell out the three-fold nature of disciples' allegiance." R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 1118. Eighth, Didache 7:1 says, "Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' in running water." Michael W. Holms, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translation*, upd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 259.

[67] Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 335.

[68] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 46.

the deity of Christ."[69] Titus 2:13, then, is a significant verse in the discussion of the deity of Christ. Titus 2:13 teaches that Jesus can rightfully be called God.[70]

While many scholars agree that Titus 2:13 indicates that Jesus is God, some do not believe it indicates this. There are three main views that various scholars hold concerning Titus 2:13 and whether it speaks to Christ's divinity. The first view is that Titus 2:13 speaks of two persons: "our great God" refers to God the Father, and "Savior Jesus Christ: refers to Christ. The second view states that in Titus 2:13, Jesus Christ is not God but is the *glory* of God. The third view believes Titus 2:13 teaches that Jesus Christ is *our great God and Savior*. These three views will be critiqued below.

The first view proports that Titus 2:13 speaks of two persons: "our great God" refers to God the Father, and "Savior Jesus Christ" refers to Christ. Therefore, this view holds that Titus 2:13 does not teach that Jesus is God. One group that believes this is the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. In their translation of the Bible, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, they translate Titus 2:13 in the following way, "While we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ." This translation makes it appear as if two persons are in view: "the great God" and "our Savior, Jesus Christ." There are several reasons why Jehovah's Witnesses and others take this view of Titus 2:13, which include the following.[71] First, in Scripture, *theos* is used often of the Father but is never used of Jesus.[72] Second, Titus 2:13 is part of a long sentence that begins in 2:11, where the Father is called God. The title God would not be used of both the Father and the Son in the same sentence. Third, some but not all

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[69] *The NET Bible*, 2190.

[70] This does not mean Jesus is the Father or Jesus is the Spirit as taught in the heresy of modalism. It means Jesus is one of three equal members of the Godhead—the one God with one nature/essence in three persons (see the previous discussion about the Trinity in Matt 28:19).

[71] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 323.

[72] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 277.

who hold to the first view believe that in Titus 2:10 the Father is called "Savior" and

Titus 2:11 says the Father brings salvation to humanity. So, the title "Savior" in verse 13

must refer to the Father. Fourth, "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" refers to two

persons: "our great God" is the Father and "Savior" is Jesus Christ. Usually for the second

noun in a noun-*kai*-noun formula to refer to a second person it must be preceded by a

definite article.[73] However, Titus 2:13 does not include a definite article before "Savior."

Those who proport the first view argue that it does not need a definite article before

"Savior" because "Savior" had become a technical term that did not need a definite

article.[74] Fifth, the designation "great God" is only used of the Father in the Bible, never

of Jesus.[75] Sixth, the New Testament often speaks of the Father and Jesus together,

indicating they are two separate persons. Finally, the second coming will include both the

Father and the Son.[76] Arguments against this first view will be discussed after presenting

the cases for the second and third views.

The second view asserts that in Titus 2:13, Jesus Christ is "the glory of our great

God and Savior," he himself is not "our great God and Savior." Philip Towner holds to this

view and explains it, saying, "Jesus Christ is equated not with God but rather with 'the

glory of the great God and Savior.' And the eschatological epiphany, 'the blessed hope,'

is thus depicted here as the personal appearance of Jesus Christ who is the embodiment

and full expression of God's glory."[77] There are several reasons why Towner and others

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[73] For the second noun in a noun-*kai*-noun formula to refer to a second person it would look like this: the-noun-*kai*-the noun.

[74] Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 181.

[75] For example, see Ezra 5:8, Neh 8:6, Ps 95:3, and Dan 2:45.

[76] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 278.

[77] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 758.

hold to this view of Titus 2:13.[78] First, "God and Savior" refer to one person. That one person is the Father, not Jesus. Second, the adjective "great" refers to God the Father in Scripture, not to Jesus.[79] Third, it is rare for Paul to refer to Jesus as deity and rarer for Paul to call him *theos*. Fourth, "Jesus Christ" is not in apposition to "our great God and Savior." Rather "Jesus Christ" is in apposition to "the glory of our great God and Savior." Arguments against the second view will be discussed after presenting the third view.

The third view, which is upheld in this chapter, asserts that "the great God and Savior" in Titus 2:13, is Jesus Christ and is therefore a declaration of his deity. Knight summarizes the third view of Titus 2:13: "This verse concludes with the name Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in apposition to the preceding designation, 'our great God and Savior,' thereby indicating precisely who it is of whom Paul has been writing. This is one of the infrequent, but important, occasions where Jesus is specifically designated θεός."[80] The third view has many reasons to support its claim. The following is a list of key reasons, which are presented in part to counter the arguments of the previous first and second views.

A key question to answer is, do the words "God and Savior" refer to one person or to two? Those who believe it refers to one person, which is the position held in this chapter, offer several reasons. First, the Granville Sharp rule requires that "God and Savior" refer to one person, not two. According to the Granville Sharp rule, in order for "God and Savior" to refer to two persons both "God" and "Savior" must have a definite articles preceding them.[81] However, in Titus 2:13, there is a definite article preceding "God" but not preceding "Savior." Mounce explains, "θεοῦ, 'God,' and σωτῆρος, 'savior,' are both governed by the same article, and according to Granville Sharp's rule they

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[78] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 324.

[79] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 757.

[80] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 326.

[81] For an explanation of the Granville Sharp Rule, see Harris, *Jesus as God*, 307.

therefore refer to the same person."[82] The Bible is full of other examples of the Granville

Sharp rule. For example, 2 Corinthians 1:2 says, "God and Father." There is a definite

article before God, but not before Father. According to the Granville Sharp rule, both

"God" and "Father" refer to the same person in 2 Corinthians 1:2—to the Father. In fact,

speaking of the Granville Sharp rule, Mounce declares, "There are no exceptions in the

NT to the rule."[83] So, the Granville Sharp rule indicates that "God and Savior" refer to

one person, not two.

 A second argument supporting the case that "God and Savior" refer to one

person is the use of "God and Savior" in the first century. In the first century, "God and

Savior" was a common description of various Greek gods. Mounce writes, "Since in

Hellenism it was a set phrase referring to one person and Paul is using language that places

his gospel in direct confrontation with emperor worship and Ephesian religion . . . the

phrase most likely refers to one person in this context, not two. This is how it would have

been understood in Cretan society."[84]

 A third argument indicating that "God and Savior" refer to one person is what

the New Testament teaches about the second advent. The New Testament teaches that the

second advent will be the appearance of one person, not two. Knight asserts, "The

'appearance' in the NT always refers to one person, Christ, not two."[85] In Titus 2:13, if

"God and Savior" referred to both the Father and the Son, then the second advent would

include both the Father and the Son. But this is taught nowhere in the New Testament.[86]

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[82] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 426.

[83] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 426.

[84] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 428.

[85] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 323.

[86] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 757.

A fourth argument in support of "God and Savior" as one person is what Paul says in the next verse, Titus 2:14. In Titus 2:14, Paul refers back to 2:13, as if 2:13 is speaking of only one person, Jesus Christ.[87] Speaking of Christ, Titus 2:14 says, "Who gave himself for us to redeem us." The Greek word for "himself" is singular in Titus 2:14, not plural, thus indicating that one person is in view in Titus 2:13.

Having established that "God and Savior" in Titus 2:13 refer to one person rather than two, the question is, does "God and Savior" refer to the Father or to Jesus Christ? The second view proports that "God and Savior" do not refer to Christ, but to the Father. However, in contrast to the second view, "God and Savior" in Titus 2:13 describe Jesus, not the Father. There are several reasons for this. First, Jesus is called "God and Savior" elsewhere in Scripture (2 Pet 1:1).[88] Because Jesus is called "God and Savior" elsewhere, it is not a stretch to think that Jesus is called "God and Savior" in Titus 2:13. Second, the title "Savior" is used for Jesus in the New Testament, and specifically in a number of places in the Pastoral Epistles.[89] So, "Savior" in Titus 2:13, could refer to Jesus.[90] Third, the fact that Jesus is called "Savior" points to his deity.[91] Concerning the epistle of Titus, Thomas Schreiner says, "We should note that in every instance almost immediately after God is identified as Savior, Christ is also said to be Savior. God and Christ have rescued believers from the peril of sin. The close equivalency between God and Christ suggests that Jesus shares the same status with God."[92] Fourth, the next verse,

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[87] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 323.

[88] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 430.

[89] Knight lists where Jesus is called "Savior" in Paul's writings: "Paul refers to Jesus as σωτήρ . . . six times (here; Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:4; 3:6)." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 325.

[90] The Father is also called "Savior" in the New Testament, and specifically in the Pastoral Epistles (for example, Titus 1:3, 2:10, 3:6). Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 325.

[91] Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 320.

[92] Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 320.

Titus 2:14, explains how Jesus, not the Father, acted as the Savior of the world. Speaking of "our God and Savior Jesus Christ," Titus 2:14 says, "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." In the epistle of Titus, when Paul refers to Jesus as Savior, the context speaks of an aspect of Jesus's saving activity.[93] Knight indicates that the context of Titus 2:13 (Titus 2:14), does exactly that. He writes, "Here [in Titus 2:13] Christ is called the Savior as the one who will bring the hoped-for blessedness through what he has done, as the following verse (v. 14) indicates, in his saving deed (giving himself for us) and its saving accomplishments."[94]

A fifth argument in support of the titles "God and Savior" as a referent to Christ is that Christ is called *theos* elsewhere in Scripture. Murray Harris explains, "I conclude that it is certain that the term θεός is applied to Jesus Christ in John 1:1 and John 20:28, very probable in Romans 9:5, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8, and 2 Peter 1:1, probable in John 1:18, and possible but not likely in Acts 20:28, Hebrews 1:9, and 1 John 5:20."[95] Therefore, it would not be unusual for Paul to call Jesus "God" in Titus 2:13.[96]

A sixth reason that "God and Savior" likely refer to Jesus is that the New Testament seeks to prove in a variety of ways that Jesus is God. Lea and Griffin explain,

> The fact of his deity is established by his supernatural birth; his sinless life; his fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecy; his demonstrated authority over nature, disease, demons, and death; his claim upon the attributes and prerogatives of God, including forgiving sins and judging sinners; and his resurrection from the dead and his heavenly exaltation.[97]

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[93] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 325. This is true except in Titus 1:4.

[94] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 326.

[95] Harris, *Jesus as God*, 271.

[96] Benjamin B. Warfield says, "So also Christ is called God in 1 Jno. 5:20 and Tit. 2:13." Benjamin B. Warfield, *Christology and Criticism*, vol. 3 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2008), 267.

[97] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 314.

Marshall argues that because Jesus does the acts that only God can do, it is right to refer to Jesus as God. Speaking of Titus 2:13–14 he says, "Redemption and purification are the work of Yahweh in the OT (Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2); in v. 14 these activities are transferred to Jesus and he is therefore appropriately called 'God' here."[98] It is not a surprise that Paul gives Jesus the title "God" in Titus 2:13.

A seventh reason "God and Savior" refer to Jesus is because of the title "great God" in Titus 2:13. Proponents of the first view state that "great God" cannot refer to Jesus in Titus 2:13 because in Scripture "great God" only refers to the Father. However, Harris explains that while the title "great God" is used of the Father in the Old Testament, it is never used of him in the New Testament.[99] Harris also points out that Titus 2:14 indicates why Jesus is referred to as "great God" in Titus 2:13: "In describing the atoning work of Christ, verse 14 explicates that in which the greatness of Jesus Christ as 'our God and Savior' is displayed."[100] Additionally, while Jesus is not referred to as "the great God" elsewhere in Scripture, he is called "the great shepherd" in Hebrews 13:20. While the titles "the great God" and "the great shepherd" are not equivalent, using the adjective "great" with a definite article for Jesus is not unusual.

An eighth argument indicating that "God and Savior" refer to Christ is that "Jesus Christ" is in apposition to "God and Savior." The second view teaches that "Jesus Christ" is not in apposition to "our great God and Savior." Rather, they believe "Jesus Christ" is in apposition to "the glory of our great God and Savior." If this is the case, then "God and Savior" refers to the Father and Jesus Christ is "the glory" of the Father. Mounce indicates why this is unlikely, saying this view would require "'savior' to refer to an antecedent several words back (which is possible but less probable). But since v 14

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[98] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 281.

[99] Harris, *Jesus as God*, 183.

[100] Harris, *Jesus as God*, 183.

spells out the saving work of Jesus, it is more natural to associate Ἰησοῦ, 'Jesus,' with the closer σωτῆρος, 'savior,' and not with τῆς δόξης τοῦ . . . θεοῦ, 'glory of God.'"[101] Marshall also argues against the notion that Jesus is the "glory" of the Father in Titus 2:13: "There is no epiphany of God's glory and grace apart from that in Christ. The NT does not know a future hope of the epiphany of God (the Father). God brings about the epiphany of his Son rather than himself appearing along with him."[102] Additionally, "the glory" is never used as a title of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, so it is unlikely it is a title of Christ in Titus 2:13.[103]

A final reason to take "God and Savior" as referring to "Jesus Christ" in Titus 2:13, is its similarity with Philippians 3:20. Philippians 3:20 is a similar verse to Titus 2:13 in that both speak of Christ's second coming, both speak of "Savior," and both mention "Jesus Christ." Philippians 3:20 says, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." In this verse, "Savior" is in apposition to "Jesus Christ," which indicates that it would not be unnatural to take "Savior" in apposition with "Jesus Christ" in Titus 2:13 as well.[104]

After looking at the details of Titus 2:13 it is appropriate to take "God and Savior" as a referent to Jesus Christ. Harris summarizes this well:

> In the light of the foregoing evidence, it seems highly probable that in Titus 2:13 Jesus Christ is called "our great God and Savior," a verdict shared, with varying degrees of assurance, by almost all grammarians and lexicographers, many commentators, and many writers on NT theology or Christology, although there are some dissenting voices.[105]

As such, Titus 2:13 teaches that it is fitting to refer to Jesus Christ as God.

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[101] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 431.

[102] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 281.

[103] Harris, *Jesus as God*, 178.

[104] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 326.

[105] Harris, *Jesus as God*, 85.

Penal Substitutionary Atonement (Isa 52:13–53:12)

Penal substitutionary atonement (PSA) is a foundational and crucial doctrine of the Christian faith. David Allen states, "The doctrine of the atonement of Christ is the heart of Christianity."[106] Stephen Holmes describes PSA in the following way: "The term *penal substitution* denotes a way of talking about the cross in terms of crime and punishment: we have broken God's law, and deserve to be punished for that, but God in his love provides a substitute, his own Son, who will take the punishment so that we don't have to."[107] PSA is taught throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament. John Murray says, "The one passage in the Old Testament that above all others delineates the pattern of Christ's atonement is Isaiah 53."[108] Therefore, when seeking to understand Christ's atonement, Isaiah 53 is a crucial scripture to study. In Isaiah 52:13–53:12, Isaiah prophesied that the Christ would suffer and die as the PSA for humanity's sins.[109]

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is the fourth and final servant song in the book of Isaiah.[110] It is called a servant song because it speaks about God's servant, saying, "Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted" (52:13). The question is, who is God's servant in this Scripture? People have offered several possibilities for the servant's identity, such as the prophet Isaiah or the nation of Israel. However, the servant is not Isaiah or Israel because the servant is not only human, but

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[106] David L. Allen, *The Atonement: A Biblical, Theological, and Historical Study of the Cross of Christ* (Nashville: B & H, 2019), xvii.

[107] Stephen R. Holmes, *The Wondrous Cross: Atonement and Penal Substitution in the Bible and History* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007), 4.

[108] John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (1955; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 14.

[109] The important question of the extent of Christ's atonement is beyond the scope of this project. The focus of this chapter is that Christ's atonement is both substitutionary and penal. For discussion on the extent of Christ's atonement see Allen, *The Atonement*; David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

[110] Allen, *The Atonement*, 36.

also divine. J. Alec Motyer states, "The Servant is truly human and truly divine."[111] The fact that the servant is divine is seen in what God says about him in Isaiah 52:13: "He shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted." These words from verse 13 are found three other times in Isaiah. Each time they refer to Yahweh.[112] Franz Delitzsch indicates that the servant is not the nation of Israel because "whenever we find a 'we' introduced abruptly in the midst of a prophecy, it is always Israel that speaks."[113] For example, Isaiah 53:6 says, "we," which is Israel speaking and contrasts it with "him," which refers to the servant. Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." So, if this servant is not Isaiah or Israel, who is he? He is the Christ. David Allen explains, "In the OT, the types and symbols given in the Passover, the Day of Atonement, the tabernacle, and the entire sacrificial system—culminating with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53—point unmistakably to the person and work of Christ in the NT where they find their complete fulfillment in the new covenant inaugurated by the cross."[114] The suffering servant in Isaiah 53, is one who is both human and divine—Jesus Christ.

For the suffering servant, Jesus Christ, to be an acceptable substitute for the sins of others, he had to meet certain requirements. First, Christ had to be sinless. Motyer explains, "Only the perfect can accept and discharge the spiritual/religious obligations of another; an imperfection incurs personal obligation and disqualifies the imperfect from the gracious task of substitution."[115] Isaiah 53:9 shows that the suffering servant fulfilled this

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[111] J. Alec Motyer, "'Stricken for the Transgression of My People': The Atoning Work of Isaiah's Suffering Servant," in Gibson and Gibson, *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, 251.

[112] Allen, *The Atonement*, 37.

[113] Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Keil and Delitzsch Commentaries on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1877), 2:310.

[114] Allen, *The Atonement*, 47.

[115] Motyer, "Stricken for the Transgression of My People," 253.

qualification, saying, "He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth." Second, the servant had to be acceptable to God, who had been offended.[116] God had to be satisfied with the sacrifice. Yahweh showed that he received the servant as the perfectly acceptable offering by what is said in Isaiah 53:6: "The LORD has laid on him [the servant] the iniquity of us all."[117] Third, the servant had to voluntarily offer himself as a substitute for the people. Motyer points out the servant's voluntary attitude in Isaiah 53:7: "The verbs in verse 7 are in the Niphal mode, often used, as here, to express what the grammarians call a 'tolerative' sense—'he let himself be brutalized.'"[118] Allen indicates that Isaiah 53:4 also points to the voluntary nature of the servant's actions: "Isaiah's use of the active voice in Isa 53:4 as distinct from the passive voice in the surrounding context makes it clear that the Servant's choice to take the sins of the people upon Himself was *his own* decision and act."[119] Because of these factors, God accepted his servant, Jesus Christ, as the substitute for sinners.

The fact that God's servant was an acceptable substitute for sinners raises the question of the meaning of substitution. Substitution is central to PSA. Holmes gives a simple explanation of the concept of Jesus as a substitute, noting that in Scripture "Jesus is sometimes pictured as our substitute: he does things so that we don't have to."[120] Isaiah 53 emphasizes the substitutionary aspect of Christ's atonement. Motyer explains just how heavily Isaiah 53 emphasizes substitutionary atonement: "Isaiah is content to make the principle of substitution the centerpiece of his portrait of the Servant's work."[121] The

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[116] Motyer, "Stricken for the Transgression of My People," 254.

[117] Motyer, "Stricken for the Transgression of My People," 254.

[118] Motyer, "Stricken for the Transgression of My People," 256.

[119] Allen, *The Atonement*, 38.

[120] Holmes, *The Wonderous Cross*, 42.

[121] Motyer, "Stricken for the Transgression of My People," 253.

servant song is saturated with substitutionary language. In Isaiah 53, the author speaks of the substitutionary nature of Christ's atonement twelve times.[122] For example, within verses 4–5 alone six statements are made about Christ as a substitute for people. Verse 4 has two statements about the substitutionary nature of the servant's work: "Surely he has borne our griefs . . . [and] carried our sorrows." Verse 5 has four substitutionary statements: "But he was wounded for our transgressions . . . he was crushed for our iniquities . . . upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace . . . and with his stripes we are healed." John Oswalt speaks about the substitutionary aspect of verses 4 and 5, saying the Israelites "had thought God was punishing this man for his own sins and failures [verse 4], but in fact he was *pierced through* as a result of our rebellion; he was *crushed* on account of our twistedness [verse 5]."[123] Because of the emphasis on substitution in verse 5, this verse can only be understood with the concept of substitution.[124] Speaking of the final line in verse 5, "with his stripes we are healed," Oswalt writes, "The Servant is not suffering with his people—he is suffering for them, procuring for them through his suffering what they cannot procure for themselves."[125] Isaiah 53 clearly shows that the work of the servant was substitutionary, on behalf of others.

The question then is, in what way was the servant a substitute for sinners? The answer is found in the word "penal." Gary Smith explains how the servant's substitution was penal: "This act was penal, for it involved a just punishment for rebellious acts."[126] In other words, people performed rebellious acts and deserved God's just punishment for

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[122] Allen, *The Atonement*, 45.

[123] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 387.

[124] J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 378.

[125] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 388.

[126] Gary Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, New American Commentary, vol. 15B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 450.

doing so. However, Jesus took God's just punishment upon himself in place of the rebellious people so they would not have to receive God's just punishment against their rebellion. This penal substitution is seen in Isaiah 53 in several ways. First, his suffering was the result of sin—the sins of others, not his own. That he suffered for sin is seen in verse 5: "But he was wounded for our transgressions." Speaking of verse 5, Motyer notes, "Our *transgressions* were the cause, his suffering to death the effect."[127] Second, the fact that the servant's substitution was penal is also seen in that humanity's sin was transferred to him. This is seen in verse 4: "Surely he has borne our griefs"; verse 6: "The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all"; verse 11: "He shall bear their iniquities"; and in verse 12: "He bore the sins of many." The Day of Atonement is the backdrop of this transfer of sin to the suffering servant, specifically when the High Priest placed his hands on the head of the goat and transferred Israel's sins upon it (Lev 16:21).[128] Third, the fact that Christ's suffering was penal is seen in that he took the punishment sinners deserved upon himself. One way this is seen in Isaiah 53 is with the word "chastisement" in verse 5. John Goldingay and David Payne disagree with this understanding of chastisement, noting that the Hebrew word for chastisement in verse 5 does not mean punishment but "is more a word for the disciplining of a pupil by a teacher or a child by a parent with a view to the recipient's growth or reform."[129] However, Oswalt indicates that the Hebrew word for "chastisement" "does not always imply 'punishment,' [but] it frequently does. . . . It is the discipline of a child by a parent up to and including punishment. Here the context demands this understanding." [130] In other words, in the

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[127] Motyer, *Isaiah*, 378.

[128] Allen, *The Atonement*, 40.

[129] John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 307.

[130] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 388.

context of Isaiah 53, the Hebrew word for "chastisement" means punishment.[131] Fourth, the fact that the servant's substitution was penal is also seen in the type of punishment he experienced—death. Verse 5 says that the servant was "pierced." Concerning the Hebrew word for "pierced," Delitzsch says, "There are no stronger expressions to be found in the [Hebrew] language, to denote a violent and painful death."[132] Larry Walker says that the word "'pierced' conveys the idea of 'pierced through,' or 'wounded to death.'"[133] Therefore, the suffering that the servant experienced on behalf of others was penal.

Isaiah 53 also speaks of the wonderful results of Christ's PSA for sin. For example, speaking of the positive results of Christ's suffering in verse 5 (peace, healed), Oswalt writes that the servant "is not merely participating in their suffering, he is bearing it away for them so that they may not labor under its effects anymore. He took the punishment that made it possible for us to have well-being, and he has taken the infected welts so that ours could be healed."[134] Another wonderful result of Christ's PSA is that Christ dealt with sin completely. He paid the entire debt.[135] Motyer summarizes the beautiful benefits of Christ's PSA described in Isaiah 53: the "'punishment of our peace' means punishment which secured peace with God for us. This peace was lost (48:18) by disobedience, and, since it cannot be enjoyed by the wicked (48:22), the Servant stepped forward (49:1) to bring us back to God (49:6). This is what he achieved by his substitutionary, penal sufferings."[136]

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[131] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 388.

[132] Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on The Prophet Isaiah*, 2:318.

[133] Larry L. Walker, *Isaiah*, in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 8, *Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Lamentations*, ed. Philip Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2005), 230.

[134] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 388.

[135] Motyer, "Stricken for the Transgression of My People," 257.

[136] Motyer, *Isaiah*, 378.

Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor 15:13–19)

Some want to remove the resurrection of Christ from Christianity. They believe removing it will make Christianity more acceptable to people in the scientific and naturalistic modern era.[137] The question is, can Christianity exist without Christ's resurrection? Can people follow a Jesus who lived, taught, performed miracles, died on a cross, was buried, and remained dead? New Testament scholar Gordan Fee answers, no: "To deny Christ's resurrection is tantamount to a denial of Christian existence altogether."[138] A key Scripture that express the necessity of Christ's resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15. Gary Habermas states, "The chief passage addressing the centrality of the resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15."[139] He then says that, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is clear that "the truth or falsity of Christianity depends on the resurrection."[140] In 1 Corinthians 15:12–19, Paul teaches that Christ's bodily resurrection is essential to the Christian faith.

While many scriptures speak of the resurrection of Christ, 1 Corinthians 15 is unique because it details reasons why Christianity cannot be a viable religion without Christ's resurrection. Paul addresses the issue of Christ's resurrection because certain people in the Corinthian church claimed that believers who died would not rise from the dead. This is seen in Paul's question in 1 Corinthians 15:12: "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" The words "some of you" indicate it was not the whole Corinthian church that denied the resurrection, nor was it a majority of the church.[141] Concerning the group that denied the resurrection, Simon Kistemaker and William Hendriksen observe the following about the

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[137] Gordan D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 475.

[138] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 475.

[139] Gary R. Habermas, *Heart of New Testament Doctrine*, vol. 1 of *The Resurrection* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000), 13.

[140] Habermas, *Heart of New Testament Doctrine*, 14.

[141] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 740.

doctrine of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15: "In view of the lengthy discourse on this particular doctrine, we assume that these Corinthians were influential."[142] In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul does not explain exactly what this influential group was saying, but David Garland describes, "We can reconstruct what they denied about the resurrection and the reasons behind this denial only by making inferences from Paul's reply."[143] They appeared to have believed that when believers die, their bodies remain dead, never to resurrect, yet their spirits go to heaven to be with Christ.[144] So, this small, influential group of people in the church of Corinth taught that people do not rise from the dead.

In 1 Corinthians 15:13–19, Paul builds a logical argument against the false teaching that believers will not rise from the dead.[145] He begins by revealing what it would mean for the resurrection of Christ if God does not raise people from the dead. This is seen in verse 13, which says, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised." Commenting on the false teachers in this verse, Schreiner writes, "Those who reject the future physical resurrection of believers also deny the physical resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:13, 15–16), even if they claim to support the latter."[146] Then, in verses 14–19, Paul explains the negative implications on Christianity if Christ was not resurrected.[147] In these verses, Paul gives several powerful reasons for the necessity of the resurrection of Christ for the validity of the Christian faith.

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[142] Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953–2001), 540.

[143] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 698.

[144] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 699.

[145] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 740.

[146] Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 107.

[147] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 738.

Paul's first argument for the necessity of Christ's resurrection is that if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then the preaching of the apostles was groundless and empty.[148] This is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:14, which reads, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." Leon Morris says that the Greek word for vain (*kenon*), means "empty."[149] According to Garland, empty preaching means that it is "devoid of any spiritual value."[150] In other words, without the resurrection, the Christian message has nothing to offer. It is empty, void. Fee indicates that the word *kenon* includes the idea of "without basis."[151] In other words, without Christ's resurrection, the Christian message has nothing to support it. In verse 14, Paul goes on to say that if Christ has not been raised, not only is the apostles' message empty, but so is the Corinthians' faith. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Your faith is in vain." If their faith is based on a groundless, empty message, then their faith is just as groundless and empty as the message they believed in.

Paul's second reason for the necessity of Christ's resurrection is that if Christ has not been raised from the dead, he and the other apostles are false witnesses for God. This is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:15, where Paul says, "We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised." According to Fee, part of what Paul is saying in verse 15 is that if Christ is not risen, then he and the other apostles "have accused God falsely of doing something he did not in fact do."[152] If Christ remained dead, then the apostles were liars and impostors like the false prophets of the Old Testament (Deut 18:20–

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[148] Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 541.

[149] Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 203.

[150] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 701.

[151] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 742.

[152] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 742.

22), and the false apostles of the New Testament (1 John 5:10).[153] Therefore, if Christ was not raised from the dead, then Christianity is a false religion.

Paul's third argument about the necessity of Christ's resurrection is that if Christ was not raised, then Christ's death provides no forgiveness of sin. This is seen in verse 17: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." Paul begins verse 17 by repeating a similar idea to what he said in verse 15. In verse 14 he says, "Your faith is in vain." In verse 17 he says, "Your faith is futile." The word *futile* is from the Greek word *mataios*, which means *useless*,[154] *worthless*.[155] In the rest of verse 17, Paul explains in what way their faith is useless: "You are still in your sins." While the ESV includes the conjunction "and" in verse 17 between "your faith is futile" and "you are still in your sins," there is no *kai* between these two clauses in the Greek. So according to Morris, Paul's words "you are still in your sins" mean "faith in Christ is a fruitless exercise if the result is *you are still in your sins*."[156] To remain "in your sins" means that Christ's death on the cross did not accomplish forgiveness of sins.[157] Why would Christ's death not accomplish forgiveness of sins if he was not risen? Fee answers this question: "As in Rom. 4:25 and 5:10, the death of Jesus as 'for us,' including both justification and sanctification, is inextricably bound together with his resurrection. To deny the one is to deny the other."[158] So, if Christ was not raised, then his death would have provided no forgiveness for sinners whatsoever.

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[153] Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 543.

[154] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 743.

[155] Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 544.

[156] Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 203–4.

[157] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 743.

[158] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 743–44.

Paul's fourth reason for the necessity of Christ's resurrection is that if Christ remained dead, then believers who have already died are not with Christ in heaven. This is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:18: "Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." The words "fallen asleep" were a euphemism used in the New Testament to refer to physical death.[159] To fall asleep "in Christ" refers to people who were believers in Christ when they died.[160] Garland explains what it means that they "have perished": "If Christ has not been raised, then those who 'fall asleep in Christ' are no different from unbelievers, who are consigned to doom and ruin."[161] Paul's logical argument in verses 17–18 is this: if Christ has not been resurrected, then Christ's death did not accomplish forgiveness of sins for those who believed in him. And if Christ's death did not bring about forgiveness, then all who believed in Christ are excluded from heaven and condemned to hell.[162]

Paul's final argument in 1 Corinthians 15, for the necessity of Christ's resurrection is if Christ remained dead, then believers in Christ have no hope of life with him in heaven after death. This is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:19: "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." To "have hope in this life only" means for believers to have hope of going to heaven when they die, but when they die, they find that their hope was untrue. They were not welcomed into heaven.[163] If their hopes were dashed in this way, then they should "be pitied" more than anyone else. So, if Christ has not been raised, then those who believe in him have no true hope of heaven.

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[159] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 689.

[160] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 744.

[161] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 702.

[162] Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 107.

[163] Kistemaker and Hendriksen, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 546.

In conclusion, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a secondary or tertiary doctrine that can be discarded to make Christianity more appealing to people in the twenty-first century. For those who discard the resurrection of Christ, Fee says, the religion they end up with "is no longer the Christian faith, which predicates divine forgiveness through Christ's death on his resurrection."[164] Therefore, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is an essential doctrine. Without it there is no salvation, there is no hope.

Justification by Faith (Rom 3:28)

One of the five *solas* of the Protestant Reformation was justification by faith alone.[165] Today, the Catholic Church, Christian cults, and some Protestants teach that justification is not by faith alone. They believe people are justified by faith plus human effort. However, Scripture declares that justification is by faith, not by works. For example, Romans 3:28 says, "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." Robert Mounce says that Romans 3:28 is "in summary form Paul's basic premise—by faith we are justified quite apart from keeping the law."[166] In Romans 3:28 Paul succinctly asserts that justification is by faith alone without any human work or effort.

To understand Romans 3:28 it is important to begin by defining "justification." To understand justification, it is necessary to look at the word in the context of Romans as well as at other related Scriptures.[167] Schreiner provides a helpful definition of justification: "Justification means that one is declared to be in the right by God as the

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[164] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 745.

[165] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:748.

[166] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 119.

[167] Justification and its other forms: justify, justified, justifies.

divine judge."[168] To understand this definition, several aspects of justification must be explained. First, justification is related to righteousness. In his definition of justification, Schreiner includes the words "declared to be in the right," which mean declared to be righteous. What is "righteousness?" To begin, righteousness is an attribute of God as seen in Psalm 11:7, which declares, "For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face." John Piper says that God's righteousness "is his commitment to do what is right."[169] God is righteous in all his ways, always doing and saying what is right. He has given people his righteous commands in Scripture, which are based on his righteousness. This is seen in Psalm 119:137, which proclaims, "Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules." To obey his righteous commands is to do what is right/righteous in God's sight as David sings in Psalm 23:3, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

So, God is righteous, and he has given his righteous commands that people may obey them. However, people are unrighteous; they disobey God's righteous rules. As Romans 3:10 exclaims, "None is righteous, no, not one." How does the righteous God respond to those who have broken his righteous rules? Paul gives the answer in Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." The result is estrangement from the kingdom of God and condemnation to hell. Paul asks, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor 6:9). This is the state of all mankind because "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23).

The good news is that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to save people from the terrible plight of condemnation. Three primary acts of Christ brought about salvation for

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[168] Thomas Schreiner, *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters*, Five Solas (Grand Rapids Zondervan, 2015), 155.

[169] John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 164.

believers: (1) as the God-man, Jesus did what no other human could do—he lived a life of perfect righteousness, never to sin (Heb 7:26); (2) Jesus died for humanity's sins on the cross, "the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18); and (3) Jesus rose from the grave on the third day (1 Cor 15:4). Through these three acts of Christ, God justifies believers. How is this so? This is explained in the doctrines of union with Christ and imputation, which are explained later in this chapter.

The second aspect of justification that must be explained is a believer's union with Christ. Grudem defines union with Christ as "a phrase used to summarize several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation."[170] A phrase in the New Testament that often refers to a believer's union with Christ is "in Christ."[171] Those who are in Christ are united with Christ and therefore receive the benefits of Christ. One of the many benefits believers have from their union with Christ is justification/righteousness. For example, this is seen in the words "in him" in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." In other words, "in him," in union with Christ, a believer becomes "the righteousness of God"; that is, he becomes justified.[172]

How is it that a believer's union with Christ results in his or her justification? The doctrine of imputation answers this question. Imputation is the third aspect of justification that must be explained. This doctrine means that something from one person is counted to, reconned to, or transferred to another person.[173] The word "impute" comes from the Greek word *logizomai*. Piper explains, "The Greek word λογίζομαι can be

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[170] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1031–32.

[171] Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 316.

[172] Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 180.

[173] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 45.

translated 'count' or 'reckon' or 'impute.'"[174] Using the word *logizomai* in Romans 4:5, Paul speaks of God imputing righteousness to a believer.[175] Romans 4:5 says, "And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness." This verse explains two key elements in imputation. First, God "justifies the ungodly." It is not the godly/righteous that he justifies—it is the ungodly/unrighteous person that he justifies.[176] Second, by a person's faith, righteousness is imputed to him as seen in the words, "his faith is counted as righteousness." Piper speaks of the imputation of righteousness by faith in Romans 4:5, saying, "The key statement is that not working but trusting results in righteousness being reckoned to our account."[177] Many other verses assert that it is by faith that people are justified, as Romans 3:28 summarizes, "For we hold that one is justified by faith."[178]

Now that it has been established that God imputes righteousness to those who have faith, a question arises: whose righteousness is imputed to believers? The answer is, Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who believe in him. This is where Christ's sinless life and his death for humanity's sin applies to justification. Christ lived a sinless, righteous life. When a person believes in Christ, the righteousness that Christ achieved through living a sinless life is imputed to/credited to the believer in Christ. Piper explains how Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers: "Our righteousness before God, our justification, is not based on what we have done, but on what Christ did. His righteous act, his obedience, is counted as ours. We are counted, or appointed, righteous in him."[179]

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[174] Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 168.

[175] Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 168.

[176] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 189.

[177] Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 168.

[178] Scriptures asserting that justification is by faith include many verses such as Rom 3:26, 30; 4:5; 5:1; Gal 2:16; 3:11, 24.

[179] Piper, *The Future of Justification*, 170.

The imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers is seen in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." This verse speaks of a two-way imputation: humanity's sins were imputed to Christ on the cross and Christ's righteousness was imputed to people who believe. Speaking of this two-way imputation in 2 Corinthians 5:21, George Ladd writes,

> We might say that our sins were reckoned to Christ. He, although sinless, identified himself with our sins, suffered their penalty and doom—death. So we have reckoned to us Christ's righteousness even though in character and deed we remain sinners. It is an unavoidable logical conclusion that men of faith are justified because Christ's righteousness is imputed to them.[180]

Christ's righteousness, achieved through his sinless life, is imputed to believers and humanity's sins were imputed to Christ.

A fourth aspect of justification that must be explained is its forensic nature. The righteousness that is imputed to believers is forensic. That it is forensic means that it is declarative. In other words, justification does not mean that God transforms a believer from unrighteous to righteous, making him or her a righteous person.[181] Rather, justification is forensic, meaning that God declares a sinner to be righteous. It is not that the believer is actually righteous in himself—it is that Christ's righteousness was imputed to him. Speaking of Romans 3:28, which says, "For we hold that one is justified by faith," Schreiner notes, "The word 'justify' here clearly means 'declare righteous,' which indicates that the word is forensic rather than transformative."[182] Schreiner puts "forensic" in other words, saying, "The righteousness of a believer is extrinsic rather than intrinsic; it is declared instead of being inherent."[183] Justification is the declaration of a believer's

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[180] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 450.

[181] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 164.

[182] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 164.

[183] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 43.

righteousness because in union with Christ the believer has Christ's righteousness, not his own righteousness.

After looking at the definition of justification and seeing that it is by faith, another question arises: does human effort play any role in a believer's justification? In other words, is a believer's justification by faith plus works of some sort? The second half of Romans 3:28 answers this question. After speaking of justification by faith Paul says, "Apart from works of the law." This second half of Romans 3:28 raises several questions. To begin, what does "apart from" mean? The words "apart from" are translated from the Greek word *choris*. According to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, in the context of Romans 3:28, *choris* means "without relation to or connection with someth., independent(ly) of someth."[184] This *Lexicon* then translates "apart from works of the law" as "without regard to the observance of the law."[185] In other words, justification is by faith with no relation to or connection with works of the law.[186] Speaking of "apart from works of the law," Schreiner notes that Paul is explaining, "*how* one is not right with God. We do not stand in the right before God by means of the law, by means of works, or by means of works of law."[187] What Paul says in Romans 3:28, then, is one of the reasons why the reformers emphasized justification by faith alone.[188]

Another question that is raised by the second half of Romans 3:28 ("apart from works of the law") is this: what law is Paul referring to? In Romans 3:28, "the law" refers

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[184] William F. Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 1095.

[185] Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1095.

[186] Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Louis Kregel, 1882), 156.

[187] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 245.

[188] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:748.

to the entire Mosaic Law. Mark Seifrid explains, "Most of the occurrences of *nomos* in Paul's letters refer to the law of Moses."[189] Additionally, the context of Romans 3 speaks of the Mosaic Law.[190] However, some believe that "the law" in Romans 3:28, refers to a limited number of laws within the Mosaic Law. For example, James Dunn writes that "works of the law" in Romans 3:28, "depicts works of the law as marking the boundary between Jew and Gentile."[191] By boundaries "between Jew and Gentile" Dunn refers to the Mosaic laws that exclude Gentiles from Jews, such as circumcision and dietary laws. Schreiner gives several arguments against Dunn's view. For example, Schreiner looks at the context of Romans 2 and 3 and says, what Paul confronts the Jews about

> is their disobedience to the Torah (2:21–24). And the sins he puts under the searchlight are *moral infractions of the law*: stealing, adultery, and robbing temples. Paul could have easily said that he was troubled by Jewish nationalism and ethnocentricism, but instead he complains about their failure to keep the law—their disobedience. All of this suggests that works of law refer to the entire law.[192]

So, "works of the law" in Romans 3:28, refer to the entire Mosaic Law, not just to the Mosaic laws that marked boundaries between Jews and Gentiles.

Roman Catholics believe that "the law" in Romans 3:28, refers only to the ceremonial laws of the Mosaic Law, not to the moral laws. The idea is that believers do not need to keep the ceremonial laws to be justified. However, according to Roman Catholics, believers need to obey the moral laws of the Mosaic Law to be justified.[193] John Calvin argued against this Roman Catholic position in his day. He spoke of the Roman Catholics view of "apart from works of the law," saying that they "prate that the

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[189] Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 9 (Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 96.

[190] Schreiner, *Romans*, 202.

[191] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38a (Dallas: Word, 2000), 188.

[192] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 101.

[193] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 98.

ceremonial works of the law are excluded, not the moral works."[194] Calvin gave several arguments against the Roman Catholic view. For example, he pointed to what Romans 3:20 says about "works of the law." Romans 3:20 says, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." It is not only the ceremonial laws that give "knowledge of sin," the entire Mosaic Law, including the moral laws, give "knowledge of sin."[195] He concludes his discussion of the meaning of "works of the law" by saying, "Therefore, let us hold as certain that when the ability to justify is denied to the law, these words ["works of the law"] refer to the whole law."[196] Therefore, "the law" in Romans 3:28, refers to the entire Mosaic Law, not only to the ceremonial ordinances of the Mosaic Law.

Knowing that "the law" in Romans 3:28, refers to the Mosaic Law, what does "works of" the Mosaic Law mean? Seifrid answers this question: "The expression 'works of the law' refers to 'deeds done in obedience to the law of Moses.'"[197] In other words, "works of the law" refers to a person's efforts to obey the laws of Moses. Seifrid further explains, "We may think of 'works of the law' in general terms as including adherence to the prohibitions against murder, adultery, theft, idolatry and the like, along with circumcision, Sabbath-keeping and food laws."[198] So, "works of the law" in Romans 3:28, refer to a person's efforts to obey the specific commandments of the Law of Moses.

While Romans 3:28 is directly speaking of seeking justification by works of the Mosaic Law, can it also apply to seeking justification through works in general, not limited to the Mosaic Law? Douglas Moo answers this question, noting that "works of

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[194] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:749.

[195] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:749.

[196] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:749.

[197] Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 100.

[198] Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 100.

the law" "ultimately connotes anything a person does in obedience to the law and, by extrapolation, anything a person does."[199] He explains why he thinks "works of the law" can extrapolate beyond the Mosaic Law to "anything a person does": "The contrast in this verse [between faith and works] therefore supports a fundamental Pauline antithesis: between believing on the one hand and all forms of human 'doing' on the other."[200] In other words, Paul's broader argument in Romans is that justification is by faith, not by any form of human works. That people cannot be justified by any type of good works is seen in Romans 4:2–5.[201] Schreiner explains that when Paul "comes to Romans 4 Paul no longer refers to works of law. The subject is works in general, so that the issue is whether Abraham 'was justified by works' (4:2). It makes perfect sense that Paul drops the phrase 'works of law,' for Abraham wasn't under the Mosaic law."[202] Paul's point is that faith in Christ alone results in justification—obedience to the Mosaic Law or performing any other good work does not lead to justification. Charles Hodge summarizes this point well: "To be justified without works, is to be justified without anything in ourselves to merit justification."[203]

Conclusion

While many more scriptures could be studied on these six foundational doctrines, the purpose and prescribed length of this project limits this chapter to six passages. The six passages studied in this chapter 2—2 Timothy 3:16, Matthew 28:19, Titus 2:13, Isaiah 52:13–53:12, 1 Corinthians 15:13–19, and Romans 3:28—lay the

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[199] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 271.

[200] Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 271.

[201] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 104.

[202] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 104.

[203] Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 156.

foundation for training the small group leaders of Laurelglen Bible Church in these six fundamental doctrines.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL
ISSUES RELATED TO DOCTRINES

Six fundamental doctrines will be discussed in this chapter in five sections. The five sections include the inerrancy of Scripture, the Trinity and the deity of Christ, penal substitutionary atonement, Christ's resurrection, and justification by faith alone. The Trinity and the deity of Christ are dealt with in the same section because they are so closely related. The historical background and apologetic arguments in this chapter give credibility to the historic, orthodox beliefs of the six foundational doctrines. In order to defend the six foundational doctrines, it is helpful to know the historic creeds and the apologetic arguments presented in this chapter.

The Inerrancy of Scripture

One of the most critical questions a person can ask is this: is the Bible trustworthy and true? If it is, then the Bible is God's authoritative Word that can be trusted and from which sound doctrine can be understood, taught, and obeyed. In the 1960s and 1970s, an increasing number of churches and Christian academic institutions in America upheld the notion that the Bible contained a mixture of both truth and error. To combat this increasing trend of disbelief in the Bible's full truthfulness, Christians who held firmly to the inerrancy of Scripture gathered to write and affirm a document they called the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI). The CSBI is a short statement of nineteen affirmations and denials that define inerrancy and explain why the Scriptures are inerrant.

Jay Grimstead,[1] a signer of the CSBI, explains the significance of the CSBI, saying it was

> a landmark church document, which was created in 1978 by the then largest, broadest, group of evangelical protestant scholars that ever came together to create a common, theological document in the 20th century. It is probably the first systematically comprehensive, broadly based, scholarly, creed-like statement on the inspiration and authority of Scripture in the history of the church.[2]

Albert Mohler praises the CSBI, saying, "I believe that the CSBI remains the quintessential statement of biblical inerrancy and that its clearly defined language remains essential to the health of evangelicalism and the integrity of the Christian church."[3] Because of the great significance of the CSBI, it is important to know what it says and to affirm it.[4]

In the mid to late twentieth century, a major influence against the inerrancy of the Bible was neoorthodoxy. Neoorthodoxy proports that the words of the Bible are not God's words, but are man's fallible words, which act as a witness to God's Word.[5] R. C. Sproul explains the neo-orthodox position concerning the Bible, stating that they believe "revelation does not occur until there is an inward, subjective human response to that Word."[6] The words of the Bible become God's Word when a person feels God is speaking to him through the Bible. They believe that the Bible is fallible when it speaks of things

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[1] Jay Grimstead was a founder of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI), the organization that launched the conference in Chicago where the CSBI was written. Grimstead was also instrumental in organizing the conference in Chicago and urging many of the scholars to attend. Grimstead himself was a signer of the CSBI.

[2] Jay Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began," Coalition on Revival, February 6, 2018, https://www.reformation.net/articles-by-j-grimstead/how-the-international-council-on-biblical-inerrancy-began.

[3] R. Albert Mohler Jr., "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic View of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. James R. Merrick and Stephen F. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 36.

[4] International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," Dallas Theological Seminary, October 28, 1978, https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI-1978-11-07.pdf.

[5] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

[6] R. C. Sproul, *Can I Trust the Bible?*, Crucial Questions 2 (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2009), 10.

such as history, ethics, and science.[7] From the 1940s to the 1960s many American theologians went to universities in Europe to earn PhDs and learned neoorthodoxy from their professors.[8] These American theologians returned to the US and became professors in seminaries in which they taught a neo-orthodox view of Scripture. In *The Battle for the Bible*, Harold Lindsell documents and exposes how far reaching a fallible view of Scripture had infiltrated many evangelical institutions by the 1970s: "This change of position with respect to the infallibility of the Bible is widespread and has occurred in evangelical denominations, Christian colleges, theological seminaries, publishing houses, and learned societies."[9]

Because of the major influence in the evangelical church of the neo-orthodox view of Scripture, in 1977 concerned evangelicals formed the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI).[10] One way ICBI sought to combat neo-orthodoxy and promote inerrancy was to invite several hundred Christian scholars and leaders to a major national conference on biblical inerrancy.[11] The plan for a conference was realized in October of 1978 in Chicago, where ICBI gathered 268 Christian scholars.[12] At the conference fourteen scholars gave lectures on the significance and meaning of biblical inerrancy.[13] Additionally, R. C. Sproul presented a draft of nineteen affirmations and denials

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[7] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

[8] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

[9] Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 20.

[10] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

[11] Jay Grimstead, "Falsehoods That Neo-Orthodox and Liberalized Evangelicals Want Us to Believe about the Bible," Coalition on Revival, February 4, 2018, https://www.reformation.net/articles-by-j-grimstead/falsehoods-that-neo-orthodox-and-liberalized-evangelicals-want-us-to-believe-about-the-bible.

[12] Roger R. Nicole, forward to Sproul, *Can I Trust the Bible?*, viii.

[13] Norman L. Geisler, preface to *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), ix.

concerning inerrancy that he had framed.[14] The scholars discussed, refined, and crafted

the nineteen affirmations and denials into an official statement on biblical inerrancy.[15]

Once the nineteen articles were completed, 240 of the 268 scholars at the conference

signed the CSBI.[16] After the CSBI was written, ICBI asked Sproul to write a brief

commentary of the nineteen articles of the CSBI.[17]

The CSBI indicates that the basis of Scripture's inerrancy is its inspiration. The

CSBI emphasizes the significance of inspiration by addressing it in eight of its nineteen

articles.[18] Article VII explains what inspiration means: "We affirm that inspiration was

the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin

of Scripture is divine."[19] The CSBI states the extent to which Scriptures are inspired in

Article VI: "We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words

of the original,[20] were given by divine inspiration."[21] Article VIII describes the human

role in inspiration: "We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive

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[14] Norman L. Geisler and R. C. Sproul, forward to *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy: The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy, Hermeneutics, and Application with Official ICBI Commentary* (Arlington, TX: Bastion, 2013), Kindle.

[15] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

[16] Nicole, forward to Sproul, *Can I Trust the Bible?*, viii. To view the handwritten signatures of those who signed the CSBI, see International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: Signatures," Dallas Theological Seminary, accessed September 16, 2023, https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1_sigs.pdf.

[17] Sproul's commentary on the CSBI is found in Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 78.

[18] Articles 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 15 in the CSBI address the doctrine of inspiration.

[19] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 7.

[20] The original documents of the sixty-six books of the Bible no longer exist. However, to the degree that the manuscripts accurately reflect the original, the manuscripts are considered inspired as well. Due to the process of textual criticism some Bible scholars estimate that there is more than 99 percent accuracy in the Hebrew and Greek eclectic tests that exist today. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 92.

[21] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 94.

personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared. We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities."[22] Therefore, it is because the words of Scripture are God's inspired words that the Bible is inerrant and authoritative.

The CSBI explains and defines inerrancy in a number of its articles. Article XII defines inerrancy: "We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud or deceit. We deny that biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science."[23] Therefore, inerrancy means that the Bible is without error in all that it asserts, including the areas of history and science. The Exposition in the CSBI gives the following definition of inerrancy: "*Inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions."[24] Article XIII indicates that the Bible is inerrant even though it contains "phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations."[25] The CSBI also acknowledges that not all the supposed errors in the Bible have clear answers yet. However, Article XIV says, "We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible."[26] Those who hold to inerrancy

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[22] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 8.

[23] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 9.

[24] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 16.

[25] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 9.

[26] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 9–10.

believe that valid answers will be found to these alleged errors when all the facts are discovered.

The CSBI explains that the autographs of Scripture are inspired and inerrant. Article X says, "We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture."[27] The CSBI acknowledges that variants have occurred in the transmission of manuscripts. However, believers of each generation can have confidence that their Bibles have been accurately transmitted and preserved. Article X explains the trustworthiness of the transmitted Scriptures: "We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original."[28]

The CSBI intentionally opposes the neo-orthodox views of revelation and Scripture. In fact, seventeen of the nineteen Articles (Articles III through XIX), are in direct opposition to neoorthodoxy.[29] For example, Article III is in opposition to the neo-orthodox belief that the "Bible is merely a witness to revelation or becomes revelation in encounter. The Bible itself is not absolute, divine revelation."[30] Another example is that Article IX opposes the neo-orthodox view that states, "Since to 'err is human,' all human writings, including the Bible, are tainted with error misconceptions, and overstatement or understatement."[31] A final example is that Article XIII is in opposition to the neo-orthodox belief that says, "Inerrancy is negated by misspelled words, informal grammar, hyperbole,

[27] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 8.

[28] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 8.

[29] Grimstead, "Falsehoods."

[30] Grimstead, "Falsehoods."

[31] Grimstead, "Falsehoods."

and round numbers."[32] The seventeen articles in the CSBI that address neoorthodoxy offer clear and solid reasons to reject neo-orthodox beliefs and to embrace biblical inerrancy.

It is important to understand that inerrancy is not a new idea that began in the twentieth century or was created by the CSBI. One neo-orthodox argument against inerrancy is that inerrancy is a modern concept. To clarify that inerrancy has been the view of the church since the first century, Article XVI says, "We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history."[33] Mohler states that a "major source for the affirmation of the Bible's inerrancy comes from the history of the church. In truth inerrancy was the affirmation and theological reflex of the church until the most recent centuries."[34] The church's belief in biblical inerrancy is not a new concept. Just the opposite is true. Suggesting that the Bible is errant is a novel assertion within Christianity.[35] Inerrancy is the historic position of Christ's church. Errancy is a novel idea.

There were several positive results after drafting and publishing the CSBI. Before the CSBI was written, many neo-orthodox and liberal scholars wrote articles attacking inerrancy. However, after the CSBI was written, liberal and neo-orthodox scholars stopped attacking inerrancy for several years.[36] Another positive result was that many Christian academic institutions, churches, missions organizations, and some denominations sought to shore up their statements of faith to ensure that they upheld the inerrancy of Scripture.[37] However, while there have been significant benefits to the

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[32] Grimstead, "Falsehoods."

[33] Geisler and Sproul, *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 10.

[34] Mohler, "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks," 39.

[35] Mohler, "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks," 42.

[36] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

[37] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

publishing of the CSBI, the battle for inerrancy continues to rage. Neo-orthodox advocates have found new ways to influence evangelicals and many Christians have bought into neo-orthodox beliefs.[38] Those who believe that God is truth, that he only speaks the truth, and therefore his Word is truth must stand their ground and teach and uphold the Bible for what it is—the inerrant Word of God.

The Trinity and the Deity of Christ

The doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Christ were hotly debated in the fourth century. Once Constantine became Emperor of Rome and ended the persecution against the church, church leaders had the opportunity to focus on important theological matters. Of most urgent importance were the doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Christ because many heresies related to these doctrines were infiltrating the church. In fact, many bishops held to and espoused heretical teaching about the Trinity and deity of Christ. The espousing of these heresies created turmoil and disunity within the church. Constantine desired to have unity in his Empire and believed that the unity of the church would aid the unity of the Empire. In AD 325, to unite the church regarding these doctrines, Constantine called approximately 250 to 300 bishops together at Nicaea, where the bishops wrote and agreed upon what became known as the Nicene Creed.[39]

The more prominent heresies concerning the Trinity and deity of Christ that divided the fourth century church were Modalism and Arianism. Modalism proports that there is one God, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three persons but three modes by which God reveals himself. This means that sometimes God reveals himself as Father, while at other times he reveals himself as the Son or as the Holy Spirit.[40] Therefore,

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[38] Grimstead, "How the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Began."

[39] In AD 381 another ecumenical council, the Council of Constantinople, was held in which the presiding bishops made additions to the Nicene Creed, primarily about the Holy Spirit.

[40] Mark A. Noll, David Komline, and Han-Luen Kantzer Komline, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022), 28.

modalism teaches that God is not the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit simultaneously but at different times.[41]

Arianism was also a prominent heresy in the fourth century church. Arianism is named after Arius of Alexandria. Arius taught that the Father alone is God and that Jesus was not God but was a creation of God.[42] Speaking of the Son, Arius said there was a time "when he was not."[43] Speaking of himself and those who held similar views, Arius stated, "We are persecuted because we say that the Son had a beginning, but that God was without beginning."[44] In a letter to Alexandar, the bishop of Alexandria,[45] Arius and his followers clarified their view that the Son was created and was not co-equal with God, saying,

> And God, being the cause of all things, is Unbegun and altogether Sole, but the Son being begotten apart from time by the Father, and being created and founded before ages, was not before His generation, but being begotten apart from time before all things, alone was made to subsist by the Father. For He is not eternal or co-eternal or co-unoriginate with the Father, nor has He His being together with the Father.[46]

Athanasius, who argued against Arianism said, that if the Son had a beginning, then God was not always Father. This is seen in Athanasius's explanation of the Arian view, where he said, "when the Son came to be and was created, then was God called His Father."[47] A

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[41] Modalism is also referred to as Monarchianism and Sabellianism. It is referred to as Monarchianism because adherents upheld the unity or monarchy of God. Some modalists were referred to as Sabellians, named after a Roman teacher named Sabellius, who taught modalism.

[42] All of Arius's writings have been destroyed. Access to his writings is only found through the writings of others, such as Athanasius.

[43] Saint Athanasius, "Four Discourses against the Arians," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius: Crosslinked to the Bible*, trans. Philip Schaff (Toronto: Public Domain, 2016), 433, Kindle.

[44] Peter Barnes, *Athanasius of Alexandria: His Life and Impact*, Early Church Fathers (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 49.

[45] Alexandar was the bishop of Alexandria before Athanasius became its bishop.

[46] Saint Athanasius, "Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia 16," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 641.

[47] Saint Athanasius, "Defense Against the Arians (Part II), 3.6," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 641.

key Scripture Arius used to show that the Son was created is Proverbs 8:22, which says, "The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago" (RSV). This verse refers to God's wisdom, which Arius believed was a reference to Christ. Arius emphasized that because Proverbs 8:22 is a reference to Christ, it teaches that Christ was created. Another Scripture Arius used to indicate that Christ was created is Colossians 1:15, which says, "He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." According to Arius, the fact that Christ is "the firstborn of all creation" meant that the Son was the first creature created by God.[48]

While many Christians opposed the heretical views of God and of Christ held by Arians, a bishop of Alexandria, Egypt named Athanasius, was a major opponent against Arianism. Athanasius taught that from eternity past, God had always been Father, saying, "We become fathers of our own children in time, since we ourselves first were not and then came into being; but God, in that He ever is, is ever Father of the Son."[49] Athanasius argued that the Son did not have a beginning, but is eternal, saying, we believe "in one Only-begotten Word, Wisdom, Son, begotten of the Father without beginning and eternally."[50] He also taught that the Son was uncreated, stating, "All things to wit were made through the Son; but He Himself is not a creature."[51] The fact that the Son is eternal, uncreated, and begotten of the Father means he is God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Athanasius expresses this in his statement about Christ, who is the Father's "absolutely perfect Son, living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12), the true Image of the Father, equal in honour and glory. For this, he says, 'is the will of the Father, that as

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[48] Barnes, *Athanasius of Alexandria*, 49.

[49] Saint Athanasius, "Defense of the Nicene Definition 12," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 217.

[50] Saint Athanasius, "Statement of Faith 1," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 114.

[51] Saint Athanasius, "Statement of Faith 2," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 115.

they honour the Father, so they may honour the Son also' (John 5:23): very God of very God."[52]

Athanasius argued against the ways Arius distorted Scripture to explain away the full deity of Christ. For example, concerning Proverbs 8:22, Athanasius said this verse is not speaking of the creation of Christ's deity, but of his body.[53] In regards to Colossians 1:15, Athanasius said calling the Son "firstborn" indicates he is not a creature but that he is the only begotten Son of God.[54] Athanasius also explained that to understand Colossians 1:15 it is necessary to understand Colossians 1:16–17, which says, by Christ "all things were created . . . and he is before all things." Athanasius indicated that because verse 17 says "he is before all things" and does not say "he was created before all things," it meant he was not created.[55]

A major accomplishment of the church for clarifying and defining the deity of Christ and the Trinity was the writing of the Nicene Creed. When the 250 to 300 bishops gathered together in Nicaea, Bithynian, they did not all agree about these doctrines. Some did not view Arianism as an important issue. Those who were opposed to Arianism did not agree about how to address it. However, after much discussion and debate for over two months, the council wrote the initial version of the Nicene Creed. In their book *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, Mark Noll, David Komline, and Han-Luen Kantzer Komline explain that there are three major assertions in the Nicene Creed.[56] First, the creed speaks of the Father and the Son as "true God from

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[52] Saint Athanasius, "Statement of Faith 1," 114.

[53] Saint Athanasius, "Statement of Faith 3," and "Statement of Faith 4," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 116.

[54] Saint Athanasius, "Statement of Faith 3," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 116.

[55] Saint Athanasius, "Statement of Faith 2," 115.

[56] Noll, Komline, and Komline, *Turning Points*, 37–38.

true God."[57] The words "true God from true God" indicate that while there is a distinction between the Father and the Son, they are both equally God. A second major assertion in the Nicene Creed is that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father, meaning he is of the same divine nature or substance as the Father. The fact that the Son was *homoousios* with the Father means he is equally divine with the Father.[58] The Arians opposed the idea that the Son was *homoousios* with the Father and insisted he was *homoiousios* with the Father.[59] *Homoiousios* means the Son was of similar substance with the Father, not of the same substance as the Father. A third major assertion of the Nicene Creed is that the Son was "begotten of the Father." The Creed states that the Son was "begotten of the Father before all worlds" and that he was "begotten, not made."[60] If God made the Son as he made all other things, then the Son would have a beginning and would not be of the same divine nature as the Father. Yet, the Son was "begotten of the Father before all worlds," which means he was eternally begotten, without a beginning. The fact that the Son was "begotten, not made" means he has the identical divine nature as the Father.[61]

The three major assertions in the Nicene Creed directly excluded the Arian view of the Son of God.[62] Because Arius and his followers could not agree to or sign the Nicene Creed, they were excommunicated from the church.[63] However, after the Nicene Creed was written, the Arian heresy continued to influence the church. While Arius and his followers were condemned as heretics after the Nicene Creed was established, they were

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[57] Noll, Komline, and Komline, *Turing Points*, 39.

[58] Greg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 237.

[59] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 287–88.

[60] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1438.

[61] Noll, Komline, and Komline, *Turning Points*, 38.

[62] Barnes, *Athanasius of Alexandria*, 66.

[63] Barnes, *Athanasius of Alexandria*, 64.

later restored to communion with the church, even though they continued to speak in opposition to the Nicene Creed.[64] When Athanasius became the bishop of Alexandria, he worked tirelessly to remove Arianism and its proponents from the church. Because of this, Athanasius received opposition, persecution, and exile. Yet, in the end, the truth of the Nicene Creed that the Son was fully divine prevailed in the church.

Not long after the death of Athanasius, another ecumenical council met in Constantinople in AD 381. One purpose of this ecumenical council was to clarify the deity of the Holy Spirit, which was the historical position of the church. The initial Nicene Creed of 325 concluded with a brief statement about the Holy Spirit, simply saying, "And in the Holy Spirit." To uphold the full deity of the Holy Spirit, the council at Constantinople added the following words: "And in the Spirit, the holy, the lordly, and life-giving one proceeding forth from the Father, co-worshiped and co-glorified with the Father and the Son."[65] In addition to adding significant statements about the Holy Spirit, the council affirmed the original Nicene Creed and its teaching about the Father and the Son.

The writing of the original Nicene Creed as well as its addition in AD 381 was a major accomplishment for the church of Christ. Noll, Komline, and Komline summarize the conclusion of the council at Nicaea: "The result of the council's deliberations were decisive in every way. Its affirmation of Christ's fully divine nature set a course for Christian orthodoxy that has been maintained to the present."[66] The three major branches of Christianity, including the Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, and many Protestant churches have faithfully held to the Nicene Creed.[67] Since the time the Creed was established to the present day, it has been a faithful guide to the church to clarify the

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[64] Barnes, *Athanasius of Alexandria*, 80.

[65] Noll, Komline, and Komline, *Turning Points*, 39.

[66] Noll, Komline, and Komline, *Turning Points*, 31.

[67] However, the Orthodox Church disagrees with the addition to the Nicene Creed of "and the Son," to the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father.

meaning of the Trinity and the deity of Christ, and to guard the church against the many heresies, which never cease to plague this fallen world.

Penal Substitutionary Atonement

The church in which I am an associate pastor, Laurelglen Bible Church, started in 1978 as a United States Mennonite Brethren church. In August of 2022, the congregation chose to disassociate with the USMB. One reason for the disassociation was due to our position that Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) is the biblical view of atonement. We do not see other "models" of atonement such as Christ as Victor, Moral Influence, or Example as standalone options that could replace PSA.[68] Rather we see them as results of PSA. However, among the members of USMB there has been a growing disregard for PSA and growing tolerance of other models of atonement as replacements of PSA. One opponent of PSA within the USMB is Mark Baker, who was a theology professor at the USMB seminary, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. In 2000, Mark Baker and Joel B. Green wrote *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, with a second edition in 2011. His professorship as well as his book has influenced many in the USMB away from PSA, including people who are a part of Laurelglen Bible Church. In the second edition of Baker's book, he states that PSA is not taught in Scripture but is read into the Bible from a Western worldview.[69] He claims that those who understand Scripture to teach PSA are reading into the Bible an individualistic, criminal-justice understanding from Western culture that is not found in Scripture.[70] He argues that the PSA view of atonement leads people to "picture a God who has a vindictive character, who finds it much easier to

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[68] For a helpful explanation of the Moral Influence model of atonement, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 724. For a helpful explanation of the Christ as Victor model of atonement, see Robert Kolb "Cristus Victor," The Gospel Coalition, January 14, 2020, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/cristus-victor/.

[69] Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in the New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 172.

[70] Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 176.

punish than to forgive."[71] Additionally, Baker teaches that PSA is a recent invention of certain theologians. He notes that the first traces of PSA were in the eleventh century from Anselm's doctrine of atonement. He explains that Anselm did not teach PSA, but his view of atonement had some similarities with PSA.[72] According to Baker, five hundred years after Anselm, in the sixteenth century, theologians such as John Calvin and Martain Luther began to teach what we now call PSA. However, Baker believes that even they did not fully develop this doctrine.[73] According to Baker, after the sixteenth century, "Penal substitutionary thinking became more and more dominant."[74]

The question is, are Baker's two assertions about PSA accurate? First, is PSA a recent invention of the church beginning approximately in the sixteenth century? The answer is a resounding no, it is not. Looking at a survey of key church fathers, theologians, and leaders in the history of the church make it clear that PSA is firmly rooted in Christian teaching as far back as the second century AD. Before surveying important figures from church history, it is significant to understand that theologians in the following survey disagreed about many things and were from various eras that dealt with different concerns, yet they all held to PSA.[75]

The following survey of key figures who wrote about PSA is based on the work of Steve Jeffery, Micael Ovey, and Andrew Sach from their book, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*.[76] This survey begins with Justin Martyr (c. 100–165). He is important because he lived within a generation of the

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[71] Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 174.

[72] Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 40–41.

[73] Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 169.

[74] Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 169.

[75] Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 162.

[76] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 161–79.

apostles. He may have even known people who knew the apostles. A Jewish man by the name of Trypho asked Justin Martyr, if Jesus was the Christ, why would God allow him to be cursed by dying on a cross? It appears Trypho was thinking of Deuteronomy 21:22–23, which says, "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God." To answer Trypho's question, Justin explained that God's curse was upon all humanity because of their sin and the curse upon humanity was transferred to Jesus when he was crucified. Justin explained, "The Father of all wished His Christ for the whole human family to take upon Him the curses of all."[77] The fact that Jesus took humanity's curse upon himself on the cross is a clear statement of PSA. Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach say the following about Justin Martyr: "[His words are] a clear statement of penal substitution: although Christ was innocent, he bore the curse due to sinful humanity, enduring in his death the punishment due to us."[78]

A second significant figure from history is Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 275–339). Eusebius was considered the first great historian of the Christian church.[79] He wrote *Proof of the Gospel* in which he explained the significance of Christ's atonement. He said,

> And the Lamb of God . . . was chastised on our behalf, and suffered a penalty He did not owe, but which we owed because of the multitude of our sins; and so He became the cause of the forgiveness of our sins, because He received death for us, and transferred to Himself the scourging, the insults, and the dishonour, which were due to us, and drew down upon Himself the appointed curse, being made a curse for us.[80]

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[77] Justin Martyr, "Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 247.

[78] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 166.

[79] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 166.

[80] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 166–67.

PSA is seen in two main ways in Eusebius's explanation. First, he says Christ "suffered a penalty He did not owe, but which we owed because of the multitude of our sins." As Romans 3:26 explains, the penalty for sin is death. Jesus took the penalty of death upon himself, just as the doctrine of PSA states. Second, like Justin Martyr, Eusebius explains Christ's death by crucifixion in terms of taking upon himself the curse that was due humanity because of their sins.

The next important church figure who wrote about PSA is Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 300–373). In his book *Against the Arians*, Athanasius referred to Jesus as "the Word," saying, "Formerly the world, as guilty, was under judgment from the Law; but now the Word has taken on Himself the judgment, and having suffered in the body for all, has bestowed salvation to all."[81] The fact that Athanasius is teaching PSA here is seen in his explanation that the world was under God's judgment because of their sin and guilt. However, Jesus took upon himself the judgment that was aimed at the world. This judgment was his suffering "in the body for all." This suffering was not simply physical pain, but physical death. Therefore, at his crucifixion, Jesus took upon himself the death penalty that humanity deserved.[82]

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330–390) was a strong defender of Christ's deity, and he presided over the Council of Constantinople in 381. In his fourth *Oration* he argued against those who said Christ was inferior to the Heavenly Father because of God's curse upon Jesus (Gal 3:13), and because Christ was made sin (2 Cor 5:21). When Gregory addressed these verses, he revealed his view of Christ's atonement:

> As for my sake He was called a curse, Who destroyed my curse; and sin, who taketh away the sin of the world; and became a new Adam to take the place of the old, just so He makes my disobedience His own as Head of the whole body. As long then as

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[81] Saint Athanasius, "Against the Arians," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 475.

[82] Saint Athanasius, "On the Incarnation of the Word," in *The Complete Works of St. Athanasius*, 48.

I am disobedient and rebellious, both by denial of God and by my passions, so long Christ also is called disobedient on my account.[83]

PSA is seen here first in that Christ "makes my disobedience his own." This means the sins of all believers were transferred to Christ, the head of the body. PSA is also seen in that because Christ made the sins of believers his own, he was called cursed (Gal 3:13). According to Gregory, the result of Christ taking believers sins and being called a curse was that Christ destroyed the curse and sin that belonged to believers, and he took "away the sin of the world." In other words, Gregory is saying that Christ was not the one who sinned and therefore did not deserve God's curse. Rather, he took the sin of humanity upon himself and suffered the curse of sin on humanity's behalf.

John Chrysostom was born in Syrian Antioch in c. 350, and starting in 378 he ministered in Syria for about twenty years. In a sermon on 2 Corinthians 5:21, he used an illustration that reveals his belief in PSA. In this illustration a king had mercy on a condemned criminal by giving his only son to receive the guilt and death penalty in place of the criminal. Chrysostom said, "If one that was himself a king, beholding a robber and malefactor under punishment, gave his well-beloved son, his only-begotten and true, to be slain; and transferred the death and the guilt as well, from him to his son (who was himself of no such character), that he might both save the condemned man and clear him from his evil reputation."[84] PSA is seen in this illustration where both the guilt and the death penalty were transferred from the criminal to the king's son and that the son died, not for his own sin but on behalf of the criminal's sin. The idea is that the Heavenly Father, the King, transferred the sins of humanity and the death penalty for their sin upon his Son,

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[83] Gregory Nazianzen, "Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen," trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, in *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nazianzen*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 7, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (New York: Christian Literature, 1894), 311.

[84] John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Second Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians," trans. J. Ashworth and Talbot B. Chambers, in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 12, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (New York: Christian Literature, 1889), 335.

the Lord Jesus Christ, who then suffered and died on their behalf. This is the heart of PSA.

Other significant church figures who held to PSA could be included in this survey,[85] but from those noted in this survey the point is clear—PSA was not a novel idea that began in the sixteenth century. It is firmly rooted in church history, at least as early as the second century. This brings us to the second question that Baker raises: is PSA primarily a Western worldview that people have read into the Scriptures? Like the answer to the first question, the answer to this question is a resounding no, it is not. Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach explain, "The fact that penal substitution has been taught in many different social and political settings throughout the last two millennia also casts considerable doubt on the contention that the acceptance of the doctrine depends on a particular set of cultural norms."[86] For example, in the above survey, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, and Athanasius of Alexandria are considered part of the Greek church.[87] Therefore, PSA is not a Western worldview read into the text of Scripture; rather, it is part of a biblical worldview.

If Baker is correct that PSA was not taught until the sixteenth century and it was a Western construct read into Scripture, then it would be wise to reevaluate the doctrine of PSA. However, in view of the survey provided, it is clear that the church has taught PSA at least from the second century not only in the Western church but also in the Greek church. Knowing this can strengthen believers' confidence that PSA is biblical and therefore God's wrath against the sins of believers has been completely satisfied.

[85] For example, see in Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*; Hilary of Poitiers in his *Homily on Psalm 53*; Ambrose of Milan in his book *Flight from the World*; and Augustine of Hippo in his book *Against Faustus*.

[86] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 220.

[87] Noll, Komline, and Komline, *Turning Points*, 31.

Christ's Resurrection

When defending the Christian faith or the Scriptures, an effective tactic is to address the resurrection of Christ. People often ask, of all the religions of the world, how can we know which is the right religion? Or out of all the religious books in the world, how can we know which is the right one? A helpful way to answer these questions is to point to the resurrection of Christ. The argument is that for God to reveal which religion and holy book is true, he had to do something miraculous and unique. God did this by raising Jesus Christ from the dead three days after his execution on a Roman cross. Raising Jesus from the dead was God's way of demonstrating that Jesus was unique and that Jesus was not simply another great religious leader—he was the Son of God. Raising Jesus from the dead was God's way of proving that what Jesus said and did was from God and approved by God. If Jesus rose from the dead, proving that he is the Son of God who spoke the words of God, then he is someone who people must listen to and follow. If Jesus is the Son of God who people should listen to, then what did he say about which religion is true and which holy book is true? While Jesus was on the earth he stated and demonstrated his belief that the books of the Old Testament were God's true word, that his own words were God's word, and that belief in him as the Messiah is the true religion.[88]

The fact that Christ rose from the dead is an important argument that the Bible is the truth, and that following Jesus is the true religion. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then his words should be evaluated as the words of any other religious leader. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, then people must listen to what he said. Yet the assertion that Jesus rose from the dead is hard for people to believe. Based on human experience, most people have never seen someone rise from the dead, so an important question is this: is

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[88] The fact that Jesus said and demonstrated that the Old Testament is God's true word is seen in Matt 4:4, 7, 10; 5:17–19; 19:3–9; Mark 7:10; 10:2–12; 12:26–27; Luke 5:14; 16:29–31, 24:27, 44; John 5:45–47, 7:19, 23, 10:35; 17:17. Jesus said and demonstrated that his words were God's true words as seen in Matt 25:34; Luke 21:33; John 14:26; 16:13–15. Jesus said and demonstrated that he is the Messiah and that following him is the true religion as is seen Matt 16:15–18; Mark 8:38; 14:61–62; John 5:18; 10:30–33; 11:4; 14:6.

there anything that gives credibility to the resurrection of Jesus? Several factors give credibility to the resurrection of Christ. Three of these factors are what historian Michael Licona calls "historical bedrock."[89] In his book *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, Licona explains what "historical bedrock" is: "Historical bedrock includes those facts that meet two criteria. First, they are so strongly evidenced that the historian can fairly regard them as historical facts. Second, the majority of contemporary scholars, who have done significant research on the resurrection of Christ regard them as historical facts."[90] Contemporary scholars mentioned by Licona include both those who believe Jesus literally rose from the dead as well as secular scholars who do not believe he rose from the dead.[91] Licona explains that the three historical bedrock facts are (1) Jesus died by crucifixion, (2) shortly after his death the disciples had experiences they believed to be Jesus resurrected, and they preached this, and (3) Paul converted to Christianity after an experience he believed was the resurrected Christ. Paul's epistles teach that Christ's resurrection was a bodily resurrection.[92] While each of the three historical bedrock facts are significant, the focus in the following pages will be on historical bedrock fact 2—the post-resurrection experiences the disciples had with Christ.

When addressing the post-resurrection experiences the disciple had with Christ, it is important to differentiate between what Christian and secular scholars believe about this. While the large majority of Christian and secular scholars who have done significant research on the resurrection of Christ regard these post-resurrection experiences as

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[89] Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 56.

[90] Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 56.

[91] Secular scholars such as Gerd Ludemann and Peter Craffert. See Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 497, 553.

[92] Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 302.

historical fact, how they understand these experiences differs significantly. Christian scholars believe that Jesus literally, physically rose from the dead three days after his death so that what the disciples experienced of Jesus was Jesus alive again. On the other hand, secular scholars do not believe Jesus rose from the dead, but that the disciples had experiences that convinced them he had risen from the dead.

What then were the experiences the disciples had with the risen Jesus? The book of Acts teaches that after Jesus rose from the dead he remained on the earth for forty days. Acts 1:3 says, "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." According to Sean McDowell and Josh McDowell, during those forty days the Gospels and Acts record him appearing twelve times to individuals, small groups, and large groups of his followers.[93] As Acts 1:3 says, one reason he appeared to them was to prove he had risen from the dead.

Anyone can claim that someone rose from the dead and that the person appeared to them. Does anything give credibility to the claim that Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection? The radical transformation of the disciples gives credibility to the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. When Jesus was buried in the tomb, his disciples were terrified and went into hiding. They likely thought that if the Jewish authorities arrest and kill Jesus, they would arrest and kill them also. This concern is seen in John 20:19: "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews." Yet part of the historical bedrock of Christ's resurrection is that after Christ's numerous appearances to his disciples, the disciples went and preached that Jesus had risen from the dead. In fact, they boldly and persistently preached that Jesus rose from the dead even in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus was crucified. The apostle Peter's bold preaching in Jerusalem is seen in Acts 2:23–24 where

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[93] Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville: HarperCollins, 2017), 263.

he said, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."

The disciples' transformation was not only seen in that they went from terrified and in hiding to boldly and publicly proclaiming Christ's resurrection, but also in the fact that they were willing to be persecuted and even die for their belief in his resurrection. When Peter and John were let out of jail for preaching Christ's resurrection, the Jewish authorities told them to stop preaching, yet they responded to them boldly in Acts 4:19–20 saying, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." All twelve of the disciples were persecuted and thrown into jail (Acts 5:17, 18), and some of the disciples, such as James, were martyred for preaching the resurrection of Christ. This is seen in Acts 12:1–3, which says, "About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also." At that time Peter was not martyred for preaching Christ's resurrection, but he was martyred later (John 21:18, 19).[94]

A critical question to ask about the disciples' willingness to suffer and even die for their belief in and proclamation of Christ's resurrection is this: would someone willingly die for a known lie? In other words, if the disciples knew Jesus did not actually rise from the dead, if they were lying about it, when James, Peter, and other apostles were about to be martyred, would they have died for that lie or would they have recanted? It is more probable that they would have recanted; but they did not. They did not recant because they were convinced they had seen Jesus literally risen from the dead. Timothy Paul Jones writes, "Of course millions of people throughout history have died for lies that they

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[94] For more documentation of Peter's martyrdom see 1 Clement 5:1–4; Ignatius, *Letter to the Smyrneans* 3:1–2; and Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25.4. For more on the disciples, who died for their belief in and proclamation of Christ's resurrection, see Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles: Examining the Martyrdom Accounts of the Closest Followers of Jesus* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2015).

believed were true—but people do not typically give their lives for a lie if they're in a position to know that it's a lie."[95] Then, speaking of Peter, James son of Zebedee, and James the brother of Jesus, who had all been martyred for proclaiming Christ's resurrection,[96] Jones explains, "If anyone might have been in a position to know that the claims of resurrection were fabrications, one or more of these three men would have known. And yet, all three of them went to their deaths still declaring that Jesus had been raised from the dead."[97] Even the threat of death could not cause them to recant.

Some secular scholars, who have done a great deal of research on Christ's resurrection, agree that the disciples were radically transformed because they thought they had seen Jesus risen again. However, these scholars do not believe Jesus rose from the dead. Some of these scholars believe the apostles saw hallucinations of Jesus, not Jesus literally risen from the dead. Research reveals that a small percentage of elderly people who lose a loved one experience hallucinations of the person they lost. Some of these elderly people see their loved one, while others hear their loved one, and some both see and hear them. To some who experience these hallucinations, they can seem very real. Research shows a primary reason they experience these hallucinations is that they are in deep grief and they desperately want to see their loved one again.[98]

An important question to ask is this: were the disciples in such deep grief and did they want so desperately to see Jesus again that they experienced hallucinations? No, hallucinations do not adequately explain the data for several reasons. First, Jesus not only appeared to his disciples after his resurrection but he also had conversations with them, let them touch him, walked with them, ate with them, and cooked breakfast for them (Luke

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[95] Timothy Paul Jones, *Why Should I Trust the Bible?*, The Big Ten: Critical Questions Answered (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2021), 96–97.

[96] McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 364.

[97] Jones, *Why Should I Trust the Bible?*, 97.

[98] Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 497.

24:38–43; John 21:9–22). According to medical professional S. J. Leinster, touching, speaking with, and eating with someone cannot be done with hallucinations. Speaking of Christ preparing breakfast for his disciples in John 21:12–13, Leinster said, "The circumstantial details given suggest a real presence and not a psychological experience; hallucinations do not commonly prepare breakfast for those experiencing them."[99] Another reason why Jesus's appearances could not have been a hallucination is that Jesus not only appeared to individuals but he also appeared to small and large groups of his disciples. Research indicates that two or more people cannot have the same hallucination at the same time. Hallucinations are an individual experience, like a dream. Michael Licona explains, "Since hallucinations are mental events with no external referent, one cannot share in the hallucination of another. In this sense, hallucinations are similar to dreams."[100] Most of Jesus's twelve appearances were not to individuals but to groups of his disciples. For example, Matthew 28:16–17 says, "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted."

The crucial question is this: what best accounts for the radical transformation the disciples experienced? What would have motivated them to go from being terrified and in hiding, to boldly and publicly proclaiming Christ's resurrection, and to suffering and dying for this? The most likely explanation is that they did in fact see Jesus risen from the dead.

Having looked at reasons to believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate to address the proper response to both the atoning death of Christ and his resurrection. According to Scripture, one critical response to Christ's atonement and resurrection is faith. It is by faith that a sinner is justified by God.

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[99] S. J. Leinster, quoted in Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 314.

[100] Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 484.

Justification by Faith Alone

In Martin Luther's day, the Roman Catholic Church taught that a person was justified by faith plus good works. Luther explained the Catholic sophists' belief that "faith justifies only when love and good works are added to it."[101] Catholic papists taught that if an unbeliever "performs a good work by his own natural inclination—such as reading or hearing Mass, giving alms, etc.,—this man deserves grace 'by congruity.' Once he has obtained grace this way, he goes on to perform a work that merits eternal life."[102] This means an unbeliever takes the initiative by doing a good work. God then responds to his good work by giving him the necessary grace to help him do more good works. Performing these additional good works will render him deserving of salvation. To Luther, this Roman Catholic doctrine condemned people to hell. Therefore, he devoted himself to combat this unbiblical teaching and to clearly define justification by faith. He emphasized the biblical teaching that justification is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, by no human effort.

To combat the Roman Catholic concept that a person is justified by faith plus works, Luther emphasized that no amount of obedience to God's commandments can justify a sinner. According to Luther, obeying laws, even God's laws, cannot justify anyone. He gave several reasons why obeying laws cannot justify sinners. First, obedience cannot justify people because the very nature of humanity is evil. Luther compared unbelievers to evil trees, saying, "Our wills are bent to do what is evil, for we are evil trees, and hence the fruit of our lives is also wicked."[103] Luther explained that by nature, as an apple tree produces apples, a sinner produces sin.[104] The sinful human nature is incapable of obeying God's laws and producing righteousness. Second, Luther taught that the only

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[101] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535 Chapters 1–4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, vol. 26 of *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 136.

[102] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 124.

[103] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 126.

[104] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 126.

way a person could be justified by the law is if he obeyed it perfectly. Luther found this in scriptures such as Galatians 3:10, which says, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." He explained that Galatians 3:10 means a person must obey the law "truly and perfectly."[105] Yet, he emphasized that no one can obey God's law perfectly.[106] Third, Luther taught that obeying God's laws cannot justify people because that is not the purpose of the law (Gal 3:21). Referring to Romans 3:20, Luther explained, "No one becomes just through works of the law but that God gave the law only so that sin might be perceived."[107] Luther said that the law is like a "hammer" to crush people's self-righteousness so they will stop trusting their own righteousness and turn to Jesus for his righteousness.[108] Fourth, he taught that people who seek to achieve righteousness by obedience to the law "rob Him of the glory of His deity."[109] Such people glorify themselves for their obedience rather than glorifying God for giving them his undeserved mercy. According to Luther, then, obedience to God's law cannot justify sinners.

While Luther explained that obedience to the law cannot justify sinners, he emphasized the good news that Christ can and does justify people. Luther taught several critical truths about Christ's justification of sinners. First, he taught that justification is passive. He said, "But this righteousness is heavenly and passive."[110] He explained what he means by the fact that it is passive: "We do not have it [righteousness] for ourselves;

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[105] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 253.

[106] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 253.

[107] Martin Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans and Concerning Christian Liberty* (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2010), 8.

[108] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 310.

[109] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 127.

[110] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 8.

we receive it from heaven."[111] The fact that righteousness is passive means a person does not achieve righteousness by his own efforts, no matter how hard he tries. Rather, it is something given to someone who simply receives it from God. Second, Luther taught that righteousness is something that is imputed. The idea that righteousness is imputed means that God gives righteousness to a believer as if this righteousness was the believer's righteousness. Luther spoke of imputed righteousness in his definition of Christian righteousness, saying this righteousness "is a divine imputation for reckoning as righteousness or to righteousness."[112] God imputes righteousness to a believer to recon him as righteous. According to Thomas Schreiner, Luther's concept of imputed righteousness means that "the righteousness of a believer is extrinsic rather than intrinsic; it is declared rather than being inherent."[113] The fact that justification is a declaration of a believer's righteousness is seen in Luther's words: "We are pronounced righteous solely by faith in Christ."[114] Therefore, a believer is not made intrinsically righteous but is declared or pronounced righteous. In other words, this imputation does not make a believer morally righteous in his behavior or character but gives him a new status, a righteous standing before God.[115] Third, Luther taught that Christ's own righteousness was imputed to believers. Speaking of Christ, Luther said, "His righteousness is yours; your sin is His."[116] While on the cross, humanity's sin was imputed to Christ, and when a person believes in him, Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer. Of all human beings, Christ alone had perfect righteousness. In his abundant grace, Christ gives believers his righteous

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[111] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 8.

[112] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 233.

[113] Thomas Schreiner, *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters*, Five Solas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 43.

[114] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 137.

[115] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 39.

[116] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 233.

standing before the Heavenly Father. Ultimately, Luther explained, the fact that Christ gave believers his righteousness means Christ gave himself to them. Luther said, "Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness."[117] Because Christian righteousness is Christ's righteousness and is Christ himself, it is a complete righteousness that a believer can add nothing to. Luther explained, "But grace does this much: that we are accounted completely just before God."[118] To Luther, then, justification is God imputing Christ and his righteousness to a passive person who has done nothing righteous to deserve or achieve this righteousness.

While the Roman Catholic Church taught that a person is justified by performing a combination of faith plus works, Luther taught that justification was by God's grace through the believer's faith, not by human works. One way he emphasized that justification is by God's grace is by referring to righteousness as a gift. Schreiner explains, "Luther believed righteousness is fundamentally a gift."[119] To Luther, not only was justification a gift, but even a believer's faith in Christ is a gift. He said, "Faith is a work of God in us, which changes us and brings us birth anew from God (cf. John 1)."[120] Schreiner explains, "Luther rejects the notion that we take the first step toward God by doing our best, since such a view smuggles in works and fails to recognize that faith is God's gift to us."[121] If faith is based on human effort, then faith is a human work, not a gift. However, Luther emphasized that faith is a work of God, not of man. Because both God's declaration of righteousness and human faith are gifts of God, no human effort can add to or bring about a believer's justification. As a result, God gets all the credit for justification—man gets

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[117] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 130.

[118] Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, 5.

[119] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 43.

[120] Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, 5.

[121] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 44.

none. Luther emphasized Scripture's contrast between faith and works for justification, saying, "Thus we have established that faith, without any good works, makes just."[122] Similarly he said, "We are pronounced righteous solely by faith in Christ, not by the works of the Law or by love."[123] To emphasize that believers are justified by faith alone, not by works, Luther included the word "alone" in his translation of Romans 3:28. A literal reading of Romans 3:28 says, "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." In Luther's translation of Romans 3:28 he added the word "alone" after "justified by faith." His addition of the word "alone" captures the idea that is already in the verse. Schreiner explains, "Such a translation isn't an imposition on the text, but represents the meaning of the verses in context."[124] Luther explains why faith alone without good works justifies believers: "Faith justifies because it takes hold of Christ; i.e., Christ is our justification."[125] To Luther, Christ is a believer's righteousness. He is a believer's righteousness because of Christ's works on the cross. Luther explained that faith justifies because it "takes hold of Christ and believes that my sin and death are damned and abolished in the sin and death of Christ."[126] A person is justified by God's grace through faith, not by human works or effort.

Because Luther emphasized so strongly that good works and obedience to God's law add nothing to a believer's justification, many have accused him of antinomianism. This is an unfounded accusation articulated by people who are misinformed, ignorant of Luther's writings, or are deviously misrepresenting him. Luther made it clear in his preaching and writing that the Christian life is one of obedience to God and good works

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[122] Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, 9.

[123] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 137.

[124] Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 44.

[125] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 130.

[126] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 160.

toward others. Luther said, "A person becomes just without works but doesn't remain without works once he has become just."[127] He urged his readers, "Because you have taken hold of Christ by faith, through whom you are righteous, you should now go and love God and your neighbor." Luther explained that a pure motive for doing good works and loving others is gratitude for Christ crucified and for the gift of righteousness. He said that love "must follow faith as a kind of gratitude."[128] When a person receives the gift of righteousness and is fully forgiven for his sins, he has a profound joy in the Lord that overflows in good works and love toward God and others. Luther said, "Through faith, a person will do good to everyone without coercion, willingly and happily; he will serve everyone, suffer everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown him such grace. It is impossible to separate works from faith as burning and shining from fire."[129] Luther, then, is emphatic that a genuine Christian will respond to the gift of justification by loving God and people with many good works.

Luther saw clearly that the Roman Catholic teaching of justification by faith plus works was anti-gospel. He worked tirelessly to clearly define and defend the doctrine of justification by God's grace through faith, apart from human effort. The results of his efforts brought much needed reform to the church. The results of Luther's teaching about justification are still impacting the world and the church for Christ's glory to this day.

Conclusion

Much more could be said about each of the six fundamental doctrines, however, the overview of this chapter with its historical background and apologetic arguments is sufficient for the training of small group leaders of Laurelglen Bible Church. The next chapter provides a description of the implemented training.

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[127] Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, 9.

[128] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 138.

[129] Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, 6.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

After much preparation and prayer, the class for leaders of Laurelglen Bible Church's adult small groups was implemented. This chapter summarizes the implementation of the class.

Preparation

Preparation for the seven-session class involved naming the class, and scheduling, inviting, and writing lessons and assignments. I named the class "Sound in the Faith" to capture the purpose of the class. I based the title on Scriptures in the Pastoral Epistles such as in Titus 2:1–2, which says, "But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness."

Scheduling the classes was more challenging than I expected. The small group leaders of LBC are busy people. They prepare lessons, connect with the people in their groups, and conduct their meetings each week. Some of them lead more than one group or class each week. Because of their busyness, I scheduled the class to meet twice a month rather than every week. This gave them two or three weeks to complete each lesson and made the class feel less overwhelming. I originally planned to teach the class on Sunday evenings because none of the leaders lead groups on Sunday evenings and LBC does not have a Sunday evening service. However, between a monthly elder training I taught on Sunday evenings and other church events on Sunday evenings, Sunday nights were not going to work. At first this was discouraging to me because I was convinced that Sunday evenings were the only evenings that would work, as LBC has small groups that meet

Monday evenings to Thursday evenings. Small groups on Friday and Saturday evenings have never worked at LBC because people want those evenings free. That left Sunday evenings as the only open evenings. Historically, I have used Sunday evenings for various trainings and other ministries, such as discipleship groups.

Once I realized Sunday evenings were not going to work, I feared that I could not find an evening when small group leaders would attend the class. Looking at the church calendar I realized the next best evening for the class was Monday evenings. Only two small groups meet on Monday evenings as well as a missions board meeting that meets once a month on Monday evenings. Monday evenings seemed like the next best night, but I feared that some small group leaders would not want to attend a Monday evening class because many of them lead groups on Tuesday and/or on Wednesday evenings; therefore, meeting on Monday evenings would mean that some small group leaders would have to do ministry two or three nights in a row. I realized that if I could not get small group leaders to attend a Monday evening class, this ministry project would fail. I then remembered this critical fact: I should pray about it. I prayed and asked the Lord to graciously provide the small group leaders that he wanted in the class.

I invited sixty-two LBC leaders of adult small groups to the class, hoping for ten to join. I invited them by sending them an email and a text message. In the email I briefly explained what the class entailed with enough information to prepare them to make a wise decision. I told them that if they joined the class the expectation was that they would attend each class. I emailed each leader separately rather than in a group email to make it more personal. After I emailed each leader, I sent a personal text to each individual. The LBC staff has found that a much higher percentage of people read texts than emails. So, I sent text messages to invite them to the class and to ask them to read a more detailed invitation in the email I sent.

When I sent the emails and texts, I struggled with fear that only a few small group leaders or possibly no small group leaders would join the class. I prayed again for

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God's provision, and I waited. To my surprise and to God's credit, on the first day I sent the texts and emails, four small group leaders enthusiastically responded that they would like to participate in the class. In the days and weeks leading up to the class, a total of twenty-four small group leaders signed up.[1] I was elated and I thanked the Lord for his gracious provision. I was also encouraged that many of the small group leaders thanked me for offering the class and said that they were excited to take it.

Those who signed up purchased the textbook that would be used for the class, *Essential Christian Doctrine: A Handbook on Biblical Truth* by John MacArthur.[2] I selected this book because it is a helpful summary of sound teaching about the six doctrines I focused on in the class.[3] I also provided participants with a binder for class notes and assignments.

Implementation

During the month of January, I wrote the class plan, which included meeting dates and times and a basic outline of the content of the classes and assignments. I scheduled the classes on the second and fourth Mondays of each month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., starting on January 29. Because of spring break during the fourth week of March, we only met on the second Monday of that month. This meant that the final class met on May 13. The first class was an introductory class then I covered one of the six doctrines at each of the next six classes. Before each class I gave homework assignments related to the doctrine of the upcoming class. I encouraged participants to complete the

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[1] The husbands of two of the women's Bible study leaders also joined the class, so twenty-six people attended. I allowed the husbands to join because I have found that in classes like this, if both the husband and wife take the class together, they hold each other accountable to do the homework and they get to talk with each other about what they are learning.

[2] John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine: A Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021).

[3] *Essential Christian Doctrine* also summarizes many other theological issues in a biblically sound way, in addition to the six that were studied in class.

assignments before each class so they could share what they had learned from doing their assignments.

Content Overview

Each of the six assignments included four components.[4] First, participants read portions of *Essential Christian Doctrine* that were related to the doctrine they were studying for the upcoming class. Second, they read a handout I gave them, which included a portion of LBC's Statement of Faith regarding the doctrine they were studying. I also had them read relevant articles concerning that doctrine. Most of the articles were sections from chapters 2 and 3 of this ministry project that related to the doctrine they were studying for the upcoming class. In the handout I also included Christian creeds for them to read, such as the Nicene Creed. I also gave participants a glossary of the technical terms for the Trinity and the deity of Christ. Third, I encouraged them to memorize one or two verses about the doctrine they were studying for the upcoming lesson. Not only were they to memorize a verse for each doctrine, but they were also asked to continue memorizing the verses they had memorized for the previous doctrines we studied so that by the end of the seven classes they would remember each of the memory verses word for word. Fourth, I asked them to write several things. I asked them to write a description of the doctrine they were studying for the upcoming class. I encouraged them write several key verses for that doctrine and reasons why they believed the doctrine was true so they could defend it against objections. Finally, I suggested that they write how this doctrine impacted them personally.

After the introductory class, the next six classes included a specific format. At the beginning of each class I had them find someone in the class that they did not know very well. I gave them time to get to know things about each other, such as what kind of small group they lead and other ministries they are involved in with the church. The small

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[4] See appendix 5 for the detailed notes of each class and the assignments.

group leaders enjoyed getting to know each other. My hope with this interaction was that growing in their relationships with each other could motivate them to support each other in their ministries and also motivate them to attend class consistently.

After a few minutes getting to know each other, I reviewed the main points from the previous week's lessons. Sometimes I reviewed key points from each of the lessons, and other times I only reviewed the key points from the lessons that were two or three weeks before the current lesson. Whenever reviewing previous points, I reminded them of the importance of review for memory sake.

After review I had participants break into groups of two to three people to practice with each other for five to ten minutes that week's memory verse as well as previous memory verses. Then, I asked volunteers to recite from memory each of the verses. I also asked someone to share why we memorized the particular verse for the doctrine we were studying. I did this for each of the verses we had memorized.

Next, the small group leaders broke up into groups of three or four to discuss the following: (1) how they would describe or define the doctrine we were focused on at that class, (2) key verses for that doctrine, and (3) reasons why they believe what they believe about that doctrine. Once they had discussed these three factors, they shared with the class what they came up with in their groups. Sometimes I would start with one group and have them tell what they came up with and then go to the next group to see if they had anything to add to or change from what previous groups said. Then, I would go to the next group and do the same until I came to the final group. To mix things up, in some classes I did not go group to group. I just opened it up to everyone and asked what they came up with for the three factors I had them discuss in their groups.

As the groups told me their answers to the three factors, I recorded their feedback on the whiteboard so everyone could see and remember what was shared. First, I wrote their description of the doctrine we were discussing. It became a list of various aspects of the definition of that doctrine. After everyone shared, I added any important

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component of the doctrine's definition that they did not mention. I also corrected any errors they may have stated. Second, I had them share key Scriptures that were the basis for the doctrine being studied and I wrote those down. Third, they gave me reasons why they believed the doctrine, which I also wrote on the board.

At each class I gave them a handout on which to take notes. The handout included the headings of the main topics we were discussing for that lesson. It also included definitions of the doctrine we were focused on that were written by various scholars.

Lastly, I mentioned significant objections to the doctrine we were studying that evening. I asked how they would respond to the objections in order to defend the doctrine. Once they shared responses, I gave them additional responses that could help them defend the faith against objections.

Before I taught each class, the expert panel reviewed the curriculum and gave feedback. Their input was helpful, and I was able to implement their suggestions. For example, one reviewer said I needed to include something in the lessons that related to personal application of the doctrines studied. As a result, I included application items in their homework.

Lesson 1

The first of the seven classes was on Monday, January 29. Twenty-four small group leaders attended.[5] In this introductory class I explained why believers, and especially small group leaders, must be able to explain and defend sound doctrine. I described why the six doctrines of the class were foundational and significant. I also explained the format of the class, expectations for participation, and how to do the homework assignments. I gave participants many opportunities to ask questions and to clarify expectations. I gave instructions for their first assignment and made sure they understood it and that it was due

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[5] As well as the husbands of two of the two women's Bible study leaders.

at the next class. As part of their first assignment, I gave them the Pre-Class Questionnaire,[6] which they were to fill out and return to me at the next class. I explained that before I taught on the six doctrines and before they started studying the first doctrine of the class, I would like them to complete the questionnaire. I explained that they would also take the same questionnaire after the final class so I could see their growth in understanding, explaining, and defending the six doctrines.

In his book *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Research*, Peter M. Nardi refers to the kind of survey used in this project as a "self-administered" survey.[7] Nardi says self-administered surveys are "questionnaires for respondents to complete on their own."[8] He offers two positive reasons for using this type of survey. First, self-administered questionnaires are more efficient, taking less of the researcher's time than other methods. Second, Nardi says, "It is less likely that researchers would affect the outcome of a self-administered survey when respondents read the items on their own, compared with a face-to-face interview. This allows for more standardization of the questions and increased reliability."[9]

Lesson 2

Prior to any teaching, participants turned in the Pre-Class Questionnaire. In lesson 2 I focused on the doctrine of the inerrancy of God's Word. Participants broke into groups and practiced the memory verse, which was 2 Timothy 3:16–17, for five minutes. After they practiced, a few people recited the passage from memory for the whole class. Next, they broke into groups to discuss three topics: how they would define inerrancy, key

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[6] See appendix 5.

[7] Peter M. Nardi, *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Research*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 72, Kindle.

[8] Nardi, *Doing Survey Research*, 73.

[9] Nardi, *Doing Survey Research*, 73.

Scriptures they would use to support inerrancy, and reasons why they believe the Bible is inerrant. I then had the groups share their responses to these three topics with the whole class and I wrote their responses on the whiteboard. Next, we looked at definitions of inerrancy written by Wayne Grudem, John MacArthur, and the Evangelical Theological Society and asked them what important components of a definition of inerrancy are found in these definitions. Finally, they shared what they learned about inerrancy from the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI), and I highlighted a few important points from the CSBI.

Lesson 3

The third class was about the doctrine of the Trinity. I began by reviewing the previous lesson about inerrancy. I reviewed the definition of inerrancy, key Scriptures, and reasons to believe that God's Word is inerrant. Then, participants broke into small groups to practice the memory verses: 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and Matthew 28:19–20. After practicing the verses, a few people recited these Scriptures from memory for the whole class. Next, they gathered into groups to discuss their definitions, key Scriptures, and reasons they believed the doctrine of the Trinity. Each group shared what they discussed in their groups and I wrote their answers on the whiteboard. The class then looked at Grudem's definition of the Trinity as well as at MacArthur's and they shared what they saw as important components of these definitions. Because the textbook for the class, *Essential Christian Doctrine*, used many technical theological terms, I had given them a glossary of those terms with their previous assignment. In class, I addressed two of those technical terms: Person and Eternal Generation. Finally, I stated significant objections to the Trinity and asked them to defend the doctrine of the Trinity against those objections. I gave additional defenses once they shared theirs.

Lesson 4

At the beginning of the fourth class, I reviewed the definitions, key Scriptures, and reasons to believe in the doctrines of Inerrancy and the Trinity. Then, participants broke into groups and practiced their memory verses: 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Matthew 28:19–20, and Colossians 2:9. After they practiced, a few people recited them from memory for the whole class. They then broke into groups to discuss the definition, key Scriptures, and reasons to believe the deity of Christ. Next, participants shared what they discussed in their groups, and I wrote their responses on the whiteboard. We then looked at Grudem's and MacArthur's definitions of the deity of Christ and at the definition of the Chalcedonian Creed. I also asked them why the doctrine of the deity of Christ was significant and how they would respond to objections to Christ's deity.

Lesson 5

In the fifth class we studied Christ's atonement. Before looking at Christ's atonement I discussed the definitions, key Scriptures, and reasons for believing the doctrines of inerrancy, the Trinity, and Christ's deity. Then, participants broke into groups to practice each of the memory verses: 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Matthew 28:19–20, Colossians 2:9, and Isaiah 53:5. After they practiced the verses, a few people recited the verses from memory for the whole class. Then they broke into small groups to discuss the definition, key Scriptures, and reasons to believe the doctrine of Christ's atonement. Next, each group shared what they came up with in their groups and I wrote their responses on the whiteboard. I told them Thomas Schreiner's definition of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) as well as Stephen Holmes's definition and had them share what components of these definitions were helpful and biblical. We also looked at the definition of propitiation and discussed how it relates to PSA. Finally, we looked at objections to PSA and had them share how they would respond to these objections.

Lesson 6

 The sixth class focused on the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. I began by reviewing the definition, key Scriptures, and reasons for believing the doctrine of Christ's atonement. Then, participants broke into groups to practice the memory verses: 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Matthew 28:19–20, Colossians 2:9, Isaiah 53:5, and 1 Corinthians 15:17. After this, a few of them recited the verses for the class from memory. Next, they broke into groups to discuss the definition, key Scriptures, and reasons Christ's resurrection is essential as well as reasons to believe he rose from the dead. Next, they shared what they discussed in their groups and I wrote their answers on the whiteboard. I then shared information about Christ's resurrection that they missed in their answers. Finally, I raised objections against the importance and reality of Christ's resurrection and had the class respond to these objections. I gave them additional responses to the objections, including an acronym B.E.A.R.R.S., which gives reasons to believe that Christ rose from the dead: Burial, Empty tomb, Appearances of Christ, Radical transformation of the disciples, Radical rise of Christianity, and Scholars that agree with the minimal facts surrounding Christ's resurrection.

Lesson 7

 At the final class, the seventh class, I focused on the doctrine of justification by faith. I reviewed the doctrines of Christ's atonement and resurrection. Participants broke into groups and practiced each of the memory verses, including Romans 3:28 for justification by faith. Then, a few people recited the verses from memory for the whole class. In groups they discussed the definition, key Scriptures, and reasons they believe the doctrine of justification by faith. Next, they shared what they discussed in their groups, and I wrote their answers on the board. I asked them to defend justification by faith against objections. One objection I asked them to address was belief that James 2:24 teaches that justification is by faith plus works. Finally, I explained the Roman Catholic belief of infused righteousness and how it differs from the Protestant position of justification by

faith alone. I concluded the class by giving them their final assignment: to complete the Post-Class Questionnaire.

Conclusion

I was encouraged and thankful that the class was well received by the small group leaders. They were appreciative and enthusiastic about the class. It was a blessing and a joy to me and to those who participated. Chapter 5 of this project will give an evaluation of this seven-session class. assessment of the class curriculum.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

After the seven-session class was completed, it was helpful to evaluate the effectiveness of the class, what it accomplished, and how it can improve the next time the class is taught. This chapter includes evaluating the ministry project's purpose and goals, an evaluation of the project's strengths and weaknesses, what I would do differently if I taught the class again, as well as theological and personal reflections.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip ten small group leaders of Laurelglen Bible Church in Bakersfield, California, to know, explain, and defend six foundational Christian doctrines. The class I taught, called Sound in the Faith, aimed to fulfill this purpose. Twenty small group leaders of Laurelglen Bible Church completed the seven-session class, in which six doctrines were covered. Whether this class equipped these leaders in the six doctrines is explained in the evaluation of the project's goals.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Three goals measured the success of this ministry project's purpose. If each of these goals were achieved, then this project would be considered effective. The first goal was to assess the knowledge of ten small group leaders and their ability to explain, biblically support, and defend inerrancy, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, penal substitutionary atonement, Christ's resurrection, and justification by faith prior to the class. This goal was considered successfully met in two ways: (1) if a minimum of 90

percent of the participants completed the questionnaire,[1] and (2) if I completed the rubric that recorded their understanding.[2] Initially, the class had twenty-six participants. Two of them were not small group leaders of adult groups, but they were allowed to attend the class with their spouses, who were small group leaders. Because they were not adult small group leaders, their questionnaires were not included in this study. This goal was successfully met because 100 percent of the twenty-four small group leaders who participated in the class completed the pre-class questionnaires before their study of the six doctrines and classwork began and they returned them to me. This goal was also successful because I completed the rubric that recorded their understanding of the six doctrines.[3]

The pre-class questionnaire results gave insight into the participants' understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Most participants (89 percent) had prior learning about the Trinity and were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. However, 61 percent of the participants were unable to identify two passages of Scripture to support the doctrine of the Trinity, and 83 percent struggled to defend the doctrine against a common objection. These results showed an understanding of the concept of the Trinity, but there was room for improvement concerning biblical support and defense of the doctrine.

The pre-class questionnaire results also gave an understanding of the participants' knowledge of the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. Most participants (72 percent) had prior learning about inerrancy and were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. However, 56 percent of the participants were unable to identify two passages of Scripture to support the doctrine of inerrancy, and 72 percent

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[1] See appendix 2.

[2] See appendix 4.

[3] See appendix 2.

struggled to defend the doctrine against a common objection. The results of their pre-class questionnaires showed that they understood the doctrine of inerrancy, but there was room for improvement related to biblical support and defending this doctrine against a common objection.

The results of the pre-class questionnaire gave useful information about the participants' understanding of the doctrine of Christ's deity. Most participants (83 percent) had some understanding about Christ's deity and were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher and 61 percent scored the sufficient level or higher in their ability to cite two or more verses to support the doctrine. However, 44 percent of the participants struggled to defend the doctrine against a common objection. These results showed familiarity with the concept of Christ's deity, but there was room for growth in the areas of biblical support and defending Christ's deity.

The pre-class questionnaire results also gave helpful insights into the participants' understanding of the doctrine of Christ's atonement. Most participants (83 percent) understood Christ's atonement and were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. However, 61 percent of the participants were unable to identify two passages of Scripture to support the doctrine of Christ's atonement, and 56 percent struggled to defend the doctrine against a common objection. Taken as a whole, these results showed that they understood the doctrine of Christ's atonement, but there was room for improvement regarding biblical support and defending Christ's atonement.

The results of the pre-class questionnaire also gave an awareness of the participants' understanding of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Just over half of the participants (56 percent) had prior understanding about Christ's resurrection and were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. The same percentage of the participants (56 percent) were also able to give two or more verses to support this doctrine. Interestingly, the same percentage (56 percent) were able to answer a common objection to the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. The results of their pre-class questionnaires

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showed that just over half the class could explain, support, and defend the doctrine but almost half the class had room for improvement in these areas.

The pre-class questionnaire results also gave insights into the participants' understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith. Most participants (78 percent) were unable to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. A majority of participants (61 percent) were unable to identify two passages of Scripture to support the doctrine of justification by faith. Finally, 67 percent struggled to defend the doctrine against a common objection. The results showed that there was much room for improvement in all three categories related to justification by faith and that the participants needed more help with this doctrine than with the other five doctrines.

The second goal was to develop and teach a seven-session curriculum to equip the participants to know, explain, and defend these six foundational Christian doctrines. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[4] This goal was considered successfully met if a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the "sufficient" level on the curriculum rubric. The expert panel included three men. Reviewer 1 was selected because he has significant theological training and has been a pastor for over fifty years. Reviewer 2 was selected because he was a pastor for almost fifty years, and he has significant theological training. Reviewer 3 was selected because he has significant theological training, was a pastor for approximately thirty-five years, and currently runs a ministry that equips pastors and elders. I am pleased to report that this goal was achieved. Over 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the "sufficient" level on the curriculum rubric. Reviewer 2 stated, "Congratulations on an outstanding piece of biblical and theological teaching. You are a huge plus in this area at LBC." Reviewer 3 commented, "The lessons were very Bible-

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[4] See appendix 3.

centered and worthy of study and further investigation. My only suggestion is that 'so what' application could have had more emphasis. Solid theology deserves life application. Solid theology impacts mind and behavior." I appreciated their comments and implemented reviewer 3's insightful suggestion.

The third goal of the project was to reassess the participants after the course to determine if they grew in their knowledge and ability to explain and defend these six doctrines. This goal was measured by re-administering the pre-class questionnaire as a post-class questionnaire. This goal was considered successfully met if a minimum of 80 percent of the participants met or exceeded the "sufficient" level on the post-class questionnaire rubric. Unfortunately, this goal was not met. I needed sixteen of the twenty participants who completed the class to meet or exceed the "sufficient" level on every criterion on the questionnaire rubric for it to be a success. However, only seven of the twenty participants who completed the class did so.[5] Two participants came close, getting "sufficient" or "exemplary" in all the criteria except for one. Of the twenty-four small group leaders who participated in the class, four dropped out of the class and two of the remaining twenty did not return their post-class questionnaires to me, so I received eighteen completed questionnaires. The rubrics that record the results of the pre-and post-class questionnaire only record the results of the eighteen participants who completed the post-course questionnaire.[6]

Comparing the results of the participants' pre-class questionnaires with their post-class questionnaires gave insight into which doctrines they grew in their ability to explain, biblically support, and defend and where they require further education.[7]

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[5] See the results of the pre-class questionnaire and the post-class questionnaire in tables A1 and A2 in appendix 4.

[6] See tables A1 and A2 in appendix 4.

[7] See tables A3 and A4 in appendix 4 for comparisons of pre-class and post-class questionnaire with attendance.

Concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, in the pre-class questionnaire, 89 percent of the participants were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. In the post-class questionnaire, 94 percent were able to explain the Trinity at the sufficient level or higher, which was a 5 percent increase. In the pre-class questionnaire, 39 percent were able to cite at least two verses to support the Trinity and in the post-class questionnaire, 61 percent were able to do this, which was a 22 percent increase. Finally, in the pre-class questionnaire, only 17 percent of the participants were able to defend against a common objection to the Trinity and in the post-class questionnaire, 72 percent were able to do this, which was a 55 percent increase. Taken as a whole, the results showed that by the end of the class, the participants grew, especially in their ability to defend the Trinity against a common objection. The results also revealed that the participants can use further education in the area of citing verses to support this doctrine.

Concerning the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, in the pre-class questionnaire, 72 percent of participants were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. In the post-class questionnaire, 100 percent were able to explain inerrancy at the sufficient level or higher, which was a 28 percent increase. In the pre-class questionnaire, 44 percent were able to cite at least two verses to support inerrancy and in the post-class questionnaire, 67 percent were able to do this, which was a 23 percent increase. Finally, in the pre-class questionnaire, only 28 percent of the participants were able to defend against a common objection to inerrancy and in the post-class questionnaire, 83 percent were able to do this, which was a 55 percent increase. Taken as a whole, the results showed that the participants grew, especially in their ability to defend inerrancy against a common objection. The results also revealed that the participants can use further education in the area of citing verses to support this doctrine.

Concerning the doctrine of Christ's deity, in the pre-class questionnaire, 83 percent of participants were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. In the post-class questionnaire, 100 percent were able to explain Christ's deity at the

sufficient level or higher, which was a 17 percent increase. In the pre-class questionnaire, 61 percent were able to cite at least two verses to support Christ's deity and in the post-class questionnaire, 83 percent were able to do this, which was a 22 percent increase. Finally, in the pre-class questionnaire, only 44 percent of participants were able to defend against a common objection to Christ's deity and in the post-class questionnaire, 83 percent were able to do this, which was a 39 percent increase. Taken as a whole, the results showed that the participants grew, especially in their ability to defend Christ's deity against a common objection.

Concerning the doctrine of Christ's atonement, in the pre-class questionnaire, 83 percent of the participants were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. In the post-class questionnaire, 100 percent were able to explain Christ's atonement at the sufficient level or higher, which was a 27 percent increase. In the pre-class questionnaire, 39 percent were able to cite at least two verses to support Christ's atonement and in the post-class questionnaire, 67 percent were able to do this, which was a 28 percent increase. Finally, in the pre-class questionnaire, only 44 percent of the participants were able to defend against a common objection to Christ's atonement and in the post-class questionnaire, 78 percent were able to do this, which was a 34 percent increase. Taken as a whole, the results showed that the participants grew by approximately 30 percent in all three categories and that the participants can use further education in citing verses to support this doctrine.

Concerning the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, in the pre-class questionnaire, 56 percent of participants were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. In the post-class questionnaire, 100 percent were able to explain Christ's resurrection at the sufficient level or higher, which was a 44 percent increase. In the pre-class questionnaire, 56 percent were able to cite at least two verses to support Christ's resurrection and in the post-class questionnaire, 78 percent were able to do this, which was a 22 percent increase. Finally, in the pre-class questionnaire, 56 percent of participants

were able to defend against a common objection to Christ's resurrection and in the post-class questionnaire, 78 percent were able to do this, which was a 22 percent increase. Taken as a whole, the results showed that the participants grew in all three categories, especially in their ability to explain Christ's resurrection.

Concerning justification by faith, in the pre-class questionnaire, 22 percent of participants were able to explain the doctrine at the sufficient level or higher. In the post-class questionnaire, 78 percent were able to explain justification by faith at the sufficient level or higher, which was a 56 percent increase. In the pre-class questionnaire, 39 percent were able to cite at least two verses to support justification by faith and in the post-class questionnaire, 94 percent were able to do this, which was a 55 percent increase. Finally, in the pre-class questionnaire, only 33 percent of participants were able to defend against a common objection to justification by faith and in the post-class questionnaire, 78 percent were able to do this, which was a 45 percent increase. Taken as a whole, the results showed that the participants grew by almost 50 percent in each category. Participants increased in their ability to explain, biblically support, and defend this doctrine more than the other five doctrines.

Several observations can be made by comparing the pre-class and post-class questionnaire results. First, there was a growth in all three categories of each of the six doctrines. The least amount of growth was in their ability to explain the Trinity with only 5 percent increase. The pre-class questionnaire revealed that they already had a grasp of the Trinity (89 percent received a sufficient level or higher), yet they experienced a 5 percent increase by the end of the seven classes. Second, the greatest amount of growth found in the questionnaires concerned the doctrine of justification by faith. The pre-class questionnaires revealed that, of the six doctrines, they were the weakest in the doctrine of justification by faith. Comparing their pre-class questionnaire with their post-class questionnaire revealed that their ability to explain the doctrine of justification by faith grew by 56 percent, their ability to give scriptural support for this doctrine grew by 55

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percent, and their ability to defend the doctrine against a common objection grew by 45 percent. Third, comparing the pre-class and post-class questionnaires also revealed where further education is needed. An area where there was growth, but not as much growth as the other categories, was with their ability to cite verses that support the doctrines. The participants need further education in their ability to cite Bible verses, especially concerning the doctrines of the Trinity, inerrancy, and Christ's atonement.

It was helpful to research the participants' attendance record and to determine if attendance impacted questionnaire scores.[8] Of the eighteen participants who completed the post-class questionnaire, seven attended all seven classes, seven attended six classes, three attended four classes, and one attended three classes. Several observations can be made concerning class attendance. First, the fourteen people who attended six or seven of the seven classes grew from their pre-class questionnaires to their post-class questionnaires on average of 17 percent overall. The four people who attended less than six classes grew from their pre-class questionnaires to their post-class questionnaires on average of 7 percent overall. Second, participants who attended all seven classes grew in 90 percent of the eighteen criteria each from their pre-class questionnaire to their post class questionnaire.[9] Participants who attended six classes grew in 71 percent of the eighteen criteria from the pre-class questionnaire to the post class questionnaire. Participants who attended four classes or less grew in 63 percent of the eighteen criteria from the pre-class questionnaire to the post class questionnaire. This may indicate that class attendance could have impacted the participants' learning. Third, some participants increased their score on their post-class questionnaire even if they missed the class where that doctrine was taught. For example, participant 4 increased by four points on Christ's atonement from his pre-class questionnaire to his post-class questionnaire even though he did not

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[8] See tables A3 and A4 in appendix 4 for comparisons of pre-class and post-class questionnaire with attendance.

[9] The eighteen criterial are the three categories of the six doctrines evaluated on the rubric.

attend the class that was focused on Christ's atonement. His increased score concerning

Christ's atonement could be due to several unknown factors. It could be because he

learned more about the atonement in the next class where the atonement was not focused

on but was reviewed, because he completed the homework on the atonement, or because

he studied the summaries from the class on the atonement that were texted to absentees.

Because there is no record of who completed their homework or which absentees read the

class summaries, there is not a way to know for certain why he increased by four points.

Fourth, the highest increases in total scores for all eighteen criteria were from those who

attended all seven classes. The top five increases in scores were from participant 1, with

+31; participant 7 with +26; participant 11 with +26; participant 6 with +23; and

participant 10 with +19 points (though two participants who attended six classes also

scored +19). The fact that the top five increased scores came from participants who

attended all seven classes may indicate that class attendance helped them increase their

score, but this is uncertain.

Strengths of the Project

This ministry project had several strengths, including the involvement of the

participants, teaching the class, and the curriculum. The first strength was the participants

and their involvement in the class. One way this was seen was in their comments about

the class. Several told me multiple times that they were learning a lot, thankful I was

teaching the class, or enjoyed the class. Of course, there were times when some complained

about the amount of homework and keeping up with the assignments, but then they would

say that they were happy they were doing it. Another way their participation was evident

was with the memory verses. I usually gave five to ten minutes of the class to review all

the verses with one or two other participants. Then I gave some opportunity to share the

verses with the class. I was usually pleased with their ability to remember and recite the

verses. Another way their involvement was noticed was by their attendance.[10] While four participants dropped out of the class, twenty small group leaders and two of their spouses completed the course. Twelve of the eighteen who returned their post-class questionnaire attended six or seven of the seven classes. Another point to note about their involvement is that people enjoyed getting to know each other. My plan at our first meeting was to do a get to know each other ice breaker, but I forgot to do it. After that class a gentleman in the class asked me if we could do activities in the class to get to know each other. That motivated me to remember for the rest of the classes to do an ice breaker at the beginning of each class. They enjoyed getting to know each other. I was aware of this because I always had a hard time getting them to stop talking with each other so we could get to the coursework. Another way I saw good class participation was when I had them break into groups of three or four to discuss what they were learning about the doctrines from their assignments. There were rarely any shortage of words within the groups. As they discussed the doctrines among themselves, various groups would ask me questions about a particular doctrine, or I would overhear the groups discussing the topic at hand. Overall, I was pleased with the participation of the people in the class.

Another strength was teaching the class. There was some enjoyment in preparing each class, but preparation was tedious and taxing. The joy was to take what I had prepared and then to teach it. I enjoyed sharing what I had learned from my studies. I was pleased that the class paid attention well when I spoke, and they were quick to respond when I asked questions. When I refer to teaching the class, I do not mean lecturing, although I did lecture some in the class. Much of the class involved me asking them questions to get them to think and to wrestle with the content. When they gave me answers I often responded with "what do you mean by that?" or "where can we find that in

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[10] See appendix 4.

Scripture?" Getting to teach the class and getting people to think, to dig into God's Word, to share their views and to understand the information was a delight.

I also believe that the curriculum I used for the class was a strength. John MacArthur's *Essential Christian Doctrine: A Handbook on Biblical Truth* is excellent.[11] It is a summary of his larger book, *Biblical Doctrine*.[12] I had read and used *Biblical Doctrine* numerous times in the past, but I had not studied much of *Essential Christian Doctrine*. As I prepared each lesson and read the assigned portions of *Essential Christian Doctrine*, I quickly began to enjoy and appreciate this book. For the most part MacArthur explains his points clearly and includes many relevant Scriptures. The only difficult portion of the book I asked them to read was the section about the Trinity. His section about the Trinity is difficult because of the theological and philosophical vocabulary. To help participants get through that challenging section I wrote and provided a glossary of terms. The participants appreciated the glossary, and it helped them better understand the difficult terminology. The portions of chapters 2 and 3 from my ministry project, the historic church creeds, and other articles I encouraged them to read were also beneficial for understanding the doctrines. In addition to the book and other readings, having them actively participate in what they were reading by memorizing verses, writing definitions of the doctrines, writing verses that undergird the doctrines, and writing defenses against objections were useful practices to help them learn and remember the material.

<div align="center">

Weaknesses of the Project

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I am grateful that my ministry project included some strengths, but there were also weaknesses. Such weaknesses include neglecting to give adequate time to personal application of each doctrine, informing the absentees about what was covered in the classes

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[11] John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine: A Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021).

[12] John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

they missed, and the way I used the questionnaires. Reviewer 1, on his evaluation of the curriculum, noted that I should have addressed the application of each doctrine: "My only suggestion is that 'so what' application could have had more emphasis. Solid theology deserves life application. Solid theology impacts mind and behavior." I wholeheartedly agree with him. He noticed this about halfway through the seven classes and addressed this issue with me at that time. From then on, I made sure that part of their assignment was to write what difference this doctrine made in their own lives. I also addressed the personal application of each doctrine as a point of discussion in the remainder of the classes. It would be an improvement to the class to emphasize the applicational aspect of each doctrine beginning with the first class.

Another weakness of the class was informing absentees about the content covered in the classes they missed. Originally, I planned to record the class in some way and have absentees either watch or listen to the recording. I did not end up doing this. I did not record the class because I knew that the classes would be so interactive that it would have been too hard for people watching or listening to a recording to benefit from it. When I taught, I did little lecturing and when I did lecture, it was for only a few minutes interspersed with discussion. What I did to inform the absentees about what covered in class was to write the main points on the whiteboard, which included the definition of the doctrines, key Scriptures concerning the doctrines, and important arguments against objections to those doctrines. I then took a photograph of the whiteboard and texted it to the absentees the next day. I realized this was not an ideal way to inform the absentees, but I thought it was better than nothing. After the seventh class I spoke with my wife about this problem, and she had an idea that I might use in the future. She said that after each class I could record myself talking about the main points of each of the doctrines in a fifteen-to-twenty-minute recording and send that to the absentees. If I teach this class again I will not only text the photographs to the absentees but I will also send them a recorded summary of what was discussed in classes they missed.

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Another weakness was the way I used the pre- and post-class questionnaire. The questions should have been clearer. For each doctrine I asked two questions, one related to the meaning of the doctrine and one related to answering objections to the doctrine. After the first question concerning the meaning of each doctrine I wrote, "Include verses you would use to describe" that doctrine. Instead, I should have made the issue about the verses a separate question, such as, "What are two or more verses you can write that teach this doctrine?" This would have been helpful because I noticed on the participants' post-class questionnaires that they did not always include verses to back up what they were saying. My theory is that they were so focused on writing the meaning of the doctrine and arguments for it that they sometimes forgot to include Scriptures. A related problem is that sometimes they would write the name of the book of the Bible and the chapter number, but not the verse number. So, if I included a third question for each doctrine that asked participants to give the chapters with the specific verses to back up what they believe, I think it would have helped them remember to write relevant verses. Another weakness of the questionnaire was that some questions I asked were unclear. For example, I asked, "How would you explain the idea that we are justified by God's grace through faith?" Few people wrote about the meaning of justification. Most focused on "by God's grace" and/or "through faith." They explained that by God's grace through our faith we are saved, not by our works. However, they did not explain the meaning of justification. If I teach this class again, I will clarify the question by breaking it into two questions: "What does the word justification mean?" and "What does it mean that justification is by God's grace through our faith?"

What I Would Do Differently

There are several things I would do differently if I taught this class again, including addressing the weaknesses I mentioned. First, I would add an assignment to each lesson to have them teach what they are learning about each doctrine to someone who was not in the class. I have found that when I teach something, I understand it more

than if I simply listen to someone teach me and I understand it more than when I simply read something. Teaching a topic forces people to make sure they understand the material accurately, to study the topic more thoroughly, and to take ownership of what they are teaching. As a result, those who teach understand their topic better and remember it longer than simply learning the material.

A second thing I would do differently is that I would have participants complete the post-class questionnaire in the classroom. Most participants were quick to get the pre-class questionnaire back to me. However, it took four weeks and two reminders for some to get their post-class questionnaires back, and I likely will not get them back from two participants who completed the course.

A third change I would try is to meet every week or every other week instead of twice a month. Twice a month and every other week sound the same, but months that have five Mondays made a three-week gap between meetings. We met the second and fourth Mondays of each month for class, starting the fourth Monday of January. One problem with meeting twice a month was that the fourth Monday of March was Easter break, which we took off. So, we only met one time in March, which dragged the class out a little too long. The last class was the second Monday of May, which was three weeks after the previous class in April, which also made the class extend too long. As a result, attendance decreased in the last two meetings.

A fourth thing I might do differently is to limit the class to twelve fully committed participants. I would have asked them before the class began not to sign up for the class unless they could commit to attend all seven classes and do all the homework. With this commitment level, I believe a greater percentage of participants would have grasped and retained more than they did in the class. Also, with fewer participants, I could have spent more time with each individual and could have had more clarity on where each of them were in their understanding of the doctrines.

A fifth change I would make would be to address fewer doctrines in the class. Teaching only one lesson on a challenging theological topic is not enough. People need time to review, reflect on, and ask questions about what they are studying to more thoroughly grasp the meaning of the topic. If I did this class again, I might only address the doctrines of the inerrancy of Scripture and PSA because of the urgent relevance of these topics to my congregation. Focusing on these two topics would give me three lessons to teach on each doctrine.

A sixth change I would make is that I would have analyzed the participant's responses to the pre-class questionnaire more thoroughly. When the participants completed their pre-class questionnaires, I read them and got a general sense of where they were strong and where they were weak in their abilities to know, explain, and defend the six doctrines. What I would have done differently is that I would have recorded their results and looked for trends to help me know how to better address their weaknesses in the seven classes. As seen above, the participants were weakest on the doctrine of justification by faith. This would have been helpful to know before teaching the classes.

A seventh change I would make would be to add a descriptor rubric that quantified what a number 1, 2, 3, and 4 were on the pre-and post-class questionnaire rubric. Therefore, I added a descriptor rubric to my ministry project for future use.[13]

An eighth change I would make would be for participants to record the percentage of homework assignments they completed for each class. This would include a record of the verses they memorized as well as how many of the verses they were able to recite by memory by the end of the seven classes. I would also have absentees record whether they read the review of the classes they missed or listened to the recording of the summary I made of the class.

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[13] See the descriptor rubric is in appendix 2.

Theological Reflections

As I reflected on this ministry project, I had a few theological observations. First, writing this paper and teaching the class reminded me that God still cares for me personally. As I mentioned, I was worried that too few people would join the class because it was on Monday evenings. After I fretted over this I remembered to pray and ask the Lord to provide participants. Then, I saw the Lord provide much more abundantly than I ever expected. God still cares for his children. God still answers prayers that are according to his will.

A second theological observation was that there are technical arguments against the foundational truths of our faith that appear to be strong. One place this was obvious to me in my studies was with the deity of Christ in Titus 2:13. I have had that verse memorized for decades and never thought that some theologians could find ways to say that it does not speak of the deity of Christ. This was a reminder to me that all Christians, including pastors, must remain diligent in their study of God's Word and must be ready at all times to defend it. Studying Titus 2:13 in depth for this project revealed that the best interpretation of Titus 2:13 states that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Godhead. This reminded me that no matter what the attacks against God's Word are, in the end, Scripture will stand through every trial and test.

A third theological observation from writing this paper and teaching the class was that even mature believers and students of God's Word in the church need continual education in Scripture and theology. Many of the leaders who took the class struggled to articulate certain doctrines and they struggled to find Scriptures to support some of the most essential doctrines of the faith. This revealed that they need regular and repeated reminders and teaching of God's Word. The apostle Peter emphasized the need for constant reminders of God's Word in 2 Peter. In 2 Peter 1:15, speaking of the truths of God's Word, Peter said, "And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things." Peter knew that people are forgetful and need constant reminders. He said something similar toward the end of this epistle: "This

is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Pet 3:1–2). Small group leaders need regular reminders of the foundational truths of God's Word. They need reminders not only from listening to sermons in order to grasp, remember, and utilize God's Word in their lives and ministry. They need to study it, memorize it, and teach it thoroughly and diligently.

A fourth theological observation I made from teaching the class was that I must exercise patience as I teach the Word of God to small group leaders. In teaching the class, my hope was that every participant would have learned and retained a large percentage of the material I taught. However, as the post-questionnaire revealed, some retained a large percentage of the material, but over half retained a lesser percentage. While I was happy to see some growth in almost every participant between the pre-class and post-class questionnaires, I was hoping to see more growth. To be honest, this was a little discouraging. I was also slightly frustrated at the participants because I thought they should have put more effort into learning and remembering the material. But as I reflect on Scripture, I am encouraged and reminded that teachers of God's Word must teach with patience, knowing that it takes much time, repetition, and careful explanation for people to understand, remember, and defend the doctrines of Scripture. God's Word through the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:1–2 encourages me to diligently and patiently continue to teach and explain God's Word not only to the small group leaders of my church, but to everyone I teach: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." Paul did not simply tell us to teach God's Word with patience, but with "complete patience." He understood that teaching can sometimes be frustrating when people do not grasp what is taught or when they cannot remember it or defend it. So, by

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God's grace and with his strength, every teacher of God's Word must teach with "complete patience," bearing the fruit of the Spirit of patience with the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22).

Personal Reflections

I am grateful to the Lord, to my church, and to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for the opportunity to write this paper and teach this class. I learned important lessons from this process. One is that I learned to wake up at 4:00 a.m. This may seem strange to mention, but it is a life changer. I used to try to stay up until 11:30 or midnight to study, but by about 10:30 I was falling asleep while I was standing up studying. No matter what I did to try to stay awake, I kept falling asleep and I could not concentrate on what I was reading or writing. I discovered this when I was writing chapter 2 of this paper. I was so focused on the seminar I was taking at SBTS at that time, that I forgot to check when chapter 2 was due. Suddenly a panic came over me and I thought I should check when it was due. I looked and then felt another wave of panic rush over me when I found out that I only had a month to get the first draft of chapter 2 to my supervisor. I realized I had to stop every extra activity I was doing at that time, take some vacation days from the church, and start waking up at 4:00 a.m. Between those life changes and a lot of grace from the Lord, I managed to turn in the first draft of chapter 2 on time. Waking up at 4:00 a.m. gave me almost three hours of uninterrupted time to study and to write. I was also more awake and alert in the early mornings than I was late at night. Learning to wake up at 4:00 a.m., or sometimes at 4:30 a.m., helped me with my foundational seminars as well as other studying I have done for the church and for my own personal growth. I plan to continue this practice to have much needed study and prayer time.

Writing chapter 2 with limited time also taught me that I can do more than I thought I could do if I focus and work diligently at it. Learning this helped me finish the rest of this paper without getting as anxious as I once did when I had big projects to work on for the church or the seminary.

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Conclusion

The foundational truths of the Christian faith are under attack not only from outside the church but even from within the church. Many Christians are unable to articulate the essential doctrines, scripturally support them, or defend them against attacks and objections. It is crucial that the people of our churches, especially those in leadership positions, understand, teach, and defend these truths against error. If church leaders are solid in the foundational doctrines, they can pass on sound doctrine to the people they teach and lead, and Lord willing, the people they teach and lead can then teach their children and others in their spheres of influence. Writing this paper helped me mature in my understanding of six of the foundational doctrines of our faith and in my ability to articulate, teach, and defend them. Teaching this class helped twenty of my church's leaders to better understand, teach, and defend these doctrines as well. Even if the class did not help them improve in these doctrines as much as I was originally hoping, the class did help them grow. But our work is not finished. The pastors and elders of Laurelglen Bible Church must continue to teach our small group leaders and church members to study sound doctrine diligently in order to teach and defend it accurately and clearly, to the glory of the one true living God until the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings returns to the earth.

APPENDIX 1

PRE- AND POST-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE

Before the seven-session class, I asked each participant to fill out a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gain an understanding of their understanding of and ability to verbally explain and defend the six foundational doctrines prior to the class. The questionnaire is on the following page.

Inerrancy

1. How would you explain the inerrancy of the Bible? Include verses you would use to describe inerrancy.

2. How would you respond if someone said, "the Bible contains some of God's Word, but some of it is just the opinions of people, not God's Word?"

The Trinity

1. How would you describe the Trinity? Include any verses you would use to describe the Trinity.

2. How would you respond if someone said, "the Trinity does not make sense. How can there be one God and yet three?"

The Deity of Christ

1. How would you describe the deity of the Son of God? Include any verses you would use to explain this.

2. How would you respond if someone said, "Jesus is not fully God?"

The Atonement

1. Explain Christ's death on the cross—why he died and what it accomplished. Include any verses you would use to explain this.

2. How would you respond if someone said, "the idea that Christ died in our place to take God's wrath against our sin makes God vengeful and abusive?"

Christ's Resurrection

1. Explain why Christ rose from the dead. Include any verses you would use to explain this.

2. How would you respond if someone said, "a person can still be a Christian if they do not believe that Jesus' body literally rose from the dead?"

Justification by Faith

1. How would you explain the idea that we are justified by God's grace through faith? Include any verses you would use to explain this.

2. How would you respond if someone said, "we are justified by our faith plus our works?"

APPENDIX 2

PRE- AND POST-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE RUBRIC

Before the seven-session class and after each participant filled out the questionnaire, I filled out a rubric for each participant. At the end of the class, I asked each participant to fill out the same questionnaire again and then I proceeded to fill out the same rubric. By comparing the results from the pre-class questionnaire with the results from the post-class questionnaire, I determined if the course helped them grow in their understanding of and ability to explain and defend the six doctrines.

Name of Participant: _____Date: _____

Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Comments**
The Trinity					
They were able to explain one God in three persons.					
They were able to cite at least two verses about the Trinity.					
They were able to respond to an objection concerning one God and three persons.					
Inerrancy					
They were able to explain the concept of inerrancy.					
They were able to cite at least two verses about inerrancy.					
They were able to answer the objection to inerrancy biblically and logically.					
The Deity of Christ					
They were able to explain that Jesus was fully God.					
They were able to cite at least two verses that indicate he was fully God.					
They were able to defend against the belief that Jesus is not fully God.					
The Atonement					
They were able to explain PSA and its significance.					
They were able to cite at least two verses that teach PSA.					
They were able to defend against the accusation that PSA makes God a vengeful abusive God.					
Christ's Resurrection					
They were able to explain reasons why Jesus rose from the dead.					

Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Comments**
They were able to cite at least two verses that teach the significance of his resurrection.					
They were able to defend the fact that Christ's resurrection is a necessary component of the Gospel.					
Justification by Faith					
They were able to explain justification by God's grace through faith alone.					
They were able to cite at least two verses that speak to justification by faith.					
They were able to defend against the idea that justification is by faith plus works.					

Other Comments:

Descriptor Rubric for Evaluating Pre- and Post-Class Questionnaires

	1 = Insufficient	2 = requires attention	3 = sufficient	4 = exemplary
Criteria	1	2	3	4
The Trinity				
Participant was able to explain the doctrine of the Trinity.	Participant was unable to explain either that there is one God, or that God is in three persons, or that each person is fully God.	Participant was able to explain either that there is one God, that there are three persons, or that each person is fully God.	Participant was able to explain that there is one God in three persons and each person is fully God.	Participant was able to explain the sufficient level plus either one essence, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, or the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and Son.
Participant was able to identify relevant biblical support for the doctrine of the Trinity.	Participant was unable to identify any biblical support for this doctrine.	Participant provided biblical support, but the passage(s) were not immediately relevant to the doctrine.	Participant provided at least two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.	Participant provided more than two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.
Participant was able to respond biblically to an objection concerning the Trinity.	Participant was unable to give a biblical argument in defense of the Trinity.	Participant was able to give one biblical argument in defense of the Trinity.	Participant was able to give two biblical arguments in defense of the Trinity.	Participant was able to give three or more biblical arguments in defense of the Trinity.
Inerrancy				
Participant was able to explain the doctrine of inerrancy.	Participant was unable to explain that Scripture is fully true and that it is inspired by an inerrant God.	Participant was able to explain either that Scripture is fully true or that it is inspired by an inerrant God.	Participant was able to explain that Scripture is fully true and that it is inspired by an inerrant God.	Participant was able to explain that all Scripture is fully true, primarily because it is inspired by an inerrant God, and the human element of inspiration.
Participant was able to identify relevant biblical support for the doctrine of the inerrancy.	Participant was unable to identify any biblical support for this doctrine.	Participant provided biblical support, but the passage(s) were not immediately relevant to the doctrine.	Participant provided at least two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.	Participant provided more than two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.
Participant was able to respond biblically to an objection to inerrancy.	Participant was unable to give a biblical argument in defense of inerrancy.	Participant was able to give one biblical argument in defense of inerrancy.	Participant was able to give two biblical arguments in defense of inerrancy.	Participant was able to give three or more biblical arguments in defense of inerrancy.

Deity of Christ				
Participant was able to explain the doctrine of Christ's deity.	Participant was unable to explain Christ's deity.	Participant was able to explain either that Jesus is fully God or that he is truly man.	Participant was able to explain that Christ is fully God and truly man and in his incarnation he remained fully God.	Participant was able to explain that Christ is fully God and truly man, having remained fully God in his incarnation, in one essence with the Father and the Spirit.
Participant was able to identify relevant biblical support for the doctrine of Christ's deity.	Participant was unable to identify any biblical support for this doctrine.	Participant provided biblical support, but the passage(s) were not immediately relevant to the doctrine.	Participant provided at least two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.	Participant provided more than two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.
Participant was able to biblically defend against the belief that Jesus is not fully God.	Participant was unable to give a biblical argument for Christ's deity.	Participant was able to give one biblical argument for Christ's deity.	Participant was able to give two biblical arguments for Christ's deity.	Participant was able to give three or more biblical arguments for Christ's deity.
Penal Substitutionary Atonement				
Participant was able to explain the doctrine of PSA.	Participants were unable to explain that Christ's death was in our place and that it was the taking of our punishment upon himself.	Participants were able to explain either that Christ's death was in our place or that his death was Christ taking our punishment upon himself.	Participant was able to explain that Jesus died in our place to take the punishment from God that we deserved.	Participant was able to explain that people are guilty and God is holy and wrathful against sin and that our sins were imputed to Christ on the cross, and He died in our place to take God's punishment against our sin and thus to make us right with God.
Participant was able to identify relevant biblical support for the doctrine of PSA.	Participant was unable to identify any biblical support for this doctrine.	Participant provided biblical support, but the passage(s) were not immediately relevant to the doctrine.	Participant provided at least two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.	Participant provided more than two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.
Participant was able to biblically defend against the accusation that PSA makes God a vengeful abusive God.	Participant was unable to give a biblical argument for PSA.	Participant was able to give one biblical argument for PSA.	Participant was able to give two biblical arguments for PSA.	Participant was able to give three or more biblical arguments for PSA.

Christ's Resurrection				
Participant was able to explain reasons for Christ resurrection.	Participant was unable to give a reason for Christ's resurrection.	Participant was able to give one reason for Christ's resurrection.	Participant was able to give two reasons for Christ's resurrection.	Participant was able to give three or more reasons for Christ's resurrection.
Participant was able to identify relevant biblical support for the doctrine of Christ's resurrection.	Participant was unable to identify any biblical support for this doctrine.	Participant provided biblical support, but the passage(s) were not immediately relevant to the doctrine.	Participant provided at least two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.	Participant provided more than two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.
Participant was able to biblically defend the necessity of Christ's resurrection.	Participant was unable to give a biblical argument for the necessity of Christ's resurrection.	Participant was able to give one biblical argument for the necessity of Christ's resurrection.	Participant was able to give two biblical arguments for the necessity of Christ's resurrection.	Participant was able to give three or more biblical arguments for the necessity of Christ's resurrection.
Justification by Faith				
Participants were able to explain the doctrine of justification by faith.	Participant was unable to explain justification and unable to explain that it is by faith, not by works.	Participant explained either that justification occurs when one is counted righteous, or that it is by faith not by works.	Participant explained that justification occurs when one is counted righteous by God's grace through faith, not by works, and is imputed.	Participant explained that justification occurs when one is counted righteous with Christ's righteousness by God's grace through faith, not by works, and is imputed.
Participant was able to identify relevant biblical support for the doctrine of justification by faith.	Participant was unable to identify any biblical support for this doctrine.	Participant provided biblical support, but the passage(s) were not immediately relevant to the doctrine.	Participant provided at least two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.	Participant provided more than two relevant biblical passages for the doctrine.
Participant was able to biblically defend against the belief that justification is by faith plus works.	Participant was unable to give a biblical reason that justification is by faith, not by works.	Participant was able to give one biblical reason why justification is by faith, not by works.	Participant was able to give two biblical reasons why justification is by faith, not by works.	Participant was able to give three or more biblical reasons why justification is by faith, not by works.

APPENDIX 3

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

I developed and taught a seven-session course that focused on the six foundational doctrines of the faith. Before teaching the course, an expert panel evaluated the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum using the following rubric.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Comments**
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to understand, explain, and defend the six doctrines.					
At the end of the class, participants will be able to better understand, explain, and defend the six doctrines.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 4

PRE- AND POST-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

This appendix includes the responses of the eighteen participants, who completed both the pre-and post-class questionnaires. The six participants who completed the pre-class questionnaire but did not complete the post-class questionnaire are not included in these results. The responses recorded in the questionnaires represent the number of people who answered either an "insufficient," "requires attention," "sufficient," or "exemplary" in each category. For example, in the first category of "The Trinity" on the pre-class questionnaire two of the eighteen people had "requires attention," eleven people had a "sufficient," and five people had an "exemplary." When the pre-class questionnaire is contrasted with the post-class questionnaire, it is evident how people improved. For example, in the first category under "The Trinity," on the post-class questionnaire, one of the eighteen people had "requires attention," two had "sufficient," and fifteen had "exemplary."

This appendix also includes a comparison of the pre- and post-class questionnaires, including the attendance record.

Table A1. Pre-class questionnaire tool results

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
The Trinity					
They were able to explain one God in three persons.		2	11	5	
They were able to cite at least two verses about the Trinity.	8	3		7	
They were able to respond to an objection concerning one God and three persons.	4	11	3		
Inerrancy					
They were able to explain the concept of inerrancy.	2	3	10	3	
They were able to cite at least two verses about inerrancy.	9	1		8	
They were able to answer the objection to inerrancy biblically and logically.	5	8	5		
The Deity of Christ					
They were able to explain that Jesus was fully God.		3	9	6	
They were able to cite at least two verses that indicate he was fully God.	2	5		11	
They were able to defend against the belief that Jesus is not fully God.	1	9	6	2	
The Atonement					
They were able to explain PSA and its significance.		3	9	6	
They were able to cite at least two verses that teach PSA.	6	5		7	
They were able to defend against the accusation that PSA makes God a vengeful abusive God.	1	9	7	1	
Christ's Resurrection					
They were able to explain reasons why Jesus rose from the dead.	1	7	6	4	
They were able to cite at least two verses that teach the significance of his resurrection.	6	2		10	
They were able to defend the fact that Christ's resurrection is a necessary component of the Gospel.	2	6	10		

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Justification by Faith					
They were able to explain justification by God's grace through faith alone.	3	11	4		
They were able to cite at least two verses that speak to justification by faith.	6	5		7	
They were able to defend against the idea that justification is by faith plus works.	2	10	6		

Other Comments:

Table A2. Post-class questionnaire tool results

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
The Trinity					
They were able to explain one God in three persons.		1	2	15	
They were able to cite at least two verses about the Trinity.	4	3		11	
They were able to respond to an objection concerning one God and three persons.	2	3	9	4	
Inerrancy					
They were able to explain the concept of inerrancy.			4	14	
They were able to cite at least two verses about inerrancy.	2	4		12	
They were able to answer the objection to inerrancy biblically and logically.	1	2	6	9	
The Deity of Christ					
They were able to explain that Jesus was fully God.			2	16	
They were able to cite at least two verses that indicate he was fully God.		3	1	14	
They were able to defend against the belief that Jesus is not fully God.		3	9	6	
The Atonement					
They were able to explain PSA and its significance.			4	14	
They were able to cite at least two verses that teach PSA.	3	3		12	
They were able to defend against the accusation that PSA makes God a vengeful abusive God.	1	3	12	2	
Christ's Resurrection					
They were able to explain reasons why Jesus rose from the dead.			8	10	
They were able to cite at least two verses that teach the significance of his resurrection.	3	1		14	
They were able to defend the fact that Christ's resurrection is a necessary component of the Gospel.		4	1	13	

1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Justification by Faith					
They were able to explain justification by God's grace through faith alone.		4	8	6	
They were able to cite at least two verses that speak to justification by faith.	1			17	
They were able to defend against the idea that justification is by faith plus works.		4	10	4	

Other Comments: Seven people got "sufficient" or "exemplary" on all eighteen criteria. Two participants got "sufficient" or exemplary" on seventeen criteria.

**Comparison of the Pre- and Post-Class Questionnaire
and Attendance Record**

Table A3 includes the total score each participant achieved and then a total of

all their scores combined. I critiqued eighteen criteria in questionnaires with 1 point being

the lowest score and 4 points being the highest. The maximum score is 72. Seventeen out

of the eighteen improved their scores from the pre-class questionnaire to the post-class

questionnaire. The greatest increase was 31 points, and the least was 4 points. Only one

person (participant 12) scored lower on the post-questionnaire than on the pre-

questionnaire.

Table A4 gives more detail than table A4, showing the breakdown of what

each participant scored on each doctrine and which classes they missed.

Table A3. Comparison of pre-class and post-class questionnaire with attendance record

Participant	Pre-Class Questionnaire (72 Points)	Post-Class Questionnaire (72 Points)	Difference between Pre- and Post-Class	Number of Classes Attended (7 Classes)
1	39	70	+31	7
2	52	57	+5	6
3	45	57	+12	6
4	41	59	+18	4
5	54	64	+10	6
6	41	64	+23	7
7	35	61	+26	7
8	40	44	+4	3
9	52	71	+19	6
10	50	69	+19	7
11	44	70	+26	7
12	61	49	-12	4
13	57	67	+10	7
14	48	67	+19	6
15	50	67	+17	7
16	27	45	+18	4
17	42	53	+11	6
18	55	60	+5	6
Totals	833	1,094	+261	

18 criteria Pre- Post-Class Questionnaire Tool with 4 points as the highest score / the maximum total score of 72. The total number of classes is 7.

Table A4. Comparison of pre-class and post-class questionnaire with attendance

Participant	Pre-Class Questionnaire	Post-Class Questionnaire	Difference between Pre- and Post-Class	Classes Missed
Participants Who Attended All Seven Classes				
1	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 6 Deity – 7 Atonement – 7 Resurrection – 6 Justification – 7 Total – 39	Trinity – 11 Inerrancy – 11 Deity – 12 Atonement – 12 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 12 Total – 72	Trinity – +5 Inerrancy – +5 Deity – +5 Atonement – +5 Resurrection – +6 Justification – +5 Total – +31	none
6	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 6 Deity – 7 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 9 Justification – 5 Total – 41	Trinity – 11 Inerrancy – 11 Deity –11 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 9 Justification – 10 Total – 64	Trinity – +5 Inerrancy – +5 Deity – +4 Atonement – +3 Resurrection – +0 Justification – +5 Total – +23	none
7	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 6 Deity – 5 Atonement – 6 Resurrection – 6 Justification – 6 Total – 35	Trinity – 10 Inerrancy – 11 Deity – 10 Atonement – 10 Resurrection – 11 Justification – 10 Total – 61	Trinity – +4 Inerrancy – +5 Deity – +5 Atonement – +4 Resurrection – +5 Justification – +4 Total – +26	none
10	Trinity – 7 Inerrancy – 9 Deity – 10 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 10 Justification – 6 Total – 50	Trinity – 12 Inerrancy – 12 Deity – 11 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 11 Total – 69	Trinity – +5 Inerrancy – +3 Deity – +1 Atonement – +3 Resurrection – +2 Justification – +5 Total – +19	none
11	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 7 Deity – 8 Atonement – 10 Resurrection – 5 Justification – 8 Total – 44	Trinity – 11 Inerrancy – 12 Deity – 12 Atonement – 12 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 11 Total – 70	Trinity – +5 Inerrancy – +5 Deity – +4 Atonement – +2 Resurrection – +7 Justification – +3 Total – +26	none
13	Trinity – 11 Inerrancy – 9 Deity – 8 Atonement – 9 Resurrection – 10 Justification – 10 Total – 57	Trinity – 11 Inerrancy – 11 Deity – 12 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 10 Total – 67	Trinity – +0 Inerrancy – +2 Deity – +4 Atonement – +2 Resurrection – +2 Justification – +0 Total – +10	none
15	Trinity – 9 Inerrancy – 3 Deity – 12 Atonement – 7 Resurrection – 10 Justification – 9 Total – 50	Trinity – 10 Inerrancy – 11 Deity – 11 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 12 Total – 67	Trinity – +1 Inerrancy – +8 Deity – -1 Atonement – +3 Resurrection – +2 Justification – +3 Total – +17	none

Participants Who Attended Six Classes			
2	Trinity – 9 Inerrancy – 6 Deity – 9 Atonement – 10 Resurrection – 9 Justification – 9 Total – 52	Trinity – 7 Inerrancy – 12 Deity – 10 Atonement – 9 Resurrection – 10 Justification – 8 Total – 57	Trinity – -2 Inerrancy – +6 Deity – +1 Atonement – -1 Resurrection – +1 Justification – -1 Total – +5	Justification
3	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 10 Deity – 9 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 6 Justification – 5 Total – 45	Trinity – 8 Inerrancy – 9 Deity – 10 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 12 Justification –10 Total – 57	Trinity – +2 Inerrancy – -1 Deity – +1 Atonement – +0 Resurrection – +6 Justification – +5 Total – +12	Atonement
5	Trinity – 10 Inerrancy – 7 Deity – 9 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 7 Justification – 10 Total – 54	Trinity – 12 Inerrancy – 8 Deity – 12 Atonement – 10 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 10 Total – 64	Trinity – +2 Inerrancy – +1 Deity – +3 Atonement – -1 Resurrection – +5 Justification – +0 Total – +10	Justification
9	Trinity – 9 Inerrancy – 9 Deity – 10 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 10 Justification – 6 Total – 52	Trinity – 12 Inerrancy – 12 Deity – 12 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 12 Total – 71	Trinity – +3 Inerrancy – +3 Deity – +2 Atonement – +3 Resurrection – +2 Justification – +6 Total – +19	Inerrancy
14	Trinity – 9 Inerrancy – 8 Deity – 6 Atonement – 9 Resurrection – 9 Justification – 7 Total – 48	Trinity – 11 Inerrancy – 12 Deity – 11 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 12 Justification – 10 Total – 67	Trinity – +2 Inerrancy – +4 Deity – +5 Atonement – +2 Resurrection – +3 Justification – +3 Total – +19	Atonement
17	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 10 Deity – 9 Atonement – 6 Resurrection – 5 Justification – 5 Total – 42	Trinity – 9 Inerrancy – 9 Deity – 9 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 8 Justification – 10 Total – 53	Trinity – +3 Inerrancy – -1 Deity – +0 Atonement – +2 Resurrection – +3 Justification – +5 Total – +11	Justification
18	Trinity – 7 Inerrancy – 7 Deity – 11 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 11 Justification – 8 Total – 55	Trinity – 9 Inerrancy – 12 Deity – 9 Atonement – 9 Resurrection – 10 Justification – 11 Total – 60	Trinity – +2 Inerrancy – +5 Deity – -2 Atonement – -2 Resurrection – -1 Justification – +3 Total – +5	Atonement

Participants Who Attended Four or Less Classes			
4	Trinity – 7 Inerrancy – 5 Deity – 9 Atonement – 6 Resurrection – 10 Justification – 4 Total – 41	Trinity – 9 Inerrancy – 10 Deity – 8 Atonement – 10 Resurrection – 11 Justification – 11 Total – 59	Trinity – +2 Inerrancy – +5 Deity – -1 Atonement – +4 Resurrection – +1 Justification – +7 Total – +18	Deity Atonement Justification
12	Trinity – 8 Inerrancy – 11 Deity – 12 Atonement – 11 Resurrection – 11 Justification – 7 Total – 61	Trinity – 8 Inerrancy – 8 Deity – 11 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 9 Justification – 5 Total – 49	Trinity – +0 Inerrancy – -3 Deity – -1 Atonement – -3 Resurrection – -2 Justification – -2 Total – -12	Trinity Atonement Justification
16	Trinity – 5 Inerrancy – 3 Deity – 6 Atonement – 5 Resurrection – 4 Justification – 4 Total – 27	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 7 Deity – 10 Atonement – 8 Resurrection – 6 Justification – 8 Total – 45	Trinity – +1 Inerrancy – +4 Deity – +4 Atonement – +3 Resurrection – +2 Justification – +4 Total – +18	Trinity Atonement Justification
8	Trinity – 8 Inerrancy – 7 Deity – 10 Atonement – 5 Resurrection – 5 Justification – 5 Total – 40	Trinity – 6 Inerrancy – 7 Deity – 11 Atonement – 6 Resurrection – 6 Justification – 8 Total – 44	Trinity – -2 Inerrancy – +0 Deity – +1 Atonement – +1 Resurrection – +1 Justification – +3 Total – +4	Inerrancy Atonement Resurrection Justification

APPENDIX 5

STRUCTURED NOTES

Lesson 1—Sound in the Faith
Orientation to Class (January 29, 2024)
Welcome:
1. Thank You for Leading – Thank you for leading your Life Groups, Women's Bible Studies, Connection Classes, and Men's Bible Studies! You are using your time and resources for God's purposes and God's priorities!
2. Thank you for Attending – Thank you for attending this class! I believe it will be helpful for all of us.
3. Ice Breaker – Find someone you don't know that well. Tell them your 1) name, 2) what your role is in your small group or Bible study and 3) what you enjoy about leading your group.
4. Sign in Sheet

The Six Doctrines (Why these Doctrines):
1. The Six Doctrines – The six doctrines we will focus on in this class in the next six lessons are the inerrancy of Scripture, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, Penal Substitutionary Atonement, the resurrection of Christ, and justification by faith.
2. Why These Six – If you've studied the Bible much and if you've been around church long enough, you know that these are very important to the Christian faith. As small group leaders and Bible study leaders you might think, I already know these so why review them again? Here are three reasons:
    a. To Reinforce – To reinforce what you already know.
    b. These are Under Attack – The cults and world religions wholeheartedly attack these six doctrines. It's important that you shore up your understanding and have a greater ability to defend these essential truths.
    c. Essential for Salvation – Some of these are essential for salvation. For example:
        • By Faith + Works – Ask, If someone believes it is by faith + works, are they saved? (Rom 9:30-32).
        • Deity of Christ – Ask, If people deny that Jesus is God, are they true Christians? (2 Cor 11:4).
        • Resurrection – Ask, If people do not believe that Christ rose from the dead, can they be saved? (Romans 10:9-10, 1 Cor 15:14-17).
    d. The 2022 Ligonier Survey – The 2022 Ligonier Survey, The State of Theology, shows that many Evangelical Christians do not understand or believe these doctrines.[1]
        • We have Opp to Help – As small group leaders, Bible study leaders, and Connection Class leaders, we have an opportunity to help the people we lead have a biblical understanding of these doctrines.
        • The State of Theology – Hand out a summary of this survey.

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[1] The State of Theology, accessed January 16, 2024, https://thestateoftheology.com.

What we will do in our class:
1. Homework – Before each class we will do some homework. Fun! Including reading, writing, and memorizing verses.
2. Discuss Your Homework – We will discuss what you studied in your homework.
3. I Will Teach – I will teach on some key aspects of the doctrine we cover each evening.
4. The Pre-Class Questionnaire – Your first assignment will be to fill out the survey, writing your answers and returning them to me. I will give you the same survey after we've done all seven classes for you to fill out again. My plan is to compare what you wrote before the class and after the class to see if this class has been helpful and how I might improve the class if I teach it again.
    a. Agreement to Participate – Read this before filling in the Questionnaire. It's at the top of the Questionnaire.

Our Class Schedule:
1. 2nd and 4th Mondays – We will meet six more times, usually on the 2nd and 4th Monday evenings of each month from 6:30-8:30 PM (except for Spring Break on March 25).
2. Dates – So, the dates will likely be – Feb 12, 26, Mar 11, Apr 8, 22, and May 13.

Assignment 1 (Have the following ready for our class on Feb 12):
1. Fill out the Pre-Class Questionnaire – Fill this out before you do any of the other assignments. You can use your Bibles for this, but no helps such as concordances, Study Bible notes, or google searches.
2. Read our book, *Essential Christian Doctrine* – Inspiration pages 55-68, Inerrancy pages 73-77.
3. Read the handout including LBC's Statement of Faith on the Holy Scriptures, the paper called An Explanation of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.[2]
4. Memorize – 2 Timothy 3:16-17
5. Write – From what we read for the class (and from any other useful resource you would like to use), write:
    a. A clear and concise description of the meaning of inerrancy in your own words.
    b. A few key verses that speak about the inerrancy of God's Word.
    c. Reasons why people can trust that the Bible is inerrant (partly to address those who believe that the Bible is a mixture of truth and error).

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[2] An Explanation of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy is the section in chap. 3 of this ministry project concerning inerrancy.

Lesson 2—Sound in the Faith
Inerrancy (February 12, 2024)

Order of the Class:
1. Practice Memory Verse (5 min) – Break into groups of two. Practice 2 Timothy 3:16-17 for 5 minutes.
2. Small Groups: Describe Inerrancy – Break into groups of three or four and share what you came up with for your description of inerrancy.
3. Big Group: Describe Inerrancy (write on board) – Let's work together to write a description of inerrancy. Let's start with one group's description and then we'll see if we can add anything to it. Who would be willing to share their description for starters (write it on the board).
4. Share MacArthur's, Grudem's, ETS's Definitions – (**Tell them to Take Notes on the Handout: Defining and Defending Inerrancy) Share MacArthur's, Grudem's, and ETS's definitions and ask if we could add anything to our definition from them.
    a. Wayne Grudem's Definition – "The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact." Grudem then says, "The definition in simple terms just means that *the Bible always tells the truth*" (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 86).
        • Originals vs. Copies – Ask, This definition inerrant in the originals. What does that mean? Are the Bibles we have today inerrant?
            - 99+% Accurate – Ask, Do you remember what MacArthur said about this?(="Through the process of analysis and comparison (a process called textual criticism), scholars know where instances of textual deviations exist and are confident of the original readings in more than 99% of the cases" (Essential Christian Doctrines, 76)).
            - The Less than 1% - Ask, But what about the less than 1%? Should we wring our hands over that?(=No, we know where those uncertainties are: Mark 16:9-20, etc.).
            - Article X (of CSBI) – We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.
                We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.
    b. MacArthur's Definition – "Inerrancy means 'without error.' When applied to Scripture, it means that the Bible is without error in its original manuscripts. Consequently, when interpreted as originally intended, the biblical text will never affirm anything that is untrue or contrary to truth" (Essential Christian Doctrine, 75).
        • When Interpreted Correctly – Ask, What is something MacArther includes in the definition that was not in Grudem's?(=When interpreted correctly).
    c. ETS's Definition – "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs" (Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy, 29).
        • Based on Inspiration – Ask, What is something in the ETS definition that isn't in Grudem's or MacArthur's?(=The Word of

God…therefore). The Bible is inerrant because it is inspired by God. So I think it is helpful to include inspiration in the definition of inerrancy. So a definition could begin with: "Because God only speaks the truth and the Bible is God's written Word, the Bible is inerrant…." The Evangelical Theological Society captures this in their statement about inerrancy. It says, "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs" (Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy, 29).

    d. Thus, it is Authoritative – Ask, If the Bible is God's Word and is inerrant, what kind of authority does it have? I think it is helpful to include the fact that because the Bible is inerrant, it is authoritative. It must be obeyed.
- Sister's Church – My sister attended a church where the pastor said, "It's God who is authoritative, not the Bible." Ask, What might you say in response to that?

5. Small Groups: Reasons for Inerrancy – Break into groups of three or four and share your reasons for believing that the Bible is inerrant.
6. Big Group: Reasons for Inerrancy (write reasons on board) – Let's work together again to write reasons why we believe in inerrancy. One group at a time, give me reasons why you believe the Bible is inerrant and we will write them on the board (someone write them on the board). Write these reasons down in your notes.
    a. It Claims to be God's Word – Almost 500 times the OT says, "Thus says the Lord…." For example, Isaiah 7:7 "Thus says the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass."
    b. It Claims to be True – Prov 30:5-6 "Every word of God proves true…."
    c. God Only Speaks Truth – Titus 1:2 "in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began."
    d. What Jesus Said about the OT – Key is, if Jesus is the resurrected Lord, then he would know if Scripture was God's true word or not. Again and again Jesus affirmed that the OT was in fact God's true word. He quoted it, submitted to it, obeyed it, affirmed it, did not abolish it.
    e. What Jesus and Apostles Said about the NT – John 14:26, Matt 24:35, 2 Peter 3:15-16.
    f. Hand Illustration by Greg Koukl – Show this to them. Give them opportunity to practice it.
    g. The Apocrypha – Hand out sheet on why we don't hold to the Apocryphal writings.
    e. Various Scriptures – Ask, What are some helpful Scriptures you found that speak of Scripture as God's trustworthy, true, inerrant word?(write ref.'s on board). Here are some that I enjoy:
- Scriptures Affirming the Bible is God's word and it True – 2 Samuel 23:2, Psalms 12:6, Psalm 19:7-9, 119:160, Prov 30:5-6, 2 Tim 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Revelation 22:6 "And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true….'"
- Scriptures against tampering with God's word – Deut 4:2, Prov 30:6, Rev 22:18-19.
    - Memorize – Memorize the references of your favorite verses about inerrancy and their main point (not necessarily word for word).

7. Small Groups: Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy – Break into groups of three or four to discuss what you got out of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and any questions you have.
8. Big Group: Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy – Ask, What did you get out of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and what questions do you have about it?
    a. Explain Key Points from The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy:

- Article XIII – We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.
  > We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.
- Article XI – We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.
  > We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.
- Article XVIII – We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.
  > We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, historicizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Assignment 2 (Complete the following by February 26th)
1. Read our book, *Essential Christian Doctrine – The Trinity* pages 108-119 (the first three pages and the last page of the section on the Trinity have old theological words you likely haven't heard of before. Don't get too bogged down or worried about these words. Look at the *Glossary of Terms* sheet for help. If that doesn't help, just move on).
2. Read the handout, which includes LBC's Statement of Faith about the Trinity, Wayne Grudem's Definition of the Trinity, History and Explanation of the Nicene Creed, and the Nicene Creed.[3]
3. Read the sheet called *Responding to Objections about the Trinity*.
4. Memorize – Matthew 28:19-20.
5. Write – From what we read for this class (and from any other useful resource you would like to use), write:
   a. A clear and concise description of the meaning of the Trinity in your own words.
   b. A few key verses that speak about the Trinity.
   c. Reasons why we believe the Bible teaches the Trinity (partly to address those who believe the Trinity is false).

<div align="center">Responding to Objections to the Trinity</div>

Jehovah's Witness Objections to the Trinity:

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[3] A history and explanation of the Nicene Creed is the section in chap. 3 of this ministry project about the Trinity.

1. The Word "Trinity" – The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible, so it is not biblical. *Response* – Ask them if the words "theocratic kingdom" or "paradise earth" in the Bible? They use these terms often, yet they are not in the Bible (not even in their Bible called The New World Translation). Once you point this out, then explain that the word "Trinity" is simply a word that summarizes a truth that is taught in the Bible (Tri = Three).
2. They have many objections to the fact that Jesus is God. I will give responses to their objections about Christ's deity with the next lesson.

Muslim Objections to the Trinity:
1. Some Muslims think Christians view the Trinity as the Father, Jesus, and Mary. This is seen in the Quran, in Sura 5:116 which says, "And when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, didst though say to men, take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?"
Response – Explain to them that the Trinity is the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Show verses that say there is only one God and verses that show that each of the three are the one God.
2. Muslims state, "The doctrine of the Trinity contradicts itself: It is saying that God is three and that God is one."
Response – No, the doctrine of the Trinity means that God is one being in three persons. Being and person are different. If the Trinity means that God is one being and three beings, it would be a contradiction. Or if it means that God is one person and three persons, it would be a contradiction. But the Trinity means that God is one being in three persons. In John 1:1 the word "with" indicates a distinction between "God" and "the Word", and the term "God" used of both the Father and the Word indicates that the Father and the Son are equally God. I'm one being (a human), with one person (Andy). God is one being (God), with three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
3. "The Trinity doesn't make sense." "You worship 3 gods."
Response – A) Show verses saying there is only one God (for example, Exodus 20:2-3, Deuteronomy 4:35, 39, Isaiah 44:8, 43:10, 45:22, 46:9-10), and verses that show the three are each God (Galatians 1:1, Isaiah 9:6, Acts 5:3-4). B) Ask, "as humans, can we fully grasp what God is like?" = No, it's natural that we cannot. He's infinite, we're finite (this is one evidence that the Trinity is of divine origin). C) We are three dimensional. Imagine a one or two dimensional being trying to grasp us without ever seeing us. That is like us trying to understand the Trinity without ever seeing anything like it.

Lesson 3—Sound in the Faith
The Trinity (February 26, 2024)

Review – Inerrancy:
1. How can we define Inerrancy? – The Bible is trustworthy and true, without error because it is the word of God, who only speaks the truth and preserves his word.
2. Key Scriptures? – 1 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:20-21, 1 Thess 2:13, Titus 1:2, etc.
3. Reasons we Believe Inerrancy? – It claims it is God's word and true, Jesus said OT was God's word and True, it does not contradict itself, history-archaeology-geography, fulfilled prophecies, unity with diversity, answers major questions accurately, etc.

Order of the Class:
1. Practice Memory Verse (5 min) – Break into groups of 2. Practice both 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Matthew 28:19-20 for 5 minutes (set timer for 5 min).
    a. People Share Verses – Have 1 or 2 people share both verses with everyone.
    b. Why Matt 28:19-20 – Ask, Of all the verses on the Trinity, why do you think I asked you to memorize this one?(=Because 1. "name" is singular, and 2. It speaks of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit equally).
2. Small Groups: Describe the Trinty – Break into groups of three or four and share what you came up with for your description of the Trinity.
3. Big Group: Describe the Trinity (write on board) – Let's work together to write a description of the Trinity. Let's start with one group's description and then we'll see if we can add anything to it.
4. Share Mac's, Grudem's, ETS's Definitions – (**Tell them to Take Notes on the Handout: Defining and Defending Inerrancy) Share MacArthur's, Grudem's, and ETS's definitions and ask if we could add anything from them (hand out sheet with these on them):
    a. Grudem's Definition – "God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God" (Systematic Theology, 269).
        • If Any of the 3 are Missing – ***If any of these three statements are missing, it is a misrepresentation of God.
    b. MacArthur's Definition – "God is absolutely and eternally one essence [nature, being] subsisting [existing] in three distinct and ordered persons without division and without replication of the essence [i.e. the three do not have three separated divine natures]" (Essential Christian Doctrine, 108).
5. Small Groups: Reasons for the Trinity – Break into groups of three or four and share your reasons for believing in the Trinity.
6. Big Group: Reasons for the Trinity (write reasons on board) – Let's work together again to write reasons why we believe in the Trinity. One group at a time, give me reasons why you believe the Bible is inerrant and we will write them on the board (someone write them on the board). Write these reasons down in your notes.
    a. Elohim is plural.
    b. God says, "let us…" (Genesis 1:26-28, etc.)
    c. Each member called God.
    d. Each member called Lord.
    e. Only one God.
    f. All 3 exist at same time (Matt 3:16-17, 20:19-20, etc.)
    g. Worship of Father and Son (Matt 14:33, etc.)
    h. Attributes of God that all three have (eternal—Jn 1:3, Heb 9:14, etc.)
7. Objection to Trinity: Contradiction – "It Contradicts itself. You're saying that there is 1 God, but that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all God. That sounds like 3 gods to me." Ask, How would you respond to that?

Response – The doctrine of the Trinity means that God is one being in three persons. Being and person are different. If the Trinity means that God is one being and three beings, it would be a contradiction. Or if it means that God is one person and three persons, it would be a contradiction. But the Trinity means that God is one being in three persons. I'm one being (a human), with one person (Andy). God is one being (God), with three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

8. Common Misunderstandings of the Trinity: (maybe have them come up with scriptural arguments against these, in their groups).
    a. Modalism – Ask, What is Modalism? Ask, How do we know this is wrong?
    b. Tri-theism – Ask, What is Tri-theism? Ask, How do we know this is wrong?
9. We Can't Fully Understand – A good question I learned to ask is this, "As finite humans, can we understand everything about the infinite God? = No. The Trinity is one of those things that we cannot fully understand about God. But our lack of ability to fully understand it does not make it untrue."
10. The Two Minute Version – Another good response I've learned when someone asks about the Trinity is, "I can explain it to you briefly in about 2 minutes, or I can explain it in detail in about 2 hours. Would you like the 2 minute version or the 2 hour version?"
11. The Shield – Fill out the "The Shield" of the Trinity illustration.
12. Various Scriptures – Ask, What are some helpful Scriptures you found that speak of the Trinity-1) that there is One God, 2) there are three persons, 3) each person is God?(write references on board). Here are some that I enjoy:
    a. The Bible says there is ONE God – Deut 4:35, 4:39, Isa 43:10-11, 44:8, 45:22, 46:9-10, etc.
    b. The Bible says God exists in THREE Persons – Matt 3:16-17, 28:19-20, John 14:26, 2 Cor 13:14, 1 Pet 1:2, Jude 20-21etc.).
    c. The Bible says each Person is God – Father (Gal 1:1), Son (Isa 9:6, Jn 10:30-33, Heb 1:8, etc.), the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4, 2 Cor 3:17).
        • Memorize – Memorize the references of your favorite verses about the Trinity and their main point (not necessarily word for word).

Two Challenging Concepts Concerning the Trinity:
1. Challenge of the Word "Person" – The word "Person" can make it sound like they are 3 separate individuals each having their own mind, emotions, and will (like 3 different people). If that's the case, it is tri-theism. But they share one and the same mind, emotions, and will. It's not that they have 3 wills but choose to agree with each other. It's that they have 1 will because they are 1 God.
    a. Example with Spiritual Gifts – By the Spirit's "will" (1 Cor 12:11), and by the Father's "choice" (1 Cor 12:18). Both have one and the same will.
    b. Example of "Thoughts" – Read 1 Cor 2:11. My spirit's thoughts are the same as my thoughts. The Holy Spirit's thoughts are the same as God's thoughts.
    c. Jesus' Human Nature On Earth – Ask, But when did we see one member of the Trinity having a distinct will from the Father?(=Jesus in human body). Where people think that Jesus has a distinct will from the Father is when he was on the earth. Like in Matt 26:39 where Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane to the Father, "not my will, but yours be done."
2. Challenge of Eternal Generation – Shows 1) that he's of the same divine nature (the son of everything is the same nature as its father). 2) shows he equal with the Father. 3) Does not mean he had a beginning (Isa 9:6, John 1:3).

3. Small Groups: History and Explanation of the Nicene Creed – Break into groups of three or four to discuss what you got out of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and any questions you have.
4. Big Group: History and Explanation of the Nicene Creed – Ask, What did you get out of the Nicene Creed and what questions do you have about it?
   a. Explain Key Points from the Nicene Creed:

Assignment 4 – Complete the following by March 11:
1. Read our book, *Essential Christian Doctrine – God the Son* pages 143-159 (Look at the *Glossary of Terms* sheet I gave you for the Trinity for help with the challenging theological words. If that doesn't help, just move on).
2. Read the handout, which includes LBC's Statement of Faith about the deity and humanity of Jesus, Wayne Grudem's Definition, two short articles about the Chalcedonian Creed, and the Chalcedonian Creed.[4]
3. Read the sheet called *Responding to Objections about the Deity of Christ*.
4. Memorize – Colossians 2:9.
5. Write – From what we read for this class (and from any other useful resource you would like to use), write:
   a. A clear and concise description of the meaning of the deity of Christ in your own words.
   b. A few key verses that speak about Christ's deity.
   c. Reasons why we believe the Bible teaches the deity of Christ (partly to address those who believe that Jesus is somehow less than fully God).

Glossary of Terms for the Trinity and Deity of Christ in *Essential Christian Doctrine*

1. Begotten – The Son of God is the only-begotten Son of God. This does not mean that the Father made or created His Son. It does not mean that the Son had a beginning. The Son has existed from eternity past just as the Father and Spirit have. It means that the Son is from the Father for all eternity past. The fact that the Son is from His Father indicates that the Son has the same nature/being as the Father (like I have the same nature as my father; my father is a human being, so I am a human being. The Father is the divine being so the Son is the divine being as well).
2. Coequal – The three persons of the Trinity have one and the same nature/being. Also, the three persons share all the attributes of God (such as being everywhere present and all powerful).
3. Essence – A synonym for nature and being. So, God is one essence, one being, one nature. It is the one divine nature that only God has.
4. Filiation – In general this refers to being the child of a parent. Related to God, Christ is the Son of the Father.
5. Generated – Means the same thing as "begotten". The Son was eternally begotten or generated from the Father (see Begotten above).
6. Godhead – This is a synonym for the word Trinity.
7. Hypostases – A synonym for the word "person." When speaking of the Trinity, God is one God in three "persons." (Also, the word hypostases is where we get the term "hypostatic union." This refers to the Son of God, when he was born of Mary, he added to himself humanity. From then on, He is one person/hypostases

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with two natures: the divine nature and human nature. This made him fully God and fully man).

8. Indivisible – God is one being with one nature. He is not three separate beings or three different beings. Also, God is not made up of multiple parts. In other words, there is not a part of God that is love, a part that is just, or a part that is truth. He is always all these things fully.

9. Ontological – Refers to the nature of something. Our nature is human. God's nature is divine. When speaking of God, ontological also refers to the fact that God is uncaused and eternal. He is the only necessary being. In other words, without him, nothing else exists. Everything else depends on God for its existence.

10. Person – The Father is a person, the Son is a person, and the Holy Spirit is a person. The word "person" refers to the fact that there is a distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Father is not the Son or the Spirit and the Son is not the Father or the Spirit. However, when talking about the Trinity, the idea of person is slightly different than how we use the word "person" today. Today "person" refers to an individual with a mind, emotions, and a will. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have one and the same mind, emotions, and will because they are one God (additionally, God's emotions do not fluctuate like ours do. He doesn't change his emotions based on what we do or don't do).

11. Spiration – Refers to the idea that the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son (John 15:26). The fact that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son means that He is from the Father and the Son, that he is equal with them, and that He is one God together with the Father and the Son.

12. Subsistences – Another synonym for the word "person." When speaking of the Trinity, God is one God in three "persons."

13. Subsisting – A synonym for existing.

14. Substance – Another synonym for being, nature, and essence.

15. Uncompounded – God is one being with one nature. He is not three separate beings or three different beings.

Responding to Objections to the Deity of Christ

Jehovah's Witness Objections to the Deity of Christ:

1. The writers of the Jehovah's Witness Bible, called The New World Translation (NWT), tried to change every verse of the Bible that indicated that Jesus is God. One way they did this is by using a lower-case *g* anywhere the term God was used in reference to Jesus. However, they missed a few places. In their Bible, Jesus is called *God* with a capitol *G* in the following Scriptures: Isaiah 9:6 with Isaiah 10:20-21, John 20:27-29, Hebrews 1:7-8, and Hebrews 3:3-4.

2. In the NWT, Jesus is also called *Jehovah* in Mark 1:1-3, which is quoted from Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. These two Old Testament Scriptures are clearly about Jehovah.

3. John 14:28 – Jesus said, "the Father is greater than I." Because Jesus said this, they conclude that Jesus is not God.
Response – In John 14:28 Jesus said this while he was on the earth in his humbled earthly body. Hebrews 2:9 speaks of the Son of God when he was on earth in his human body, saying, he was "made a little lower than the angels." And Philippians 2:5-11 says something similar, saying he "made himself nothing…." while he was on earth by becoming a human.

4. Mark 13:32 – Speaking of the second coming, Jesus said, "no one knows the day…not even the Son." They say that if Jesus was Jehovah, he would have known the day he was returning.

Response – Like number 4 above, Jesus said this when he was on earth in his human body. While Christ was on the earth, he chose not to always use his divine power and knowledge. Yet, Jesus knows everything (John 16:30).

5. John 20:17 – Jesus calls Jehovah, "my God." They assert that Jesus cannot be God if he calls Jehovah, "my God."
Response – When Jesus was on earth in his human body, he was a genuine human being. As a human being, Jehovah was his God.

6. Mark 10:18 – Jesus said to the rich young ruler, "no one is good except God alone." They say that in this verse Jesus is admitting he is not God.
Response – Jesus was testing the rich young ruler. Jesus did not say that he is not good. Jesus also did not say that he was not God. He wanted the rich young ruler to come to that conclusion for himself.

Muslim Objections to the Deity of Christ:

1. Muslims say, "Jesus never said he was 'the Son of God', he only said he was 'the Son of Man.' So, he's not the Son of God, he's the son of man, meaning that he's just a man."
Response – In John 10:36 and John 11:4, Jesus says that he's the Son of God. In John 5:18 Jesus calls the Father, "my Father", which is a way of saying that he is the Son of God. In Mark 14:61 the high priest asked Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed one? Jesus said, 'I am….'" Also, the Father called Jesus His "Son" in Matt 3:17 and 16:16-17.

2. A major teaching in the Quran is that "God has no sons." To a Muslim, the idea that God has a son sounds like God had sex with a woman and had a son. Surah 19:35 says, "It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son." Surah 3:47 says Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.
Response – A) Call Jesus "the spiritual Son of God." This may help them better understand. B) That Jesus is the Son of God does not refer to his birth from Mary, but to a special relationship with God that makes him equal with God. For to be a son of something means that you have the same nature and qualities (John 5:18, 10:30, 33). C) Luke 1:37 Mary said, "nothing is impossible with God." Ask, if God cannot have a Son, isn't that limiting what God can do? D) God wanted to come to humanity to get down to our level so we could understand him. The best way to do this was to come to us in a human body. He loved us enough not just to send others (the prophets), but to come himself.

3. "Where did Jesus say I'm God worship me?"
Response – 1) Jesus indicates that he is God in John 5:18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 14:9. 2) Jesus taught people to worship God alone in Matthew 4:10 where he said this to Satan, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 3) People and angles worshiped Jesus but he did not stop them from doing so. This is seen in Matthew 2:11 (the Maji), 14:33 (those in the boat), 28:9 (women at his resurrection), 28:17 (the eleven disciples), Luke 24:52 (two disciples), John 9:38 (the blind man), Hebrews 1:6 (angels), Revelation 5:13-14 (All created beings).

Lesson 4—Sound in the Faith
The Deity of Christ (March 11, 2024)

Review – Inerrancy:
1. How to define Inerrancy? – "The Bible is trustworthy and true, without error because it is the word of God, who only speaks the truth and preserves his word."
2. Key Scriptures? – 1 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:20-21, 1 Thess 2:13, Titus 1:2, etc.
3. Reasons we Believe Inerrancy? – (Do the Hand Illustration) It claims it is God's word and true, Jesus said OT was God's word and True, it does not contradict itself, history-archaeology-geography, fulfilled prophecies, unity with diversity, answers major questions accurately, etc.

Review – The Trinity:
1. How can we Define the Trinity? – (Do the Triangle Illustration) The 3 main points: "1) There is one God, 2) God is in three Persons, 3) Each person is fully, equally, and eternally God." If one of these is three points is missing, it is unbiblical. There are other details about the Trinity, but these are the primary points to remember.
2. Key Scriptures? – 1) One God – Deuteronomy 6:4. 2) Three Persons – Matthew 28:19-20, Matthew 3:16-17. 3) Each Person is fully God – The Father—Galatians 1:1; The Son—Colossians 2:9; The Holy Spirit—Acts 5:3-4.
3. Reasons we Believe in the Trinity? – 1) Scriptures like the one above (One God; Three Persons; Each person is fully God); 2) God often says, "Let us." 3) Jesus claimed to be God and equal with God. 4) Each have all the attributes of God. 5) Each Person does the works that only God can do.
4. Objection: "The Trinity Contradicts itself" – Ask, How would you respond to that? 1) Show verses about the 3 main points of the Trinity. 2) The words "nature" and "person" are two different things.

Order of the Class – The Deity of Christ:
1. Practice Memory Verse (5 min) – Break into groups of 2. Practice 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Matthew 28:19-20 and Colossians 2:9 for 5 minutes (set timer for 5 min).
   a. People Share Verses – Have 1 or 2 people share both verses with everyone.
   b. Why Memorize These?
      • 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – Why did we memorize these verses for inerrancy?
      • Matthew 28:19-20 – Why did we memorize these verses for the Trinity?
      • Colossians 2:9 – Why did we memorize these verses for the deity of Christ?(=A clear passage on Christ's deity, plus his humanity).
2. Small Groups: Describe Christ's Deity and Reasons/Scriptures for it – Break into groups of three or four and share what you came up with for your description of the deity of Christ and reasons/Scriptures for it.
3. Big Group: Describe Christ's Deity, and give Reasons/Scriptures (write on board) – Let's work together to write a description of the Trinity. Let's start with one group's description and then we'll see if we can add anything to it.
   a. Share Mac's, Grudem's, Chalcedonian Definitions – (**Tell them to Take Notes on the Handout: Defining and Defending Inerrancy) Share MacArthur's, Grudem's, and ETS's definitions and ask if we could add anything from them (hand out sheet with these on them):
   b. Grudem's Definition of Jesus as God and Man – "Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person and will be so forever" (Systematic Theology, 663).

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     c. MacArthur's Definition – "Jesus was and is the God-man—truly and fully God as well as truly and fully human" (Essential Christian Doctrine, 150).

     d. The Chalcedonian Creed – Ask, Where do we see that Jesus is God in the Chalcedonian Creed? (Read the Chalcedonian Creed) = "perfect in Godhead." "Truly God." "God of God, light of light, very God of very God." "Consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead." "Begotten before all ages of the Father." "Mary, the mother of God." "God the Word."

4. Big Group: Reasons/Scriptures for Christ's Deity (write reasons on board) – Let's work together again to write reasons why we believe in Christ's Deity. One group at a time, give me reasons why you believe the Bible is inerrant and we will write them on the board (someone write them on the board). Write these reasons down in your notes.

     a. Old Testament – Isaiah 9:6

     b. Son of God means equal with God – John 5:18

     c. Born of a virgin – Luke 1:35

     d. Christ's Claims – Mark 14:61-62. John 5:18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 14:8-9.

     e. Other's Claims – John 1:1-3, John 20:27-29, Phil 2:5-11, Col 1:19, 2:9, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1, Hebrews 1:1-4, etc.

     f. The Father's Claims – The Father Calls Jesus 1) God (Heb 1:8), and 2) Yahweh (Heb 1:10).

     g. Jesus is called Yahweh – Mark 1:1-3.

     h. Unrestrained Worship of Christ – If he's not God and he received worship, he'd be more like Satan than God (Matt 4:9). Unlike Rev 19:10, Acts 14:14-15. Jesus said worship God alone in Matt 4:10. Jesus allowed people to worship him in Matt 2:11, 14:33, 28:9, 28:17. God tells all his angels to worship Jesus in Heb 1:6. All Creation worships the Father and the Son together in Revelation 5:13-14.

     i. Christ's Works – He did the things only God can do like Create the universe (Colossians 1:15-17), raise himself from the dead (John 2:19-21).

     j. Why is Christ's Deity Important – Ask, Why is Christ's deity so important—Why not be okay with people believing that he was just a great prophet or Michael the Archangel?

5. Objection to the Deity of Christ – "Jesus was not God but was a great prophet." Or "Jesus was Michael the Archangel." Ask, How would you respond to these arguments?
Response – 1) The Scriptures above indicating he's God (show people these verses). 2) Clarify that we're not saying Jesus is the Heavenly Father, but one with him and equal with him. 3) If Jesus was only a prophet, then he'd be a false prophet because he claimed to be God. 4) Where in the Bible does it say that Jesus was Michael the Archangel? And Heb 1:5 and 2:5 specifically say Jesus was not an Angel.

Assignment 4 – Complete the following by April 8:
1. Read our book, *Essential Christian Doctrine – Salvation* pages 265–276.
2. Read the handout, which includes LBC's Statement of Faith about the Christ's Atonement, Penal Substitutionary Atonement Defined, Penal Substitutionary Atonement Defended, and Penal Substitutionary Atonement in Isaiah 52:13–53:12.[5]

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[5] Penal Substitutionary Atonement Defended is from the Penal Substitutionary Atonement part of chap. 3 of this ministry project. Penal Substitutionary atonement in Isa 52:13–53:12 is what is written in chap. 2 of this ministry project under that heading.

3. Memorize – Isaiah 53:5.
4. Write – From what we read for this class (and from any other useful resource you would like to use), write:
   a. A clear and concise description of the meaning of Penal Substitutionary Atonement in your own words.
   b. A few key verses that speak about Penal Substitutionary Atonement.
   c. Reasons why we believe the Bible teaches Penal Substitutionary Atonement (partly to address those who argue against Penal Substitutionary Atonement. For example, some say, Penal Substitutionary Atonement is wrong because it makes God vengeful and abusive).
   d. How does the truth of PSA impact your life personally? In other words, what difference does it make to your life?

Review – Inerrancy:
1. How to define Inerrancy? – "The Bible is trustworthy and true, without error because it is the word of God, who only speaks the truth and preserves his word."
2. Key Scriptures? – 1 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:20-21, 1 Thess 2:13, Titus 1:2, etc.
3. Reasons we Believe Inerrancy? – (Do the Hand Illustration) It claims it is God's word and true, Jesus said OT was God's word and True, it does not contradict itself, history-archaeology-geography, fulfilled prophecies, unity with diversity, answers major questions accurately, etc.

Review – Trinity:
1. How can we Define the Trinity? – (Do the Triangle Illustration) The 3 main points: "1) There is one God, 2) God is in three Persons, 3) Each person is fully, equally, and eternally God." If one of these is three points is missing, it is unbiblical. There are other details about the Trinity, but these are the primary points to remember.
2. Key Scriptures? – 1) One God – Deuteronomy 6:4. 2) Three Persons – Matthew 28:19-20, Matthew 3:16-17. 3) Each Person is fully God – The Father—Galatians 1:1; The Son—Colossians 2:9; The Holy Spirit—Acts 5:3-4.
3. Reasons we Believe in the Trinity? – 1) Scriptures like the one above (One God; Three Persons; Each person is fully God); 2) God often says, "Let us." 3) Jesus claimed to be God and equal with God. 4) Each have all the attributes of God. 5) Each Person does the works that only God can do.
4. Objection: "The Trinity Contradicts itself" – Ask, How would you respond to that? 1) Show verses about the 3 main points of the Trinity. 2) The words "nature" and "person" are two different things.

Review – The Deity of Christ:
1. What is the definition of Christ's Deity – I appreciate MacArthur's definition from his book: "Jesus was and is the God-man—truly and fully God as well as truly and fully human" (Essential Christian Doctrine, 150).
2. Key Scriptures – Colossians 2:9, Isaiah 9:6, John 10:30-33, John 14:8-9, etc.
3. Reasons to Believe Deity – OT Prophecies, Born of Virgin, Christ's Claims, Others Claims, Called Yahweh (Mark 1:1-3), Unrestrained Worship of Christ, Christ's Miracles, etc.

Order of the Class – Christ's Atonement:
1. Practice Memory Verse (5 min) – Break into groups of 2. Practice 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Matthew 28:19-20 and Colossians 2:9 and Isaiah 53:5 for 5 minutes (set timer for 5 min).
2. Isaiah 53:5 "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed."
   a. People Share Verses – Have 1 or 2 people share both verses with everyone.
   b. Why Memorize These?
      • 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – Why did we memorize these verses for inerrancy?
      • Matthew 28:19-20 – Why did we memorize these verses for the Trinity?
      • Colossians 2:9 – Why did we memorize this verse for the deity of Christ?(=A clear passage on Christ's deity, plus his humanity).
      • Isaiah 53:5 – Why did we memorize this verse for the Atonement of Christ?

3. Charles Simeon – In 1779 a man named Charles Simeon became a student at Cambridge University in England. After he began, he discovered that all students were required to take communion. Charles knew a little about Jesus but was not a Christian. The thought of taking communion terrified him. He said, "Satan is more prepared to take communion than I am."
    a. His Preparation – So he thought, I'd better go and prepare myself for communion! He bought the only Christian book he knew of and read and reread it. He cried out to God for mercy. He fasted and he prayed. By the time he took the communion, he had literally made himself sick from anxiety and fasting.
    b. Easter – After he took communion, Easter was coming soon and he was told that all the students were required to take communion on Easter too. So he found books that explained what communion was all about and he studied and studied them. He remembered the sins of his life and he was grieved about them. Again he was so stressed and worried about taking communion.
    c. Sin Transferred – Then just days before Easter he read that in ancient times when the Jews sacrificed lambs to God, their sin and guilt would be transferred from them to the lambs. So Charles had a couple profound thoughts, 1) Can I transfer my sins to someone or something else? And 2) Has God provided a sacrifice for me so I can transfer my sins to it?
    d. Easter Morning – Finally, on Easter morning he woke up and realized, "Jesus is my sacrifice. He took my sins and died for me! I can transfer my sins to him! And he said, "Jesus Christ is risen today, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"[6]
4. Small Groups: Define Christ's Atonement AND Reasons/Scriptures for it – Break into groups of three or four and share what you came up with for your description of Christ's Atonement and reasons/Scriptures for it.
5. Big Group: Define Christ's Atonement AND Reasons/Scriptures for it (write on board) – Let's work together to write a description of Christ's Atonement and reasons for it. Let's start with one group's description and then we'll see if we can add anything to it.
    a. Drawing of the Cross – Draw cross on board with arrow pointing to it of all humanity's sin (1 Pet 2:24, 1 John 2:1-2), and another arrow pointing to the cross of all of God's wrath against humanity's sin (Isa 53:5, 2 Cor 5:21).
    b. Thomas R. Schreiner's Definition of PSA – "Because of God's great love, he sent Christ to bear the punishment of our sins. Christ died in our place, took to himself our sin (2 Cor 5:21) and guilt (Gal 3:10) and bore our penalty so that we might receive forgiveness of sins."[7]
    c. Stephen Holmes' Defines PSA – "The term *penal substitution* denotes a way of talking about the cross in terms of crime and punishment: we have broken God's law, and deserve to be punished for that, but God in his love provides a substitute, his own Son, who will take the punishment so that we don't have to."[8]

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[6] E. Michael and Sharon Rusten, *The One Year Christian History: A Daily Glimpse into God's Powerful Work* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2003), 618.

[7] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 73.

[8] Stephen R. Holmes, *The Wondrous Cross: Atonement and Penal Substitution in the Bible and History* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007), 4.

     d.   Propitiation – Propitiation is a key word when seeking to understand Christ's crucifixion. It is closely related to PSA. 1 John 2:2 "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." Definition of Propitiation: Christ's suffering and death fully satisfied God's wrath and anger against the sins of mankind.

     e.   Our Definition – They share and I write it on board.

6. Defend PSA against Mark Baker – Read the summary of his book "Recovering the Scandal of the Cross" 2nd Edition. Ask, How would you defend PSA against Mark Baker's (and others) claims that PSA makes God vengeful and abusive?

Mark Bakers' Second Edition of Recovering the Scandal of the Cross (2011)

In the second edition of his book, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Mark Baker critiques Charles Hodge's explanation of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA), because he see's Hodge's explanation as representative of others who hold to PSA. Baker says, "Hodge continues to be representative of much that is written and said about penal substitution" (p.183, see also p.177, 179, 183). So, Baker's critiques against Hodge specifically are his critiques against PSA in general.

Baker's Critiques of PSA/Hodge:
1. PSA is Unbiblical – PSA uses many Bible verses so that it appears to be biblical, but PSA is not biblical. Rather it is based on a Western idea of justice that says, when a crime is committed and a law is broken, it needs to be punished. Baker explains, "He [Hodge] cites many scriptural passages to support his explanations, thus at least giving his position the appearance of being biblical. Upon closer examination, however, we find that Hodge's model actually falls short in this regard. Because Hodge read the Bible through the lens of the criminal-justice system of his era…" (p.172).
2. PSA Divides the Trinity – PSA puts one member of the Trinity against another member of the Trinity. As a result, this removes their unity. Baker says, "Rather than presenting a Father and Son who are one, Hodge has one member of the Trinity punishing another member of the Trinity" (174).
3. PSA Makes God Vengeful – Baker says, "His [Hodge's] presentation is more likely to lead his readers to picture a God who has vindictive character, who finds it much easier to punish than to forgive" (p174). Baker also explains, "Hodge's presentation makes it much easier for us to conceive of a God who punishes with vindictive retribution—a God from whom we need to be saved" (p.177).
4. PSA Makes God Unable to Forgive Without a Sacrifice – Baker says that PSA leads to a "distortion" of biblical atonement, which is "that God had to punish Jesus in order for God to be able to forgive and be in relationship with God's people" (p.190). Baker also explains that God doesn't need a sacrifice in order to forgive sins. For example, Baker says this is seen with the father of the prodigal son. He says that the father didn't require the son to die or to offer a sacrifice in order to be forgiven. He simply forgave him. The father represents our Heavenly Father, who therefore does not need a sacrifice in order to forgive our sins.
5. PSA Allows for Human Abuse – Baker argues that those who believe in PSA allow for abusive behaviors toward others because of the example of the Father toward his Son. Baker says, "Unfortunately, then, in calling people to imitate Christ the model [PSA] too easily has been misused to glorify suffering and encourage passive tolerance of abuse" (p.176, see also 185).
6. PSA Makes God Frightening – Baker compares the view of God in PSA to an angry barking dog. The owner of the dog may say, "it's okay, he won't bite you", but people might have a hard time believing that. Similarly, Baker accuses

proponents of PSA as saying, "it's okay, God loves you," but if they believe God punished his Son, they'll have a hard time believing God is a loving God" (p.176).

In addition to Hodge, Baker disapproves of other pastors and theologians who teach PSA such as John MacArthur, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Thomas R. Schreiner (p.178). Baker quotes Schreiner to show what he disapproves of about PSA. Schreiner said, "…because of God's great love, he sent Christ to bear the punishment of our sins. Christ died in our place, took to himself our sin (2 Cor 5:21) and guilt (Gal 3:10) and bore our penalty so that we might receive forgiveness of sins" (p.178). Baker explains that Schreiner's explanation is unbiblical and makes God vindictive and frightful (178-179).

Assignment 5 – Complete the following by April 22:
1. Read our book, *Essential Christian Doctrine – Incarnate Christ* pages: bottom of 177-179.
2. Read the handout, which includes LBC's Statement of Faith about Christ's Resurrection, Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19, and Defending Christ's Resurrection.[9]
3. Memorize – 1 Corinthians 15:17.
4. Write – From what we read for this class (and from any other useful resource you would like to use), write:
    a. A clear and concise description of the meaning of Christ's resurrection in your own words.
    b. A few key verses that speak about Christ's resurrection.
    c. Reasons why we believe the Bible teaches Christ's resurrection, partly to address those who argue against Christ's literal, bodily resurrection from the dead, saying that it was unnecessary and he just "rose spiritually."
    d. How does the truth of Christ's resurrection impact your life personally? In other words, what difference does Christ's resurrection make to your life?

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[9] Christ's Resurrection in 1 Cor 15:13–19 is from chap. 2 in this ministry project under the same heading. Defending Christ's Resurrection is from chap. 3 of this ministry project under the heading "Christ's Resurrection."

Lesson 6—Sound in the Faith
Christ's Resurrection (April 22, 2024)

Review – Christ's Atonement:
1. Definition of PSA – Ask, What is PSA?(=Because of our sin, we deserve God's punishment of death and hell, but in his love and justice, Christ took our punishment upon himself on the cross so we could be set free from it).
2. Propitiation – Ask, What is a key word in Scripture which goes hand in hand with PSA?(=Propitiation).
   a. Ask, What does Propitiation mean?(=God's full wrath against our sin is fully satisfied by Christ's death).
3. Key Verse – Ask, What is our key verse? Ask, Can someone recite it? Isaiah 53:5 "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed."
   a. Other Key Verses – Ask, What are some other key verses for PSA?(=2 Cor 5:21, 1 Jn 2:1-2, Rom 3:25-26, Gal 3:13, 1 Pet 2:24).
4. Defending PSA:
   a. Other "Theories" – Ask, How would you respond to this: That's one theory of atonement. Some believe in Moral Influence, others in Example, others in Christ as Victor, and others in Ransom?(=It's not Multiple Choice, it's All of the Above, with the emphasis on PSA. The others are results and blessings of PSA).
      • Moral Influence Theory – Christ died to show us how much God loves us.
      • Example Theory – Christ died as an example for us to serve others.
      • Christ as Victor Theory – Christ's death resulted in his victory over sin, death, and Satan to reconcile us to God.
      • Ransom Theory – Christ's death ransomed sinners.
   b. Cruel/Abusive – Ask, How would you defend the doctrine of PSA against those who believe it makes God cruel and abusive?(=Christ voluntarily gave his live to benefit others at the sacrifice of himself; like a girl giving her kidney to her brother; see John 10:17-18).

Review Memory Verses:
1. Practice Memory Verse (7 min) – Break into groups of 2. Practice 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Matthew 28:19-20, Colossians 2:9, Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Cor 15:17 for a few minutes (set timer for 5 min).
2. 1 Cor 15:17 – "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."
3. People Share Verses – Have 1 or 2 people share both verses with everyone.
4. Why Memorize These?
   a. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – Why did we memorize these verses for inerrancy?
   b. Matthew 28:19-20 – Why did we memorize these verses for the Trinity?
   c. Colossians 2:9 – Why did we memorize this verse for the deity of Christ?(=A clear passage on Christ's deity, plus his humanity).
   d. Isaiah 53:5 – Why did we memorize this verse for the Atonement of Christ?
   e. 1 Cor 15:17 – Why this verse?
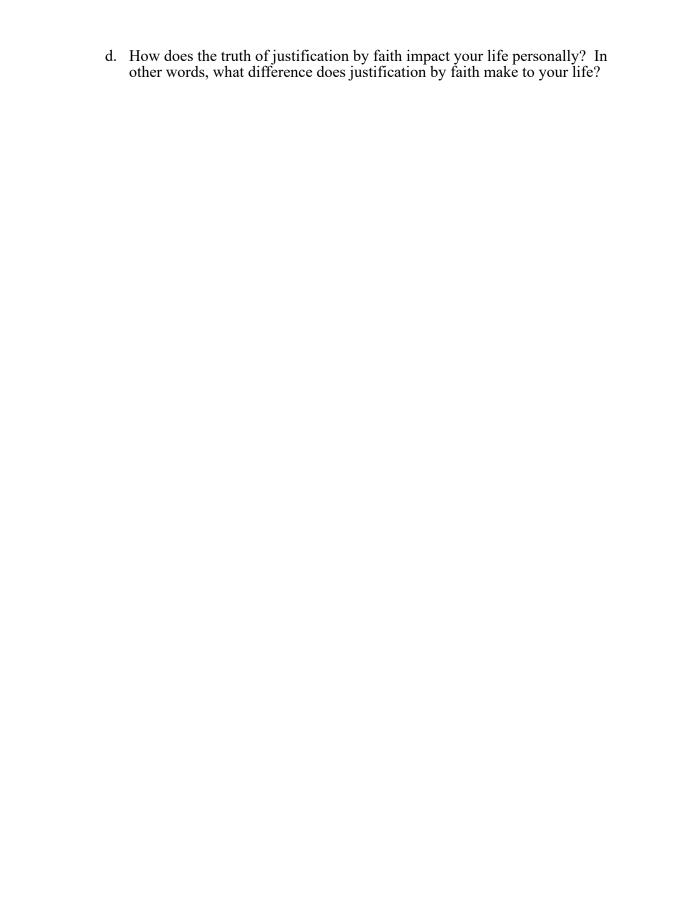
Order of the Class – Christ's Resurrection:
1. Small Groups – Discuss 3 things: 1) The definition of Christ's resurrection, 2) Key Scriptures about it, and 3) Reasons why you believe in the resurrection of Christ?
2. Big Group (Write answers on board) – Each group share what they wrote.
   a. Definition – Three days after Christ's death, he came back to life bodily and eternally.

b. Key Scriptures – The end of each of the 4 Gospels. 1 Corinthians 15. Etc.
c. Reasons Why You Believe -
3. Defending it:
    a. Non-Essential/Superstitious Myth – Ask, What would you say to this: "The resurrection is a non-essential teaching of the church. In the advanced age we live it, we can't attract people to Christianity if we talk about superstitious myths like Christ's resurrection. Belief in Christ's resurrection is NOT necessary for people to be genuine Christians and right with God." Reasons It is Essential:
- Without it, Old Testament Prophecies and Christ's prophecies were untrue.
- Jesus couldn't be the Christ because the OT said the Christ will live eternally.
- It confirmed his deity.
- 1 Cor 15 – If Christ didn't rise, our sins are not forgiven, we are excluded from heaven, the apostles are false apostles, etc.

    b. Evidence for Resurrection – Ask, What evidence would you give someone who's struggling to believe that Christ rose from the dead?
- Prophesied in both Old and New Testaments, even by Christ.
- Multiple attestations both in the Bible and outside the Bible.
- The "natural" explanations for the events surrounding the resurrection of Christ fall short of explaining it.
- Christ's body was never found.
- BEARRS (the "minimal facts")
    - B – Burial
    - E – Empty Tomb
    - A – Appearances of Christ after his resurrection
    - R – Radical transformation of the disciples after the resurrection
    - R – Radical rise of Christianity in a hostile empire
    - S – Scholars who have researched the resurrection agree with most of the above (even secular scholars; though they believed he only appeared to the disciples in a hallucination, etc.).

Assignment 6: Justification by Faith (the final assignment!) – Complete the following by our class on May 13:
1. Read our book, *Essential Christian Doctrine* – the section about Justification, pages 324-335.
2. Read the handout, which includes LBC's Statement of Faith about Justification by Faith, Romans 3:28 and Justification by Faith, and Martin Luther on Justification by Faith Alone.[10]
3. Memorize – Romans 3:28
4. Write – From what we read for this class (and from any other useful resource you would like to use), write:
    a. A clear and concise description of the meaning of justification by faith in your own words.
    b. A few key verses that speak about justification by faith.
    c. Reasons why we believe the Bible teaches justification by faith, partly to address those who argue against it, indicating the idea that justification is by faith plus some sort of works."

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[10] Rom 3:28 is from chap. 2 of this ministry project under the same heading. Martin Luther on justification by faith is in chap. 3 of this ministry project under the heading "Justification by Faith."

d. How does the truth of justification by faith impact your life personally? In other words, what difference does justification by faith make to your life?

Lesson 7—Sound in the Faith
Justification by Faith (May 13, 2024)

Review – Inerrancy:
1. Muslims Defending Quran – A street preacher went up to a crowd of Muslim men and asked them if anyone could give evidence that the Quran was from God. None of them could.
2. Christians Defending the Bible – If a Muslim came up to you and asked you to give evidence that the Bible was from God and was true, what would you say to him?
3. The Hand Illustration – Prophecy, Unity, Major Questions, Points to Historical Accuracy, Thumbs Up, Faught for Survival, Palm Sunday/Jesus.

Review – Christ's Atonement:
5. Definition of PSA – Ask, What is PSA?(=Because of our sin, we deserve God's punishment of death and hell, but in God's love and justice, Christ took our punishment upon himself on the cross so we could be set free from it).
6. Propitiation – Ask, What is a key word in Scripture which goes hand in hand with PSA?(=Propitiation).
    b. Ask, What does Propitiation mean?(=God's full wrath against our sin is fully satisfied by Christ's death).
7. Key Verses – Ask, What are some key verses for PSA?(=2 Cor 5:21, 1 Jn 2:1-2, Rom 3:25-26, Gal 3:13, 1 Pet 2:24).
8. Defending PSA:
    a. Other "Theories" – Ask, How would you respond to this: That's just one theory of atonement. Some believe in the Moral Influence theory, others in the Example theory, others in Christ as Victor theory, and others in the Ransom theory? Just pick one of these theories, and it is biblical."(=It's not Multiple Choice, it's All of the Above, with the emphasis on PSA. The others are results and blessings of PSA).
    b. Cruel/Abusive – Ask, How would you defend the doctrine of PSA against those who believe it makes God cruel and abusive?(=Christ voluntarily gave his live to benefit others at the sacrifice of himself; like a girl giving her kidney to her brother; see John 10:17-18).

Review – Christ's Resurrection:
1. Definition – Ask, How would you define Christ's resurrection?(=Three days after Christ's death, by the power of the Trinity, his dead body rose back to life as a glorified, immortal body).
2. Key Scriptures – Ask, What are some key Scriptures about Christ's resurrection?(=Isaiah 53:10-11, 1 Cor 15:17, 1 Cor 15, End of each Gospel: Matt 28, Mar 16, Lu 24, Jn 20-21).
3. Reasons it is Essential – Ask, Can someone be saved if they do not believe that Christ literally rose from the dead? Ask, Why is it essential?
    a. Without it, Old Testament Prophecies and Christ's prophecies were untrue.
    b. Jesus couldn't be the Christ because the OT said the Christ will live eternally.
    c. It confirmed his deity.
    d. 1 Cor 15 – If Christ didn't rise, our sins are not forgiven, we are excluded from heaven, the apostles are false apostles, etc.
4. Reasons We Can Believe it – Ask, What are reasons that we can believe Christ actually rose from the dead?
    a. Prophesied in both Old and New Testaments, even by Christ.
    b. Multiple attestations both in the Bible and outside the Bible.

    c. The "natural" explanations for the events surrounding the resurrection of Christ fall short of explaining it.

    d. Christ's body was never found.

    e. BEARRS (the "minimal facts")
- B – Burial
- E – Empty Tomb
- A – Appearances of Christ after his resurrection
- R – Radical transformation of the disciples after the resurrection
- R – Radical rise of Christianity in a hostile empire
- S – Scholars who have researched the resurrection agree with most of the above (even secular scholars; though they believed he only appeared to the disciples in a hallucination, etc.).

Review Memory Verses:
1. Practice Memory Verse (7 min) – Break into groups of 2. Practice 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Matthew 28:19-20, Colossians 2:9, Isaiah 53:5, 1 Cor 15:17, and Romans 3:28 for a few minutes (set timer for 7 min).
2. 1 Cor 15:17 – "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."
3. People Share Verses – Have 1 or 2 people share our memory verses with everyone.
4. Why Memorize These?
    a. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – Why did we memorize these verses for inerrancy?
    b. Matthew 28:19-20 – Why did we memorize these verses for the Trinity?
    c. Colossians 2:9 – Why did we memorize this verse for the deity of Christ?(=A clear passage on Christ's deity, plus his humanity).
    d. Isaiah 53:5 – Why did we memorize this verse for the Atonement of Christ?
    e. 1 Cor 15:17 – Why this verse?
    f. Romans 3:28

Order of the Class – Justification by Faith:
1. Small Groups – Discuss 3 things: 1) The definition of justification by faith, 2) Wha are key Scriptures about justification by faith, and 3) Reasons why you believe in justification by faith?
2. Big Group (Write answers on board) – Have them share what they wrote for the above.
    a. Definition – Ask, How would you define justification by faith?(=By Christ's death and resurrection when a sinner has faith in the Gospel, God gives Christ's righteousness to him as a gift and is then able to declare him righteous in God's sight).
- The Great/Sweet Exchange – "God treated Jesus on the cross as if He lived your live, so that he could treat you as if you had lived his life."
- Alien Righteousness – So, as Martain Luther said, it's an "alien righteousness." It's not our righteousness at all. It's God giving Christ's righteousness to us as a gift (Romans 5:17). Then because God gave us Christ's righteousness, God can declare us righteous. It's not our righteousness but Christ's that causes us to be declared as righteous.

    b. Key Scriptures – Ask, What are key Scriptures?(=Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:2-5, Romans 5:17-19, Romans 9:30-32, 2 Cor 5:21).

    c. Reasons Why You Believe It – Ask, Why do you believe we are justified by faith and NOT by works?(=Explain the following Scriptures: Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:2-5, Romans 5:17-19, Romans 9:30-32, 2 Cor 5:21).

3. Defending it – Ask, How would you respond to this: "We are made right with God when we have faith in Jesus and when we do good deeds?"
   a. James 2:24 – Ask, How would you respond to this? "James 2:24 teaches salvation is by faith plus works because it says, 'You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone?'"
      - More than 1 Meaning of a Word – Ask, Can a word have more than one meaning?(=Yes like the word "run"). Ask, If a word has more than one meaning, how do we know what meaning a word has when it's used?(=The Context)!
      - 2 Meanings of "Justified" – Justified has more than one meaning in Scripture:
         - Declared Righteous – As we've seen, in some contexts it means "to declare a person righteous" as in Romans.
         - Vindicate/Prove – It can also have the meaning of "vindicate" or "prove." In this case it means to demonstrate to others that we are righteous. It is others focused. Others would see our actions and think, "that person is righteous" or "that person is not righteous" because of the way they are behaving. The standard Greek Lexicon defines this type of justification in this way: "to show that we are without blame." (From "A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament by Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, and Bauer). For example, Matthew 11:19 "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds." Ask, What does it mean that wisdom is justified by her deeds?(=You know if someone is wise if they do wise things).
         - The Context of James 2:24 – The context of James 2:24 is about so called Christians who had some sort of faith in Jesus, yet they lived unrighteous, sinful lives. James is saying, "Don't just say you're a Christian, live it out. Prove your faith by our actions." Paul taught that our faith should be proved by our actions as well. For example, in Galatians 5:6 Paul said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."
   b. Roman Catholicism View: Infused Righteousness – "Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992).
      - Brian Murphy's Explanation – Possibly explain what Brian Murphy explained to me (he grew up Roman Catholic).

Final Assignment:
   1. Fill out the Post-Class Questionnaire. Don't use notes or books. Only use your Bible. Thank you!

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS OF LAURELGLEN
BIBLE CHURCH IN BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA,
TO KNOW AND DEFEND SIX FOUNDATIONAL
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

Andrew George Middlekauff, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jay D. Owens

The purpose of this ministry project was to train small group leaders of
Laurelglen Bible Church in Bakersfield, California, in six of the fundamental doctrines of
the Christian faith. Chapter 1 is the introduction, which explains the ministry context of
Laurelglen Bible Church, rationale, and purpose, as well as the research methodology and
definitions and limitations of this project. Chapter 2 explains the biblical and theological
basis for the doctrines of inerrancy, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, penal substitutionary
atonement, Christ's resurrection, and justification by faith. Chapter 3 explains significant
theoretical, practical, and historical issues related to this project. Chapter 4 gives the details
and description of the ministry project including its preparation, implementation, and
content overview. Chapter 5 evaluates the project's purpose, goals, strengths, weaknesses,
theological reflections, and personal reflections.

VITA

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