

# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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## THE DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION

### WHAT THE CROSS MEANS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- **Galatians 2:20**—“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
- **Galatians 6:14-15**—“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”

### THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD FOR THE CHRISTIAN

- **The All-Sufficient Trinity**—“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).
- **The All-Sufficient Father**—“**Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above**, coming down from **the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation** or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures” (James 1:17-18).
- **The All-Sufficient Christ**—“To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man **complete in Christ**” (Colossians 1:27-28).
- **The All-Sufficient Spirit**—“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, **just as from the Lord, the Spirit**” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

### THE BELIEVER'S STANDING AND STATE

The believer's standing/position before God is unchanging and secure, but his state/condition is dependent on his obedience toward God. Our goal is to have our condition reflect more accurately the position we have before God. Below are a few examples, but they are not exhaustive (Note, quotations are incomplete). This is a principle to keep in mind when studying Scripture.

- **We are saints by position; therefore, we must be holy in our condition.**
  - 1 Corinthians 1:2—“*Saints by calling.*”
  - 1 Peter 1:15-16—“*Be holy in all your behavior.*”

- **We are justified in our position; therefore, we must be righteous in our condition.**
  - Romans 8:33—“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God that justifies.”
  - 1 John 3:7—“The one who practices righteousness is righteous.”
- **Other examples include:**
  - Being delivered from sin’s penalty and needing to be delivered from sin’s power.
  - Being reconciled to God and needing to pursue fellowship with Him.
  - Being believers and needing to live by faith.
  - Being slaves and needing to serve.
  - Being Christians and being like Christ.
  - Being blameless and walking blamelessly.

## THE CHRISTIAN’S RULE OF LIFE

Our rule of life is the standard to which God desires to conform us.

- **It is not the Law**—“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). We are not sanctified by something that could not justify us: Christ Himself is our justification, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).
- **It is our new nature fashioned after Christ Himself.**
  - Galatians 4:19—“My children, with whom I am again in labor **until Christ is formed in you.**”
  - Galatians 6:14-15—“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but **a new creation.**”

## ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

### STEP ONE: BAPTISM

Baptism is an assumed necessity after belief in the gospel. It is an act of identifying with Christ and publicly linking one self with Him in His death (into the water), burial (under the water), and resurrection (out of the water).

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look! Water! **What prevents me from being baptized?**’” (Acts 8:35-36). See also Acts 2:41 and Acts 16:31-33.

### UNRESERVED OBEDIENCE

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies** a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual [rational] service of worship**. And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what **the will of God** is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2).

## FAITH

Faith incorporates unseen realities into our visible walk as believers. It is an unreserved trust in God that depends upon His character rather than what we see Him doing or not doing. The Christian life is one of faith from beginning to end.

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, **the conviction of things not seen**. For by it the men of old gained approval. **By faith we understand** that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; **AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP**; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up **he was pleasing to God**. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for **he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**" (Hebrews 11:1-6)*

## CHARACTER

*"But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh**. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now **the deeds of the flesh** are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law**. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires**. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another." (Galatians 5:16-26).*

## WORSHIP

*"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and truth** [It is an internal thing based on a correct view of God]; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" John 4:23-24.*

## THE WORD OF GOD

*"How blessed is the man who **does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night**. He will be like **a tree firmly planted** by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers" (Psalm 1:1-3).*

## PRAYER

*"O God, You are my God; **I shall seek You earnestly**; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To*

see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, **My lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live**; I will lift up my hands in Your name. **My soul is satisfied** as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips" (Psalm 63:1-5).

## THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY & LOVE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

- **It Logically Flows from Salvation**—"So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the **apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer**" (Acts 2:41-42).
- **It is a Command to Not Neglect It**—"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:23-25).
- **Love of God's People is a Sign of Salvation**—"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because **we love the brethren**. He who does not love abides in death" (1 John 3:14).

## TESTIMONY

- **Personally**—"Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him." (Luke 8:39).
- **Collectively**—"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27).

## PRACTICAL ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN LIVING

### ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

- **Comes from the Spirit of God**—"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16)
- **Based Solely on Faith in Christ; Evidenced By a Life of Fruit**—"And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. **He who has the Son has the life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **so that you may know** that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:11-13). What things did John write? He also gave at least three tests of salvation:
  - **The Test of Light**—"But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).
  - **The Test of Love**—"The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. . . Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:10, 15).

- The Test of Life—"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

## FALSE PROFESSION

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

## THE BELIEVER'S THREE ENEMIES

- **The Devil**—"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).
- **The Flesh**—"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:16-21).
- **The World**—"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." (1 John 2:15-16).

## CONFESSION OF SIN

"**If we confess our sins**, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins [not salvation forgiveness, but relational forgiveness to keep our communion with God clear] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, **we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.**" (1 John 1:9-2:2).

## TEMPTATION AND TRIALS

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance**. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and **complete, lacking in nothing**. . . Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But **each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust**. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and

when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren" (James 1:2-4, 12-16).

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- **John 15:3-5**—"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."
- **2 Peter 3:17-18**—"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

## THE ULTIMATE QUESTION: DO I LOVE CHRIST?

- Love to God is **Man's Basic Obligation**—"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).
- Love for Christ **Divides Eternity**—"If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha" (1 Corinthians 16:22).
- Love for Christ **Comes from Understanding Forgiveness**—"When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more? . . . For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:42, 47).
- Love for Christ **is the Central Factor of Progress**—"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:21, 23).
- Love for Christ **is the Outstanding Virtue of a Person**—"I thank my God always. . . . because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake" (Philemon 1:4-6).
- Love for Christ **Culminates in Prayer**—"In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father" (John 16:27).
- Love for Christ **is Ultimately Incorruptible**—"Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love" (Ephesians 6:24).
- Love for Christ **is the Answer for Trials**—"So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:7-8; also James 1:12;2:5).
- Love for Christ **is the Answer for Restoration**—"Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.'" (John 21:15-22).

## SUMMARY STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE

**Christ and His cross** are not only our means of salvation, but they change the source (*Galatians 2:20*) and scope of our lives (*Galatians 6:14*). Christ is now the very essence of our **life** (*Colossians 3:3-4*), and God aims to **complete** us in Him (*Colossians 1:27-28*). Part of this entails a new **rule of life**, which is "Christ formed in you" (*Galatians 4:19*) through the new nature that God has given us in salvation (*Galatians 6:14-15*). In this rule of life, though our positional **standing** before God is changeless (*Romans 8:33*), we are to strive for a greater condition and **state** that conforms to our righteous position (*1 John 3:7*).

The Christian life manifests itself by various acts of **obedience**. The first expression of this is **baptism** (*Acts 2:41; 8:35-36*), an outward identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (*Romans 6*). This should evidence an attitude of heart that gives the whole person to do **God's will** without reserve (*Romans 12:1-2*). This is empowered by **faith**, an unreserved trust in God that lives in light of unseen realities based on God's Word (*Hebrews 11*). This will produce increasing virtue in the Christian's **character** as he learns to crucify his **old nature** with its passions and desires (*Galatians 5*).

The essence of all this is found in **worship** (*John 4:23-24*), responding to God appropriately in light of His Word. We study **Scripture** for this purpose: both to know God and to live according to His will (*Psalms 1, 19, 119*). As we grow in the **knowledge of God**, we will grow in our desire to **prayer** in expression of our aim to know Him and please Him more (*Psalms 63*). This personal experience in the presence of God, however, cannot replace our collective participation in God's presence in a **local assembly** (*Hebrews 10:23-25; Acts 2:41-42*). The local church is a necessary part of the Christian's life. As to his relation to the world, he desires to **testify** for the sake of Christ both personally (*Luke 8:39*) and collectively (*Philippians 1:27*) with his assembly.

When the Christian grows in his life, he will be met with various struggles. He may struggle with the **assurance** of salvation: ultimately this comes from the promises of God (*1 John 5:13*), the witness of His Spirit (*Romans 8:16*), and the confirmation of a changed heart (*1 John 1:7; 2:10, 15; 5:20*). He may struggle with the reality of **false believers**, something which we must be aware of (*Matthew 7:21-23*). But his main struggle will be with his three enemies. The **Devil** "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour," (*1 Peter 5:8*) and we are called to resist him (*James 4:7*). The **flesh** fights with the Spirit of God to gain control of our desires and actions; we must walk in the Spirit's power and will to combat this enemy (*Galatians 5*). We also face the **world**, the system that opposes God, and we are to keep ourselves from loving it in any capacity (*1 John 2:15-16*). The question arises, then, "How does a Christian respond when he does sin?" The answer is to **confess** our sins to God directly, understanding that Christ's righteousness opens the way for restoration to communion with the Father (*1 John 1:9-2:2*). Life will face us with both **trials** and **temptations** to challenge our relationship with God, but we must remain joyful in God during trials and keep ourselves from deception when temptation arises (*James 1*). This is all part of the process of **spiritual growth** (*John 15:3-5*) which comes by growing in the knowledge and grace of Christ (*2 Peter 3:17-18*). The ultimate question of Christianity is "**Do I love Christ?**" (*1 Corinthians 16:22; 1 Peter 1:8; John 21:15-22; Ephesians 6:24; Philemon 4-6*). It is the answer for both trials and restoration. The Christian life is to love the Lord with full heart, soul, mind, and strength (*Mark 12:30*).