

Series: Reboot

Sermon #3

Creed or Chaos

Romans 12:1-2; Romans 3, Galatians 3

Dr. Matt Cassidy – January 16, 2022

Good morning, Grace! Thanks for joining us any way you can. You saw that Rebecca McLaughlin is coming to Grace Covenant Church on February 13, and we had a meeting last week and it was a unanimous decision that that counts as part of a Valentine's date. If you come on that day, that will count as a date. There wasn't a single woman in the room when we made that decision, but man, it sounded like a good one to me. So, you'll be glad you came.

You can turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12 if you want. I'll meet you there.

Today I'll just put it out there: this is the most important thirty-five minutes of your life. For many of you, right now, listening to me, this will be the most important moment in your entire eternal existence. That's not a bad introduction.

We're in a series right now called *Reboot* and we're on our third week. We just want to start the year right. And sometimes just maybe start over, the whole do-over. Let's start life over again. So, where do we go to figure out how to do that? And the theme of the whole series is how to think and live biblically in the culture. We're not the type of church that runs from the culture. But to think and live biblically in the culture courageously—that's the theme. So, we've got to get strong and reboot and change the way we're living and thinking, maybe.

And the passage we've been going to the last two weeks now is Romans 12:1-2. And if the theme is life change, then that's where you'd go. These two sentences will tell you a lot about life change, because they're declarations from Paul that say you've got to stop thinking wrong and you've got to think right, and you've got to do right: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice." So, that's why we're going there. And today we're going to emphasize a different section of those two sentences. Let's look at the passage and you'll see the part that we will spend our time on today.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² 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.

It says, “Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual, logical, service of worship. 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.”

So, this week you can see in the letters there, the red letters, that we’re transformed by the renewing of our minds. That’s what it says. But what does that mean? What does that mean in the way that we’re supposed to be perceiving reality? What does that phrase mean?

And sometimes it would be easy to teach this passage to kind of a narrow group of people, and you could focus on transforming your mind on this one topic. But since we’re talking about the whole big picture of things, what I wanted to do today is transform your mind to the bigger picture. You need to transform your mind from what you think about to what God has declared to be right and real and true and beautiful. And if His definitions are different than yours, you need to change your definition of what is right and real and true and beautiful.

And again, I’m going to look at the bigger picture of things, and later studies would help us get to more specifics. But this is the big story of the human experience. This is to make sense of all of human history and the future of things to come. It’s the macro story, the macro truth, that we’re supposed to transform our minds to look like.

And what I’m going to do is go through a section of declarative, truthful principles. But I want you to see that they’re not in isolation and disconnected to one another. They actually build on each other. It looks like it’s chronological, and it somewhat is, but it’s also a logical order of sequences, and they’re supposed to form a worldview. And a worldview is the way our minds filter all of reality. It’s the way we perceive the existence around us. And how we, quote, make sense out of, in this case, the human story: the history of humanity, where we are right now,

individually, but also collectively, and what the future looks like for us. So, that's the big picture here.

And so, we're supposed to transform by renewing our minds to these thoughts, these values, these perceptions of reality, to bring them into harmony with God.

The Bible Alone

So, the first principle is kind of a priority statement of where to start. And that is that we're starting with the Bible alone as our source of authority on spiritual things. In my mind, there are probably only two absolute sources of authority. One would be math and one would be the Bible. I know that "math" is a trigger word for some of you, so if you could just let that go and come back, and we're just going to talk about the Bible. I won't mention math again.

In the context of the Bible, that is the absolute authority of defining who God is and what He's done and what the plan is. And there are a lot of reasons to come to that conclusion, and I talked a little about that last week. And there's a lot more, but I'm just saying that we've got to transform our mind in the way that we think about the Bible as our source of knowing God and how to practice the Christian faith.

So, at Grace here, we don't care much about church history, whether it's Catholic or Protestant. Another application to the Bible alone and its authority is that we don't necessarily have to like what the Bible says, and sometimes not even agree with what the Bible says. Our job as followers of the Bible alone is to humbly and graciously and generously obey what God has declared to be true. So, that's what it means by "the Bible alone." When we settle that as our source of where we get our worldview, then we can move forward and hear more about what God has for us.

And what happens when you put these declarative truths about the nature of reality of together is that they become a creed. And in a wonderful book by Dorothy Sayers entitled *Creed or Chaos*, she comes to the conclusion that you live under a creed or you live in chaos. And today, what we're going to do is we're going to survey these major topics and we're going to find ourselves coming up with a creed. And we'll recite that creed together.

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

Here's the first principle built on the idea that the Bible alone is our source of authority knowing about God and His nature. The first truth that we live our worldview around is this: that we believe in one God, the Almighty maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

Hebrews 11:3

**By faith we understand that the universe was formed at
God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what
was visible.**

By definition, this is faith. Hebrews 11: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command ..." It just says it. "... so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."

In other words, God made things out of nothing. He created *ex nihilo*, out of nothingness. And when we apply that fact to our lives, and if we're transformed by the renewing of our minds—when our minds are renewed that God is the creator of all things just by speaking it, we come to the theology term called "sovereign", that God is sovereign. And what that means is that He's so infinitely powerful to create all things. But also, it means that He can change anything within His creation. And it means that He has a plan, and He has a way to make sure that plan comes to fruition.

And the last thing the word "sovereign" means—not just the plan and the power to do it—is that He rules. He owns everything.

And a person that has had their mind transformed and renewed by this fact lives with the sense of tranquility. There's a sense of ease in their life. When they look around and they wonder what is happening right in front of them, they know this to be true because of the promises of God: that there will be justice and there will be equity and there will be salvation coming. The two topics that you know concerning the sovereignty of God is that justice will come, and that there is a celebration at the end of all time; that there's a purpose for time and history and it culminates in this ultimate answer to the ultimate prayer of the reigning prayer—an ultimate

answer to an ultimate prayer that we would obey on earth as it is in heaven. And that's what will happen.

So, a person who believes this first principle is not worried about current events, even something like a world war or a rumor of war.

Man Was Created in the Image of God

From there, after creating all things, the second thing we need to know and understand is that God created man in His image. Man was created in the image of God, and by that the Bible uses the word “righteous”—without flaw. And so, the application there—it's very easy to stop and wonder, *Why would God create this chaos, man that does this and is so evil?* And the answer is that He didn't create man that way. Man was created in the very image of God.

Man Sinned and Hopelessly Fell Out of God's Favor

Which leads us to the obvious next step. God created everything; man was righteous in his creation; and the third thing we need to know is that man sinned and hopelessly fell out of God's favor—hopelessly fell out of God's favor.

In God's dealing with mankind, there's a word in theology called “federalism.” And federalism is the belief that one or two people can represent all of that creation. The point is that Adam and Eve—Adam particularly—were federalist representatives of all of mankind. Whatever he did, we lived with. Federalism happens two times particularly in the Bible: Adam represents all of mankind and Jesus, the Christ—He's called “the second Adam” because He's going to have federalist implications to what He chooses to do.

But in the story we're talking about right here, though, we see that Adam chose. He had a freedom that no one has ever had since then, but he chose to reject God, not to depend upon God, no to trust in God's promises and His nature and His character. And in his sin—that's the word for it in the Bible—depravity enters all of mankind, because we're all sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. And in that sin, we get guilt and shame and weakness. And every descendant from Adam and Eve on has had those attributes. They inherit them. When Adam sins, death enters the world. Death rules the world. And we're talking about immediately—death to the

spirit takes place. Our body is on a terminal destiny towards the grave. And then our souls are bent, demented. It's hard to think and feel right.

War dominates our history. Someone said that the history of man is the history of war, because that's what takes place when men and women are depraved: there's a war against God always. There's a war against others, there's a war within ourselves, there's a war against nature. Death and war now define the human existence.

Romans 3:10-18

¹⁰ None is righteous, no, not one.

¹¹ No one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.

¹³ Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips.

¹⁴ Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.

¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.

When Paul writes about this attribute of total depravity that we inherit, he just surveys a lot of older Testament sentences. I'll just survey that for you. That's found in Romans 3. It starts in verse 10 and just goes. Look what it says: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

The idea is that when we come into the presence of God, we bring nothing of moral value. Even when we do something mildly good, it is contaminated by some kind of self-serving angle on things.

Now, parenthetically, we are still in the remnant of that image of God. In other words, we still take on attributes of God in that the human soul has infinite value compared to any other created thing. We still have the remnant of God in that we are still creative and industrious. We're in the image of God—God is creative and industrious. And it shows up in our ability to show love and charity to one another. So, there's this echo from Eden of where we used to be, what we used to be like. But in the context of morality, we bring nothing to that.

And when we're renewing our minds and transforming our thought to this truth, absolute and complete depravity, I find that it's easy to show up in parenting. What I find interesting is that sometimes an elementary school teacher will tell you that he or she believes in total depravity. I mean, the kids are cute and all that stuff, but, oh yeah—you turn your back on them long enough and they'll burn the building down. And a good school teacher will run that class with the idea of total depravity, no matter how cute the skirts are. And it's managed well. What's interesting is that I have found that same school teacher goes home and she looks at her little baby and says, *Oh, but this is different*. And that little kid runs wild with way too much freedom. And it's based on her thinking, *Well, my little girl couldn't be that bad*.

And I'm just saying, in appreciation for total depravity, look at parenting with this in mind, that there is none righteous, not even one. And I honestly had trouble with the whole thing, with other people not treating their kids this way, until I had a little grandbaby, and I thought,

Man, this little girl is sugar and sweet and everything nice and all that stuff. That girl is going to



obey God. This is the exception.



And then you just wait ten minutes and, yeah, there's the other side.



You know what she's saying right there? She's saying, *I don't know how to talk right now, but when I do I've got a lot to say about the way you've been running things so far, and I'm already in charge of a couple of you, and I'm going to run this house soon.* I'm just saying that it happens a lot.

One of the applications for total depravity is that every institution—if you believe this to be true, if you mind is transformed—needs to have checks and balances to it. The United States republic is built on that value that no one can have too much power. But even in parenting, the reason I think the father and mother (husband and wife) are in the household together is because it allows for checks and balances. But parenting and the judicial system and the government—businesses—when one person is in charge ... churches—that happens—when one person is in charge and there is no checks and balances or accountability, it's not a matter of if; it's just a

matter of when. Because any time, every time, when man is left unaccountable, the depravity just needs to show itself in some way that expresses self-service and the abuse of that power. That's because of total depravity.

I think a third way of applying this essential doctrine is that about every one hundred years (and we're coming up on it soon) or so, the collective thought is that man can be perfected. You know, given enough science and accidentals, using the word of Dorothy Sayers in *Creed or Chaos?*—with science and what she calls accidental evolution, man will find himself perfected. And she speaks of that being what led to the second World War. Because man is just on the brink of perfection. If you believe this doctrine to be true, you'll believe this: that every time we come up with a life-saving medicine, it's just a matter of time before we use that same medicine to destroy the world. It's just the way we've been bent.

So, all have sinned, all have fallen away from the glory of God. And this is the hopeless predicament that we find ourselves in, because we can't fix it.

Only a Gift from God Can Fix Us: Grace Alone

Which leads us to our next point, and it's this: that only a gift from Yahweh can fix this. It's the idea of grace; "gift" and "grace" are the same word. It's the idea of grace alone. Only God can do this. Only God can make this right, and it has to be a gift, because we can't afford what it costs to fix this. It's that big of a gift.

And just to absolutely clear, God is not obligated to get us out of the circumstances that we put ourselves in. In other words, the goodness of God doesn't mean He's required to do something about this. Somewhere in this the prayer of the depraved says, "God, you have to step in." And for 2,000 years men and women longed for the red-letter sentence "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever would believe in Him would not perish, but would have eternal life." God, in His motive of love, has decided to enter our fray. It would have to be a gift; it would have to be a gift from Yahweh. It's not our works.

Titus 3:5

Christ saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of God's mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

It says this in Titus 3:5. Watch how it says what it is and what it's not. "Christ saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of God's mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. "

Let me put it another way. This gift from God is the Gospel. The Gospel is the greatest manifestation of the attributes of God that can ever be imagined. And here's why. Because the Gospel answers the divine dilemma that philosophers and theologians and angels have been perplexed about for thousands of years: how does God get out of this divine dilemma? And the divine dilemma is this: how could God be just and give mercy to the wretched? If He just lets people go, then He's no longer just. If He's just, He can't let them go. What's He going to do? What can He do about that?

Romans 3:22-26

We are given the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as sacrifice of atonement by His blood, to be received by faith ... ²⁶ It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Well, the Gospel answers that question. It's summarized in Romans 3:22-26. Here's what Paul says: "We are given"—there's the gift—"the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified" —made righteous—"by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is found in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as sacrifice of atonement by His

blood, to be received by faith ... It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that Yahweh God might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

How can God, Yahweh, the righteous, holy God, be just and justifier? Here’s how: He makes sure that the gift is payment in full for the crimes against God so that that debt is paid and those people are set free.

In other words, no one gets away with it. That’s debt’s paid. The gift, the grace—when we talk about gift alone, grace alone—let me make sure—I’m going to summarize it right here. This is that gift. I’m going to explain. This is what we’re talking about when we say “grace alone” or “gift alone.” It’s pointing to a man. This is it. This is how we restore righteousness. The gift is Jesus the Christ, who was fully God and fully man, the Bible says. And that’s why it’s Jesus alone—because no one else qualifies for that. He needed to be fully God and fully man, what we call “the second Adam”—federalism again—we’re going to inherit what He is like. He had to be born perfect. He was. But He had to live a perfect life, without sin. He did. Being born perfect, living perfect, qualifies Him to be an atoning payment, a blood sacrifice for the wrath of God.

This is the gift: the perfect man climbing upon that cross volitionally to take on our sin, our curse, our shame; so that the holy hatred of God could focus down and destroy, body, soul, and spirit, an innocent; so that the guilty would have their debts paid. The wrath of God was poured out upon Him.

Did it work? Did it take? The resurrection is proof that those promises were fulfilled. Without the resurrection we would always be wondering—I hope, I hope. But the resurrection says, No, there was a great exchange that took place in those moments. What happened just then was that He took on our sin and we inherited His righteousness. He took on our shame, a shameful way of dying, so that we would not be shamed. We receive His honor. It means that He became weak and vulnerable like us, so that we could inherit the Holy Spirit and be strong and courageous. And in that gift of Jesus and His actions on the cross and the resurrection, that is how God becomes both just and the one who justifies—in grace alone, in the gift alone, having that faith alone.

Faith Alone in the Gift of God

That's what the gift is. The next truth that goes along with that (now that we know what the gift is)—here we go—faith alone in the gift alone. Faith alone in the gift of God—and that gift of God is Christ alone. You have to have faith in that set of truths. In other words, you can't just believe it to be true; you've got to trust your soul for it.

Let me take it out of the spiritual context so that it's a little easier. Faith means trust. It means making an obligation to something that has consequences. And this is important—there has to be an object of that faith. What is the faith pointing to, exactly? So, those two attributes: it has to be a consequence and there has to be an object.

So, right now you are having mostly faith in the chair you're sitting in. There's an obligation with consequences and there's an object—the chair itself. So let's do this: everybody pick your feet up off the ground. Now there's nothing to catch you—not that your feet would do much anyway. But now that's like one hundred percent physical faith in the chair. That's a consequence and there's an object to that. That's helpful.

So, when we say you have to have faith alone—could we just say you have to have faith alone in God? Yeah—no, you can't. Because that's too vague and general, to just have faith in God. Faith has to have an object and the object has to be specific. So, it has to not just in the nature of God, but in the promise that He made. And the promise that God made is that the gift is adequate to quench the wrath of God. So, you're actually putting your faith in the promise of God. And it's not just in God—it's in the promise of God. Faith, trust, belief, hope—these are all action words that have life change attached to them.

And so, how does it work? I'm believing in the promise of God and therefore, my life is completely altered. If it's not altered, I'm not believing.

Let me give you an example that's somewhat in the Bible that I've updated so that maybe it's a little easier for us to grasp. Let's just say for some reason that I have three years to live. And I come to you and we go to dinner and I say to you, "You know what? I'm going to will you ten million dollars. You're going to inherit ten million dollars from me in three short years. You're welcome."

So, if you have faith in that inheritance, it looks like this. The object of the faith in generally me, at the beginning, and that is: Am I trustworthy? Do I keep my promise? Sure, that

would be a factor. Do I have ten million dollars to give you? I mean, that would be a thing, right? Yeah. And then, ultimately, the specific faith that you would have would be that *You willed me ten million dollars—that you made a promise to that fact. To me.* That’s why inheritance is one of the metaphors that they use in the Bible. Jesus Christ says, “You will inherit my righteousness.” That’s the whole thing there. And so, if you have this promise from me for ten million dollars in three years and you’re living your life as a miser—if you keep planning and sending all your money ahead—*I have to have enough for retirement and I’m not sure this is going to be enough*—you’re fidgety and you’re living that way—that means you don’t have enough faith in the promise.

See again, the power of faith is that you ought to be relaxed about the things that are promised, and the thing that is promised is that in three years you’re going to have more than enough to retire on.

This is what faith looks like—it looks kind of dumb. If I were you, I’d evacuate some of your retirement and go to Paris. I’d see the world. Because all that stuff that you were saving for is not necessary. A person who lives by faith lives in a way that doesn’t make sense to people who don’t live in this certain promise of God.

With that in mind, the application here—“be transformed by the renewing of your mind”—in faith alone, in the grace, the promise of this gift alone that is, in fact, Jesus Christ alone.

That is to be applied in two different ways. We’re supposed to apply that to our salvation, and we’re supposed to apply it to what’s called “sanctification,” our becoming like Christ in all of life. In other words, this is how you enter the kingdom of God—this is how you become a child of God. It is by grace, it is by a gift. You can’t work your way there.

Ephesians 2:8-9

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

Look what it says in Ephesians chapter 2. “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” Look how repetitive this is. “And it’s not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of

your works, so that no one may boast.” Grace, faith, gift—that’s how it works. You know how it doesn’t work? What does it say—“not of yourselves, not as a result of your works” that you could be boasting about. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

**The way you became God’s child is the same way
you will become God’s perfect child.**

Part two. The most neglected, non-taught truth is the American church today—that’s not me saying that, that’s some really smart guy that I studied under—the single-most neglected passage in the New Testament, is that that same method of salvation applies to becoming like Christ in all of life—grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone. Let me just say it this way. The way to become Christ’s child is the same way you become God’s perfect child. The way you become God’s child is the same way you become God’s perfect child. It doesn’t change after you’re in the family—*Now get to work.*

And that’s what happens in so many churches today. Wow, you walk up the aisle, you become a believer—now get busy. And if you’re not busy, you ought to feel guilty, because that’s what the Christian life is—keeping busy until Jesus comes back.

Galatians 3:1, 3

**You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before
whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ³
Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now
being perfected by the flesh?**

But Paul says in Galatians chapter 3, “You foolish Galatians”—*You foolish American Christians*—“who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ... Are you so foolish?” Yeah, he’s calling us out. “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

Are you going to become like Christ in all of life by works? No, he’s saying this. The way you become like Christ is a desperate cry for God’s gift to intervene again. How do you get rid of the lust and the temper and the fear that’s in your soul? You’re going to have to cry out to

God. And it's going to have be God's grace, this gift that He gives you. And then you'll overcome that.

And if you come to this church, you'll hear stories. We're not trying to get you busy. We're trying to get you to come to the terms that you can't earn this. Faith alone, salvation and sanctification. It is through faith alone in that promise of the gift that is Christ Jesus. It applies to salvation and sanctification.

So, we have to transform our mind and say it's all of that and nothing else when we talk about it in the context of justification when we become saved--that righteousness. If we say that *I'm going to receive this gift and then I'm going to do a little more after that so that God will like me*, you're showing contempt for the gift, Jesus Christ. You're saying that walk to Golgotha and that beating and that death were not enough to pay for your sins, so you're going to have to add a little something. And you've just lost the gift. You're insulting the gift and you've taken it away.

In the context of salvation, if we say, *Okay, I receive that as a gift and now I'm going to work, it's gift plus works, so that I can be approved by God and I can be approved by the church or my other friends*, or whatever it might be. If you receive a gift and then you pay for that gift later, then it's not a gift. You're putting it on layaway. And that's not how it works.

So, again, in the context of anger—hopefully, if you're around here long enough, you'll see that part of the discipleship model is to push people into a place where they give up trying harder and they cry out. Again, this is Paul in Romans 7: “I can't stop doing the things I don't want to do. Who will save this wretched man from his flesh?” And his answer is, “The grace of God only”—faith in that grace only. And that is Jesus Christ.

So, here's the big ask today. Are you going to transform your mind and what your core beliefs are in how to become a believer and how to grow as a believer? We are from so many different church backgrounds. This is Christianity. This is the definition of that—choosing biblical Christianity, living your whole life around the fact that you received the gift and it wasn't meritorious, that your debts against God are paid in full and now you can enjoy intimacy with God and a relationship with God that's going back and forth, the Spirit of God living inside of you. And so, it's a life of rest and tranquility, less anxiety, and generally, you're giving grace to everyone around you, because it's overflowing. You're not one to hold grudges. You're one to give. You're free.

And the motive that a real Christian whose mind has been transformed and renewed to believe in these things, in grace alone, in salvation and sanctification—these people are not motivated—listen—in their love for God. It would seem that in light of all that God’s done for us, that in our love we would do things. If you look at New Testament saints and see what motivates them, they’ll say that they’re not motivated by their love for God; they’re motivated by their love from God. Because these men and women that are writing know that their love is fickle and with one change in the wind, they’ll lose that. Obedience, real long-term obedience, comes from a deepening appreciation for God’s love for us.

So, this is saving faith. It’s when you say “living by faith, trust forever,” it’s a bit of a gamble. It’s like gambling. And it’s just saying, *I’m taking my soul and spirit, my eternal faith, and I’m putting it—because I believe the Bible to be true—on this one number.* I’m thinking roulette. *Everything. I go to hell if I get this wrong, or I—I don’t know—just disappear in nothingness.* And that gift is in Jesus Christ, that He died and was raised, and I’m putting all of my faith in that, and that alone. Nothing else. That the nature of God is one that He makes promises and keeps promises. And this promise is that they all spend eternity with Him and have intimacy with Him between now and then.

So, what are you going to do? I’m asking you to make a choice—for salvation, for some of you; sanctification for others. You never heard that you become like Christ through grace by faith. I’ll explain that a little more next week. You’ve got to transform your mind.

The storyline of creation—logically and chronologically, is God created all things, made man in His image without flaw, man sinned and became hopelessly depraved and unable to have intimacy with God. God in His love for us mercifully gets us out of that through a gift, and only that gift, and the gift is complete, and we believe in that gift, faith alone in that gift alone, which is Christ alone. That’s the story so far.

Final Judgment and Celebration

The last truth that we need to hold onto is this. That there’s an end to this story. And this truth is just like what we’ve studied before. It is a truth, but it’s also in historical, chronological order. The way this ends is that two things are promised throughout the Bible: justice and a celebration. Justice: that everyone will answer for what they’ve said, done, and what motivated them. In the Old and the New Testament it’s called the Day of the Lord. It’s a scary event.

The other thing that's promised absolutely is a wonderful creation celebration of a new reigning king. It's a wedding feast. And God, not wanting any to perish, wants as many people at that event as possible. That's what it looks like. That's the big story all along.

Revelation 22:3-5

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve Him. ⁴ They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Look what it says in Revelation 22: “No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face”—can you imagine?—“And His name will be written on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give the light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

Those are the promises of God that fit together with the world view, and knowing how it ends is going to help us make a decision how to live right now.

Let me pause. Watch. Knowing these doctrinal truths that fit into a worldview—watch how it alters our existence right now.

Romans 12:2

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.

Look at Romans 12:2 again: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”—get on board with what God has already declared to be true—“so that”—there's a cause and effect here—“you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

People wonder a lot about what is the will of God. Well, it starts here on the macro level. This is how it starts. These things that are true, God wants all people to be ending up at that wedding party. Our job between now and then is to participate in that jet stream of what He's already declared to be His will. In other words, we need to get on board with what God's doing, and then we're going to be in His will. God's will in the context of what we talked about today is a big, wide superhighway. How do we fit in? We find out where our lane is: the way God made us, the experiences we've had in life, positive or negative—all of those working their way towards all the good works that Christ has arranged for each and every one of us to do for His glory before the beginning of time.

What do we do between now and then? We find out what those good works in Christ are. And we do those. We do it together. That's the will of God. That's the thoughts of God, that we're supposed to renew our mind and think about. All of those fit together to become a creed.

It didn't seem like there was any other way to end our time together today than to have everyone stand and recite what is called the Nicene Creed. Let me tell you a little bit about this. Some of you might know this already. It's kind of like the Apostle's Creed with some things added—some things have changed over time.

And I want you to read the Nicene Creed out loud with us. If there's something we read that you don't believe, don't say it, because you don't believe it. Second, know this: that one of the lines in here is going to say that we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. Please note that the word "catholic" is not capitalized. When it's capitalized it means the Roman Catholic Church. When it's not capitalized, the word "catholic" means "universal." It means this global church. So, when you're confessing that in this creed, you're not confessing to be Roman Catholic.

Well, let's stand up and agree to these things that have been declared to be true. This is a summary of that. We'll read it out loud together. Ready? Here we go.

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

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through Him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
He came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scripture;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.

And all God's people said ... Amen.

That's true. I believe those things. I'll transform my mind to meet those parameters and live my life accordingly. Let's pray.

Lord, we first of all celebrate the Bible, and Your second most loving gift to mankind was words of truth so that we might know absolutely what is right and real and true and the things

that are seen and unseen from the very mind of the Creator. And from that we come to these realizations. And I'd ask, Lord, that you would puncture our minds as to when we are out of line with these fundamental facts about who You are, the way we were made, the way we're bent, and how You saved us from that. But not just to become Yours, but to become like You. Help us understand that, grasp that, and apply that in our lives.

Lord, let us be a church that is famous for its grace, its grace and mercy for salvation and its grace and mercy as we help each other become like Christ in all of life. Who will save me, this wretched man that I am? The gift of the Holy Spirit. So, Lord, we pray this and ask this and enjoy Your presence in our life. And until that coming kingdom we'll live for you because You loved us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.