Christian Doctrinal Statements of Faith

The following items listed (on pages 1-6) are the heart of Christian doctrine and are often called our ***"Statement of Faith."*** The heart of the Gospel message. There are many more additional statements that may be added that are drawn from the truth of Scripture that reflect the attitudes, perspectives and goals Christians should strive to attain, but they are not always agreed upon by all. However the following are the "non-negotiable, foundational beliefs of Christianity. They will be summarized then reviewed with comments along with related Scripture.

**Scripture:* We believe the Bible is the inerrant (free from error) and infallible (incapable of error) Word of God.

**The Trinity:* We believe in one God who has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

**The Deity of Christ:* We Believe God, the Son, came to this earth incarnate (in the bodily form of man) as Jesus Christ.

**The Virgin Birth:* Jesus was *not* born through the natural inherited sinful seed of the natural man but was born through God's Holy Spirit as announced to Mary by Gabriel, an angel of the Lord.

**Jesus' Sinless Life:* We believe that Jesus led a perfect sinless life in order to qualify as the perfect sacrifice, in our place, for our sins.

**Miracles of Jesus:* We believe the miracles Jesus performed as stated in the Bible. A definition for a miracle: A miracle is the introduction of God's supernatural power by altering the laws of physics to endorse God's messenger and advance His purposes bringing wonder to those who see it.

**The Vicarious and Atoning Death of Christ:* We believe Jesus died in our place to pay our sin debt. *"For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. (1 Peter 1: 18,19)* When there is reference made to the blood of Christ in the New Testament it is more than the fluid that it speaks of, it is the whole atoning work.

**The Resurrection*: We believe Jesus was crucified, died on the cross, was buried in a tomb and raised back to life on the third day.

* *For Salvation each man must personally "by faith, believe" the Gospel Message.* That is; Jesus, God the Son, died on the cross, in our place for our sins, and was buried in a tomb and resurrected from the dead three days later. Jesus Christ died *"for all"* so that "*whosoever*" would "*by faith, believe*" in Him would obtain salvation. *It Is our responsibility to acknowledge and confess our sins and to repent, turning away from our sins and to ask for forgiveness*. All are given the opportunity, but just as a gift that is held out to you, it does not become yours *until you receive it!*

* ***Sin***: All-inclusive missing of the mark (falling short) of God's holy standard in *thoughts*, *words* or *deeds* against God or our fellow man. – We believe all men are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, deserving of eternal condemnation.

* *Salvation – Regeneration by the Holy Spirit: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7)*

**The Resurrection of the Saved; they that are saved* unto the resurrection of eternal life in heaven.

**The Resurrection of the Lost; they that are not saved*; unto the resurrection of damnation.

**Christ's Ascension:* He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

* *The Church:* We believe the church is the body of Christ, of which Christ is the Head.

* The Second Coming of Jesus Christ. *John 14:1-3 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

* *Scripture:* We believe the Bible, in the original manuscripts, is the inerrant (free from error) and infallible (incapable of error) Word of God, written by its authors *while under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,* and it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. It was written to make God known to man and to be man's book of instruction on how to live our lives on this earth and do so with preparation for our eternal life as promised by God. (*2 Timothy 3:16-17)* states *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Peter 1:20,21)* explains the process, *"...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."* Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God was protected from human error.

* *The Trinity:* We believe in the one, true and living God, who created the heavens and the earth, and that He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. *(Genesis 1:1)* states "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Then in (Genesis 1:26) God said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, in **Our** likeness..."* In *(Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus came and told His disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Luke 3:21-22)* states "*When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."*

  It states in (*Deuteronomy 6:4) "Hear, 0 Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"* The word "one" is "Echad" in Hebrew and the grammar singular but *allows* for plurality. It is used in Scripture for unity with plural elements. It does have to be at least two but can be many. An example is (*Genesis 2:24)* "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* Husband and wife = one flesh (oneness with two parts) "Yacid" in Hebrew means to state something singular, undivided, a unit. It does not allow for plurality. If God, singular, was meant - He could have - but did not - use Yacid.

* *The Deity of Christ:* We Believe that God, the Son, came to this earth incarnate (in the bodily form of man) as Jesus Christ. *(Colossians 2:9-10) "For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority." (John 1:1)* says *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." (John 1:14) "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (1John 1:1,2) "We proclaim to you the One who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw Him with our own eyes and touched Him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This One who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen Him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that He is the One who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then He was revealed to us." (1 John 5:6,7) "...And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one."*

* *The Virgin Birth:* In the Old Testament when the Israelites sacrificed animals to atone for their sins the animals had to be in perfect health, that is, without spot, blemish or defect. For Jesus to qualify as our acceptable sacrifice He had to be perfect. That is the reason for the virgin birth. He was not born through the natural inherited sinful seed of the natural man (through Adam) but through God's Holy Spirit as announced to Mary by Gabriel, an angel of the Lord. *(Luke 1:26-35)*

Both *(Matthew 1:23 & Isaiah 7:14)* state *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (Luke 1:34-35)* states *"Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* Because man (through Adam) was the sinful creature, man had to pay the penalty, that is, God in the form of man - Jesus.

* *Jesus' Sinless Life:* We believe that Jesus led a perfect sinless life in order to qualify as the perfect sacrifice, in our place, for our sins. *(Hebrews 4:14,15)* "*So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 7:26) "He is the kind of high priest we need because He is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in heaven."*

* *Miracles of Jesus:* A definition for a miracle: "A miracle is the introduction of God's supernatural power by altering the laws of physics to endorse God's messenger and advance His purposes bringing wonder to those who see it." We believe the miracles Jesus performed as stated in the Bible. They were witnessed by believers and non-believers alike. They convinced many people He was indeed the Messiah, and perplexed His adversaries who, because of their passionate rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, could not reconcile the unbelievable deeds He performed. *(John 2:11)* says *"This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee (*changing water into wine*) was the first time Jesus revealed His glory. And His disciples believed in Him."*

* *The Vicarious and Atoning Death of Christ:* We believe Jesus died *in our place* to pay our sin debt. *(1 Cor. 15:2-3) "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures…" (Hebrews 2:9) "What we do see is Jesus, who was given a position 'a little lower than the angels'; and because He suffered death for us, He is now 'crowned with glory and honor.' Yes, by God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone." (Ephesians 1:6-7) "So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins."* And since the blood of Jesus Christ was, in fact, the blood of Jesus Christ, and, in fact, was shed in His death for us, it is, indeed, precious. The shedding of that blood in death was the price of our sins paid by Christ. And He literally poured out His blood in a sacrificial offering of His life, and in so doing, sealed forever the new covenant and purchased our redemption by paying the price for sin. The blood of man and animals has always been an integral part of God's plan for man's salvation. *(Lev 17:11) "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." (Gen. 3:21)* Has the first blood sacrifice for sin. Blood of animals was shed for their skins to clothe Adam and Eve after "The Fall." *"In fact the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood. And without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness." (Heb. 9:22)* The sacrifices made for sins in the Old Testament had to be made annually because they merely "covered" the sins of the people**.** The example of animals being sacrificed foreshadowed the "*once for all*" sacrifice Jesus would make in our behalf. The fig leaves Adam and Eve used to cover themselves could represent the rags of our own righteousness *(Isaiah 64:6),* But God made them coats of skin, large, strong, durable, and fit for them: such is the righteousness of Christ which has been granted to us to put on, through His shed blood.

(Hebrews 9:24-28) "For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. And He did not enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, He has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by His own death as a sacrifice. And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him."

* *The Resurrection*: We believe Jesus was crucified, died on the cross, was buried in a tomb and raised back to life on the third day. *(1 Corinthians 15:3-6) "I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and He was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, He was seen by more than 500 of His followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died."* The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the single most important event in the history of our earth. Virtually every person in the modern western, and most of the non-western world, calls this year (2017). No other man in history has been accorded the almost universal honor of dividing history in half – and with such definitive influence; that millions who do not call Him Lord – are forced to bear witness daily to His on-going importance in the world by using the date (2017 or current date).

* *For Salvation each man must personally believe in the Gospel Message which is:* ***God sent Jesus to this earth to make God known to man and for the purpose of dying, in my place, for my sins, that is – my redemption. I believe by faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and God as the 2nd Person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), who came to this world in human flesh, shedding His blood on the cross, dying in our place for our sins and was resurrected from the dead to affirm who He was, our Lord and Savior, and to give us hope.*** *It is our responsibility to confess, repent and turn from our sins and ask for forgiveness.* ***Salvation is wholly of God by grace, (unmerited, undeserved favor), on the basis of our trust in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood on the cross, and not on the basis of anything we can do.*** More importantly, understanding that it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that shows He conquered death and gives us the assurance that all He said is true. The redemption of man being accomplished by His death on the cross and three days later, *the greatest event to ever take place on earth, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

* *Sin*: All-inclusive missing of the mark (falling short) of God's holy standard in *thoughts, words* or *deeds* against God or our fellow man. We believe all men are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, deserving of eternal condemnation. *(Romans 5:12) "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam) and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned." (Romans 3:10) "There is none righteous, no not one."* And *(Rom.6:23)* states*, "For the wages of sin is death…*" We are not sinners *because we sin.* We sin *because we are sinners!* We believe all those who repent and ask forgiveness of their sins are justified on the single basis of faith in the shed blood of Christ, and that only by God's grace, through faith alone, are we saved. *(John 3:16-19) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the*

condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 14:6) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."(Ephesians 2:8-10) "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

* *Salvation* - Regeneration by the Holy Spirit: *(Titus 3:4-7) "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Romans 8:1-17) So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. The Law of Moses (*the Ten Commandments*) could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent His own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit. Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as He raised Christ from the dead, He will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you. So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into His family--calling Him "Father, dear Father." For His Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. And since we are His children, we will share His treasures - for everything God gives to His Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share His glory, we must also share His suffering. (John 3:5-8) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."*

* *The Resurrection of Both the Saved and the Lost;* ***they that are saved*** unto the resurrection of eternal life in heaven, and ***they that are not*** unto the resurrection of damnation. *(John 5:26-29) "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."* The "evil" and "wicked" person, as used throughout the Bible, are those who reject

God and those *who reject the Holy Spirit's leading to the truth of Jesus Christ as Savior,* also known as the 'unpardonable sin.' Rejecting Jesus means no forgiveness of sins which means no salvation.

* *Christ's Ascension to the Right Hand of the Father*: We believe Jesus is presently in heaven. *(Luke 24:50-51) "When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11) "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Mark 16:19) "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."*

* *The Church:* We believe the church is the body of Christ, of which Christ is the Head. It consists of all regenerated (that is, *saved, born again*) persons. We believe in local churches as visible manifestations of the invisible body of Christ, the Church universal. We believe God has given the task of evangelism of the world to the church under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. We believe in the fellowship of all true believers in Christ, where together we can provoke one another to love and good works. *(1 Cor. 12:12-14)* "*For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many."* This is another example of the "plurality of oneness" as described above regarding the Trinity. *(Ephesians 1:22-23) "God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is His body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with Himself."* Through the power of the Holy Spirit the church has been given the directive to spread the Gospel message. *(Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

* *The Second Coming of Jesus Christ. (John 14:1-3) "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (Matthew 24:27,30) For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." (Acts 1:9-11) "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

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* *The Ordinances of the Church:* Definition of Ordinance – Something prescribed. Something regularly done because it is formally prescribed, especially a religious ceremony, such as Holy Communion. We believe ordinances of the New Testament church are Communion (the Lord's Supper) and water baptism for believers by immersion as a public act of confession of faith.

Regarding Holy Communion, (*1 Cor. 11:23-26)* states "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."* Communion is a commemoration of the physical pain and suffering of Christ and the shedding of His lifeblood, the sacrifice provided to redeem us from the wages of sin, which is death, and provides a just opportunity for forgiveness. We celebrate the resurrection and the anticipation we have that He is coming again.

In *(Matthew 28:19-20)* regarding baptism, *"Jesus came and told His disciples, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."* (*Acts 2:38) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

The symbolism of baptism is that, when immersed, we have died and been buried to our old life and old nature, and in our reappearing, we have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit to a new life, a whole new destiny directing our lives, to walk in a new direction, a newness of life. Water baptism for believers is a public act of confession of their faith, *but is not a requirement for salvation*. The apostle Paul, considered the greatest Christian and writer of most of the New Testament, said the following in (*1 Corinthians 1: 12-17)* "*Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ." Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not! I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else). For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power."*

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5 Solas of the Reformation

Sola Scriptura
We are saved by the authority of *the Word of God alone*
Sola Gratia
We are saved *by grace alone*
Sola Fide
We are saved *through faith alone*
Solus Christus
We are saved *in Christ alone*
Soli Deo Gloria
We are saved for *the glory of God alone*

The **five *solae*** (from Latin, *sola*, lit. "alone"; occasionally Anglicized to **five *solas***) of the Protestant Reformation are a foundational set of Biblical principles held by theologians and churchmen to be central to the doctrine of salvation as taught by Western Protestantism. Each *sola* represents a key belief in Protestant Christian faith in contradistinction to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers claimed that the Catholic Church, especially its head, the Pope, had usurped divine attributes or qualities for the Church and its hierarchy. In most of the earliest articulations of the solas, three were typically specified: scripture over tradition, faith over works, and grace over merit, each intended to represent an important distinction compared with Catholic doctrine.
The solas were not systematically articulated together until the 20th century. But *sola gratia* and *sola fide* were used in conjunction by the Reformers themselves. All of the solas show up in various writings by the Protestant Reformers, but they are not catalogued together by any. By the middle of the 20th Century, it became common to see the original list of three increased to create five solas. The additions were "Christ alone" and "Glory to God alone".

Sola Scriptura, or ***"scripture alone"*** (literally: "by scripture alone"), asserts that scripture must govern over church traditions and interpretations which are themselves held to be subject to scripture. All church traditions, creeds, and teachings must be in unity with the teachings of scripture as the divinely inspired *Word of God.*

Sola Scriptura asserts that the Bible can and is to be interpreted through itself, with one area of Scripture being useful for interpreting others. That scripture can interpret itself is a means by which to show the unity of Scripture as a whole. As all doctrines are formed via scriptural understandings, all doctrines must be found to align with Scripture and as such are then subject to scripture before the believer can begin to apply them.

Sola gratia, **or** ***"only grace,"*** specifically excludes the merit done by a person as part of achieving salvation. *Sola gratia* is the teaching that salvation comes by divine grace or "unmerited favor" only, not as something merited by the sinner. This means that salvation is an unearned gift from God for Jesus' sake. While some maintain that this doctrine is the opposite of "works' righteousness" and conflicts with some of the aspects of the Roman Catholic doctrine of merit, it might be asserted that this article, taken at face value, conflicts in no way with Roman Catholic teaching; while the doctrine that grace is truly and always a gift of God is held in agreement between both views, the difference in doctrine lies mainly in two facts: that of God as sole actor in grace

(in other words, that grace is always efficacious *without* any cooperation by man), and second, that man cannot by any action of his own, acting under the influence of grace, cooperate with grace to "merit" greater graces for himself (the latter would be the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church). This doctrine asserts divine monergism in salvation: God acts alone, through the Holy Spirit, and works to bring about the salvation of an individual through spiritual regeneration. The responsibility for salvation does not rest on the sinner to any degree.

Sola fide,* or *"faith alone," asserts that good works are not a means or requisite for salvation. *Sola fide* is the teaching that justification (interpreted in Protestant theology as "being *declared* just by God") is received by faith alone, without any need for good works on the part of the individual. In classical Protestant theology, good works are seen to be *evidence* of saving faith, but the good works themselves do not determine salvation. Some Protestants see this doctrine as being summarized with the formula "Faith yields justification and good works" and as contrasted with the Roman Catholic formula "Faith and good works yield justification." The Catholic side of the argument is based on *James 2:14-17. "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled', but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* The *Sola fide* doctrine is sometimes called the material cause or principle of the Reformation because it was the central doctrinal issue for Martin Luther and the other reformers. Luther called it the "doctrine by which the church stands or falls"

Solus Christus* or *Solo Christo ("Christ alone" or "through Christ alone") excludes the priestly class as necessary for sacraments. *Solus Christus* is the teaching that Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and that there is salvation through no other. It emphasizes that salvation is made possible for man *only* by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria or Glory to God alone It is affirmed that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify Him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for His glory alone. It is denied that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel. In Soli Deo Gloria - Christ is glorified whenever someone believes in His redeeming work. His resurrection is often referred to the glorification of His mission on earth.

Defining Doctrine

Doctrine is something that is taught; a principle or creed of principles presented for acceptance or belief; a system of beliefs. In Scripture, doctrine takes on a broader meaning.

In the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* this explanation is given:

"Christianity is a religion founded on a message of good news rooted in the significance of the life of Jesus Christ. In Scripture, then, doctrine refers to the entire body of essential theological truths that define and describe that message ... The message includes historical facts, such as those regarding the events of the life of Jesus Christ ... But it is deeper than biographical facts alone... Doctrine, then, is scriptural teaching on theological truths."

Monotheism.

Quite simply, there is only one God. *Exodus 20:3* states very powerfully, *"You shall have no other gods before Me."* Monotheism is the belief that there is only one God to be worshipped and served. *"'You are My witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me'" (Isaiah 43:10).* Here we see that we are to "believe" and "understand" that God lives and is one. A Christian will know that there is only one God, the God of the Bible. All other "gods" are false and are no gods at all. *"For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).*

The Holy Trinity.

While the concept of a "three-in-one God" is not represented by a single verse or passage, it is described frequently throughout Scripture. If we look at *Matthew 28:19*, we see the verse calling out the Trinity: *"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."* While this verse mentions all three Persons of the triune God, it does not call them the Trinity. So to understand the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, we must look at the "totality" of Scripture and glean from it the definition. In *1 Corinthians 12:4-6*, we see how this comes together: *"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone."* Again, we see all three Persons being represented but not titled the Holy Trinity.

The deity of Christ.

Quite simply, Jesus is God. While Jesus never directly says, "I am God" in the Scriptures, He makes it very clear to those around Him, especially the Pharisees and Sadducees, that He is God. *John 10:30* says, *"I and the Father are one."* Jesus was claiming deity, and, interestingly enough, He did not deny that He was God. Another example is *John 20:28*, when Thomas says, *"My Lord and my God!"* Again, Jesus does not correct him by saying that He is not God. There are many other examples one can find in the Scriptures regarding Jesus' rightful place in heaven.

Salvation by Grace

We are all sinners separated from God and deserving of eternal punishment for our sin. Jesus' death on the cross paid for the sins of mankind, giving us access to heaven and an eternal relationship with God. God did not have to do this for us, but He loves us so much that He sacrificed His only Son. This is grace, and it is most definitely undeserved favor. Scripture tells us, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).* There is nothing we can do to earn God's favor or gain access to heaven apart from His grace.

Salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

A truly provocative question to ask someone might be "Do all roads lead to God?" The truth is that all roads do lead to God. Eventually, we are all going to stand before God when we die, no matter what faith we are. It is there that we will be judged for what we have or have not done while we were alive and whether Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives. For the majority of people, this will be a terrible occasion, as most will not know Him or be known by Him. For these people, hell will be the final destination. But God in His mercy has provided all of us the only means for salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. *Acts 4:12* tells us that *"salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* This passage speaks of the name of Jesus and His saving power. Another example is found in the book of *John. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).* No one gets into heaven except by faith in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ on his or her behalf.

The resurrection of Christ.

Perhaps no other event in the Bible, aside from Jesus' appearance here on earth and subsequent death on the cross, is as significant to the Christian faith as that of the resurrection. Why is this event significant? The answer lies in the fact that Jesus died and then after three days came back to life and rose again to reappear to His followers in bodily form. Jesus had already demonstrated His ability to resurrect others such as His friend Lazarus. But now God the Father had resurrected Him to display His awesome power and glory. This amazing fact is what separates the Christian faith from all others. All other religions are based on works or a powerless deity or person. The leaders of all other religions die and remain dead. The Christian faith is based on Christ crucified and resurrected to life. *"And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14).* Lastly, to deny Christ's bodily resurrection (*John 2:19-21*) is to deny that Jesus' work here on earth was a satisfactory offering to God for the sins of mankind.

John 2:19-21 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

The Gospel.

In *1 Corinthians 15:1-4*, Paul spells out what the gospel is and how important it is to embrace it and share it with others. He reminds the Corinthians of the gospel he preached among them: *"That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."* This is the essence of the gospel. Paul also warns us to be wary of the many "false gospels" that are being offered to the unsuspecting*:*

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9). The pure gospel of Jesus Christ—His death on the cross for sinners and His resurrection to everlasting life—is central to the Christian faith.

The good news of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and He appeared to many witnesses (*1 Cor. 15:1-11*).

1 Cor. 15:1-11 Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless you believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, He was seen by more than 500 of His followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw Him. For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by His grace. So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all preach the same message you have already believed.

***Faith** – Trust, Confidence, Reliance, Conviction, Belief, Assurance*

Finally, the essentials of Christianity would not be complete without the ingredient that binds everything together—faith. *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).* As Christians we live by this verse with the understanding that we believe in a God we cannot see. But we see His work in our lives and all around us in His creation. We do all of this through faith because we know that faith pleases God. *"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).*

2 Samuel 14:14 All of us must die eventually. Our lives are like water spilled out on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God does not just sweep life away; instead, He devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from Him.

The great promise to *those who seek* the Lord is that He will be found. "*If you* seek *Him, He will be found by you" (1 Chronicles 28:9).* And when He is found, there is great reward. *"Whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards* those who seek *Him" (Hebrews 11:6).*

Ten Essential Christian Behaviors

1. We repent and turn from our sins *(Matt. 5:29-30, 11:20-24; Acts 2:38, 3:19; Heb. 10:26-27).*

Matt. 5:29-30 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Matt 11:20-24 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

Acts 2:38; 3:19 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit…Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Heb. 10:26-27 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

2. We forgive others (*Matt. 6:14-15, 18:33-35*).

Matt. 6:14-15 If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins

Matt.18:33-35 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry, and delivered him to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

3. We are undivided in our devotion to God and to Jesus Christ *(Matt. 6:24, 10:38-39, 19:16-30; John 12:24-26).*

Matt. 6:24, 10:38-39 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money… Whoever does not take up their cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for My sake you will find it.

Matt. 19:16-30 – Read the story of the Rich Young Ruler.

4. We publicly acknowledge Jesus before others *(Matt. 10:32-33, 21:33-44, 22:1-14, 26:24; John 5:23)*

Matt. 10:32-33, 26:24 Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven…The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.

Matt. 21:33-44 - Read the parable of the Landowner

Matt. 22:1-14 - Read the parable of the Wedding Feast

John 5:23 so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

5. We obey God's commands and do not make a practice of sinning *(John 14:15; 1 John 3:9-10, 1 John 5:2).*

John 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

1 John 3:9-10 Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

6. We live a life that is fruitful and not fleshly *(Matt. 12:33-37, 21:43, 24:36-51, 25:1-46; Gal. 5:18-24, 6:5; Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).*

Matt. 12:33-37; 21:43 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." ***…****Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that will produce the proper fruit.*

Matt. 24:36-51 Read about 'the day and the hour unknown' / 'the faithful and evil servants.'

Matt. 25:1-46 Read about 'the parable of the wise and foolish virgins' / 'the parable of the talents' / 'the final judgment.'

Gal. 5:18-24, 6:5 But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties,

and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there…For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

Heb. 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

1 Cor. 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

***7. We are humble and broken-hearted for our sin** (Matt. 5:3, 18:3-4; 1 John 1:8-10).*

Matt. 5:3, 18:3-4 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven…Then He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

1 John 1:8-10 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins 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.

***8. We love God and love others** (Matt. 22:34-40; John 15:12; 1 Cor. 13:1-3; 1 John 3:14-15).*

Matt. 22:34-40 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

1 Cor. 13:1-3 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

1 John 3:14-15 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

9. We must persevere in the faith *(Heb. 6:4-6, 10:29-31, 12:12-17; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 5:11-12).*

Heb. 6:4-6, 10:29-31 For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come—and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing Him to the cross once again and holding Him up to public shame…How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Heb. 12:12-17 So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

1 Cor. 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 Tim. 5:11-12 The younger widows should not be on the list, because their physical desires will overpower their devotion to Christ and they will want to remarry. Then they would be guilty of breaking their previous pledge.

10. We help our natural family and church family when there are physical needs *(1 Tim. 5:8, 6:18-19; 1 John 3:17).*

1 Tim. 5:8, 6:18-19 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever…Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

1 John 3:17 If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?

Food For Thought

The benefits of salvation, God's grace to us all, are having our sins forgiven, a totally transformed life, our guilt removed, washed clean with a clear conscience, with hope of heaven, *and* the mind of Christ which gives us the true perspective of this gift of life we have been given which includes all truth and the power of the Holy Spirit, as a compass to guide and direct us throughout our lives. (*Jeremiah 29:11)* states ***"****For I know the plans I have for you." declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (1 Corinthians 2:9)* also adds *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

The more we understand the benefits, the more difficult it is to understand how anyone could reject such a gift. Who would turn down heaven, forgiveness, mercy, joy, peace, and eternal life – and in exchange receive hell, *especially with such indifference and hostility?* Turning a "blind eye" and/or ignoring the Word of God, without even taking the time to know what it says before you deny it, as so many do, will not make it go away or be any less true. You now know what it says. *(Psalm 10:4)* says *"In his pride the wicked does not seek Him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God."* And *(1 Cor.1:18)* states *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power God."* Hell is a decision of choice because of pride and arrogance. If the Bible is true and you have left God out of your life, then He is just making it permanent. If you feel the punishment is too great, you don't realize how great the crime of rejecting Christ is!

To know who Jesus is, is the most important fact you will ever discover and the impact of that realization is "eternal"!

By simply recognizing our need for a Divine Savior, and accepting Christ's payment for our sins, we do not have to guess, hope or wish but are given assurance, yes we are *promised* salvation and eternal life. *(1 John 5:11-13)* states *"This is the testimony: - God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may* ***know*** *that you have eternal life***.**" Yes, Heaven, by the grace of God, is a free gift! But as any gift, it is of no value until it is accepted!

Picture this in your mind. Jesus Christ, the righteous and sinless Son of God on the cross. Think of all the sins of every man, *past, present and future,* as a heavy, ugly, black wool coat, coated with the blood of His wounds. Though Jesus never sinned it is as though this "coat of sin" was placed on Jesus having taken upon Himself man's every sin and paying the penalty for those sins which is death (*For the wages of sin is death…Romans 6:23).* Just as Jesus did not deserve to wear that coat of sin, we are told that if we believe Jesus died in our place, for our sins and was resurrected to life on the third day, we become reconciled back to God. When that is done, as *(Romans 8:1)* states *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* That is when the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us, or placed to our account. Jesus may have worn our "coat of sin" but now, it is as if, although we don't deserve it, Jesus' righteousness is as a light, beautiful, white linen garment that has been placed on us. Our "coat of sin" has been exchanged for His "garment of righteousness."

Most Christians, though feeling pretty good about themselves before accepting the Lord, will admit they are extremely thankful that they have been changed and are not the man or woman they used to be. With the Lord having your best interest at heart and your ability to put your troubles

at His feet, life's pressures are lessened. You gain a proper perspective and the Peace of God in your life.
"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt.11:28-30) "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." *(1 Peter 5:6,7)*

The Resurrection. It is the reason we celebrate Easter. It is the beginning of new life. The beginning of our new life, (no matter how old we may be), when we acknowledge that He died in our place for our sins. After conquering death, speaking of His resurrection and our eternal life, in (*John 14:19)* Jesus said, ***"Because I live you shall live also."*** Remember, no one can pray you into heaven or pray for forgiveness on your behalf. You cannot get into heaven because the rest of your family were or are dedicated Christians. You cannot plead for leniency, or make excuses. If not before, today you have heard the gospel and you are now responsible. And if you have accepted that responsibility and accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, the words of Jesus on the cross to the thief will also pertain to you when you are ready to take your last breath; ***"Assuredly, I say to you today, you shall be with Me in paradise"(Luke 23:43).*** But that decision to accept Christ as your Savior must be done with a *sincere heart* and *true motive* before you take your last breath here on earth! The alternative is hell – The fire and brimstone we have heard about many times – eternal life separated from God. Death after our last breath is not the end of it all!

"For salvation that comes from trusting Christ - which is that we preach - is already within easy reach of each of us; in fact, it is as near as our own hearts and mouths. For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation." "For the Scriptures tell us that no one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect: they have all the same Lord who generously gives His riches to all those who ask Him for them. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:8-13)

(2 Cor. 6:2) states, ***For God says "Your cry came to Me at a favorable time, when the doors of welcome were wide open. I helped you on a day when salvation was being offered. Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you. Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."***

He brought me up also out of the pit of despair, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust… (Psalm 40:2-4) ***More importantly,*** *(Isaiah 55:6)* says, ***"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."*** *But Simon Peter answered Him, "…Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68,69).*

Lord, we pray that those who know you as Lord and Savior will thank you daily for our salvation and drawing us near to You. For those who have not, let them consider if their pride today is worth the terror of facing you on that Day of Judgment, when Scripture says "*…Prepare to meet thy God…" (Amos 4:12)* and seriously consider the matter, and ask themselves, "What am I waiting for?"