



THE CREED

WHAT WE BELIEVE



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Week 13 - "The Forgiveness of Sins"

We are continuing our walk through the Apostles' Creed today. This will be the second to the last week in this series where we bring out the biblical truths in that ancient statement of Christian faith. And today, we come to the line that says I believe in "the forgiveness of sins."

Let's read today's main passage to start:

Ephesians 2:1 "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" 4But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Among these other truths that are at the heart of our faith is the truth that we believe in the forgiveness of sins.

And to believe in the forgiveness of sins means that we believe in the unpopular notion that sin is a thing. That there is such a thing as sin at all. So we'll talk about sin today, what it is and isn't, and the good news of sin's forgiveness before God and what that means for our relationships with one another.

It has become recommended preaching technique to not talk about sin. We don't want to sound harsh or religious, we want to be winsome and compelling, so don't talk about sin. That's not what people want to hear, we are told.

But unless our view of the world and our philosophy of life actually talks about reality, it's a false philosophy of life and won't make any sense of the world. And if we aren't living according to reality, we don't have a shot at lasting joy.

And the reality is that sin is mankind's biggest problem, and our biggest need is for its remedy.

You've probably been in family situations where everybody knows there has been a major offense, everybody knows there is a rift, but we are all going to sit at Thanksgiving dinner and pretend everything's fine. And you just endure the icy awkwardness in that room.

Or maybe you've gone over to someone's house, and the second you come in you realize this couple has been fighting. You feel the unresolved tensions in the room.

And humanity that is not addressing sin is like that. There are tensions galore, always underneath the surface. There is guilt and shame and animosity. But then we deny there is a God that we answer to, so therefore we deny there is any such thing as a sin against him, and the guilt and shame and animosity continue to grow.

Lives are constantly ruined by sin, but we refuse to acknowledge that it exists.

Carl Trueman writes, *"The best arguments for Christian morality are (sadly) the ruined lives of those who ignore it."*

We can try to ignore sin, deny that there is sin, but it will still do its ruining work.

And sin is not just society's problem. It is our problem. It is my problem. It does it's ruining work in my heart, in our church, in our relationships. And we need to experience the forgiveness of sins and grasp its implications.

Sin is not the direct source of all of our problems, but it is at the root of most of them¹.

When the Heidelberg catechism asks the question, "How many things are necessary for you to know, that you, enjoying this comfort, may live and die happily?"

It gives the answer: ***Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.***

So in our search for lasting peace and joy, we can do a bunch of things that we pretend are working, we can take placebos and convince ourselves we are getting close to joy and peace. But unless we deal with the real issue: our sins, we will be pretending, or masking, or ignoring reality, or numbing ourselves to reality.

Scripture talks so much about sin that it seems to present it as humanity's biggest problem. And understanding sin and how to deal with it is actually key to our joy here and in eternity.

And in our day when there is so much striving for wellness, for wholeness, for happiness - without good results, we would do well to go back to these categories of sin, repentance, and forgiveness to find our lasting joy. And it isn't that our only problem is sin, we have lots of other problems as well. But the biggest problem that each of us faces individually and that all of society faces is the problem of sin.

There are many words for sin in the Bible, many with different nuances, so there are a number of ways we could define it. But probably the most concise is in 1 John 3:4:

¹ *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The most experienced psychologist or observer of human nature knows infinitely less of the human heart than the simplest Christian who lives beneath the Cross of Jesus. The greatest psychological insight, ability, and experience cannot grasp this one thing: what sin is. Worldly wisdom knows what distress and weakness and failure are, but it does not know the godlessness of man. And so it also does not know that man is destroyed only by his sin and can be healed only by forgiveness. Only the Christian knows this."*

1 John 3:4 “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”

Sin is lawlessness. It is breaking the law of God. The Westminster catechism says, “Sin is any [lack] of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.” So God gave his law, his commands, to tell us what He requires of us. And sin is missing that mark and failing to meet those requirements.

And it isn’t just on the surface. It comes from a heart that is in rebellion against God. R. C. Sproul calls it “Cosmic Treason.” Sin is failure to obey that law from the heart, and when we sin it shows what is in our hearts.

And sin has not just made us spiritually sick, it has killed us. Again our passage in Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:1 “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”

Sin kills us spiritually. Verse 1 says we were dead in trespasses and sins. And the thing that kills you spiritually is your biggest problem.

And this matters because until we understand the nature of our biggest problems, we will miss out on the solutions.

If we believe, for example, that we are basically good people in need of guidance, we will look for direction. We might even look to Jesus to teach us. We might think what we need most is a good example, so we will look to the example of Jesus and try real hard to walk in his footsteps. Which is all good, but it doesn’t get at the root - the root is that we are dead in sin and need the miracle of forgiveness to happen before we could even start to try to follow Jesus.

If we believe that our biggest problem is not our sin, but our political system, we will convince ourselves that if the right people got elected, then righteousness would prevail and society would be fixed. If we could just get more people to adhere to progressive or

hyper-conservative values, then we could achieve utopia. But the problem runs deeper than just the systems.

If we misdefine this problem so that we believe that our biggest problem is not my sin, but the sin in other people or other groups of people, that I am OK and not really sinful, but they are and they are somehow less than me, then our solution becomes diminishing them and exalting me. I am the answer, and they are the problem.

In its extreme form you saw this worked out in the racism and hatred of the Buffalo shooter - he identified people as less than himself and as “the problem” based on the color of their skin and his rejection of biblical truths, and did what he did out of the evil of his heart. He saw those he considered to be other than him and less than him as the real problem.

If we believe that this is not my problem but the problem with others, we will try to solve it by removing ourselves from all connections to others.

We probably have a few Christian friends who say they love Jesus but can't stand the church - those people are hypocritical and sinful and I just can't get near them or be associated with them. They're draining. The problem is sin out there, but not in here in me - I'm pretty good. So we isolate ourselves thinking that will fix our problem.

But in isolation, if we're honest, we see the sin in our hearts grow. Martin Luther once went into the monastery to get away from sin, but then he said, “That rascal came with me.”

If we think “I'm basically a good person, and I'll find happiness if I just prioritize myself,” we will try and fail to find real joy. Because sin is our biggest problem. If our biggest problem is that we just need more pampering because don't care for ourselves enough, we will try to solve it with self-care alone.

Now this doesn't mean we don't take care of ourselves. We are called to be stewards of all of the resources God has given us. So we should care for ourselves by guarding our minds and hearts to keep our thoughts holy. We should be humble enough to recognize our creaturely limits and sleep and rest and play and exercise. And we should obey the Lord so it will go well with us. We should take care of ourselves, as ourselves were given to us by God to use well for his glory.

But there are self-care-as ultimate gurus who would tell us our biggest flaw is that we don't focus enough on ourselves, and our greatest need is to put ourselves first.

Tara Burton, in her book, Strange Rites, points out how wellness culture can actually take on religious undertones. *"The implicit mantra of wellness is equal parts Ayn Rand and John Calvin: you're not just allowed but in fact obligated to focus on yourself - but, no matter how much you do, it will never be good enough"* (Burton 98).

The big problem is not sin, the big problem is not enough self, in this way of thinking. And the greatest command is to focus on self more.

When a religious leader asked Jesus what the greatest commandment is, He said:

Mark 12:30-31 "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." 31 The second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

But we can see our biggest problem is that we need more focus on the self.

And then we define sin differently: sin is when you don't find your true self and live for that self. Sin is when you don't treat as ultimate that inner light.

But sin is breaking God's law. And so while it's true that sometimes we need a nap or some exercise or a better diet, our biggest need is a remedy for our sin.

Our biggest problem is that we have failed to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts and souls and minds and strengths, and we have failed to love our neighbor as ourselves.

We have incurred guilt before God. We are dead because of our sin. We are (Ephesians 2:3) by nature children of wrath. And it's so bad, that on our own, we can't fix it.

We are spiritually dead, not just spiritually sick. Not just spiritually out of shape. Our treason against God has killed us. And on our own, we know things are not right, but we don't want the cure. The cure is our enemy. We are really in bad shape because of our sin.

But the good news is that we don't just believe in sin, we believe in the forgiveness of sin:

Ephesians 2: 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Paul talks about our spiritual death and the wrath we deserve, but then in verse 4, he says, "But God!" But God is merciful and has provided the way for sin to be lifted.

Mercy is when we don't get what we deserve. And God was rich in mercy, and had great love for us.

And notice that God didn't love us in response to us cleaning ourselves up. It doesn't say we started looking for God and he met us half way. We weren't sick, we were dead.

BUT GOD loved us with great love "even (verse 5) when we were dead in our trespasses." He didn't look at us and say, "At least they're trying, I'll help them out." He looked at us and said, "They're dead. But I love them. And I'll raise them to life."

God never said he'd just help those who help themselves. Because we were powerless to help ourselves - but He helped us anyways in Christ.

He helped the helpless.

He raised the dead.

He died, not for those who were seeking him, but for his enemies.

And if we will repent and believe, we will receive forgiveness of sins.

That's love like no other. Who does that? Paul says something similar in one of his other letters, Romans:

Romans 5:7-8 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We didn't just need to work the rough edges off. We were his enemies, but in his rich mercy, because of his great love for us, he made us alive.

And Paul says, "By grace you have been saved."

And this is the core of the faith: Grace.

Grace just means "gift."

Paul says it 3 times in the verses we're looking at today - in verse 5, in verse 7, and verse 8. This is his theme here - God saves you, and that is all of grace. It is all a free gift from from God.

And a gift is something you don't pay for in any way.

If it's Christmas morning and family members all bring you presents, but then you bust out the check book and start asking what you owe for all of them, "How much for the jeans? What did the socks run you? What do I owe you for the snowbrush?" They'd say, "They're gifts - you don't pay for them."

A gift is something you receive freely. It's something you haven't worked for, something you've done nothing to achieve. It's a gift.

And being a Christian is that - it is grace. It is a gift from God.

And look at how amazing the forgiveness of sins is.

It says in verse 5 that God made us alive "together with Christ." And then he mentions two more things he did for us together with Christ:

6and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

He is saying that we have been attached to Jesus.

And when Jesus was made alive, we were made alive. When Jesus was raised up, we were raised up. And when Jesus went to heaven, we did too.

Imagine a woman is a world traveler. And then she and her husband discover that they are pregnant. And there are so many more places she wants to go, but she knows the realities of motherhood will limit her travels for years to come. So she decides, in this first trimester, to travel to some places she has never seen.

So she travels the world: she goes to see Victoria falls in Africa, and then to the Eiffel tower in France, she sees some sights in Asia and south america, and then comes home.

The baby is later born, and he is a day old. And he could legitimately say that, because of his union with his mother, that he has already been to five continents. He's been to Victoria Falls and the Eiffel Tower and the Peruvian Rain Forest all because of his union with his mother.

And we, at the moment we believe, are the same way. We are united with Christ. So that everything that happened to Jesus has legitimately happened to us.

Jesus died. But we died with him. The wages of sin is death, and those wages were paid when Jesus died. And if we have received Him by faith, we died with him.

Jesus rose, and we rose with him.

Jesus was seated in heaven, and we are so closely united to Jesus that we are too.

We are attached to Jesus.

So it is like everything that Jesus did, we did. Everything good about Him was credited to us because we were united with Him.

And this is a cause for joy: everything that Jesus has ever done or ever deserved has become ours. Just as Jesus deserves to be loved and accepted by God, we are loved and accepted by God.

And then the dark side is that everything that we deserve became his.

The punishment for sin that we deserved became His on the cross. The death that we deserved was died by Him. He made the great exchange - gave us his obedience and life and resurrection, we gave him our sin and death.

That's the gift. The forgiveness of sin.

And look why God did all of this:

7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

God did all of this so he could show us his greatness by spending the coming ages - all of eternity, pouring out his kindness on us.

Imagine you got a call from Jeff Bezos tomorrow. And he said I want to use all of my wealth coming up with new ways to express kindness to you. That would be a good day.

But eventually, Jeff Bezos would have bought you everything. You'd have it all, and he would run out of ideas.

But God will give us eternal life, expand our capacity to enjoy Him by perfecting us, and then spend eternity blessing us. And he will never run out of ideas. He will spend eternity showing us the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

This is it - the heart of our faith. We are saved by Grace and Grace alone.

And this is not some sweet catchy new idea we made up as this cool thing our church does. This free grace thing is not just a grace road thing. This is Christianity.

This is the message that when the worst sinner repents and believes the Gospel, he or she is given forgiveness and grace.

And the teaching of the Bible is not only that the forgiveness of sins happens between us and God, but that it then, if we are forgiven by God, gets extended outward to one another.

The classic story Jesus tells to illustrate this is in Matthew 18, so turn there.

Matthew 18:23-35 23“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24“When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25“But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26“So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ 27“And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28“But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ 29“So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ 30“But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. 31“So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32“Then summoning him, his lord said* to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ 34“And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35“My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

So Jesus tells the story of two loans. One guy gets loaned a talent: 1.2 million bucks. His master wants the money back, he doesn't have it, and contractually he is obligated to either pay it back or be sold into slavery. So he needs MERCY. So he gets down on his knees and begs for mercy and the master, moved with compassion, forgives him the debt totally.

But that second guy goes out and asks one of the guys he's loaned money to for payback. His servant, that he had loaned 100 denarii (\$10,000) can't pay up yet. So he gets ticked and throws him in prison. That's being unmerciful.

Well, his boss finds out about it, and says, “What the heck are you doing? I forgave you so much, and you refused to forgive a little.” And the consequence is that he is handed over to the torturers (cool job title).

And the point is obvious: God has forgiven us much, how much more should we be willing to forgive our brothers.

If we really are poor in spirit, we recognize how bad we really are and we want to be forgiven by God, how could we ever see sin in someone else and refuse to forgive them?

If the fundamental attribute of a Christian is brokenness and humility, how can the same person who recognizes how bad he is and how much he has been forgiven even consider withholding forgiveness from someone else?

Christians always forgive, because the fundamental attribute of a Christian is being poor in spirit, realizing how sinful and empty we are, realizing how much we need to be forgiven of. And if we see how wicked we are compared to God, there is no room for us to not forgive other wicked people.

And that forgiveness of others is MERCY! And its an evidence of salvation because Jesus says the merciful will receive mercy: the evidence that you've received the mercy of God is that you are merciful yourself.

So what should forgiveness be like?

Ephesians 4:32 says, "32Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

The question you should ask is, "How does God forgive us?" If we're supposed to forgive others like God forgave us, what should our forgiveness look like?

1) He never holds our sin against us when we repent— so we should never hold the sins of others against them when they repent.

He doesn't pretend our sins don't exist – he pays the price for them, asks us to confess them, and then when we do, they are no longer held against us. So don't say you've forgiven someone if you plan on bringing their past sins out to use against them at a future time. Their sins are GONE.

He goes out of his way to restore relationship and we should do the same

I would say Jesus dying on the cross was inconvenient for him, it was out of his way, but he went through all of it to restore relationship. So being a merciful forgiving person means you work hard to reconcile with people. You go to them to restore the relationship.

2 He seeks us out proactively.

John 15:16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

Jesus took the initiative, he came to us, he worked to restore relationship with us, actively pursued us while we were yet sinners. And we should do the same.

We should never be people who have permanently broken relationships with people because we didn't make the effort. We should make every effort and pursue relationship. I know sometimes the other person refuses to make up and there's not much we can do about that, but we should never be the ones refusing.

Now, God doesn't forgive those who don't repent. So if someone doesn't acknowledge their sin, they don't ask for forgiveness, they persist in their ways, we don't have to pretend everything is OK. Forgiveness is like a gift you wrap up and give to someone, and they have to unwrap it and open it by repenting and asking forgiveness for that all to be complete.

But in the cases when people won't open it, won't repent, won't ask for forgiveness, we still do our part. We offer, we don't feed bitterness in our hearts. But no, technically there is no forgiveness and restoration without repentance.

3. He forgives repeatedly and we should do the same

Matthew 18:21-21 Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus said* to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Now this verse either means you keep a tally of every time your brother sins and keep forgiving him until he has 490 marks on the page, or it means keep forgiving him. And I think it means keep forgiving.

Think of how often God forgives us. How many thousands of times do we commit the same sin over and over and over again and over and over and over he says, “IT IS FORGIVEN!”

Let's be like that! Let's be merciful!

But if we repeatedly forgive people, won't we get walked all over and used?

Maybe.

I'm not saying we should put ourselves in harm's way or always trust people, if every day on your way to work you walk by a guy who punches you in the face, its ok if you walk on the other side of the road. Stay away. Don't needlessly expose yourself to the wrongs others are doing against you. It isn't an unforgiving spirit to get away from abuse or mistreatment. So getting out of harm's way is good.

But offering forgiveness when someone has wronged us is Christian.

People who live like this are a totally different kind of person. They have totally different values, self doesn't come first, they have a completely different king.

But how do I forgive like that? You don't know what this person did to me.

How do I forgive on a deep, heart level when I've been sinned against so grievously?

Let me give you two strategies:

1) Dwell on how much you've been forgiven of.

I know the kinds of things people have done to some of you. I have seen the depth of that sin, so I don't say any of this to minimize the horrible things people have done to some of you.

But Christ has forgiven you of more. There is more of a gap between you and Jesus than there is between ANYONE and you. The gap between you and Christ was infinite and he had to die to bridge that gap. So dwell on that when you're having trouble forgiving someone. Say to yourself, "I was worse, and Jesus loved me nonetheless."

I know for some of us this kind of forgiveness can be a lifelong struggle. Its not always going to be, "I just prayed and now I don't feel badly toward that person." Some of you have been deeply damaged by people this will be a war for you, not just a battle.

******And what makes it harder is it feels so RIGHT to respond to SIN with SIN. Someone sins against you and in your mind it justifies gossiping about them, or trying to destroy them, or hating them in your heart, or dreaming about their downfall, or fostering bitterness. It feel right to do when they've sinned against you. But it is not the right response, responding like that will destroy you.

2) Trust Jesus as the perfect judge.

When we're sinned against, we have a right feeling that somebody needs to pay for that. So we spend our lives tryng to get vengeance on that person, or hoping for it, or we pay for the sin ourselves by being eternally bitter.

Trust that God will sort things out. Either Jesus paid or they will pay, but you don't have to by always being angry and bitter.

If you hold a grudge, you doubt the judge, Piper says.

We believe in the forgiveness of sin. And that has massive implications for solving our big problem before God and our big problems with one another.

Prayer of Confession - Adapted from the Prayer Book Prone to Wander, p. 128.

Father,

We have often been quick to judge and slow to forgive our brothers and sisters. We notice and keep score for every sin that others commit against us. Sometimes we punish them by lashing out in anger, while at other times we treat them with silent coldness, instead of extending mercy and grace. We have dismissed their attempts at repentance as insincere words, and have held grudges against them, instead of forgiving them freely. At times, we have not even given them the chance to make amends by graciously showing them their sin but have simply assumed that they would be unwilling to repent.

Thank you, Father, that this is not how you have treated us. You have mercifully accepted our flawed repentance, in spite of our divided hearts. You have not held our sin against us, though we have grieved and sinned against you countless times, boldly and brashly, not merely out of ignorance or oversight but with deliberate defiance. Instead you have taken every last one of our sins and crucified them in Jesus, your Son. In place of our failure and sin, you have substituted Christ's perfect obedience and righteousness.

Spirit, help us to worship you in light of these truths. Enable us to love and forgive one another in the same way that you have loved and forgiven us. In place of the record that we keep of one another's wrongs, help us to ponder the record of Christ's righteousness, which is sufficient to pay for our brother's sins, just as it has paid for ours.

Help us to become people who, knowing that they have been forgiven much, are themselves deeply forgiving, even toward those who have sinned against us many times.

Assurance of Pardon

Isaiah 38:17 “Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.”

Lord's Supper

Works Cited During the Apostles' Creed Series (This is a Work in Progress)

[Affirming the Apostles Creed](#) by J. I. Packer

The well-renowned Biblical scholar Packer walks readers through each line of the Apostles' Creed, bringing to center the rich history, implications, and modern applications of this important statement of faith.

[The Ascension of Christ](#) by Patrick Schreiner

As the title suggests, Schreiner's work focuses on the imperative nature of Christ's ascension to the right hand of the Father, arguing that this occurrence was a necessary step to both the fulfillment and continuation of His work here on earth.

[The Creedal Imperative](#) by Carl Trueman

For a clear yet thorough guide to the Apostles' Creed, *The Creedal Imperative* suits well. Trueman spends much of his treatise digging into the history and structure of the Creed, but also spends a large portion of time on the formational importance of Creeds today. He gives special attention to the phrase 'No Creed but the Bible.'

[**Christless Christianity**](#) by Michael Horton

Horton diagnosis the difference between diluted forms of Christianity often found specifically in American culture. He posits the question, "Is the faith and practice of American Christians today more American than Christian?" A helpful discourse for those seeking to discern the subtle ways we compromise the undiluted Gospel.

[**Christian Apologetics**](#) by Cornelius Van Til

This book takes into account the "noetic effects" of sin. That is, sin corrupts our minds and our wills, so that scientific and philosophical proofs alone cannot lead us to God. The need is for the power of the Spirit to overcome the circular reasoning of the secular worldview. This book is a needed addition to the above books because it provides an explanation for how someone becomes savingly convinced of the faith.

[**The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way**](#) by Michael Horton

A unique and refreshing systematic theology that explains the major doctrines of the Christian Faith.

[**Christian Theology**](#) by Millard J. Erickson

This serious systematic theology textbook explores each of the main areas of theology, with a strong biblical foundation and fair treatment of opposing views.

[**The Deity of Christ**](#) edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson

Tracing the Deity of Christ through the Old and New Testaments, this text from the *Theology in Community* series contains contributions from Gerald Bray, Stephen J. Nichols, Ray Ortlund, and more. Explore this important doctrine from a variety of pastoral and lay perspectives in the church, including systematic, apologetic, and missional.

[**To Everyone an Answer**](#), edited by Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland

This book presents the case for God's existence, for Christ, and for miracles. It answers philosophical, cultural, and religious challenges to the Christian faith. 20+ authors each write in an area of their specialty in this edited volume.

[**The Glory of Christ**](#) by John Owen.

Available here: Owen, John; Spurgeon, Charles H.; Winslow, Octavius; Flavel, John; Plumer, William S.; Watson, Thomas. The Glory of Christ (Free Grace Broadcaster Book 244) . Chapel Library. Kindle Edition.

[The Heidelberg Catechism](#)

<https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Heidelberg-Catechism-with-Intro.pdf>

[The Knowledge of the Holy](#) by A.W. Tozer

A classic of Christian literature, Tozer's book on the holiness of God is one that has maintained a place on many a bookshelf. In this relatively short text, Tozer explores the nature of God and how we might come to know Him deeper. By focusing on the known attributes of God, Tozer encourages readers to more thoroughly examine and appreciate who God is.

[Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne](#) by Robert Murray McCheyne and Andrew A. Bonar

Another well-loved Christian classic, this biography of Scottish minister McCheyne by Andrew A. Bonar (brother to Horatius Bonar) also includes of a breadth of sermons, journals, and various other writings.

[New Age Beliefs Common Among Both Religious and Non-Religious Americans](#), article by Claire Gecewicz from Pew Research Center, 2018

[No Little People](#) by Francis A. Schaeffer.

This book is comprised of sixteen sermons from Francis Schaeffer on the topic of humanity and its relationship with God. "There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense," Schaeffer argues, "but only consecrated and unconsecrated people."

[Off the Edge: Flat Earthers, Conspiracy Culture, and Why People Will Believe Anything](#) by Kelly Weill.

Weill details her account of integrating herself in the Flat Earther movement, a conspiracy theory known for its fringe beliefs about the shape of the Earth. This book offers a look into the conspiratorial mindset and the often conflicting nature of its logic.

[Orthodoxy](#) by G.K. Chesterton

Considered one of G. K. Chesterton's best works and a masterful apologetic, the British critic and philosopher makes compelling arguments here as to the rationale of

belief and more. In its Preface, Chesterton writes that the purpose of this book is to "attempt an explanation, not of whether the Christian faith can be believed, but of how he personally has come to believe it."

[**The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories**](#) by Jan-Willem Van Prooijen

For those looking for a short yet concise primer on conspiratorial mindset, Prooijen provides a helpful summary. In the text, Prooijen explains the attractiveness of conspiracy theories, the mechanics of how we embrace them, and communal aspect of sharing them.

[**Recovering Our Sanity: How the Fear of God Conquers the Fears That Divide Us**](#) by Michael Horton

Fostering a healthy fear of God puts all other fears in perspective. Horton shows that a rightly-ordered perception can enable us to navigate this life without fear, even of death itself.

[**The Reason for God**](#) by Tim Keller

This book answers a number of common philosophical arguments against the existence of God, including the problem of evil. Keller's intelligent and humble approach is helpful for those who doubt, for those who are skeptical, and for the believers aiming to help both see Jesus more clearly.

[**Reasonable Faith**](#) by William Lane Craig

This extensive work builds a case for the Christian faith starting with the existence of God, and then answering the problem of historical knowledge (which is important in proving the resurrection.) From there he explains who Jesus understood Himself to be, followed by an extensive historical proof for the resurrection of Jesus, and refutations of the claims against the resurrection.

[**Reformed Dogmatics**](#) by Harman Bavinck -

This is a four volume work on Christian Theology written by the great Dutch Calvinist theologian.

[**The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self**](#) by Carl Trueman.

This book explains so much of how modern people think of themselves. It expands on the corrupt way of thinking that jettisons the past and strives to find the true self in an unencumbered state of nature as opposed to in glorifying God and enjoying

Him forever. This seeking after the self finds its expression in many facets of the sexual revolution, and explains why our culture is the way it is in our day.

[Signature in the Cell](#) by Steven C. Meyer

Written in 2009, this is Meyer's call to look deeper at the faltering claims of scientific materialism and recognize intelligent design.

[Strange Rites](#) by Tara Isabella Burton.

This book details the new spirituality that is emerging in the U.S.: a cafeteria-style 'choose your own adventure' religion that mimics (in its own curated ways) the same dogmas present in the institutional religions. Burton notes that religion has been "remixed" into a variety of cultural movements that bear all the hallmarks of a religious group.

[Westminster Shorter Catechism](#)

This is one of the greatest summations of the Christian faith ever written by English speaking people.

[What we Believe: Understanding and Confessing the Apostles' Creed](#) by R.C. Sproul

What does it mean to believe in the Christian Faith? Sproul discuss the declaritive nature of the Creed and the significance of each line.