

The Doctrine of God

Foundational Truth Volume 13

By Peter Tan

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PREFACE

The joy of being in Christ is that we now have access to God our Heavenly Father. There are so many things to know about God: His attributes, His works and His ways. We do understand that in the end it is to know Him and not just about Him; but we need to recognise that knowing as much we can about God is part of the process of knowing Him.

In this book we seek to put in as simple terms as we can the wonderful and great doctrines of the Christian faith. There are some instances when we need to use theological words and expressions to describe the great attributes of God but we will attempt to explain every expression in as clear and simple language as possible. Despite all our attempts at describing God, we know that we would only have touched less than the hem of His garment. Yet we must persist to do our best to understand Him that we may know Him and love Him even more.

We admit that for the finite to understand the infinite, our limitations of language, intellectual capacity and metaphors will fall short of His glory. Nevertheless, whatever little we have understood of God and His attributes, we do describe here for the benefit of all believers who want to seek to know Him better.

This foundational book is our small little attempt to further establish the body of Christ to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried by every wind of doctrine... but speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things into Him (Ephesians 4:13-15).

May God grant all of us His wisdom that we may peer through our humanity darkly at the divine attributes of our wonderful Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Peter Tan

CHAPTER 1

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Our Lord Jesus in His prayer in John 17 said that this is eternal life – that they may know You (Our Heavenly Father), the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (John 17:3). Salvation is not just a ticket to heaven but it is an eternity of exploring all the attributes of God and developing a deep relationship and understanding with God. Knowing God is the beginning and the end of all our existence; it is the reason for our creation. As this is only a foundational truth series and not full-fledged theological analysis of God, we would touch on the most important of God's attributes and the doctrine of God for the new believer.

Basic Attributes of God

The first thing we need to do is to establish certain basic concepts of God and understand them perfectly:

1. God is eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27)

This means that concepts of time, beginning and end *do not* apply to God. If there was a beginning and an end, it would imply that there was something anterior to God and greater than God controlling the beginning and the end. Our concept of the eternal God must completely include that understanding that all beginnings and all endings was created by Him; that God is the ultimate source of all time, beginnings and endings. The human habit of thinking of things with a beginning and an end is caused by our physical training of space and time. Imagine that space and time does not exist – that is the true realm of God's dimension.

We will attempt to help you imagine and understand the God-dimension. God is love (1 John 4:8). Attributes of love, joy and peace transcend time and dimensions (1 Corinthians 13). Imagine that love, joy and peace are the true dimensions of reality and that space and time are but subsets of the love-dimension. Space and time were created sub-realities that exist in the love-dimension. The love dimension has no beginning and no end, it purely just exists! When the space and time dimension was created, all living and sentient beings were also created to explore the love-dimension in their own limited and progressive ways. Everything created was an expression of the love-dimension so that the creation can understand and emulate the attributes of the love dimension in their limited

time-space dimension. God is eternal love and He will never stop loving us.

2. God is unchangeable (Hebrews 6:17, 18; James 1:17)

If God is changeable then there will be no stability in the entire universe or His creation and everything would become unstable. It is because *all* of God's creation rests upon Him and His immutability that His creation has laws and stability. It is a fact of human life that all things change. It is the constant throughout the Universe of time and space. All change has to change *from* something and *to* something. Imagine the beginning of all change as the creation of this time-space Universe that we know and the end of all change as ending in the finality synchrony with the God-dimension. God is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega; everything begins in God and ends in God – He is immutable and unchangeable. When you relate to God, remember that you are relating to the Being of all finality, the Unchangeable God.

3. God is unique – there is only One God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:6)

If there were several Gods, there would be no unity of plan or power in the entire universe. There is only One God and no other beside Him. Our perception of God as being the Trinity is due to our perception from our time-space dimension. Behind all the façade of time-space manifestations, God is One God. We will examine the Trinity in a separate chapter but for now we need to know that there is *only* One True God who manifests Himself through God the Father, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit. God is One God.

Humans who worship multiple gods and deities have mistakenly worshipped other created beings more powerful than natural man making them into gods. Within the culture and languages of those who worship more than one God is the 'expression' or 'phrase' that describes the 'highest' or the 'origin' or the 'supreme' Being of all their plethora of gods. There is only one true and living God. He might have been known vaguely by other names in various cultures but to the believer He is known as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a natural tendency to humanize God. We always think that God is like us, rather we are like Him, made in His image (Genesis 1:27). An image is never a 100% representative of God; it is only a minimisation at the finite human level dimension of what the full

infinite God is like. There is none like Him and no one else besides Him. Even though He has manifested at the human level through Christ (He is so great that Christ has to leave all the glory behind to manifest at our finite level – John 17:5; Philippians 2:5-8), we are not to think of His human manifestation through Christ as all there is to Him. We are exhorted not to think just of the limited Christ who manifested in the flesh but rather of the unlimited Christ who is now full of the glory of the Father (2 Corinthians 5:16; John 17:5, 24).

God is the One and Only Self-Existential Being. God is unique. Our very existence was a gift from His very being and Spirit. He revealed Himself to Moses as ‘I am that I am’ (Exodus 3:14 Hebrew *ehyeh asher ehyeh* – I AM THAT I AM). The Hebrew word *ehyeh* is the first person form of the Hebrew word *hayah* (the Hebrew equivalent of the English word *to be, is/am/are*). *Yahweh* is also derived from *hayah*, but is the third person singular form (English equivalent *He is*). The difference between I AM and Yahweh is not in name but in perspective: first person or third person. It is a description of GOD WHO IS. (I AM the self-existing one or HE IS the self-existing one).

4. God is immaterial and beyond all His creation (Hebrews 11:3; Romans 1:20). God is Spirit (John 4:24).

If God were any part of His material or created universe He Himself would be subject to them; thus He has to be above and beyond His creation and not part of the material of the created universe. Although His life fills and sustains the entire universe, He Himself is above and beyond His creation. If nature or any created things seem to demonstrate powerful forces and demands that we understand its laws of harmony with nature and creation, it is merely because God has created self-sustaining forces within His creation and also assigned His created angels or created spirit-beings to be in charge of them. He, Himself, will always remain above and beyond His creation. His creation draws life and light from Him but He always remain separate from His creation. All His creation merely reveals His attributes by which we can come to know Him more.

5. God is absolute love, goodness, mercy and grace (1 John 4:8; Exodus 34:6; Hebrews 4:16).

God is complete love, perfection, wisdom, goodness, righteousness and everything that we can conceive of all concepts of love, goodness and mercy – for these concepts first originate from the attribute of who God is (1 John 4:8-19; Matthew 5:48; Mark 10:18).

All measurements of love, perfection, goodness, righteousness and mercy are based on comparisons to God who is the true measure of these attributes.

God is light and it is from His light that we can perceive and know all things. Just like we need physical light to see, we need God's light to enable us to have thoughts and sentient existence. God being the origin of our ability to think and know (to be sentient) would always be above our highest thought, our highest concepts, and our highest inspiration. All things exist only in relation to God. Just as our concepts of situational ethics and concepts of right and wrong have to be measured and subject to the absolutes of the Bible principles, our concepts and knowledge can never be beyond the ability of the Giver of our ability to think and know. God is the Absolute of all absolutes. He is the perfection and the personification of our highest concept of perfection, of love, of righteousness, of wisdom and everything else we can conceive of.

How does knowing God as eternal, as unchangeable, as unique, as immaterial and beyond all His creation and as the personification of all our highest concepts and absolutes help us?

God is eternal and we are temporal; in Him we live and move and have our being; without Him, we are nothing, just a vapour of smoke (Acts 17:28; John 15:5; James 2:26; 4:14). We do not look at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

God is unchangeable but we are subject to change; He is our Rock, He is our strength, in Him alone do we trust (2 Samuel 22:1-2). By His immutable person and His immutable Word, we are guaranteed His promises (Hebrews 6:17-18).

God is unique, there is none like Him. There is none who love like God loves, there is none who love like Jesus loves; and we shall love Him and love one another. To love Him with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, all our strength and to love one's neighbour as oneself is *more than all* burnt offerings and sacrifices (Isaiah 46:9-10; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Mark 12:32-33). We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:11, 19).

God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). Our worship is no longer dependent on time, place, race, culture, creeds and all outwardly forms (John 4:21-23). Our worship is continuously flowing from deep within our hearts and our spirits – deep

calling unto deep (Psalms 42:1, 7). There shall be continual praise and worship from our spirits to God who is Spirit (Exodus 29:42; Psalm 34:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Hebrews 13:15).

God is the Absolute expression and personification of mercy, graciousness, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth; and we should absolutely know that all His thoughts and all His plans for us is only good (Exodus 33:6; Jeremiah 29:11). His thoughts and words seek only blessing and goodness to us (Isaiah 55:8-13). We need to learn to be like a little child before Him and learn once again that God is SO good.

(It might be appropriate to sing or hum the sweet little Sunday school song that 'God is so good' before you move to the next chapter of the doctrines of God ☺).

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING THE TRINITY

The origin of the doctrine of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) arises primarily from the creeds of the first millennium of Christianity. A creed is like a statement of faith; it is a confession of faith for public use or a form of words outlining with authority certain articles of faith or belief. There was much doctrinal controversy that beset the early church and the early church fathers and leaders had to streamline a set of creeds to distinguish between errors and truth as they perceived it in the Holy Scriptures.

The Apostles' Creed

The earliest of the creeds was the Apostles' Creed. Legend has it that the apostles wrote it on the tenth day after Christ's ascension (a derivation from Peter's confession of Christ in Matthew 16:16) but this is probably not true. It probably developed sometime in the first or the second century of Christianity. The earliest version found was around 215 AD (*Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus*). The current form used today was from around 542 AD (*Caesarius of Arles*). It's used seemed to be alongside baptismal ceremonies with the baptismal candidate answering in the affirmative that they believed each statement.

The traditional English version of the creed is given below (remember that the word *catholic* does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church but rather to the word meaning *universal*):

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.

The modern English version (note some changes to the word *hell* – Greek *katotata* – *kato* meaning *beneath* or *below* and *tata* abbreviated for *tartarus* or *Hades*) is as follows:

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. AMEN.

For the interest of those who enjoy studying creeds, we have provided the Latin, New Testament Greek and French versions found in manuscripts in the Appendix section of this book. The development of the Apostles' Creed during the first century with various parts added to its present form around the eight century seemed to be in early response to the Marcionite heresy (Marcionites taught that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was not the same as the Hebrew Old Testament God but rather that He was the Son of the good God).

The Nicene Creed

Around the fourth century, another controversy, the Arian heresy, arose in regard to the relationship of Jesus to God the Father. The Arian heresy taught that Jesus was a created being lesser than God the Father. The Council of Nicaea held in 325 AD in Asia Minor dealt with this doctrinal controversy. The Nicene Creed which was officially adopted (First Council of Constantinople) around 381 AD began to expound the Godhead and pointed the way towards the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Nicene Creed in its present form state the following:

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father (and the Son),¹
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

You can immediately see that the Nicene Creed was an expansion of the Apostles' Creed as it sought to clarify the truth about who God is; and the position of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD made minor changes to the Nicene Creed by asserting the true divinity of the Holy Spirit. The *filioque* clause added to the Nicene Creed in 589 AD caused a split between the Western Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Eastern Orthodox church viewed that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and was sent (on the day of Pentecost) from the Father through the Son (*ex patre per*

¹ *filioque* clause (*filio* meaning *from the son*, while *que* means *and* in Latin)

filium procedit). The Roman Catholic Church stated that the Holy Spirit proceeded equally from the Father and the Son (*ex patre filioque procedit*).

The Eastern church continued to regard the Roman Catholic church as heretical for adopting the *filioque* clause and this controversy prevented many second millennium attempts to reconcile the church. The doctrinal position of the Roman Catholic Church, with its greater political power and influence (Holy Roman Empire), became the default base for most new formulations of doctrinal understanding about God. In secular history the victorious in war often re-write history to their point of view; in church history the last remaining influential church impacts the doctrinal position of the next generation. This also took place in modern church history during the twentieth century when the stronger Pentecostal groups, who held the ‘finished work theory’ of sanctification, became the major Pentecostal force against the smaller groups who held to the ‘second blessing theory’ of sanctification (Doctrine of sanctification covered in Chapter 3).

The Athanasian Creed

Athanasius, who lived from 293-373 AD, was a champion of orthodoxy against Arianism. He did not write the Athanasian Creed which was named after him because it was improperly ascribed to him in the ninth century but this claim was rejected in the seventeenth century and was attributed to have originated in Gaul about the fifth century as it was written in Latin. It was in use during the sixth century by the Western church. The Creed expounds on the Trinity in its first part and dealt primarily with the incarnation and the dual nature of Christ in its second part. The text of the Athanasian Creed is given in the Appendix of this book. It was the spread of and use of the Athanasian Creed that cemented the doctrine of the Trinity in the church today.

During the twentieth century, there was a revival of debate about the doctrinal understanding of the Trinity among the Pentecostals. It started with the baptism formula which traditionally was done ‘*in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*’ (Matthew 28:19). The new “Oneness Movement” baptised in the formula of the book of Acts which was ‘*in the Name of Jesus Christ*’ (Acts 2:38; 4:10-12; 8:12; 10:43, 48; 19:4-5). If it were just a formula controversy, it could have been easily resolved by combining both passages of Matthew and Acts with baptism done ‘*in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ into the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*’

The controversy between the Oneness Movement and the Traditional Trinity view was the doctrine of God. Basically, the Trinitarians believed

that God is Three Persons but One God and the Oneness Movement believed that God was Three Manifestations but One Person thus One God. The problem with both these views is that if you pull its idea to the logical conclusion, it becomes wrong and extreme. For example, if you develop the idea of God being Three Persons (a plurality) to the extreme (especially using the Hebrew plural word for God – *Elohim* instead of the singular *El*), one would lead to a conception of Three Gods with Three very different functions although done in harmony. On the other hand, if you develop the opposing idea of One Person Three Manifestations, it seems to reduce the Almightyness and the majesty of God into a limited singular person multitasking in His role as the God of the Universe; the question of ‘how, then, does He appear as Three very complete different Persons?’ and ‘what happened to the One Person of God when Christ died on the cross?’ arises.

Illustrations and Descriptions of the Trinity

Firstly, we need to understand that the synergy of the Trinity is in the Bible use of the word *Godhead* (Greek *theios, theiotes, theotes* – Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). Secondly, we do need new paradigm shift and with new words and even invent new vocabularies to describe the Trinity. For example, when John saw Jesus in His glory in the book of Revelations, he described Him as having a two-edged sword coming out of His mouth (Revelations 1:16). Having seen Him in visions, too, the more modern description is that of light like a laser beam coming forth from the His mouth. Laser beams were not invented yet and the apostle John could not illustrate what he saw with inventions of the twentieth century. We would need to incorporate two words from the English language to describe the Trinity: the word *dimension* (borrowed from its use in science and mathematics) and coin the new word *God-Person* (our definition meaning that a God-Person can infinitely manifest multiple persons of Himself in multiple dimensions simultaneously unlimitedly – as opposed to a normal person who can only finitely exist as one unit of consciousness in space, time and reality).

To understand the Trinity, we will first use traditional illustrations and allegory and then give an analysis of its weaknesses in representation of the Trinity in terms of possible percentage of accuracy:

Water Illustration of the Trinity – 20% accuracy

The Trinity is often illustrated as water or H₂O existing in three states: solid ice, liquid water and water vapour. This illustration is not bad in its illustration of Oneness and Sameness; it could be construed to be illustrating One Person Three manifestations.

Work Description of the Trinity – 20% accuracy

In this illustration, we have one person who works, for example, as an engineer. At home, he is the husband to the wife and also the father to his children. Thus, we illustrate one same person with three roles: engineer, husband and father. This illustration is strong in picturing the One Person of God but weak in its illustration of Three Persons. It is more one person multi-tasking.

Sun illustration of the Trinity – 30% accuracy

The Sun can be illustrated as a picture of God the Father, the Light of the Sun as Jesus, and the Heat of the Sun as the Holy Spirit. This is a pretty good illustration as it shows sameness and differentiation at the same time. It could however also be taken to be one person three manifestation but since the Sun as a whole is made up of Light and Heat, the relationship and unity effect is neatly illustrated.

Building of House illustration – 20% accuracy

There is a house that needs to be built. The architect designs it, the contractor builds it and the tenant lives in it. The Father being represented by the architect, Jesus the contractor and builder, and the Holy Spirit the tenant. This illustration is strong in showing three very separate persons with differing roles. It is weak in that it can be taken to be three Gods working in unison rather than one God.

Spirit, soul and body illustration – 1 % accuracy

In spite of this illustration being of a small percentage in accuracy, it does raise a small insight and point. Just as the human has a spirit, soul and a body; the Godhead is seen as God the Father the Source as the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit being the Soul of God and Jesus being the visible manifestation of God as the manifest body of God in human flesh. This is an extremely weak illustration but at least it does convey the Oneness of God's Being as One God-Person.

New time dimension illustration – 30% accuracy

At the writing of this book it is the year 2008. Let us imagine that a future Peter Tan had a time machine in 2018 and he took the time machine to 1998, and then came to visit me in 2008. As they come out of the time machine, we see three Peter Tans: one from 1998, one from 2008 and one from 2018. We are three persons but yet we are one and the same person from different time dimensions. Separated by different times, we might have different roles and be doing different things in each decade yet we are the same person and three persons at the same time. I like this illustration as much as the Sun illustration. It conveys certain concepts that the old illustrations could not.

The Godhead – One God-Person in Three Dimensions

Having seen and imagine all the different illustrations of the Trinity, we now need to enlarge our human idea of God to encompass God as the God over all the whole Universe covering an infinite number of stars and galaxies and worlds. For the sake of simplicity of concept let us take all the material Universe as one dimension, and all the invisible spiritual dimension as the second dimension (which is invisible to the physical material realm but not to those who live in the invisible spiritual realm – although in truth, there are also degrees of visibility here to spirit beings as the physical world also have degrees of physical invisible electromagnetic waves but let us not complicate the explanation at this point; just see it as three major divisions or dimensions with its own internal sub-divisions), and a third dimension which we shall call the God-dimension where only God exists.

We thus have the God-dimension where God exists, and two created dimensions: the spiritual dimension and the physical dimension. In order to reach out to us, create us and relate to us, God the Father creates the energy-space-time continuum through Himself as God the Spirit. You have God now existing as The Father (for lack of a better word) in the God-dimension where God exists and you have God now existing in the energy-space-time continuum as God the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is all of energy-space-time put together and also sustains the Universe of energy-space-time, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit would still be invisible to the creation living within the energy-space-time continuum (in the same manner as the leaves can never see the trees nor the forest for it is one tiny part of the forest).

In order to relate to His creation, God manifests as God the Word to each of the worlds and galaxies which He has created. The manifestation of Himself as God the Word to all His creation is simultaneous but unique to each of His creation throughout the Universe. Now you have the Godhead in One God-Person existing in Three Dimensions to relate to us: God the Father who exists in the God-dimension, God the Word who is the visible and tangible manifestation of God to His creation, and God the Holy Spirit who encompasses all of His creation in the energy-space-time continuum. Being one and the same God-Person, God the Father, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit are omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.

Eons ago, in one small part of the Milky Way galaxy, a rebellion of God's creation took place involving the planet earth and there was a pre-Adamic catastrophe the scale of which we have yet to fathom. To draw this portion of the galaxy with His great love, the unique God the Word manifestation in our section of the galaxy chose to manifest Himself in a body of human

flesh, whom we have come to know as the Lord Jesus Christ. When He rose from the dead, He also opened a way through Him for us to taste of the glories which He had with the Father (John 17:21-24). It is now the desire of Jesus that we get to know God (for this is eternal life) and, enabled by the Holy Spirit, behold the glory of the Father through Jesus (John 17:3, 24).

CHAPTER 3

THE MAJOR DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY

At some point or another every believer in Christ will confront some of the ‘big word’ doctrines like justification, sanctification, predestination and foreknowledge. In simple words, they cover who we are in Christ (justification), who Christ is in us (sanctification) and the outworking of God’s plan through our lives on earth (predestination and foreknowledge).

Justification by Faith

Although we exist as independent creations of God, we were never meant to exist separated from Him. The doctrine of justification by faith, lost in the Dark Ages, was restored to its proper place during the Reformation by preachers like Martin Luther. The basic legal basis of justification by faith is simple: Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins that we might be reconciled to God (Romans 5:6-11). The essence of justification by faith is that God does not just want a legalised relationship with us rather He wants a love relationship with us. A marriage has a legal basis and framework but it cannot exist without love. Take love out of a marriage and it becomes a bondage. Justification by faith has a legal framework and basis in Christ but the essence of it is a love relationship with God in Christ.

For this reason, one of the first things that take place when we are justified by faith (accepting Christ into our hearts) is the outpouring of God’s love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). Everything that is transacted in the act of justification by faith is *not* just a legal position in God, it is an impartation of His life and substance into us:

1. We receive peace with God (Romans 5:1)
2. We receive His love in our hearts (Romans 5:5)
3. We receive an abundance of grace (Romans 5:15-17)
4. We receive the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17)
5. We receive the gift of eternal life in Christ (Romans 5:10, 21; 6:23)
6. We receive union with Christ’s victory (Romans 6:4,5)

Paul illustrates the new relationship with Christ as a new marriage with Him (Romans 7:4). Many people only see the positional and legal aspect of justification by faith and find it hard to live their Christian life – they know it in their mind but have no power in their lives. It is like being married without love; they know what they *ought* to do but have *no power* to do it.

The Gift of Righteousness

Jesus did not just cover the legal ground for justification by faith; that is where many Christians stop. They are left holding the legality of their justification but without the power. If somebody illegally occupies your house, you could legally evict them. The court may issue the papers giving you legal authority but you would need the physical action by the police to enforce the legal authority. Jesus provided both the legal position (*exousia* – authority) and the dynamic power (*dunamis* – power) to experience the fullness of justification by faith. The book of Romans and other Pauline epistles outlines this whole process:

1. God gives the gift of righteousness to us in Christ which we access through faith (Romans 4:6-8, 13; 5:17).
2. The faith which we access this gift of righteousness is also a gift – a gift of His life, a gift of faith (Romans 4:14, 16, 20). It is by faith that it might be by grace and this faith is through the faith *of* Jesus (Romans 3:26 *pisteos Iesou* – faith *of* Jesus; 4:16). The faith of Jesus is a gift of His faith and not our own faith (Acts 3:16; Ephesians 2:8; Galatians 2:20 I live by the faith *of* the Son of God).
3. It is God who works in us: both to will and to do (Romans 9:16; Philippians 2:13). The only part left for us to do is to yield ourselves as instruments of righteousness or present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 6:13, 18; Romans 12:1-2).

The whole true essence of righteousness and justification by faith is that we are now in Christ and His righteousness is gifted upon us. It is the power of His life flowing forth through our spirits, souls and bodies that make us conform to the image of God. This was the gospel of His gift of righteousness which God wanted to reveal from faith to faith (Romans 1:17).

Sanctification and Christian Perfection

The doctrine of sanctification and Christian perfection was widely taught and discussed in the days before the Pentecostal movement. It even had its own name and was called the holiness movement. Christian perfection and sanctification was a doctrine well taught by John Wesley and many others of his time. It was even believed to be a ‘second blessing’ after salvation before the Pentecostal movement in 1906. When the Pentecostal movement came to the forefront after the Asuza street revival, the early Pentecostals struggled with how to identify and place the new Pentecostal experience of the baptism in the Spirit with speaking in tongues within their theological framework. Some of them like Seymour, the leader of the Asuza street

revival, began to teach the Pentecostal experience as a 'third' blessing after the 'second' blessing of sanctification.

Others like Durham began to teach that sanctification was completed at conversion (finished work theory) and that the second blessing was the baptism in the Spirit. Thus the early days of the Pentecostal revival was filled with controversy caused by these two main opposing streams of theological understanding about the new movement. Looking back over a hundred years from today, we all know that Durham's theology won out over Seymour's and there is very little teaching within modern Pentecostal churches (or even other churches for that matter) about holiness and Christian perfection.

Today, we still have to be able to answer the questions on Christian perfection having seen the maturing of both movements through church history. Can a Christian be perfect while on earth? Can a Christian be sinless on earth? The answers to these questions are important as they do affect our fundamental belief system in the atonement work of Christ and possibly where we will be in the years to come.

Can a Christian be sinless and perfect on earth?

We all know that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and Paul expects that we live a life free from sin (Romans 5:8; 6:1-2). The contrast between 1 John 1:8 and 1 John 3:9 tells us only the difference between those who are spiritually children in the Lord and those spiritual young men and spiritual fathers who have matured to understand the ability that God gives to be free from sin (1 John 2:1; 2:12-14). It is clear that those who are born of God do not sin (1 John 3:9). If Christ died on the cross for both our sins and our sin nature, then the effect of the atonement that we received from Him must be that we remain free from sins and live free from the domination of sin nature. The only correct answer as to whether God wants us to live free from sin can only be a resounding 'Yes.' Thus the question should not be *whether* He wants us to live free from sin but *how* we can live free from sin. It should also be obvious that if Jesus is coming for a church without spot or wrinkle, that the church should be a mature and perfect church (Ephesians 4:13-16; 5:27). Since the biblical answer to the question of whether a Christian can live free from sin is 'Yes,' then the next question raised would be 'how.'

How a Christian can be Sinless and Perfect in God

It is first important to understand that sin nature (or the tendency or desire to sin) is not eradicated from our physical body. Paul acknowledged that sin

dwells in his flesh (Romans 7:18-25). The solution to this is found in three things that Paul understood to be the work of God that enables us to be sinless and perfect before God (remember we are not just talking about the positional and objective perfection in Christ that every believer has in the atonement but we are talking about the real, experiential and subjective perfection that is available to every believer):

1. Sanctification is past tense.
Sin is eradicated from our spirit nature through the born again experience, where we receive the life of Christ within our spirits and experienced the new birth (Romans 8:10, 15-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
2. Sanctification is present continuous tense.
Sin is being eradicated from our soul nature through the process of the renewal of the mind (Romans 8:4-9). This is a metamorphosis process and it seems from the epistle of 1 John to be a spiritual growth process (Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 2:12-14). It is more theologically sound to see it as a growth process than as a 'second' or 'third' instantaneous blessing process.
3. Sanctification is future tense.
Sin nature in our physical bodies is being 'neutralised' by the *zoe* life of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11-13; Galatians 5:16, 24-25).

If you take a concordance and check every word in the New Testament on sanctified or sanctification, you will find that sometimes it uses the past tense, sometimes the present tense and at other times the future tense. The tenses used line up with the work of God done respectively in our spirits, our souls and our bodies. Being tripartite in nature (spirit, soul and body – 1 Thessalonians 5:23), we could say theologically that we have been sanctified (spirit), we are being sanctified (soul) and that we will be sanctified (body). Another way of saying this is to say that we are freed from the penalty of sin (spiritual birth through the atonement of Christ), we can live free from the power of sin (through the renewal of the mind/soul) and one day we will be freed from the presence of sin (new body given in the resurrection). A careful reading through the New Testament Scriptures will attest to this understanding of past, present and future realities.

Understanding the process by which we can be sinless and perfect before God is important for as we recognised, like the apostle Paul did in Romans, that there is still the presence of sin in our physical body, the maintenance of sinlessness and Christian perfection is through the constant abiding in Christ and being filled by the Holy Spirit. The moment we are 'no longer' filled with the Spirit, the work of the Spirit in 'neutralising' the sin nature within our flesh is gone and the 'supposedly' perfect, sinless and sanctified Christian can fall into sin again.

Thus the true key and secret of the perfect Christian life is a continuous dependence on the infilling of the Holy Spirit minute by minute and day by day. This infilling and impartation of Christ in us was expressed in various ways in the New Testament. Paul recognised that it was no longer he who lives but Christ who lives within him (Galatians 2:20). He also recognised that it is not him who labours (lives day to day) but it is the grace of God in him who made who he was (1 Corinthians 15:10). Jesus said that we are to abide in the vine that we may bear fruit in Him (John 15:5).

Paul also expressed that we are to be continuously filled with the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit that we may not fulfil the works of the flesh (Ephesians 5:18-19; Galatians 5:16). The question then becomes not a question of whether we 'can be' sinless and perfect by our own strength but it becomes a question of whether we have learned to 'be filled with the Spirit' or 'to allow the grace imparted in our lives to flow forth' or 'to let the Christ in us to live through us.' If we learn to do this continuously minute by minute and day by day, then of course, we will be experientially sinless and perfect in Christ.

The Quality of Christian Perfection

Many times people see Christian perfection as what we 'don't do'; for example, 'don't sin, don't be worldly, etc.' The truth is that Christian perfection is more about the perfection of God's nature in our spirits, souls and body. It starts with the perfection of our heart. We are exhorted to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). A cross reference to Luke shows forth that Jesus was asking us to be merciful as the Heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36). In other words, we need to have a heart of love and compassion as our Heavenly Father has. Since God is love, the perfection that is demanded of us is that we have a perfect heart of love. Thus the essence of Christian perfection is actually the perfection of God's love within us. This is logical for when we truly walk in the love of God, we fulfil all the commandments of God – and walking in the commandments of God fully implies that we are sanctified and sinless. Thus a loving spirit, a loving soul with loving actions shows forth the fullness of Christian perfection.

If a person thinks that the absence of wrong actions alone is Christian perfection, then the quality of their understanding of what Christian perfection entails is shallow. A person can seem to outwardly do no wrong but yet be unloving. People can also seem to outwardly do all the Christian things but their minds and souls are filled with wrong, worldly, sinful and selfish things. This is not true Christian perfection; it is only an outward shell which Paul would have called a whitewashed wall (Acts 23:3).

John the apostle goes as far as to say that if one is not walking in love one is walking in darkness and in death (1 John 2:9-11; 3:14). We must be completely saturated and filled with the love of God in spirit, soul and body to have the high biblical quality of Christian perfection that is promised to us (1 John 4:18). It is when we are filled with love that we are filled with Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). Being born again should not be viewed just as being born free from sin, rather it should be viewed as being born into love and being enabled to take the first steps of our life flowing from God's life poured into our hearts (Romans 5:1-5).

The whole of Christian living is then the growing fullness of this river of love until we are matured and grown in the love of God. Indeed, being a kindergarten in the things of God is being immature in love – no matter how clever we think we are or how great an intellectual capacity or how talented we are or how a great philanthropist we are. It all means nothing if we do not have love (1 Corinthians 13:2). Anyone whether they be a person, a Christian or even a Christian clergy or minister and who seemed to be immature in the unconditional love of God – in God's sight, they are all just mere babies and immature children in His great kingdom of love no matter how high or great they are in the eyes of men and society (1 Corinthians 13:11 – childish). True Christian maturity and Christian perfection is measured by the depth, height, width and breadth of God's love. The greatest is love.

Predestination and Foreknowledge

The Bible tells us that God foreknew, then He predestines (Romans 8:29). Any correct teaching about God would have to admit that God is omniscience – He knows all things past, present and future. Out of His foreknowledge of all possibilities, God then predestines. In other words, foreknowledge comes first before predestination (Romans 8:29-30). This order is very, very important. Based on what He knows of every possibility and alternative free will decision of His creation, God structures a plan that will lead us back to Him. He did not structure a plan, and then create us to make us fit into His plan.

For centuries, Christian theologians have wrestled with the concepts of predestination and free will. The doctrine of Calvinism (developed by John Calvin and his followers) states that only some people are destined to go to heaven and cannot lose their salvation. The doctrine of Armenism (developed by Jacobus Arminius and his followers) states that one can lose their salvation and must work to keep it. Thus the debate between Calvinism and Armenism has raged in Bible schools and from pulpits everywhere. John Wesley leans towards Calvinism while George Whitefield leans

towards Armenism but both remained good friends in the ministry of God. What does the Bible say?

There is no doubt that we all have been predestined before we were created (Ephesians 1:4). There is also no doubt that it is possible for some to lose their salvation (Hebrews 6:1-6). When we placed all the Scriptures on predestination together with those that advocate universal repentance from *all* men to receive salvation, we could say that God predestined *all* men to be conformed to His image; thus since *all* have sin, *all* need to repent and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ unto salvation (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5, 11; 1 Timothy 2:4). Thus, Calvinism is in error for saying that God chose some to be saved and others to be damned. In his autobiography, John Bunyan shared his struggles to attain salvation thinking that he was among those God chose to be damned. When people believe that it is the Will of God to chose some to be saved and some to be damned, the devil will always come along and tell people that God chose them to be damned. In the end, John Bunyan found comfort in the verse that says that God will, in no wise, cast out those who come to Him (John 6:37).

While Calvinism is extreme in its interpretation of predestination, Armenism is extreme in how easily one loses one's salvation. There are those who ascribe to it who even believe that a person can be born again, lose their salvation, repent and backslide, lose their salvation again, get born again the second time, etc. Such frivolous teaching makes born again as nothing more than a human exercise of free will and neglects the supernatural element of the implanted seed of God within our spirits that prevent us from falling (1 John 3:9; Jude 24). What then is the balance between these two extreme interpretations and how does one explain Pharaoh's predestined condemnation in Romans 9:17, 22?

Two Areas and Two Levels of Predestination

The key to harmonising all these Scriptures is to understand that there are two areas of predestination and two levels of predestination. The two areas of predestination are predestination of events as opposed to predestination of persons. There are events that are predetermined by God of which human free choice cannot affect its occurrence. Human free choice can only sometimes delay its occurrence but never stop its predestined course. One good example is the predestination of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea into the promise land. The disobedience of the first generation who came out of Egypt stopped them from possessing the land but forty years later the event still occurred via the second generation. The predestination of events form a part of the body of God's revelation of Himself to us and cannot be stopped from its predestined path of occurrence, they can only be slightly

delayed. They can be delayed due to the fact that humans are needed as instruments to bring about an event but if the human through free choice does not yield to the plan, then another human will be used to fulfil the original plan.

The second area of predestination is the predestination of people which has two levels: Level One is the general working of God in a person and Level Two is the special working of God in a person. This is due to the free will which God gives to everyone. With the free will, justice demands that there be a reward and punishment system established to encourage the right free choices and to discourage the wrong free choices. Part of the reward and punishment system is built into every creation of God through self-perpetuating laws which He has established. The same laws for good can work against those who are in disharmony with them; laws that could have blessed them. For example, the natural law of fire, electricity, gravity, etc. There are, of course, laws which govern other areas besides the physical realm: there are social laws, soul laws, spiritual laws, etc.

Everyone starts with predestination Level One and as one continually make the right choices in life, there comes a time when Level Two predestination is tapped upon bringing a more special working in one's life. For example, as Abraham kept obeying God and following after Him, God began to pronounce His special work and blessings upon his life each time he made the right choice:

1. After Lot left him God told Abraham to walk through the land which He will bless him and his descendants (Genesis 13:14-17).
2. After he said 'No' to the offer of the king of Sodom, God promised Abraham an heir and made a special covenant with him (Genesis 15:1-21 *after these things*).
3. After his faith and obedience was tested, God promised victory for Abraham and his descendants over the gates of their enemies (Genesis 22:16-17 *because you have done these things*)

In the life of Zachariah and Elisabeth, their walk of righteousness and faithfulness to all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord did not go unrewarded (Luke 1:6). They were now well advanced in years and had prayed for a child long ago but have probably forgotten about it as they loved the Lord and kept walking faithfully in Him (Luke 1:6). Level Two predestination (God's special work) was tapped upon and an angel Gabriel was sent to tell to announce the blessings on their lives. God rewarded them with a child who reaped all the benefits and blessings of his parents faithfulness; such that the child, John the Baptist, walked into the level two stream of predestination created by his parents and was filled with the Spirit even as a baby (Luke 1:13-17; 2:41). It is possible to create a strong flow of

both Level One and Level Two predestination downstream to our descendants through our making the right choices in our lives in pleasing the Lord.

The same principle of Level One and Level Two predestination also works negatively by continual wrong choices. Such a thing happened to Pharaoh when he resisted the Lord's work through Moses. Note that by the time God pronounced the negative Level Two special judgment on Pharaoh, he has already resisted Moses six times resulting in six plagues (Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17). There was no more redemption when one by free choice kept continually resisting God resulting in sin that leads unto death (Matthew 12:31; Hebrews 6:6; 1 John 5:16). Understand that the sins classified into blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, rejection of Christ in apostasy, and sin unto death are not just casual or occasional weak moments of temptation but they are the deliberate and continual choice made with full understanding of one's free will and consequences (a practice of evil and sin and not just a falling into sin) which lead to Level Two judgment (Hebrews 10:26).

As we analyse the above truths of predestination and free will, we can at last solve this mystery in harmonising these truths which have caused centuries of debate between Calvinism and Armenism. By understanding the two areas (differentiating event-predestination from people-predestination) and two levels of predestination (based on varying free choice responses in each individual life with flow-over downstream to one's descendants), we can harmonise these truths together. When two truths come together we need to show their relationship: free will is a subset of predestination in two levels. (This means that if you draw a circle for predestination and a separate circle for free will, the circle for free will is drawn inside the predestination circle).

Remember we have simplified these great doctrinal truths for easy understanding by new believers. There are many areas of these truths to be explored: for example, God does not just have one Plan A but God has multiple plans that cover each specific and possible choice that we have opportunity to make in life; He has Plan A to Plan Z and more for every single life with free choice. We can never out think or out choose God (choose something He has never thought of). We are all predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ but through our choices we begin to move into the special Level Two predestination, for good or for bad.

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL

Many people always ask why if God exists, and if He is a good God, that He allowed so much evil to continue on the earth. Such questions ignore the fact that when free will was created, there must also be given the full workings and consequences of alternate scenarios which result from the free choice – otherwise the free choice is merely a sham; that is whenever a wrong free choice is made the individual gets killed or imprisoned immediately without experiencing the full experience of the opposite of right. There are also degrees of wrong and degrees of evil which all cannot be generalised with a simple death penalty or imprisonment for everything (1 John 5:16).

Imagine crossing the red light wrongly and being sentenced to either death or life imprisonment. Imagine the petty thief who stole \$2 sharing the death penalty as a murderer or sharing the same prison. Firstly there will not be many people left alive to run society and secondly, the good people left might be outwardly good because of the fear of death or imprisonment rather than inwardly good, understanding that wrong acts hurt and damage to others as well as themselves. If everyone in the world were to react taking an eye for an eye and a hand for a hand, there will be many people with one eye left or blind (since they did wrong twice) as well as many amputees.

Darkness is the Absence of Light

All the evil in existence in the world today has been the accumulation of all the wrong choices made since the creation of man (Romans 5:12-14). We can *never* blame God for the existence of evil in the world; at most you can blame your fore fathers (not a good thing to do as there were also good things passed downstream). God does not have to create evil, evil came about when wrong choices were made just as darkness results when there is an absence of light. Since one cannot blame God for the existence of evil, the only other rational question is why God does not deal with it more severely and try to protect the innocent more carefully? In other words, we are questioning God's style and method of dealing with evil.

From our viewpoint as humans, we would rather live in a 'sin-free' zone without all the temptations and trials which this world seems to have plenty of. From God's point of view, He can see the end of all evil and He can also see how facing and overcoming evil makes us stronger. If He just wants a bunch of weak people whom He has to protect all the time from the slightest

sin or evil, He would have created a dictatorial society with angel policemen at every corner. However, if He wants a strong society who will come to police themselves and choose good in the midst of evil, He would just give us the tools to govern ourselves and allow us the freedom and liberty of growing independent (although helped invisibly by Him) on our own. If you were a creature of free will and want to develop your freedom and liberty, which society would you choose?

The goal of God is that we grow to be like Him. In order to do so, we must be permitted to experience the uncertainties and difficulties present in an imperfect sinful world to develop and grow our character:

1. In order to encourage us to grow in love for truth, we must grow up in a world where error and falsehood are present thus enabling a choice for truth.
2. In order to grow in faith, then we must grow up in an environment where knowledge is limited and fear is present.
3. In order to develop hope, we must grow up where there is uncertainty and insecurities.
4. In order to develop loyalty, we must grow up in an environment where betrayal and desertion is possible as a choice.
5. In order to develop courage, we must grow up in a world where hardships and disappointments abound.

The above list goes on but we get the picture and understanding as to why sin and evil is not immediately removed but they are there as opportunities for us to succeed and overcome them – not merely as stumbling blocks that beset and cause us to fall. Even in our limited human way when we train our children, we do not do the homework for them; rather we watch them as they struggle to master each field of study and wrestle to come to an understanding themselves. We provide them with the tools and necessary tuition to ensure that they have a reasonable chance of success.

God has promised that with every trial, temptation or test, He provides a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). He does not save us *from* the lion's den but He does save us *through* the lion's den and we are better off for the experience. And in case we complain that it cannot be done, He sent His Son, Jesus, to show us the way and gave us His Word and His Spirit to empower us. He has provided us the tools and tuition (even provided a personal Helper called the Holy Spirit) and it is our fault if we do not avail for ourselves all His provision.

God Permits what We Permit

As we read the Bible, especially the Old Testament, we need to understand that there is a permissive tense (passive tense) where God *allows* rather than actively *did* something. For example in 2 Samuel 24:1, it states that the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel and He moved David against them to number them. In 1 Chronicles 21:1, it is clarified that it was the devil (not God) who actually moved against David. The only thing God did was that He allowed it to happen. In 1 Chronicles 10:14, it states that the Lord killed Saul but we know from the preceding story and other passages that Saul fell on his own sword and with some life remaining in him asked an Amalekite to slay him; God only allowed (permissive tense) Saul to be killed.

With that understanding, we need to see that all the time, it is God who was actively protecting us but Satan sometimes made demands that God removed the ring (or hedge) of protection around us so that he could tempt and test us (Job 1:9-12). If we study the Bible very carefully, we would notice that each time there is permission given it is due to two things: there is something within our hearts that need to be tested and God has already provided us with a way of escape (Deuteronomy 8:2; 1 Corinthians 10:13). Even our Lord Jesus had to be tested and tried in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1). With every successfully temptation or trial overcome, God always blesses with rewards (James 1:12; 1 Peter 4:12-13).

The curse causeless will not alight (Proverbs 26:2). Although it might not always be personal sin or causes, we do know that the world as a whole contains sufficient imperfections that would allow any human living here to experience the temptations, trials and tests that would cause their character to grow. There is no shortcut to character building; it has to be through tribulations (Romans 5:3). What mankind has permitted since the beginning of the human race in the world, and what we sometimes permit in our own lives, God has to permit as He respects our free choices and liberties but He uses every situation surrendered to Him for good; thus overcoming evil with good (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 8:28).

The Speed of Sin and the Speed of Righteousness

As we saw in the previous chapter in predestination and free will, the choices of a person affects the generations downstream in time from him – making it either easier or harder for the next generation. How far does it affect before its energy dissipates? Imagine time as just another dimension on a plane. Whenever a sin is committed it instantly travels at a certain speed and affects several generations; up to third and fourth generations

(Genesis 15:16; Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9). This does not mean that the next several generations are responsible for the sin but rather they are affected by the consequences of the sin. It creates more pressure and makes it harder for the next generation but the free choice is still available for them to choose to do right and follow after God.

For this reason, sometimes you have a series of bad kings in the story of kings (1 and 2 Kings) but a good king still can arise to turn the nation around. When the bad king Ahab had one repentance experience over the murder and theft of his neighbour Naboth's vineyard, God said that the calamity will not come in Ahab's time but in his son's time (1 Kings 21:25-29). God was not making a statement of judgment but rather making a statement of fact (as He knew that sin travels instantaneously to affect the third and fourth generation).

Even if it were a statement of judgment, all the judgments of God are subject to repentance and intercession (even if the prophecy does not seem to offer it); for example, Jonah was surprised when Nineveh adverted judgment when they repented and was himself upset at God's mercy and grace (Jonah 3:10; 4:1). If Ahab's son had repented, it would have passed on to the grandson of Ahab and if the grandson and great grandson had repented, the energy of the sin would have been dissipated completely. Understanding this, we know that although it might be more difficult for succeeding generations because of the sins of the preceding generation, free choice and free will is still intact and a whole hearted turning to God in succeeding generations can cancel the sins of the previous generations.

Of course, in a time of the dispensation of grace, when a person is in Christ, all the sins of the forefathers are instantly cancelled; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). For the gospel of grace through faith operates on a higher law which cancels the lower law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2).

On the positive side, when a person walks in righteousness, the effects and blessings of righteousness travel across time to affect a thousand generations (Exodus 20:6; 34:7; Deuteronomy 5:10 *thousands – could be more than a thousand but we use a thousand for the purposes of illustration*). This means that the speed of righteousness travelling across the time dimension and affecting future generations is much, much faster than the speed of sin; possibly comparative to the superfast speed of light with that of the slow speed of sound. This means that no matter hard bad or how evil an inherited environment or sin nature is, by free choice (with the help of Christ, of course) we can change our future and the future of our descendants more powerfully than the effects of sin. Each successive

righteous act produces a blessing wave that overtakes the curse wave and even neutralises and overcomes it, plus has a staying power affecting thousands of generations.

Good is more powerful than evil. Righteousness is more powerful than sin. Light is more powerful than the nothingness of darkness. And when Christ died on the cross of Calvary, absorbing in Himself all the cursed of the law in atonement for us, in His one powerful act, He released the force of righteousness that was completely unstoppable. The force of the gift of righteousness in Christ vanquished all death and everything evil in its path. He took sin on the cross that we might become the very righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Now through the gift of righteousness, we can reign in life through Christ (Romans 5:17). Where sin had abounded, grace abounded much more so that where sin had reigned in death, even so grace now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:20-21). Amen.

APPENDIX

Greek Text of Apostles' Creed

Πιστεύω εις Θεον Πατερα, παντοκράτορα, ποιητην ουρανου και γης.

Και (εις) Ἰησουν Χριστον, υἱον αυτου τον μονογενη, τον κύριον ἡμων, τον συλληφθέντα εκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, γεννηθέντα εκ Μαρίας της παρθένου, παθόντα επι Ποντίου Πιλάτου, σταυρωθέντα, θανόντα, και ταφέντα, κατελθόντα εις τα κατώτατα, τη τρίτη ἡμέρα ἠαναστάντα ἄπο των νεκρων, ἄνελθόντα εις τους ουρανοῦς, καθεζόμενον εν δεξια θεου πατρος παντοδυναμου, εκειθεν ερχόμενον κρῖναι ζωντας και νεκρούς.

Πιστεύω εις το Πνυμα το Ἄγιον, αγίαν καθολικην εκκλησίαν, αγίων κοινωνίαν, ἄφεσιν αμαρτιων, σαρκος ἀνάστασιν, ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Ἀμήν.

Latin Text of Apostles' Creed (around 700 AD)

Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem; Creatorem coeli et terrae.

Et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus unicum, Dominum nostrum; qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria virgine; passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus; descendit ad inferna; tertia die resurrexit a mortuis; ascendit ad coelos; sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis; inde venturus (est) judicare vivos et mortuos.

Credo in Spiritum Sanctum; sanctam ecclesiam catholicam; sanctorum communionem; remissionem peccatorum; carnis resurrectionem; vitam oeternam. Amen.

French Text of Apostles' Creed (Galican version around sixth century)

Je crois en Dieu, le Père tout-puissant, créateur du ciel et de la terre.

Et en Jésus-Christ, son Fils unique, notre Seigneur, qui a été conçu de Saint-Esprit, et qui est né de la Vierge Marie. Il a souffert sous Ponce Pilate, il a été crucifié, il est mort, il a été enseveli, il est descendu aux enfers. Le troisième jour il est ressuscité des morts, il est monté aux cieux, il siège à la droite de Dieu. Il viendra de là pour juger les vivants et les morts.

Je crois en l'Esprit-Saint. Je crois la Sainte Eglise catholique, la communion des saints, la rémission des péchés, la résurrection de la chair, et la vie éternelle. Amen

The text of the Athanasian Creed (Marquess of Bute's English translation):

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreate, the Son Uncreate, and the Holy Ghost Uncreate. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. As also there are not Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Uncomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almighties but One Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not Three Gods, but One God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not Three Lords but One Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, there be Three Gods or Three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is One Father, not Three Fathers; one Son, not Three Sons; One Holy Ghost, not Three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore or after Other, None is greater or less than Another, but the whole Three Persons are Co-eternal together, and Co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity is Trinity, and the Trinity is Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting Salvation, that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that

we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of His mother, born into the world. Perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and human Flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood. Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but One Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into Hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.