

Various Scripture
Sermon 1

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INTRO: Today I'm starting a two week series titled "Faith Foundations". I can't stress enough how important it is that we know WHAT and WHY we believe, and that we understand the essentials of Christianity. SO FEW DO.

Let me start by saying, there is great diversity among Christians concerning the doctrines of the church. That's no secret. That is why there's so many different denominations and belief systems among Christian brothers and sisters. In some cases the difference in interpretation is almost indiscernible, while some differences are large.

Not all doctrines taught in scripture are *essential* to salvation. Theologians call these doctrines, and I don't particularly like this term but it does make the point, *the non-essentials of the faith*.

For the record, everything Jesus taught and every word of scripture, for that matter, is important and has great benefit to those who read and take it to heart. But it is true, not everything taught in scripture, and the correctness of it's interpretation, is necessary for salvation. We would be right in saying, that affirming every biblical doctrine, and correct interpretation of such, is essential for perfection! But because perfection is not what God requires from us, it is not all essential for being a Christian and living a life that is useful for the Kingdom. All that being said, there will always be differences among genuine believers in interpretation, concerning some of the doctrines of scripture.

I like the phrase, written by a theologian more than 400 years ago, "*In essentials—unity; in nonessentials—liberty; and in all things—love.*" (PLEASE PUT ONSCREEN)

That phrase begs the question, however, WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIALS?

There are some things you must affirm if you call yourself a Christian! We call these beliefs, THE TENETS OF CHRISTIANITY. There are several of these. The exact number depends on how far you break each one down. But for the most part, there are 6 essential doctrines you must adhere to in order to call yourself a Christian.

And on these essentials, Christians, throughout the ages, despite many varying beliefs, have been able to come together in unity and faith. Which I believe is nothing short of a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, in the lives of God's children.

Today, and next week, I want to look at these essentials. I want you to take notes. I want you to appear to be interested :) And I want you to learn from God's Holy Word.

Today, we will look at the first three of these ESSENTIALS of Christianity. But before we get started, let me give you the full list.

1. *The Authority of Scripture, and the Gospel,*
2. *Monotheism, and the Unity of the God-head (Trinity),*
3. *The Deity of Christ, and His Manhood,*
4. *Substitutionary Atonement and Forgiveness of Sin,*
5. *The Bodily Resurrection, Ascension, and Return of Jesus,*
6. *Salvation by Grace, through Faith, and Nothing Else.*

These are the foundational truths we'll be talking about the next two weeks. It's important to say at this point however, that although Christians, by means of creeds, councils, and synods, have affirmed these essential doctrines through the ages, It is not man however, but rather, God, through His Word, that declares these truths as absolute!

Notice, essential number...

1) THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AND THE GOSPEL: If you were here two weeks ago, you will remember, I'm sure you remember, that I preached on the subject, DO YOU BELIEVE?. And I shared with you that scripture is indeed the WORD OF GOD, and that it is INSPIRED, INERRANT, and INFALLIBLE.

Scripture is God's enduring written revelation that tells us who He is, what He's accomplished in space and time, and what He desires of you and me. The Bible doesn't reveal everything about God or His plans and actions, but it does reveal all we need to know and quite possibly, all we can comprehend. **Deuteronomy 29:29** *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."*

RECEIVING and BELIEVING the Word of God is essential because, if the Bible isn't what it claims to be, and it claims to be the very words of God, then everything else concerning Christianity collapses. The Word of God is the foundation of all we believe. And if you can't believe that, then you can't believe in Christ, or Salvation, or God at all, because it's the Bible, and only the Bible, that reveal these to us. If the Bible is not true, and factual in every regard, IT IS FALSE! And we are lost and groping in darkness!

Jesus was praying for His disciples one time when He said in **John 17:17** *"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."*

Paul, writing to Timothy concerning young Timothy's handling and understanding of scripture, he said in **2 Timothy 2:15** *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."*

GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH! And it's absolutely necessary that we believe it.

Now. Let's look at the Gospel. The Gospel is the truth within the truth!

What is the Gospel, and why is it essential that we believe it? The Bible itself defines what the Gospel is. In **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** *"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"*

AND THAT IS THE GOSPEL TRUTH!

And the belief in the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel are Essentials to Christianity and Salvation.

I) THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AND THE GOSPEL:

II) MONOTHEISM AND THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD: This is a phrase that some of you probably aren't aware of. And that's okay. That's why we're here looking at this.

So what is Monotheism? It's a theological term and compound word, Mono meaning ONE, and Theos meaning GOD. Monotheism is the belief that there is only ONE GOD. Now, Monotheism is not exclusive to Christianity. Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity, among others all believe in just one God.

The opposite of Monotheism is Polytheism; the worship of or belief in multiple deities or many gods.

The Bible declares there is ONE TRUE GOD: **Isaiah 43:10** "You are My witnesses, declares the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me."

Isaiah 44: 6 "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.'"

Now, although many religions believe in ONE GOD, there is something that separates Christianity from all others... the belief that God is a Triune being. And although He is ONE, He is made up of three distinct personalities that all act in unison yet also independently of one another. WOW, I just blew some of your minds!

The doctrine of the Trinity is arrived at systematically by looking at the totality of Scripture. It is, however, the proper representation of the scriptural revelation concerning the nature of God.

Matthew 3:16-17 "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"

Matthew 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

There are those that will argue that the OT and NT are at contradict in that the OT speaks of ONE GOD and the NT speaks of the GODHEAD or Trinity. But both the Old and New Testament absolutely agree in the teaching of God. For example the NT also teaches in ONE GOD. **Ephesians 4:4-6** "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.."

Here, at the beginning of time, we see God speaking to the Son and Spirit in creation. In St. John we see a description of Jesus being part of creation. **John 3:1-3** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

I) THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AND THE GOSPEL:

II) MONOTHEISM AND THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD: I have said many times, and say it again, that Jesus is the SON of GOD and VERY GOD. And this is an ESSENTIAL TRUTH of Christianity!

III) THE DEITY OF CHRIST AND HIS MANHOOD: I started establishing this truth with the last point, but let me make it clear... JESUS IS GOD IN FLESH!

In **John 8:58** "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Now that phrase, "I AM" is important because, it is the name of God. When God told Moses to go and deliver His children out of Egypt, Moses said what if they don't believe you have sent me? What should I say to them? And in **Exodus 3: 14** we read, "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I am has sent me to you.'"

In John 8:58 Jesus was claiming Deity! He made the claim of "I AM" God.

John 1:1, 14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

There is no mistaken, according to Scripture, Jesus is God! HE IS FULLY GOD! But according to the same Word of Truth, Jesus is also FULLY MAN. Now how can that be? At conception, that is, when the Spirit of God supernaturally placed inside the Virgin Mary, the seed of God, something miraculous happened. The eternal Son of God added humanity to Himself, simultaneously being God and man, Creator and creature.

Jesus is the God-man. The theological term for this is hypostatic union, as a single Person with a divine and human nature. Both natures are distinct and preserved, not mixed or confused, fully God and fully man.

This is the only way Jesus could be both SAVIOR and SACRIFICE. Only God can SAVE lost sinners, but salvation required a SACRIFICE and God cannot die. He is everlasting to everlasting! So God became man and dwelt among us. And at the appointed time the GOD-MAN gave His life for the sins of the world. Many in the world deny this and says it can't be. But the Word of God declares this ESSENTIAL TRUTH...

1 John 4:2-3 "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

CONCLUSION: This is where religion falls short. Some rightly believe in ONE GOD. But they deny Christ. And a relationship with Jesus is an ESSENTIAL to Christianity and Salvation. Oh, I hope you believe today. I hope you believe the WORD, I hope you believe in GOD, and I hope you believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, the GOD-MAN, who came to save you from your sins!