



The Creed

Part 1 – I Believe

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Today, we start a seven-week series; it will take us all the way through September. It's called *The Creed*. *Creed* comes from the Latin, which means to believe. We are going to be talking about what it means to know what you believe and how to live what you believe.

Let me start with this. If you grew up in a church that regularly recited The Creed, would you raise your hand? Everybody look around and welcome the Presbyterians, the Catholics, the Lutherans, the Episcopalians. Raise your hand if you were not allowed to recite the creeds. How many of you didn't recite creeds? The second group that just raised their hand, they live by a "No creed by the Bible." We heard that often in... I don't want to call out denominations, but the Baptist church that we grew up in often said, "No creed but the Bible."

If this whole idea of a creed is brand new to you, understand the authority that we stand on here at Woodland Hills is the Word of God. We are using The Creed as an outline; the Apostle's Creed specifically because some of you have been asking what creed we are going to be using. The Apostle's Creed is the oldest of the creeds; it goes back all the way to 140 AD. As we study this for the next seven weeks, we're just going to be using it as an outline as we look to the scriptures, so we can go deeper into what it is we believe. We want you to take one step wherever you are on your faith journey. We want you to take one step in understanding what you believe and then we don't want you leaving here the next seven weeks not knowing what to do with it, how to live this out in your life.

What's the purpose of a creed? One, you confess this, you profess this individually. We also do this corporately; it's what we believe here in community or in the church. This is so we can stay on the same page. It helps us correct errors. It's a concise statement of beliefs. If you're brand new to understanding this, it's just a concise statement. It's not everything we believe, but it's what we would put in the essentials category. There are a lot of non-essentials that churches like to get caught up in. These are the essentials for us and it's a concise statement that we'll be looking at all the way through September.

Belief Precedes Confession

We're going to start with this big idea. If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Romans 10, as we look at where this idea of confession and belief comes from, and how it works together in our faith. But, it is very important to start off the series that we understand belief precedes (or comes before) confession.

I want to make that very clear up front. You joining along and reciting this creed in a moment...

Some of are like, "We're doing that? Are the elders okay with this? Do they know we're doing this because we're not starting..." Welcome to Woodland Hills Presbyterian Church, here. What do we have going on?

Just saying the words, reciting the creed does not save you. I want to make sure we are very clear on that, leading out. Belief, what's in the heart is what we want to look at.

In Romans 10, we see this clearly in Verses nine and ten. We want to see the progression of faith, belief, and confession or profession of faith. **9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** You hear us quote this verse often around Woodland Hills. Look at the next verse. **10 For it is with your heart that you believe...**

For the first ten years of our church, Gary Smalley's passion was talking about the beliefs. All of us have beliefs. All of us have beliefs written on our hearts. Somebody said something to you over and over again when you were growing up and eventually you believed it. It found its way like a tattoo or Gary liked to use the term *branding* on the heart. And then everything you say and everything you do flows from that message.

We also talk about this in marriage and family with your family of origin. What kind of family did you come from? What are the beliefs in your heart about life, worldview, and all of that you got when you were very young. Paul, here, is telling the Roman Christians, "It's with your heart that you believe and are justified." *Justified* is a very important word here. This is your right before God. You were declared righteous because of Jesus.

In liberal theology, which we want to avoid at all costs at this church... Let me just say that again. In liberal theology, which we want to avoid at all costs... That's not part of the creed; I'm just repeating for emphasis sake. Liberal theology is let's take God's glory, his sovereignty, his supremacy, and bring it down just a little bit. Then let's take man in his sinfulness, in his wickedness, conceived in iniquity of our father the devil, children of wrath – this is man's condition before Christ – but, let's take the condition of man and not make it so bad; let's just talk nicer about man. That's how we try to bridge that gap.

That's not what we do at this church. At this church, the gap between God and man is filled by only one person and only one name and it is the person of Jesus Christ. He is the one. We don't have to try to make God lessor or man greater; that's not what we're trying to do. With belief alone in Christ alone, faith alone in Christ alone, you are justified, you are declared righteous and your right standing before God is because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. **...and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess...** Believe and profess. **...your faith and are saved.**

Your heart is the wellspring of life.

Proverbs 4: 23 says **Above all else, guard your heart...** Why? **...for it is the wellspring of life.** So, as parents around here, we believe that the heart of our child is more important that the behavior of our

child. Let me say that again because some of you are like, “No; that’s not true. You spank that bad behavior out of them until their heart changes.” But, don’t we just need to be reminded today that that behavior is coming out of their heart. When your kids say or does something and you're like, “What are you thinking?!” you want to get to the heart because what just came out of them was in the heart.

It’s true of all of us. So, when we talk about this creed and stating what we believe, we want to be solid in that. We want these beliefs tattooed on our heart. We want them there so that the overflow of our life are these deep convictions, these essential truths that we hold as followers of Jesus. So, in a moment, when we share this together, when we recite this together, I’m going to invite those who have placed faith alone in Christ alone to recite that with us. If you’ve never placed faith alone in Christ alone, please hear that just reciting that is not what saves you; it’s believing in your heart that you are justified. Faith alone in Christ alone.

Let’s look at the progression, and this is going to follow through the whole series.

To know that you believe is good. So, when we talk to people, friends, family or talk to many of you in here and ask if you believe in God, you say, “I believe in God. I believe in Jesus.” That is great. We are good with that; that is a good thing that you say you believe in Jesus.

To know what you believe is better. We’re going to hit that next week and the week after that. We are going to go into many statements about who Jesus is, the person of Jesus Christ in the Trinity. The word *Trinity* is not in the Apostle’s Creed, but it’s three persons in one: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We want you to know what you believe so when people ask you about your relationship with Jesus, you are able to state it clearly. You are able to say with conviction, “This is what I know to be true.”

To live what you believe is best. That’s when we know it’s to the heart. That’s when we know it’s there. Yesterday, I was thinking about this because I want my kids to have this. Don’t we want our children to have these truths in their hearts?

I was saying goodbye to some college students this morning. It’s a time of mourning for many parents in the congregation trying to help them out. I’ve been telling the parents of our church, “Do not call your children, who you are checking into the dorms, to see if they have brushed their teeth today. If you do that, you are against everything we believe as a church. The kids have to learn to brush their teeth on their own.” And all the parents said... Amen. How many of you plan on calling your kids to see if they brush their teeth?

Corynn’s birthday was Friday and I asked her what she wanted to do for her birthday. So, we had a party with grandparents on Friday night. She said, “Saturday, I want to go shopping in Eureka Springs.” I love Eureka Springs. It’s a great place to go and eat. I’m not a huge shopper; I’m not into vintage jewelry and all of that; not really my thang. But, we showed up on Diversity Weekend in Eureka Springs. I sat on the bench with my son for about an hour. We had five other old men on this side and five other old men on that side. We’re all sitting there on the benches waiting for our wives.

I was deeply saddened. I hope, follower of Jesus, that's your response when you see people struggling with their identity. This is going to tie in exactly with what we're talking about today. When you see people shaking their fists at God, which is how I completely interpret it. It's not at me, not at what I believe, but at God. "Don't you dare tell me how to live." "Don't you dare tell me what the bedroom should look like." I see this and I just... I talked it through with my son. This is so important, follower of Jesus. I hope this is in your heart.

A guy wrote a book. I don't even know the author; I just saw this pop up and it was in my heart as I walked around a city far from God. It simply said this: "Jesus ate with people that you and I cross the street to avoid." I kept thinking of that, telling my son... We went on an evangelistic talk to as many as people as we could. The more uncomfortable we are, the better.

I say all that to say... I'm going to say this as your pastor and this isn't to judge anybody in here. It happened in the first service too and I just want us to be okay, as a community of believers, to discuss it. Even the way you responded to me bringing up diversity weekend, for many. I just hope the Lord works in you on that. I don't know what was going on in there, but what are the messages on your heart about how we are to be living out our faith in a lost, dark, and broken world.

Jesus went and ate with... I was thinking about this on the drive home. Jesus invited himself over to a lot of people's houses to eat. If you want to be like Jesus, start inviting yourself over to people's houses and have dinner with them. I haven't been doing that enough. "Hey, where you going?" "I'm going home." "I'm coming with you and we're eating. What are we having?" Do you believe it? I don't ever want to be this guy that just says, "Oh, I've got all this stuff I believe," but you don't ever see it in my life. That's not what we want for you.

So, let me do this all again. We're going to say it one more time in different words. It is good that you believe in Jesus. It is good that you have faith alone in Christ alone. We applaud that. It is better that you know what you believe about Jesus. But, it is best that you live like him. That's our desire.

I love this story in Matthew 16. Look at what it says. ***13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"***

I love this because look at all the confusion and all the speculation that people had about Jesus and all the different answers that were given.

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." They are all over the map.

15 "But what about you?" he asked. The guys that were following him, that were with him on this journey. They laid down their nets. I want to have the answer. I want this answer for every single one of us in here. ***"Who do you say I am?"***

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

While we are on the subject of fishing, I want to show you a quick little picture. (picture of Ted with a large trout) Look at that! It has absolutely nothing to do with the message; I just wanted you to see it. No, it has a point. A very loose point, but I had to work it in. I caught her while studying on Monday. I'm going to tell you a fish story. Do you want to hear a fish story? It's could have a been a 10 to 12-pound rainbow trout. There were plenty of witnesses that saw it. I fought the thing.

What are you laughing at? It's true. I caught it. I had it for the whole time, alright? I'm speaking truth up here. We're doing a series called *The Creed* and I would lie about a fish? It was like 15 to 18 pounds, this fish that I was fighting. And these old guys with these really short nets were trying to help me net. I broke it off and then I came back and this is one I caught. It's 21 inches. People were accusing me of having a mount. They said I took a mount in my bag from somebody's wall and held it up for this picture.

But, I'm passionate about this. I'm not a great fly fisherman though. I'm a Taneycomo fly fisherman, which I don't know if you know, but Taneycommo fly fishing is pretty easy. It's called a trough. You go stand there with about 20 other people and you just throw in your fly to try to get the fish, and then you try to hook them across the back if you can't get them to bite on the fly.

People ask me where my passion for fly fishing comes from. We were having dinner earlier this year as a family. We were just gathered around our table. At the end of dinner, Corynn walks over with a little yellow tacklebox I had that I had put together probably 16 years ago, before she was born. It was my fly tying gear.

She sets it on the table and goes, "Dad, will you show me how to tie a fly?"

"Well, yes I will." So, we tie about six or eight flies that night and something just turned on in me again.

I had gotten into fly fishing with good friends before the kids were born. Then we started having kids and getting the church started and traveling... We used to meet every Sunday night down at the dam and fish and it was a blast. Then I gave it up for like ten years. I hadn't done it.

Corynn goes, "Will you take me out and fish?"

"Well, yes I will; I would be happy to do that." Just a passion came on me.

Last month, we were in Colorado. I hired a guy to take us on the Big Thompson. This is some of the most beautiful county; like second to The Ozarks, but it's awesome country. We hiked down into this beautiful stretch of land with a great guide named Kent. He's out of Springfield. He spends eight months a year in Colorado and four months in Alaska. He hadn't had a day off in like 2 ½ months. He's been very busy.

He said, "What are your goals today?"

I said, "I want my daughter to catch a fish and I would like to work on my technique."

He said, "Well, where are you as a fly fisherman."

In fly fishing, you have novice, intermediate, and pro, or as I call "guide." These guys are fantastic. Kent's obviously a pro; it's his whole life.

I got adventurous and said, "I'm intermediate. I think I'm intermediate."

He said, "Okay, we'll work on your cast and we'll catch Corynn some fish."

We sat Corynn up fishing and teaching her... I just wanted her to be able to catch fish and get excited about it.

He wanted to see my cast. I went to the first cast and he goes, "Oh, boy, is that how you cast?"

I'm like, "Uh, yeah."

He goes, "Oh, not good."

I was like, "Oh man the first cast, let me just get warmed up here a little bit." On the way to this trip, I even watched *A River Runs Through It* with Brad Pitt. I'm fully into this. I look like Brad Pitt, so I might as well fish like Brad Pitt. So, I was totally into it.

He goes, "Well, your muscle memory has a bad cast."

I go, "My muscle memory?"

He goes, "Yeah, when it gets ten and two..."

We don't do a lot of these long casts. I want to get better at that.

He said, "Oh, you took both hands up. This hand is supposed to stay down. We're going to have to totally retrain you."

I was like, "Kent, come on, lighten up. I'm paying you for this."

He goes, "You see that hole down there with the foam on it? I want you to walk down there. If you can't catch a fish in there, you should give up fly fishing."

Okay, now there is pressure. So, I walked down... I took a picture back at Corynn and Kent; they are going to fish a little higher up. I went down and I caught a fish after four or five casts.

What are you laughing at? That's a legitimate fish that I... He weighed at least, I'm thinking, two to three ounces. I had to get a picture of it, but I'm passionate about it.

Now, I'm getting a little more confidence. I caught about six fish. At the end... I still want technique. Here is the last picture I'll show you because you're like *You're taking this story way too far*.

Corynn says to me, "Dad, even when you're teaching me how to fish, you look like you're preaching." I'm up there giving a Billy Graham sermon to the world.

We got back into the car and I go, "So, Kent, would you put me at the intermediate status?" and he went "Uhh, no, not yet. I put you somewhere between novice and intermediate." Corynn is probably a better fisherman than me now.

On the way back, I kept thinking about how I want to be awesome, because I watch these guys fish and they're just awesome and I live in one of the most beautiful parts of the country in the world for this sport. I want to get good at it.

He was so encouraging after that. He goes, "What's great is that you've got..." Boy, if I didn't hear that a hundred times in school growing up. "You've got so much room for improvement." I don't know why, but that just encouraged me. I'm going to get better. I'm no Tim Sainato at bass fishing, but I'm going to become better at fly fishing and I'm just going to take a step. So, I worked on the one technique.

I tell you that long story to tell you this one point right here. Woodland Hills, I hope you understand, has a lot of folks that gather here each week that are between novice and intermediate in their faith. They are brand new believers. Some starting to take steps and some maybe stalled out, saying "I have faith in Jesus and that's all I need." I hope, over the next seven weeks, you take one more step. I hope you move just a little bit further. And in of all that we're going to be studying in this statement of the Apostle's Creed, I pray that you would take one more step and say, "I believe that." And then now watch how that belief is going to change all this other stuff happening in your life, all these other areas of your life.

Today, we are going to cover "I believe in God the Father, Almighty Creator of heaven and earth." I want to go through the whole creed and then come back. We're actually going to focus on the word Almighty today as we talk about Creator.

I have many steps to take and I'm 43. Hopefully fly fishing will be a passion I can pass onto my kids and grandkids. I know I have many steps to take and I want to take one. I hope that's your heart behind this. I'm going to invite you, as I read through the Apostle's Creed, to join me. This is what we'll be looking at for the next seven weeks. Join in if you wish.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from whence he shall come 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 life everlasting. Amen.

We will clear up “Holy Catholic Church” for you in a few weeks for those of you going, “What just happened?” We’re not speaking of the Roman Catholic Church; we’re speaking of the church universal.

Another statement of faith, profession of faith that we have shared often, which is still a creedal statement of Judaism, is Deuteronomy 6: 4-5. ***4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*** There is a God, there’s only one God; he is the Lord and he is our Lord. ***5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.***

Today, we’re going to move into “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” You may have learned it “Maker of heaven and earth.” But, the word *Almighty* there, as we branch out, has two big ideas. The first one is **absolute dominion**. He is over all and being over all, creating it all, working through it all, and all of it’s for his purposes and his glory, and he has **unlimited power**. It would probably be a good point here to remember that you and I do not. I’ll say it again for all of us control freaks in the room. We have limited power.

I was thinking about this. If you truly, truly lived with “I believe in God the Father Almighty” – talking now about his sovereignty – over all, in all, through all, and all powerful, you can watch Fox News without your heart rate going up. True? I’ll say it again because I don’t feel you got that at all. You can turn on the news without freaking out. You can turn on the news and see something that happened and not freak out that everything’s falling apart. Why? It’s because God is still over all and all powerful. You can look and go, “What these bozos did this week, I have absolutely no idea what they were thinking, but guess what? There is one greater than he.

I love when we talk about the president, whether it was Bush, Clinton, Obama, Trump, and call them the most powerful leader in the world. WRONG! It’s not true. There is one greater than our president. He may not believe that, but there is one greater than our president. Aww, I’m sorry. I pick on every president. It’s equal opportunity offending here. If that totally offended you, you needed it. Bring it down a notch. But, you shouldn’t hear the news and be like oh, no, what’s going to happen. God is over all, he’s got this, he is all powerful. We don’t need to stress. Some believe in horses, some believe in chariots, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. He is over it all, so we don’t have to freak out.

I’m worn out with Christians freaking out. Christians are freaking out because they have a low view of God’s sovereignty. They believe in creation; yes, he created the earth. He created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh; we believe that, but do you live Almighty Creator? Over all and in all. This is just to encourage you: everything is under his power, even the democrats. Everything is under his power, even the republicans. Not quite as much response to that one. Everything is under his power: every leader, every preacher, every pastor, every parent, every corporation. Everything is under his power, even that which seems to rebel against his authority. Follower of Jesus, we don’t have to see people shaking their fists and God and then shake our fists at them. We can see them shaking their fists at God and be moved, as Jesus was moved, to say, “I’m coming to your house for dinner.”

I’ve been spending time... I hate to do this for a second illustration in a message, but I’ve been spending time with fly fishermen. I don’t know if you know this about fly fishermen. I call them purists. They are some of the biggest environmentalists on the planet. You want to talk about conservationist. Especially

when you go to Colorado. It's all this Rep Your Water, "leave it better than you found it." I learned "leave it better than you found it" from my parents as a child, and mainly about my room, but I've taken it to the lake now. "Don't throw trash..." I get that because tending to and caring for creation was man's first job. God put him in the garden to care for it and to tend to it. But, I watch these guys, I'll just say it, worshiping creation. I hear them and I get engaged in these conversations because they are right there and I want to say, "You are so passionate about creation..." What would happen to these guys if they took that passion and directed towards the Creator more than the creation? If they began worshipping the one who made all of this rather than worshipping all of this, they would be there.

I'm in some forums with these guys... I'm trying to become a better fly fisherman and their pushing their agendas on these sometimes. "I'll never eat another fish." But, they're so delicious; I don't know how you guys catch and release everything. We need to be eating these things. God gave them to us to eat, okay? If you show a picture of fileting a fish, some of these guys will cuss you out.

When President Trump pulled out of the Paris Agreement, you would have thought a million people died. They're like, "Oh, no!" I wanted to say, "Guess what? From the moment we were in the agreement to the moment we got out of the agreement, the Creator is still over it all. He's still over it all, in charge of it all, still holding it all together." Listen, should we care for the environment? Yes. But, can I get my environmentalist friends to bring it down a notch. You should care for and tend to the environment, but you're not over it all, the Creator is; you're a manager, a steward of it, but you're not God, so turn your heart towards the creator.

I told Amy I was feeling snarky. I didn't know if I should leave the comments. I was typing out stuff, having fun with it. These guys were F-bombing each other and cussing each other out about the agreement. It was a democrat/republican thing. And I come in... Amy asked if I was being passive/aggressive. Oh... yeah, but let me just do this thing right here. What I was trying to do was bring all of us together on this stream about the Paris Agreement. I don't do politics online; I rarely will get engaged, but I love fishing and so I'm with these fishermen and I'm going, "Hey, guys, do you know what I've always loved about fishing? It brings democrats and republicans together. It brings liberals and conservatives together." I said, "Just this week, I fished with someone who didn't vote the same way I did and I didn't figure that out until the end. And afterwards, we were still cool, we were okay. Back it down a notch." I got, "Well, bleep you!" Okay, alright. Even those who shake their fists at God or have worshiped the creation instead of the Creator, are still under his power, are still under his authority.

The Psalms put it this way... Am I screaming a lot. I feel like I'm screaming a lot in this message. I need to bring it down. I always love when people yell at you for screaming. Isn't that a good way to do it. "JUST KNOCK IT OFF!!" You do that with your kids; don't judge me. "QUIT SCREAMING!" I am fired up. I've been fishing too much; that's been the problem.

Psalm 33: 6-7 - ***By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made...*** And all God's people said... Amen. ***Their starry hosts by the breath of his mouth.*** Out of nothing he spoke it into existence. But we can't stop there with what we believe. ***7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord...***The one who is over it all. ... ***let all the people of the world revere him. 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.***

You take this idea of “stood firm” and now go to Colossians 1. This helps us understand the purpose of creation and the continuation of creation. ***15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities...*** The Psalm says that every authority, every king is under this authority, the authority of an Almighty Sovereign God. ***...all things have been created through him...*** He’s the creator. ***...and for him.*** They find their purpose in him.

This is where I want to help my environmental and conservationist friends. Let’s understand we’re managers and stewards of this. When we eat this fish, we’re enjoying creation, not killing God. You’re viewing this fish as a God. This is not why this fish was given to us. I don’t think I have a big issue with that in the Ozarks, by the way. That’s just when I’m preaching in Colorado.

17 He is before all things... We believe in the eternal existence of Jesus. We don’t believe in the incarnational sonship of Jesus. We’ll talk about this next week. Jesus didn’t become the Son of God at his birth; he was there at creation. That’s very important to understand and we’ll cover that more. ***...and in him all things hold together.*** This is key. The very breath you take right now is there because he gives it to you. He’s the Creator and sustainer of life.

To believe this... I would have a pretty difficult time finding someone... There would be a few in here that would want to argue with me about creation and go against that and apologetics and all that. We can discuss the finer details of it, but most people are going to say, “I believe he is the Creator.” Do you believe he is the Almighty Creator? Do you believe he is still working through creation? Do you believe he still works all things together for the good to those who love him? Do you believe he is sovereign, all powerful over all? It will change the way you live your life.

Family

That belief that we are confessing as part of this series will change the way you view your family. It’ll change the way you view your marriage.

I know many in here who are struggling with a child that’s far from God. Rest in knowing he is over all. I tell parents this. Parents will come up to me and go, “I don’t know what happened with my teenager.” Let me help you understand what happened with your teenager. His brain fell out. You want to freak out, but your job, Mom and Dad, is to continue to pray for your teenager and look to your Father in heaven and say, “You’ve got this.” You continue to pray until that brain finds its way back in. But, parents begin to fret and they stay up at night and instead of going to the one who is over all, in all, and powerful over it all, we sit there and try to figure out what we’re going to do. Your power is limited; God’s is unlimited. You’re trying too hard for what you can do and you need to rest in what he can do.

Salvation

How about this? We could go a lot of debates on this. When we talk about God’s sovereignty around salvation, you get into this debate between his sovereignty and man’s free will. I do not believe God’s

sovereignty and man's free will are at war, but I do know many people who struggle with their salvation, assurance of their salvation. Do you believe God is over your salvation? Do you believe you've been justified, a right standing before God, because of what Jesus did? You profess faith alone in Christ alone and you are now saved. Do you believe he will hold you?

Again, I grew up in a church and I remember the evangelists that would come in and say, "Do you know that you know that you know that you know that you know?" "Well, I thought I knew. You put it like that and I don't know. I was good right up until you said that. I was fully saved until you said that and now I'm doubting." For some of you, something hits you early in life. You live with this "God's love, my salvation hinges on what I do and what I don't do." God's love hinges on "Did I do enough good acts or stop doing the bad acts." Let me tell you, God's sovereignty is even over your salvation. He will hold you in that.

I grieve when I hear Christians that struggle with the doubt of their salvation. Many times, it's not a doubt of salvation; they've just never been saved and to lead them in faith, to lead them in a prayer, to tell them how to profess faith alone in Christ alone... To have that moment with them, you're like, "Yes!" But now don't live with doubt because you're not the one who saved you. Jesus saved you. To quote Philip Yancey, "There is nothing you can do to make God love you more and there is nothing you can do to make God love you less." He's even sovereign over that.

Sin

How about this? He's sovereign over our sin. Jesus died for our sin. There are some of you in here dealing with habitual sin. You have an addiction in your life and you know in going through a recovery program, the very first thing you hear and one of the very first things you say is "This is unmanageable. I can't do this." I'm here to say yes, finally. To get that there is one who is even greater than your sin. When you professed faith in Jesus and you were justified, you were declared righteous, you were freed from the penalty of sin. The penalty of sin is death, for wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You also have this power... You're being saved from the power of sin over your life. He's even greater. You don't have to try to figure out how to just clean yourself up. Cry out to him because he's the one that delivers you. One day, his sovereignty will deliver us from the very presence of sin, but today, you need to rest in the fact that you are out of control, it is unmanageable, and you can't do it anymore. What a great feeling to take this deep sigh of relief. "I've been trying too hard on my own, but there is one greater."

Identity

How about your identity? I saw many yesterday struggling with their identity. I love what Dr. Travis Brawner says. He said, "God gives us science to help us understand better some of the mysteries of his creation, but he gave us his word to make some things crystal clear." On the issue of identity and the issue of sexuality and on the issue of marriage, we don't need science to guess for us or reinterpret for us. We know exactly what his plan was in creation for marriage, clearly.

Christian, don't get offended when they're shaking their fists at you. They're not shaking their fists at you; they're shaking their fists at God, those who struggle with identity.

I just wanted to run up to some of them and grab them and say, "Listen, there is one who is greater and if you're struggling with who you are, let me tell you, before Christ, you are a child of wrath, you're of your father the devil... I don't say this the first thing when I meet somebody, but when you place faith alone in Christ alone, you're a child of God. You're born into the family of God and you have identity, you have purpose, and you know exactly who you are.

For some of you struggling with identity issues today... "I want to know what I believe." The culture... I need to do a whole message on this when we're done with The Creed series on sex and sexuality because our culture says "Don't define anything." When you don't define stuff, it's just confusing. We define it. We say, "Almighty Father, Creator of heaven and earth, you gave us marriage. What is marriage? What is it clearly. I want to know from your word. Who is man? Who is woman? Why did you create male and female?" It says, "Male and female, he created them."

Decisions

We are going to see this list a lot over the next seven weeks because we want to take each one of these statements that we are going to spend time with and the scripture that we use to dig deeper into each one. We want to say, "How does 'I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten son' fit over my family, salvation, sin, identity, and decisions.

Some people are immobilized by decisions. They're like, "I believe in the sovereignty of God, so I'm just going to wait." No, the sovereignty of God should embolden us to make decisions. We should never use prayer just to be passive. We're praying out to the Almighty Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, but we should have great freedom in making decisions according to who he is and according to what his word declares.

Affliction

You're going through a difficult time right now and you're challenged in life and you don't know how you're going to get through this. Can I just encourage you? The storm may not pass, but to know there is one over the storm... There is one greater than the storm. You don't see it right now, but this is what it means to have absolute dominion and unlimited power. He sees the end. He knows the purpose and you have to trust and wait and rest in that.

Life and Death

I don't know if it got you as it got to me when our church family was reciting The Creed at the beginning of the message, but when Denise stood up and said, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," I think many of us just went there going, "Here's one who just laid her husband to rest, declaring 'I believe in the resurrection of the body.'" He is sovereign over your life and your death. We don't fear death because he's sovereign over it all.

I shared this with the first service. A guy dies and goes to heaven and he's on a tour. This isn't part of the creed, this is a joke. He walks by the first room and these people are bouncing off the wall and swinging from the chandeliers and they're fired up.

The guy goes, "Wow! Who's that?"

"Well, those are our charismatics and our Pentecostals. Their faith is finally fully realized. They are as excited as anybody you've ever seen in your life."

They go to the next room and all these guys are scurrying around with papers and everything and the guy asks, "Who's that?"

"Well, those are the pastors and professors seeing how wrong they were about some things. They're editing their charts and everything."

They go by the next room and it's a room full of people just joyous, but just standing around and it was the Catholic room. He said hi to the Catholics and they go, "Well, we knew we'd all get back together one day."

Then they go by the next room and people are just ticked off. They're kicking stuff... The guy goes, "Wow, who are they?"

"Those are the Baptist and they're pretty ticked off because they thought they were going to be the only ones here."

But that's not the end of the joke. He says, "Wait until they find out there's wine for all of eternity. That's going to put them over the edge right there and probably the AG room."

Why share all that? It's because I hope... I've been in so many hospital rooms where people are at the end and you know the ones that have the belief. "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." The peace that is over that person that's in that room and over the family that's gathered that holds the same belief. I've also been in the room with those who did not have that belief and the clinging to life.

He's even sovereign over my death and that's why we will declare "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

Father,

It is in the name of Jesus that we come to you, we bow before you. God the Father, Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. As we take that truth deep into our heart, may that be a message that stays, and may the overflow of our life, our words, our actions, and our behavior live with "You've got this, you're over it all."

We can watch the news without our heart rate spiking. We can go into a voting booth and we can make our votes known, but we can rest ultimately in you. We can be with our family, we can drop a child off at college, knowing you've got this. We can trust in you.

For the one struggling right now with addiction, a sin they struggled with for 10 years or 20 years. They've been trying to manage it, trying to control it. They've been trying to do it on their own power. Today, I pray they walk out going, "My power is limited, but his is not," resting on you, the one with ultimate dominion and infinite power.

I pray for the next seven weeks that as your word goes out, it will be received and people will rest in the truth that you have given us. I pray that we won't just know what we believe, but it will be evident in our lives by the way we speak to others, by the way we watch the news, by the way we interact with friends and family, and by the way we lay our head on the pillow at night and rest in you.

It's in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.