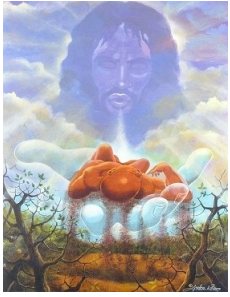


Fundamentals of Christian Doctrine

Creator & Creatures – Lesson # 1



When God created mankind, it was *His* plan that we would have an everlasting relationship with *Him*. But sin destroyed that relationship. In sending *Jesus* as the *Savior* of *all* mankind, *God* did what we could never do to restore our relationship with *Himself*.

Of course, this raises huge fundamental questions such as: “How do we know about *God* and *Who He* really is?” - First of all: We know that *He* exists. Creation makes that obvious. The Apostle Paul told the *Roman Christians* (Romans 1:19-20) that *God*

has made

Himself known to all people thru the existence of creation. It is obvious that it did not come into existence by itself. Also, *God* has written *His* existence into our hearts; morality is *hardwired* into us. For example, most of us automatically feel it is *not* okay to murder or steal or lie. At our *core* we know right from wrong. Our heart tells us so.

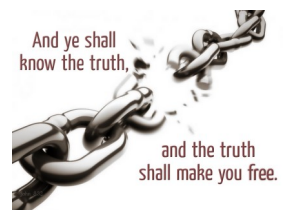
But if we knew of God's existence only from nature or our conscience, that would not be enough to enter into a good relationship with *Him*. We know about *God* thru the way *He* has chosen to reveal *Himself*; namely, *His Word*, the *Bible*, wherein *He* has revealed that *He* is *three* persons, but only *One God*, the *Trinity*! That does not make sense, but because it has been revealed in both the *Old & New Testaments*, we accept & believe it! - In Genesis 1:26 *God* says, “Let *us* make man in *our* image.” Another clear example is found at *Jesus*' baptism, where we see the *Son* standing in the water, the *Spirit* in the form of a dove, and the *Father's* voice from heaven. Also, when *Jesus* commanded *His* disciples to baptize (Matthew 28:19), *He* told *His* disciples to “baptize in the name of the *Father*, & the *Son*, & the *Holy Spirit*.” The one singular name “*God*” includes all *three* persons of the *Trinity*.



While we creatures cannot fully understand the Trinity, we recognize that *God* has not revealed everything about *Himself*; only what we need to know for *Him* to develop a great relationship with *Himself*. Yet, numerous errors & false teachings have evolved because people want *a God* who fits their limited human understanding. But, as written in the book “*Lutheranism 101*,” *Lutherans* are most comfortable in confessing what *God* has revealed to us about *Himself* in the *Scriptures*, “no more, no less.”



An important result of *Lutheran* teaching that *God* created everything out of nothing, is that *God* created out of *His* generosity; nothing compelled *Him* to create the world or us. As *Luther* said in his *Small Catechism*, *God* created us “out of fatherly, divine goodness & mercy, without any merit of worthiness in me.” - In other words, freely out of love for us. We learn from *Scripture* that this good *God* is also merciful, just, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, - eternal & unchanging. All these attributes about *God* have been true for all time & will be true for all time to come.



Who are we in relation to this triune God?

Thru His Word we learn that we are God's creation, made by *Him*. We did not evolve; we



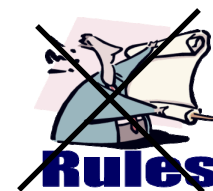
are not accidents of nature, but **God Himself** created us, in **His** image; we are the grand finale of **all His** creation (Psalms 139:13-14). We are **His** creatures; not some mini-gods. As creatures we are not independent, autonomous, self-sufficient, self-determining creatures; **we are dependent on God**. As the Apostle Paul told the *Corinthians* (1 Corinthians 4:7), we have received everything from **God**; we are dependent upon **Him & His** gifts. Also, we are interconnected & interdependent with **God's** creation & **His** other creatures. The air we breathe, the water we drink, & the food we eat - **-take these away & we die**. We need to learn to live as *creatures*; not try to be *gods*.



In summary: God's first act of creation is an act of grace. Even after the “Fall” and the coming of sin, much of the goodness that **God** built into creation remains. *Lutheranism 101* reminds us that “philosophers debate why evil exists, & people ask how a **good God** could allow bad things to happen. But, it is not the existence of evil & suffering that requires an explanation; it is the existence of goodness & beauty & love that is most remarkable. A world without **God** cannot explain such things. The persistence of goodness reminds us of what we have lost, but it also offers us a glimpse of **God's** grace & everlasting glory to which **God** has called us thru **Christ**.”



“Rules Are Made to be Broken” - Is that **really** true? That's what a lot of people say; even some **Christians** think it's true & that the church makes up too many rules. “After all,” they say, “life should be about fun & happiness, joy & self-expression, isn't it?” Under-lying this type of thinking is the belief that the church's concept of sin somehow doesn't apply to their lives. But such thinking totally differs with the *Bible*. – Sin is betraying **God**, rejecting **His** will & **His** ways; any thought, word, or deed that departs from the will of **God**.



When we were born, we came into God's world. **He** created it & defined its values & morality. As its **Creator**, **He** owns & has rights over everything. One day we will answer to **Him** for our every thought, word, & deed. We are personally accountable to **Him**. Sin is more than the individual bad things we do. It is the corrupt attitude & will of all humanity, the self-determiners of what is good & right which ultimately leads us to distrust **God & His Word**. By questioning the rights **God** has over mankind, *Satan* challenged the goodness of **God** as the giver of life and enticed *Eve* to rely on herself for good. By rearranging **God's** words, Adam & Eve aspired to assume **God's** place, asserting themselves as the final determiners of what is good.



This root sin, called “original sin,” is our desire & search for personal meaning & identity apart from God. Adam & Eve could not return by themselves to a life of trust in **God**; they would return to the dust from which man is made. The Apostle Paul told the Romans that man is by nature weak, ungodly, sinful, and an enemy of **God** (Romans 5:6-10). We have all inherited original sin, corruption & its tendency to commit actual sin (every thought, emotion, word, or act conflicting with **God's** law - -which includes sins of **commission** & sins of **omission**). Sin gets only one reaction from **God** - -**His** righteous wrath & punishment.

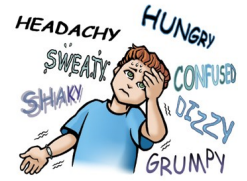


The original desire of Adam & Eve to be their own god, has affected every person's nature & all of mankind's powers; even his reason is corrupted. Sin is so deeply rooted in each of us that even



with all our reason, we cannot discern its depths nor ever clearly see ourselves in absolute harmony with **God**. *The 10 Commandments* identify our original sin condition, disbelief, & false beliefs.

We have lost all our created goodness, and we can never by ourselves produce anything good as judged by **God**. With our natural disposition turned wholly inward & completely away from **God**, we are subject to the judgement of **God** and **His** decree of death & hell. No one can ever free himself from that wrath of **God**.



The miseries of body & soul daily remind us of our condition & the fact that we are subject to the present power of *Satan* who continues to lead mankind into false belief, wicked & shameful vices, despair & pride. But we can take hope. *The Bible* tells us (Romans 5:8) that “**God** showed **His** love for us in that while we were still sinners, **Christ** died for us.” **God** did not create us and then abandon us to our own failed devices. **He** did not thunder **His Law** at us & then turn away. **He** sent **His Son** to earth as the one sinless human being, the one perfect person who kept **God** at the center & followed all the rules without breaking them. For the sake of **Jesus**, **God** does not count sin & its consequences against those baptized into **Christ Jesus**. And, we would never hear this message as **Good News** if we did not understand the reality of sin (Romans 10:9-10).



What is at the Heart of the Lutheran Faith?

- A better question is “**Who** is at the heart of the *Lutheran* faith?” – **Jesus Himself** said, “You search the *Scriptures* because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about **Me**.” – John 5:39. If you take **Jesus** out of the message of the church or out of a person’s faith, it is no longer **Christian**. **Christianity** is solidly based on the saving work of **Christ** for the rescue of the world. *Lutherans* have a rich & exciting message about **Jesus** based firmly on the *Bible*. **He** is at the center of what we believe, worship & do.

One day, Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do people say the **Son of Man** is?” They gave several answers, all of which were incorrect. Then **Jesus** asked, “But who do **you** say that **I am**?” Peter answered, “**You** are the **Christ**, the **Son** of the **living God**.” – Matthew 16:13-16. **Jesus** commended Peter for this correct answer, and then reminded Peter that he did not come up with this confession on his own, but that **God** gave Peter the words to say. Today, people also have a variety of wrong opinions, calling **Him** only a good man, a prophet, miracle worker, etc. But we **Christians** understand & believe **Jesus** is the **Son** of **God**, the 2nd person of the **Holy Trinity**; **God** in the flesh for the salvation of the world.



While other religions teach that something must be done by men to earn God’s favor & salvation, **Christianity** teaches that **Jesus** has already secured salvation for us on the **Cross**. - **God** reaches out to people in **Christ**, rather than people reaching out to **God**. Peter said, “There is salvation in no one else (**Jesus**), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) In our *Lutheran* worship services we regularly use the *Apostles’* & *Nicene Creeds* to speak clearly about who **God** is based on **God’s Word**. Many false teachings about **Christianity** are based on misunderstandings about **Jesus**. If they do not get that right, they will never understand about the

Trinity. False teaching always diminishes *Christ* & *His* saving work.



Color Code:



(Purple) Royalty - *God*

(Red) Blood - *Jesus*

(Green) Living - *Holy Spirit*

(Blue) True - *Christians*

RESOURCES

“Lutheranism 101” – Scot Kinnaman, Chief Editor; CPH, 2010.

“Summary of Christian Doctrine” – Ed & Alfred Koehler, CPH, 1952

“The Holy Bible” – English Standard Version, Crossway Bibles, 2001

Class Notes composed & assembled by the Rev. Hal Teuscher, MDiv, MST, MA; edited by Julia Teuscher

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