

Chain and Creed

Jesus' Death and Resurrection and Its Implications in 2 Timothy 1-2

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher,

¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. ...

2 Timothy 2:1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,

⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself.

(2 Tim 1:1-13)

The Gospel of the Greeks

The shooting star that was [Alexander the Great](#) gave rise to the greatest empire the world had ever known and, after his surprising death, one of the greatest historical battles for succession the world would ever see. The [Diadochi](#) (“[Received Successors](#)”) were the rival [generals](#), families, and friends of Alexander who fought to rule his empire after his death in 323 BC. Perhaps the most famous of these Diadochi were Ptolemy, Antigonus, Cassander, and Seleucus, each of whom were initially given their own smaller regions within the greater Greek Alexandrian Empire.

For my purposes here, [Antigonus](#) is in the target of my investigation. Antigonus I Monophthalmus (“[The One-Eyed](#)”) first received the lands just north and east of [Ephesus](#), but later was able to control it as well as most of western

Turkey. In 306, he declared himself king and established the Antigonid dynasty.

Antigonus had a son who would become known as **Demetrius** I Poliorcetes (“**The Besieger**”). The year he declared himself ruler, Antigonus found himself at war with Ptolemy I. The prize of this particular battle was control of the Island of **Cyprus**. Ptolemy had seized the island and was using it as a base of operations **against Asia Minor** and the Levant (which included Israel). This was unacceptable, and so Antigonus sent Demetrius to take the island, which he did, invading the city of Salamis, defeating Menelaus, Ptolemy’s brother. As told by Plutarch some 300 years later and just slightly after **2 Timothy** had been written, Ptolemy himself sailed to attack Demetrius with 150 ships. It was an invasion meant to end a dynasty. But Demetrius, in a daring move of cunning and genius, opposed him with only 10 ships, while he took the rest of his forces and flanked the unsuspecting Ptolemy with 180 more of his own, thus “**utterly routing**” his enemy. For **his reward**, he received the island, 1200 horsemen, 12,000 men at arms, and the love of the celebrated Hetaira named Lamia.¹

¹ A Hetaira (“companion”) was a kind of highly educated prostitute (with very few lovers), who was also an artist, entertainer, and talker. They seem very much equivalent to the Japanese Geisha.

But now put yourself in the shoes of Antigonus, who was far away from Cyprus on the mainland. Demetrius had sent his “special messenger to carry word of the victory ... which was so fair and brilliant” to his father. This man was his “arch-flatterer among all his courtiers, and ready now ... to crown the achievement with the grossest of his flatteries.” Demetrius had to do this, of course, because there was no internet, no text-messaging, no phone, no telegraph to transmit the details of the battle. Antigonus had to wait it out. As Plutarch puts it, he was “anxiously awaiting news of the battle, and was disposed as men are apt to be disposed who are struggling for so high a stake. And now, indeed, when he heard that Aristodemus was coming, he was more disturbed than before, and, with difficulty keeping himself indoors, sent servants and friends, one after the other, to learn from Aristodemus what had happened. ²”

But as I said, the courtier that was sent was hand-picked because he was good at spinning a yarn. His job would be to tell the news of the victory in such a way that 1000 generations of Greeks would remember tale and tell it to their grandchildren. How would Aristodemus of Miletus compose his story? He picked a most unusual way do to it.

² Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, ed. Bernadotte Perrin (Medford, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920).

He commanded the crew of his ship to cast anchor far off land but within sight of the king, still far away. They would quietly remain on board while he would, alone, board the ship's smaller boat, go ashore, and proceed towards Antigonus who was so anxiously awaiting the news. As he approached the king, he “would make no answer to anybody, but step by step and with solemn face drew near in perfect silence.” This “thoroughly frightened” Antigonus who was no longer able to restrain himself as he saw the messenger approaching. He came to door to meet the man, who was by now escorted by a large throng which were all hurrying into the palace. And we are told,

Accordingly, when he had come near, he stretched out his hand and cried with a loud voice: “Hail, King Antigonus, we have conquered Ptolemy in a sea-fight, and now hold Cyprus, with twelve thousand eight hundred soldiers as prisoners of war.” To this Antigonus replied: “Hail to thee also, by Heaven! but for torturing us in this way, thou shalt undergo punishment; *the reward for thy gospel* [*apolēpsē to euaggelion*] thou shalt be some time in getting.”

(Plutarch, *Demetrius* 16-17).³

³ Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, ed. Bernadotte Perrin (Medford, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920).

Gospel? Yes, his gospel. You see, the word we are Christians know so well, is of course a Greek word. In this story, as well as many others of the ancient world, it was *news*. News that someone had to hear from an outside source. They could not know it on their own than they could the date of their own future death. They could not divine from in the stars. They could not figure it out through philosophy or science or by doing mathematical equations. Question others who had never heard the news would do no good either. The only way it could be known was for *someone who knew to tell it to another*.

But gospel is *never* news of *disaster*. Rather, it is *good* news. In this story, as well as many others,⁴ the good news was often very particular news of *victory in war*. For giving this news, there was often an accompanying *reward* that went with this gospel. Sometimes it was money. Sometimes basic necessities that were needed after the struggle to deliver the message. Sometimes it was a crown. To put that another way, there was *some kind of relationship that corresponded between the message and the messenger* and, obviously, *the one who received the message* so gladly.

⁴ See “εὐαγγέλιον,” in Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 705.

2 Timothy: the Gospel and Resurrection

Today is the day much of the Church celebrates **the yearly resurrection of Jesus Christ**. The heart of our text connects the biblical Gospel of Jesus to his resurrection from the dead. It is a call to *remember*, which we gladly do. “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel” (2Tim 2:8). The Apostle mentions here **two things** that are particularly associated with his gospel. Both concern the man Jesus. While other parts of Christ’s work are elsewhere mentioned as part of this gospel, R. Kent Hughes may have figured out why these two things are mentioned here:

The command to “Remember Jesus Christ” calls for the remembrance of two things: **First**, he was “raised from the dead,” and, **second**, he was “descended from David.” These dual remembrances correspond to his two names “Jesus” and “Christ.” “Jesus” (his human name given him at his birth) matches “raised from the dead.” “Christ” (which means “Messiah”) matches “descended from David.” Interestingly, in the rest of 2 Timothy Paul uses the term “Christ Jesus,” but here he says “Jesus Christ” to correspond to the order of his emphases.⁵

⁵ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 201.

In other words, this is the only time in the letter that Paul chooses this order for the name and title of our Lord.

Now, this verse appears in the second chapter of 2 Timothy. But it seems to be **paralleled** in some ways in an **approximately similar spot** in the first chapter. These parallels will show you why I've chosen these texts for this week. Paul has already said, "... our Savior Christ Jesus, who *abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*" (1:10). This is not the only similarity the two chapters share. Both begin with a reference to Timothy as Paul's "**child**" (1:2; 2:1). Both have Paul mentioning the "**grace**" that came to Timothy from Christ Jesus (1:2; 2:1). Right after that, Paul recalls himself in both places, in the first thanking God that he serves "**as did my ancestors**" (1:3), and in the second that he told Timothy the gospel "**in the presence of many witnesses**" (2:2). In other words, Paul is surrounded in both places by **a group of people**.

From here, the two chapters diverge for a few verses, only to come back together with several similar themes. The first is **suffering** [**implies Christ's suffering**] "**Share in suffering for the gospel...**" (1:8). "...as preached in my gospel, for which I am *suffering...*" (2:8-9). In both, he then immediately turns to the themes of **election** and **salvation**

and other parts of the aptly named “golden chain of salvation.” In the first he said God “*saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began*” (1:9). This is what caused him to them talk about the resurrection of Jesus (10). In the second, he immediately talks about how he endures “*everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” (2:10).⁶ And again, this causes him to reflect upon Christ’s resurrection, but this time as it impacts us, “*The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him*” (11).

In the first chapter, all this is followed by Timothy following “*the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me*” (1:13), while in the second chapter, it is the word of God that precedes the discussion. “*But the word of God is not bound!*” (2:9). Finally, the first chapter concludes with *two names*, names of men who have turned away from Paul and the Gospel (*Phygelus* and *Hermogenes*; 1:15), while the second chapter also ends with two names, names of men who are spreading false doctrine about ... the *resurrection*

⁶ *Eternal Glory* continues in vs. 12 with, “*If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.*” But this also has a parallel in 1:12, “*I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day.*”

(**Hymenaeus** and **Philetus**; **17-18**). But the second chapter doesn't end until a few more comments are given about how **election** and **sanctification** and the **resurrection** impact the believer now (**18-21**). This sufficiently demonstrates that the two chapters are meant to be read together. In fact, just like the interplay between the king, the messenger, and his Gospel in Demetrius, so also there is an obvious interplay in our two chapters between King Jesus, the messenger, those who gives the good news, and the gospel.

Parallels between 2 Timothy 1 and 2 Timothy 2

<p>² To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.</p>	<p>ESV 2 Timothy 2:1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,</p>
<p>³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors ...</p>	<p>² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.</p>
<p>⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,</p>	<p>³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus ... ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering...</p>
	<p>⁹ ... But the word of God is not bound!</p>
<p>⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,</p>	<p>¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.</p>
<p>¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,</p>	<p>¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;</p>

<p>¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me,</p>	
<p>¹⁵ You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.</p>	<p>¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,</p>
	<p>¹⁹ But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." ²⁰ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.</p>

Five Golden Links (x2)

To explain and apply this interplay to you, I want to **compare and contrast** the so-called **Golden Chain of Salvation** with the **five parts of the Apostle's Creed** which pertain directly to the life of Jesus. I believe you can make a case that all ten elements are to be found here in 2 Timothy! This is important because together, they give us the fullness of the Gospel and its implications in our life. The way I look at it is that the **Apostle's Creed summarizes for us the objective Gospel**, the good news about Jesus that we need to hear. It is wholly about him and nothing about us. **The chain, on the other hand, is the subjective Gospel**, the good

news about the work of Jesus that is about us and how and why it is that his death and life can be ours.

A vital question we must ask is, “**What is the Gospel?**” Sadly, the **majority** of people who call themselves Christians **get neither side of this coin right**. They simply can’t tell you what the Gospel is. They have no idea. Surveys have increasingly shown that most people think the Gospel has something to do with *loving your neighbor as yourself* or *God helps those who help themselves* or some variation. The first is not the Gospel, it is the law. The Golden Rule taught by Jesus is not the Golden Chain of Salvation. Loving your neighbor is not what makes a person a Christian, otherwise, salvation is wholly of good works and literally has nothing to do with Christ. Helping yourself, that’s not even in the Bible, but rather is a Greek proverb popularized by Aesop and Benjamin Franklin. It has its place up to a point, but that place is not the Gospel.

Because of **the feud with Roman Catholics** during the Reformation, even many Reformed Protestants get confused on this question. This is understandable, given the book of Galatians. In that book, it is very clear that the Gospel centers on justification by faith alone. This is in fact the Gospel. But it is *the Golden Chain part* of the Gospel—the

Gospel's *subjective* component, the thing that gets the work of Christ to a believer. However, **the entire church since time immemorial** has always confessed the objective gospel—the creeds, that is the Triune God and especially the work of Jesus Christ on this earth. This is *the objective* Gospel. Together they work to bring the good news of what Jesus has done in this world to become the good news of what Jesus does in the hearts and minds and lives of sinners.

The Golden Chain of Salvation

So **what is the Golden Chain of Salvation?** Many Reformers, perhaps first beginning with Zwingli (1527) called **Romans 8:29-30** an *armilla aurea*, a golden bracelet or chain.⁷ It became a popular saying due to the Puritan **William Perkins** who gave a book this title in 1590. This passage in Romans refers to five historical elements of salvation. The “**For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those**

⁷ See **Richard Muller**, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 161–63. Muller has the first reference to this in Zwingli (1527), later by Vermingli (d. 1562), and many others after these. See also **J. V. Fesko**, “Romans 8.29-30 and the Question of the Ordo Salutis,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 8 (2014): 41-50.

whom he *called* he also justified, and those whom he *justified* he also *glorified*” (Rom 8:29-30).

The chain gives us five unbreakably chained links of God’s purposes, plans, and actions in the lives of his elect. They take us from before the foundation of the world all the way into eternity future. While they are unbreakably linked, they are nevertheless separate doctrines and events that span ages of time.

Foreknowledge is the most confusing of the five. It does not refer, as the compound word might lead you to believe, to God somehow looking down the corridors of time to see what someone will choose. Read carefully. It is not God’s foreknowledge *of our actions or choices*. Rather, it is God’s foreknowledge *of us*. James Boice explains,

It means that God “sets his special love upon” a person or “elects” a person to salvation. This is a characteristic use of the word in the Old Testament. In Amos 3:2, which I mentioned in the last study, the King James Version has the words, “You only have I *known* [Hebrew, *yāda*] of all the families of the earth.” That does not refer to God’s knowledge in the usual sense of knowing all things, because in that sense God would have to be said to “know” all people and not just the people of Israel. In this verse the word has

the meaning “set a special love upon” or “choose.” [Hence] the New International Version sharpens the meaning by translating Amos 3:2 with the words, “You only have I *chosen....*”⁸

Thus, **before the foundation of the world**, God sets his special love upon certain people and groups of people, before they are born, before they have done anything good or bad. This is God’s purpose in election. Without using the term, 2 Timothy clearly alludes to this when he says this is not “**because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began**” (2Tim 1:9).

If foreknowledge is the most confusing, **predestination is often the most upsetting**. This should never be so. What a most gracious doctrine this is! Unlike the former, this compound word *does mean* exactly what the compound makes you think it means. It means to **determine beforehand**. Predestination is different foreknowledge. The former has in mind a person. The latter has in mind **something that will happen** to that person. If God sets his love upon his elect, then predestination determines what he has set his love upon them to do.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: The Reign of Grace*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 921.

Now, everyone who reads the Bible knows that predestination is found throughout its pages. But some get so upset with the word that they look only to one aspect of its usage. Many will suggest that predestination only applies to groups and not to individuals and that those groups (since they are groups) must only be predestined to something like good works. This *is* a biblical use of the word. However, it is equally as biblical that **God sets his love upon individuals**, not just groups (like Israel or “the church), and that he does not predestine them merely to good works, but in fact he first predestines them **to salvation**. Only those who are saved can then begin to truly do good works that are done to glorify and honor God. That same verse mentioned a moment ago clearly teaches predestination. Not “**because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began**” (**2Tim 1:9**). Thus, in ch. 2’s parallel, Paul endures everything for the sake of “**the elect**” (**2:10**).

If the first two links take place **before our births** and before time began, the next two take place **during our lives**, after we are born, each at a specific time in the course of our sojourn here. The third link is “**calling**.” Now, God calls all people in a general way. When the good news goes out to

anyone, they are called. Jesus says, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). This clearly has the calling broader than the choosing. But the call in Romans refers not to the loving, general call, but to the very special gracious effectual call that raises a person from the dead. As when Jesus told the dead man, “Lazarus, come out [of the grave],” so the effectual call of the voice of Christ raises the spiritually dead to life. Paul talks about this directly in 2 Timothy. God “saved us and called us to a holy calling” (1:9). When we hear the voice of the Savior, we need the call, for the sheep hear his voice and listen to their Shepherd.

The fourth link in the chain may historically be the most nuanced of the words. The word is “justified/justification.” Even though this is the “chief article” of the Reformation, I was told by at least one professor in seminary that we really shouldn’t use this word today, because people won’t understand what it means. I found that offensive then. But it doesn’t even jive with reality. Someone writes,

Actually, there is nothing more familiar to people today than “justification.” Not only are we the most litigious society in history, all of us are bent on self-justification. I justify my actions; my production at work; my inaction. I justify my failings; my claims to respect; my “people.” I justify my

feelings of anger or hatred; my attitudes. I justify myself over against my family, colleagues, etc. It never ends. Self-justification is often the bane of our existence, particularly in relationships in home, family and church. With God, self-justification is deadly.⁹

The Greek term (*dikaioō*) is not used by Paul in 2 Timothy. It is a courtroom term that means to be declared righteous by being found not guilty. That sounds simple enough, until you realize that for 1000 years, due to the translation of Jerome into Latin, the word was understood by the translation *justificare*, which is a combination of “righteousness” (*justus*) and “to make” (*facare*). In other words, we are not declared righteous, but *made* righteous. Through the slow importation of works into salvation and the moving of justification from the beginning to the end of a person’s life, Rome twisted justification to become the making righteous of a person through the sacraments, through good works, and through the final verdict on judgment day. We would call this sanctification and glorification. This is was not, as Paul taught, the once-for-all declaration of not guilty that takes place when a person

⁹ Matthew Harrison, “Justification, our ‘Chief Article,’” *The Lutheran Witness* (Feb 28, 2016), <https://witness.lcms.org/2016/justification-our-chief-article/>.

believes in Christ alone. Though there is a declaration at the end of time (“**Well done, good and faithful servant**”), and in a sense this is justification, that declaration is rooted in the justification that takes place the moment a person believes and begins to follow Christ the Lord. Hence, *it comes after the calling* and before the last link in the chain. A parallel word to this in 2 Timothy seems to be “salvation.” “**God saved us...**” (1:9). (The aorist here in all English translations is past tense.) The Apostle works tirelessly that the elect “**may obtain the *salvation* that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory**” (2:10).

Eternal glory takes us to the **fifth** and last link in the chain. We are **glorified**. Curiously, Paul uses the past tense in Romans,¹⁰ as if it has already happened. And yet, glorification happens only upon death and the receiving of our resurrected bodies. The word defines **a translation from one state of being to another**, from sin to sinlessness, from the age of the flesh to the age of the spirit, from a body that

¹⁰ Technically, it is an aorist indicative, but Black explains, “The word *aorist*, as we have seen, means “unlimited” or “undefined.” It was given to this tense by grammarians to denote that the action spoken of is to be regarded simply as an event, without any regard to the time in which it occurs or the length of time during which it has been going on. However, this statement must be qualified with respect to the indicative mood. Here the aorist has an augment and is generally used of events that are spoken of as occurring in *past* time. It is therefore the most suitable Greek tense to translate the English simple past tense (‘I heard,’ ‘I believed,’ ‘I was saved’). Thus, the aorist indicative is a past-tense form, but it is the augment, the sign of past time, that makes it so, not the term *aorist*.” **David Alan Black**, *It’s Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 104.

is being corrupted and dying to one that is incorruptible and, as the word said, eternal. So **why the past tense** in Romans? It is because the Apostle is viewing the entire chain from the perspective of the eternal decrees. God's plan and purpose for his people is **so certain** that it is as if they are already all glorified now, even though the historical reality is that many of them are even still under the wrath of God (**Eph 2:1**) or have not yet even been born. But viewing it this way helps the Christian understand the certainty with which God is going to bring all of the stages of the plan to pass exactly as he has decreed. Nothing can thwart his will, not even we ourselves. And this is good news!

The Five Works of Christ in the Creed

I will **return to this subjective** aspect of the Gospel later. For now, I want to move to **the objective news** of the Gospel. This is the truth that deals with the **historical person known as Jesus Christ**. Like any objective news, you first have to hear it in order to know it and then believe it. Nothing in this world could lead you to the conclusion that 2,000 years ago, God sent his only begotten Son to this earth to do a work so fantastic, the world would still be shaken by it millennia later. Someone must tell it to you.

The Apostles' Creed as we know it today has its roots in what is called the *Old Roman Creed* or *Symbol*. This 2nd-Century Rule of Faith was a **tripartite** creed divided up into Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It really isn't all that different from the Apostles' Creed. Like the Apostles' Creed, it is composed of twelve lines of doctrine, one for each of the twelve Apostles.

All I'm concerned with today are the lines that deal with Jesus in *The Apostles' Creed*. Six of the Twelve deal with him. However, the first is about his person, not his work. It says, “[I believe] in Jesus Christ, his [the Father's] only Son, our Lord.” The next five take us through his life from the beginning of his First Coming in human flesh to the Second Coming in Glory. Curiously, there is a more than interesting **correspondence** between these five and the order of the five links in the Golden Chain, as we will see.

As typically understood, the first of the five declarations of the work of Christ deals with **his incarnation**. “... who was conceived from the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.” Isaiah had predicted, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall his name Immanuel (God With Us)” (**Isa 7:14**). He later predicted, “To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon

his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor (or Angel of the Great Council), Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6). Incredibly, he said this human would be God in the flesh. Again, just a little later, he also predicted the Spirit. “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him” (Isa 11:2), predicting both his heavenly lineage and the Spirit’s work in his life. The idea in the first line of the creed is found in 2 Timothy when Paul mentions the “Offspring of David” (2Tim 2:8) and yet also “Lord” (equating him with God; cf. 1:18). It is fascinating to think that the birth of the Savior corresponds to the foreknowledge of God of the elect. One is the *beginning* of the Incarnate Son’s work for us. The other is the *beginning* of the eternal God’s work of salvation for us, as we have already seen, “which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (1:9). Hence, the objective meets the subjective.

The second line of the five moves quickly through Jesus’ life. It takes us to what we call his passive obedience. This refers to his suffering in his Passion, which we have observed throughout this last week. “... who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.” This fits very much with so much of the letter’s discussion of suffering. Paul is suffering right now in prison for this. Timothy will

suffer (he will be killed as well for his faith many years later). All Christians will suffer. And it is because Christ himself suffered.

The Creed roots this suffering of Jesus, not in prehistory, not in legend, not even in myth, but in **history**. **Pontius Pilate** was the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judaea from 27-37 AD. We have a first century piece of limestone called the Pilate Stone that bears his name. He had coins minted. Josephus tells us about him in his histories. As even the Wikipedia tells us, he was the best-attested governor of Judaea. The claim of the good news is that the suffering of Jesus really happened, and Pilate was overseeing it.

The climax of this second of the five doctrines is that Jesus was *crucified, died, and was buried*. From his betrayal by Judas to his trial that night to the mocking and scourging he endured, and now to the cross, the most brutal form of capital punishment devised by the Romans, the point is, Jesus died. His death was, as the Law of Moses says, a curse, for “**cursed is anyone who is hanged on a tree**” (**Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13**). He was **cursed** ... for us. He took our **punishment**. Our sins deserve **death**. Jesus took that upon himself, though no guilt was found in him by God. As Isaiah

again foretold 600 years earlier, “He was *despised* and *rejected* by men, a man of *sorrows* and acquainted with *grief* ... Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him *stricken*, *smitten* by God, and *afflicted*. But he was *pierced* for our transgressions; he was *crushed* for our iniquities; upon him was the *chastisement* that brought us peace, and with his *wounds* we are healed” (Isa 53:3-5).

Paul clearly discusses this in 2 Timothy. Jesus “*abolished death*” (1:10) because he died. And we “*died with him*” (2:11). This second of the five points in the creed has a remarkable correspondence to *predestination*, the second link of the chain. Peter preaches, “For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place” (Acts 4:27-28), and yet through this predestined punishment of the Innocent Lamb (which he willingly undertook), we are predestined “*to be saved*” (2Th 2:13) and also to *suffer* for Christ (Php 1:29; Acts 9:15-16). Again, objective meets subjective.

The *third* of the five doctrines in the Creed takes us to what we celebrate on Easter and *every Lord’s Day*! He

“*descended* into hell and *rose* again from the dead on the third day...” It is interesting that the descent into hell is put traditionally with the resurrection as being part of a **single line** of doctrine.¹¹ The **descent into hell** is misunderstood by many. Sometimes, people who want to affirm the doctrine but don’t understand the original meaning want to say that Jesus suffered the hellish forsaking of the Father on the cross, which is true enough. But the descent into hell is not to be considered part of his suffering in the Creed, as it takes place after he has died. **Jesus did not suffer in hell**. Rather, the descent into hell refers to two things. First, he went to the place of the dead. Everyone who died prior to the resurrection went to Sheol. Sheol is always translated as Hades in the LXX. Second, Jesus went to hell and proclaimed to the evil spirits of the underworld his **victory** over them, whereupon he took the keys of hades, emptied Abraham’s bosom, and took a train of saints with him to heaven.¹² This shows us that even the Gospel of Jesus is, like

¹¹ A rare dissenter is **Pelbartus Ladislaus of Temesvár** (late 15th century) who divides this article into two, and combines the resurrection of the body and life everlasting into one.

¹² The Creed uses *katotata* (Gk) and *inferna* (Lat) for “hell.” Schaff writes, “*Descendit ad inferna* (other Latin copies: *ad inferos*, to the *inhabitants* of the spirit-world; so also in the Athanasian Symbol), κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα (other Eastern creeds: εἰς ᾗδου, viz., τόπον, or εἰς τὸν ᾗδην), *he descended into Hades*. This clause was unknown in the older creeds, though believed in the Church, and was transferred into the Roman symbol after the fifth century, probably from that of Aquilcia, A.D. 390, where it first appears among Latin creeds, as we learn from Rufinus. In the East it is found before in Arian creeds (about 360). After this we

the word is so often used with the Greeks, news of a military victory.

The resurrection is inextricably tied to the descent. Jesus doesn't proclaim anything, he doesn't free anyone and bring them to heaven, unless he himself rises from the dead. Predicted again by Isaiah in the same place the death, "When

meet it again in the Creed of Venantius Fortunatus, A.D. 590, who had the Creed of Rufinus before him. The words κατώτατα and *inferna*, taken from Eph. 4:9, correspond here to the Greek Ἅιδης, which occurs eleven times in the Greek Testament, viz., Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Cor. 15:55; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14, and is always incorrectly translated *hell* in the English Version, except in 1 Cor. 15:55. *Hades* signifies, like the Hebrew *Sheol*, the unseen spirit-world, the abode of all the departed, both the righteous and wicked; while *hell* (probably from the Saxon word *helan*, to cover, to conceal), at least in modern usage, is a much narrower conception, and signifies the state and place of eternal damnation, like the Hebrew *gehenna*, which occurs twelve times in the Greek Testament, and is so translated in the English Bible, viz., Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6. The American editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* leave it optional with the minister to use, in the Creed, *hell*, or *the place of departed spirits*; but it would be much better to restore or popularize the Greek *Hades*. The current translation, *hell*, is apt to mislead, and excludes the important fact—the only one which we *certainly* know of the mysterious *triduum*—that Christ was in *Paradise* in the time between the crucifixion and the resurrection, according to his own declaration to the penitent thief, Luke 23:43. Some connect the descent into Hades with the resurrection in one article; while others, on the contrary, connect it with the preceding article by placing a (,) after buried. It forms rather a separate article, and should be included in (;), as above.

“The clause has been explained in three different ways: 1. It is identical with *sepultus* (Rufinus), or means ‘continued in the state of death and under the power of death’ till the resurrection (Westminster divines). This makes it a useless repetition in figurative language. 2. It signifies the intensity of Christ’s sufferings on the cross, where he tasted the pain of hell for sinners (Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism). This is inconsistent with the order of the clause between death and resurrection. 3. An actual self-manifestation of Christ after the crucifixion to all the departed spirits, Luke 23:43; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Pet. 3:18, 19; 4:6; comp. Eph. 4:8, 9; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:10; Rev. 1:18. As such the descent is a part of the universality of the scheme of redemption, and forms the transition from the state of humiliation to the state of exaltation. This is the historical explanation, according to the belief of the ancient Church, but leaves much room for speculation concerning the object and effect of the descent.”¹²

Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 45, n. 2.

his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; *he shall prolong his days...*” (Isa 53:10). My favorite telling of the event has to be in John’s Gospel. Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, while it was still dark. But she saw the stone had been rolled away. Make no mistake, this was not a stone any twelve men could move together out of its rut, let alone a man who had just been crucified. Besides, Roman soldiers were guarding with their life. Nevertheless, it was moved.

Mary then ran to Simon Peter and the one whom Jesus loved and told them that someone has taken the Lord out of the tomb. Peter high tailed it over to the tomb, but *the other disciple was younger and faster* and he beat him to it. When he looked in, all he saw was the linen cloths and the face cloth, not crinkled up, but folded up. As Mary stood outside weeping, she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. They said to her, “*Woman, why are you weeping?*” She told them the same thing, when she was startled by someone standing behind her. It was Jesus (See *John 20:1-16*). The greatest miracle in history, a man predicting his own resurrection and then doing it, had occurred. And the world has never been the same.

Paul directly tells us again and again that Jesus has “brought life” (2Tim 1:10) because he has “risen” (2:8). The “resurrection” is real (2:18). This resurrection also has an amazing parallel to the third link of the chain: calling. When Jesus effectually called Lazarus, what happened to the man? He rose from the dead. Thus, the calling of God bring life when there was death.

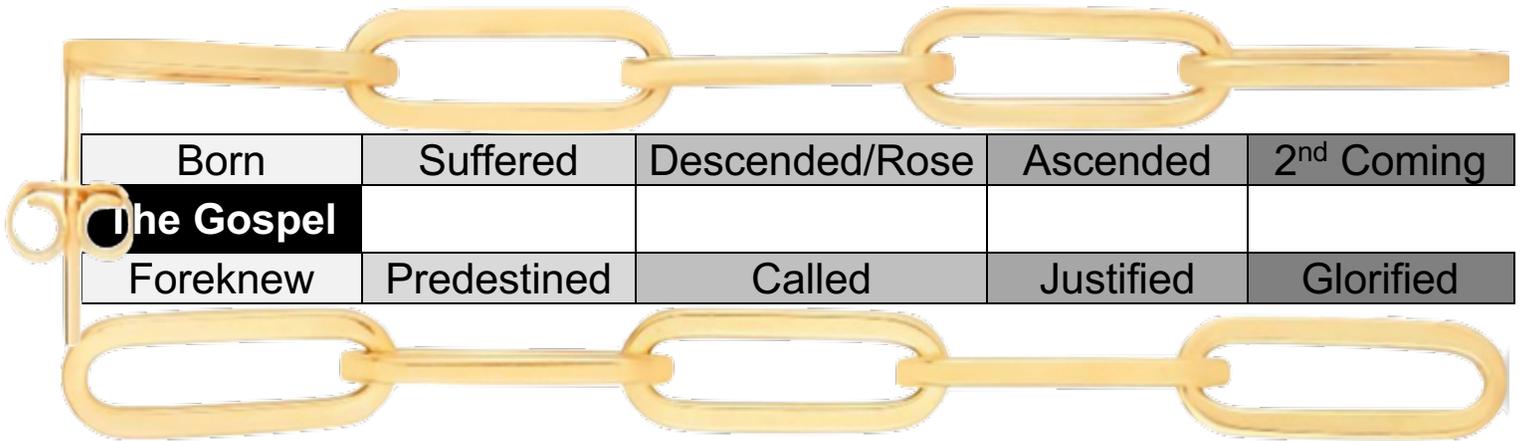
The fourth line of doctrine in the creed teaches us about the ascension of Christ. He “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.” The ascension is in my estimation the most neglected of all the doctrines of the work of Christ. Jesus had told Mary, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). The ascension of Christ to the right hand of power is his elevation as the God-man to the angels and saints in heaven that Jesus is King of kings. It is his prize for the good news he won for us. Now, all things have been put into subjection to him, whether in heaven or on earth.

Paul talks about the ascension in a round-about way in 2 Timothy when he says, “We shall reign with him” (2Tim 2:12). This fourth line of doctrine about our Lord’s work is again parallel to the fourth link in the chain. Jesus’ ascent into heaven is what allows him to stand before the Father in

the divine council as our advocate. Job knew even 2,000 years earlier that he has an “advocate in heaven, and he testifies for me on high” (Job 16:19). And God justified even the OT saints “by faith” (Rom 4:3; etc.). But God had to only pass over sins in the OT era, because Jesus had not yet paid the price with his blood (Rom 3:25). But now, he is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (26), and we have a mediator who pleads our case in heaven so that the court declares us not guilty, because Jesus has ascended as the God-man and he is always interceding and always acting as our advocate, even when we sin. That’s precisely why he came in the first place. What kind of good news is this that anyone who looks to the Son could have such gifts?

The fifth and last line of the creed dealing with Jesus’ work is about his Second Coming. It teaches, “He will come again to judge the living and the dead.” Paul clearly has this in mind in 2 Timothy when he says that he suffers as he does, not ashamed because he knows the one he has believed and he is “convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me” (2Tim 1:12). That Day refers to the Second Coming, when Jesus will judge the living and the dead. Again, this has a remarkable correspondence to the

fifth link. For that Day is what **brings glorification** to all the saints of God. On it, we receive our glorified bodies. Hence, we will be glorified.



Born	Suffered	Descended/Rose	Ascended	2 nd Coming
The Gospel				
Foreknew	Predestined	Called	Justified	Glorified

Golden Chain of Salvation		Christ's Work	
Romans	2 Timothy	Apostle's Creed	2 Timothy
Foreknew	Before the ages began (1:9)	Birth	Offspring of David (2:8)
Predestined	His purposes (1:9), the elect (2:10)	Suffering/death	Abolished death (1:10), died w/ him (2:11)
Called	Called (1:9)	Descent/resurrection	Brought life (1:10); Risen (2:8), Resurrection (2:18)
Justified	Saved (1:9), salvation (2:10)	Ascension	Reign with him (2:12)
Glorified	Eternal glory (2:10), reign (2:12)	Second Coming	Until that Day (1:12)

Each of these ten things are **made known to us through the Gospel**. The Gospel of the Bible is the Good News of what Jesus has done in history *and* what Jesus does for any

who trust in him to save them from their rebellion and sin against God. It is objective and subjective. This means that which is outside of you can somehow come into you and change you forever. How?

The **job of the Gospel** is to be **the power of God** to do that. In 2 Timothy, it is the Gospel “**by the power of God**” (**2Tim 1:8**). The **job of the messenger** is to take the good news and faithfully proclaim it to those who need to hear it. That messenger will receive his reward, though even, I suppose, if he tries to find a clever way to give it like Aristodemus did and had to wait a while before the King’s frustration subsided.

The **job of the hearer** is now before us. You must believe it. Do you believe it? There has been **war** and the consequences of that battle are for your very soul and eternal destiny. If you are **aloof** to this war, **busy** about your life such that you don’t care about it, too **young** to think it matters to you, or perhaps you have **forgotten** about it, or you are just now being **told** for the first time, then you must know that the only person who is going to receive this good news of victory is the one who, like Antigonus was “**struggling for so high a stake ... disturbed, and ... with difficulty**” finding yourself on the seat of your pants

wanting to know the outcome. That outcome has been proclaimed to you this Resurrection Day.

God himself **has come** in human flesh. He has **suffered and died**, paying the penalty all deserve. He has proclaimed his victory and taken the keys of hell itself, **rising from the dead** as the victor over the grave. He has **ascended to heaven** to the right hand of power where now all things are being put into subjection to him. He is coming to judge you and me and all people. What will he say to you?

The Gospel alone is the key that takes this history and moves it into your heart. For, don't you see, that God did not do this merely to glorify himself through the work of the Son, but also to glorify himself through the salvation of his people. Before time began, he **set his love** upon them. He **predestined** them to salvation and sanctification in good works. He **calls** them in time, and perhaps he is calling you this very moment. Are you listening? Are you understanding what good news the messenger is delivering to you? The victory is his and the spoils can be yours. God will **justify** anyone who bows their knee to Jesus Christ alone, and who trusts him to forgive them though they are guilty and to set them apart in this life as holy (which is the subject of much of the second chapter of 2 Timothy as we

will see next time), and to take them to heaven because nothing can separate them from the love that is in Christ Jesus. God will take these people there and **glorify** them for eternity with a future that words cannot express, for no man has seen or heard what God has prepared for those who love him.

This is what it means that Jesus has been raised. Hear the call of him upon your life now and do not delay in responding to the good news. Pray and confess your sin and his authority over your life and come to know what Easter and the Lord's Day has always meant to those who have received the Good News. And persevere to the end, no matter the cost, for this is what he tells his disciple Timothy as he talks about the Good News to this seasoned Christian.

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