

DEATH INTO GLORY

THE APOSTLES CREED - Part 2

Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you guys here this morning. Please turn in your Bibles to Hebrews Chapter 2 as that is where we are going to be this morning. I think pollen is in the air now causing lots of allergies, and I kind of let it rip the first service so my voice is feeling pretty weak right now. So I am going to ask you to pray for my voice, and I am going to lead us in prayer to draw our hearts close to God right now. So please pray for me as I pray for us and I will really appreciate it. Let's bow our heads and go before our Savior.

Jesus, we are grateful for this opportunity to worship you and to praise you. We sang songs to you that I hope were more than songs. I pray, Jesus, that right now in the next few minutes that you would give me the strength to proclaim the beauty and the power of your death and sacrifice for us. So God I just thank you again for this opportunity and I pray that you will open our hearts and our minds to understand what it is that you have for us. We just trust in you, Lord, for all things. We pray these things in your name. Amen.

Well we are in a series on the Apostles Creed. And the Apostles Creed is one of the most ancient creeds of the Christian faith. It is hundreds and hundreds of years old. And when we think about creeds a lot of times it just kind of feels like they are stuffy and stale, and a lot of times they just doesn't feel exciting. When we say we are doing a series on creeds in our church it doesn't move the needle up much for people, but I know that creeds are still an active and a regular part of our lives today in 21st Century America.

If you don't believe me, I want you to look at these yard signs which are like some you might see around town. I am not going to talk about what is said on some yard signs; I am just pointing out something to you. So the sign may say – 'We Believe Black Lives Matter, Women's Rights are Human Rights, No Human is Illegal, Science is Real, Love is Love, or Kindness is Everything.' Now by reading that sign in someone's yard, you kind of know who lives there, right? You kind of know what kind of person they may be; you might even guess how they voted in November. And we do that. We are looking at those statements, and again I am not going to pick those statements apart, I am just using it as an illustration as a means to point out that we are creedal people. Even people who don't necessarily believe in the God of the Bible have creeds that they live by.

So when we talk about creeds we have to understand that this is a bedrock foundation for our life. Each of these statements that we are going to be discussing in the Apostles Creed is made so that we can understand what the significance of the statement is and how it impacts our lives. A couple of weeks ago Dan preached on 'God the Father, maker of heaven and earth.' And then last week we released a series of podcasts on that second kind of section about 'Jesus Christ, His only Son, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.' And the reason why we did that on

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podcasts is we were trying to get to the section of ‘He rose again,’ for Easter. So we kind of moved some things around.

And the reason why those statements about Jesus are important is because we have to understand that Jesus was fully man and fully God. And any belief system that does not fully emphasize the dual natures of Jesus Christ being fully divine and fully human, if any belief system diminishes His divinity or His humanity, then that belief system is heresy. We have to make sure that we fully embrace the belief that Jesus was fully man and fully God.

And that leads us to our statement today which is – ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.’ And if you think about that statement, you will see that it is very interesting that we as Christians emphasize and highlight the death of our Savior. Did you ever think about that? I mean sometimes when you grow up in the church, when you are around Christian people and you have heard it most of your life, isn’t it sometimes see odd to you that we want to make a big deal about how our Savior, our Lord died?

Normally death doesn’t sound like something that is that exciting. In fact most of us when death comes up in the conversation, when death happens around us, when death happens to a loved one, it is tragic and there is sorrow, there is pain, and there is anguish. There is something inside of us emotionally that when death touches our lives there is something inside of us that says, ‘*It shouldn’t be like this.*’ And death is a reminder that we were made for life, that God originally created us for life. So what is it about Jesus’ death that really we want to emphasize, that we want to talk about? Do you realize we just sang songs this morning about Jesus dying? And someone who is not used to that may want a time out. They don’t think this is normal. So what is it about the death of Jesus?

In every generation and in every culture there is this question of what does it mean to be a Christian, what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? Each of these statements that are given in the Apostles Creed have kind of a dividing line indicating that if you do not hold to this orthodox view you are not really a Christian. And so we talk about God’s nature, about how He is the creator of heaven and earth. Then we talk about Jesus and His dual nature of humanity and divinity. And now we are going to talk about His death.

Why is His death so significant? Why do we have to believe it? There are reasons why His death is so significant and so important to talk about and why we are making it an emphasis this morning. And I think one of the issues that we face as people who have grown up in the church is that many times when we talk about the death of Jesus and we talk about His crucifixion is we only understand the historical realities of that event. And many times we make these theological statements as a mental assent of the reality of it like. ‘*Yes, I believe Jesus died on the cross.*’

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And then we just leave it there. It doesn't change us, it doesn't transform us, and it doesn't drive us in ways that it is supposed to. And there is a reason why I know this to be true. Keep your Bible marked in Hebrews Chapter 2, but turn in your Bibles to Revelations Chapter 5 and verses 11 through 13. Here we can see a glimpse of the throne room of heaven. And in the glimpse of the throne room of heaven we see they are worshipping Jesus. John has this sneak peek into the throne room of heaven, where this worship gathering is happening. Listen at what they are singing about and listen to whom they are praising.

“Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.” John is saying that there were literally millions and millions of these creatures around Jesus and they are all praising Him.

“Saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!””

There is something about the death of Jesus that makes angels, people, and animals bow down in worship. Think about that! This is one of the most unbelievable things that we can imagine. When we think about the cross of Jesus Christ, when we think about His death, what does it drive you to do? What is the response inside of you? Listen, I grew up in the church, I grew up as a pastor's kid, and I had no choice but to sit in the second row at church. I heard about the cross, I sang about the cross, I heard about the nails in His hand and in His feet and the crown of thorns. I knew about His blood being spilled, but I am telling you that one of the great dangers that I experienced as a young person growing up in the church is that it just became stale information.

And His death is supposed to transform us. It is supposed to be worship. The reason why this is so significant is I wonder how many of us are moved emotionally, are moved in our hearts, souls and minds when we think of Jesus' death. What drives us to understand more about the cross and the death of Jesus Christ? Another reason why this is significant is because maybe you are sitting here and you are still trying to figure out the Christian faith. You have questions. And whether you are a seeker or a skeptic maybe the death of Jesus doesn't make sense to you.

And the reason why this is so significant for you to understand is because we believe that the death of Jesus is the turning point of human history. That it is His death that helps us understand death ourselves. We all understand that every single one of us is going to die someday. And it doesn't matter what our background is, or how much money we have, or how famous we are. It doesn't matter what race we are or what

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ethnicity. Death is a common human experience. And one of the things that you need to ask whether you are a seeker or a skeptic is – how do I prepare for death?

The Christian faith teaches us that how we understand death and believe about it humanly speaking needs to change. And that is why we are going to look at Hebrews Chapter 2 this morning. Hebrews Chapter 2 is a very theological deep passage. Sometimes we have these sermons that are inspirational and we feel like going out and charging hell with a squirt gun. Sometimes we have those inspirational sermons, but this is not one of those.

Sometimes we have very practical sermons about working our faith and those are good. But this is a theological sermon. This is a sermon that I hope will awaken our hearts and minds to the theological realities of what Jesus' death means. And make no mistake that in itself is entirely practical as well. Every problem that we have on the face of this earth today we can find the solution in Jesus Christ and in His death and in His resurrection. So we must always understand that the death of Jesus is the dividing line of human history, and it is also the dividing line of humans and what they believe His death really means.

Let's start reading in Hebrews Chapter 2 and beginning in verse 9 through 18. I wish I could read the whole chapter but for the sake of time we won't. One of these days we are going to have a church service that starts at 6a and I am going to preach for two hours. We will let you know when we start that. I had to cut half of my notes this morning in the first service and I still preached 50 minutes. I am trying, but this is important.

Let me remind you that Hebrews was written to an audience of followers of Jesus that were Jewish. And they had grown up with the temple, with the sacrifices and with the Old Testament laws. They knew the Old Testament and they knew the Hebrew way of doing things. And then they had chosen to follow Christ, but the problem was that some of them were deciding they wanted to go back to their old beliefs. They weren't sure if He was really the Savior, if He was really the Messiah. So the entire point of Hebrews is that the author is saying that Jesus is better than the angels, He is better than Moses, He is the better sacrifice, He is the better high priest, and He is the better everything. He is what we find is the ultimate. And the author in verse 9 is talking about Jesus and His death.

So Hebrews Chapter 2 and verse 9 says this: ***“But we see Him (meaning Jesus) who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”***

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“For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers, in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

“And again, “I will put my trust in Him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children God has given me.” Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

This is a deep passage and a rich passage. There are a lot of big words and theological concepts. There is just some really awesome stuff in there. But here is what I want to try to teach you every single time I get to preach God’s Word and that is this – we have to ask the Bible questions. So when we read this passage what are the questions that we want to ask? We need to read the Bible with fresh eyes. Let’s not just kind of read over something but we need to think crucially about what we read.

As I was reading verse 9 it just captivated me. It captured my attention and it made me think about something that didn’t make sense to me. When we read verse 9 something should not make sense to us. Let’s look at verse 9 again. *““But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor.”* Now I get that. I get Jesus crowned with glory and honor. Why? It is because He is the Son of God and He deserves glory and honor.

The verse goes on: *“Crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death.”* Whoa, time out. Jesus is crowned with glory and honor, with worship, with praise and with adulation. There is this divinity with a crown over Him and glory and honor *“Because of the suffering of death.”*

Now when we think of death, what do we think of? We always think of death as a loss. So why in the world is the death of someone a victory? Why is Jesus’ death the very thing that makes Him have glory and honor? This is what drives us crazy, because it is something significant that must have happened in this particular death. As human beings when we face death we are not saying, ‘*Man, this is glorious.*’ Death in its own nature is sad, it is tragic, and it means loss.

So Jesus did something to death that made it have glory and honor. Do you get it? This is something so big, so huge because if all of us as human beings face death, and if every single one of us is bound by the curse of death, what do we do with death and how is death made glorious and honoring? This is what Jesus did. And not only did His death

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bring glory and honor to Himself, look at what it says in verse 10. ***“For it was fitting that He, (God the Father) for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”***

Not only does the death of Jesus cause Him to be crowned with glory and honor because of His death, but there is something about that death where the glory and honor of Jesus becomes our glory and honor. Now the death of the followers of Jesus becomes somewhat glorious and honoring. Can you believe that? Doesn't that just blow your mind?

Now we have to figure out why this is true. We need to understand what it going on here. So here is the main idea, and if you don't take anything else away this morning, please understand this, Jesus' death turned death into glory. Jesus' death turned the curse of death, the finality of death, the pain of death, the loss of death, the tragedy of death into glory. And not just for Him but for you and I. That is something that should just change our lives.

So how did He do that? How did Jesus turn death into glory for Himself and for you and me? Let's go back to verse 9 again and look at this. ***“But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels.”*** Let's just stop right there for a theological sidebar. When you meet someone, whether it is a Jehovah's Witness or Mormon, they may tell you this is talking about Jesus here being a little lower than the angels, and angels being less than God. And they will tell you that to try to convince you that Jesus is not fully divine.

Time out – when the author is talking about being a little lower than the angels he is talking about Jesus' humanity. He took on human flesh, and the nature of humanity is lower than the nature of angels. So that is what they are saying here when it says He was made a little lower than the angels. ***“Namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace He might taste death for everyone.”***

Okay, how did Jesus' death turn death into glory? Here is number one – by overcoming death for us. This idea of death is permeated throughout all Scripture. In fact a good follower of Jesus, someone who studies the Bible, needs to have a theology of death. And we know that death is mentioned in the first few pages of the Bible. God creates this beautiful world, this harmonious world, this world without evil, suffering, pain, sin and death. He creates everything and calls it 'good.' He creates humans and puts them into this beautiful garden with two trees. One tree was the tree of life which gave everlasting life, and the other tree was the knowledge of good and evil, and if they ate of that tree they would die. So this idea of death comes in the very beginning. In the very first story in the Bible death is introduced.

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And our first parents decided to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil because they wanted to be the rulers of their own existence and to throw off the shackles of God. And so death enters into the world. When the Bible talks about death, “***For the wages of sin is death,***” we have to understand that there are two dimensions of biblical death. And there is spiritual death and there is physical death. The spiritual death is the separation of our spirit from God, the relational separation. Physical death is our soul separating from our body, and spiritual death is our soul separating from our relationship with God. We understand that when the Bible talks about death it means the fullness of death, and it means we are dead in our trespasses and sins.

We understand that humans have a death problem, and it means that one day our bodies will physically die and our spirits will leave our bodies. And it is not just talking about that but the reality of you and I being separated from God. There is a separation that is present in our existence. And this is a huge problem because we don’t know how to fix the problem. We don’t know how to bridge it. We don’t know how to overcome death because when people die they die, and there is nothing we can do to avoid that. There is nothing you and I can do to fix the problem of the separation our souls have from God.

We see in Romans Chapter 5 and verse 12 this relationship between sin and death. When we sin, when we go against God’s ways, when we go against God’s perfect law sin enters in, and the consequence of sin is death. Listen to verse 12 where it says this: “***Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man*** (meaning Adam) ***and death through sin, so death spread to all men,***” because all have sinned. See all of us have a death problem. We all have a sin problem and we also have a death problem because death is the curse of sin.

Now what does it mean that Jesus tasted death for us? What is so significant about this? Jesus lived a perfect life so if anyone earned heaven, if anyone earned eternal life it would be Jesus. He obeyed the law. He obeyed God the Father perfectly. He didn’t have to die. In His human nature, fully nature and fully divine, He could have lived forever, but He chose to die. Why did He choose to die? It was so that He could take for us the condemnation and the consequences of our sin.

There is a word I want you to write down. It is the word ‘atonement.’ The word atonement is a word that we hear a lot of times referring to the relationship to the cross and the death of Jesus Christ. The atoning death of Jesus, what does that mean? The word atonement simply means ‘to cover an offense and reconcile the offender to the offended.’ To atone means ‘to cover an offense and to reconcile the offender to the offended.’

So how to atone for something depends on how big the offense is. For example, when I was a kid growing up my dad had a few treasured possessions in our house. On one of our mantels he had this carved wooden man on a horse. It wasn’t the most

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intricately beautiful thing but it was something that my dad's grandfather had carved and given to him. It was special because my dad's grandfather had fifty-one grandchildren. Can you imagine Christmas with that great grandfather? He was spread pretty thin to have time with all those grandkids. So anything my dad got from his grandfather was pretty special and very meaningful to him.

So he kept this carved man on a horse on the mantel and we were not allowed to touch it. We were threatened within an inch of our lives not to touch it. Well one day someone broke the man on the horse. One of the legs on the horse was broken off. My dad lined all three of us kids up and asked us who did it. He was really upset. We knew that one of us was going to get a spanking because this was spank worthy. To this day I promise you I did not do it. And no one else ever claimed responsibility for the broken leg on the horse either. I don't know who did it, but the problem was even if I had gotten on a stool and took down the horse and broke it, what could I have done about it? I might have tried to glue the leg back on but it would never have been the same as it was before. My dad's grandfather had long since died so he couldn't make my dad another one. This special gift given to my dad was forever marred, forever broken, and there was nothing that anyone could do to fix it back to its former state.

And that is a lot like you and me. We were created to have fellowship with God. We were created to walk with Him and to love Him. And sin breaks something inside of us and causes a big problem. The problem with our sin is that no one, no human on the planet can fix or cover up the offense that you and I have committed against God. Only Jesus can do that because He was perfect. He took his righteousness that He had earned and He gave it to us. What happened on the cross with His death is that God the Father placed on God the Son the sins of you and me and the sins of the world. It says He tasted death for everyone. He took the curse of sin on Himself. This is what Jesus did. He tasted death for everyone. We don't deserve this, we don't deserve a relationship with God, we don't deserve heaven, but He chose to offer this to us because we can't fix ourselves. Think about that, we can't save ourselves, we can't overcome our sin problem, and we can't overcome our death problem. There is nothing we can do to overcome that issue in our lives. Only Jesus can do that.

And that is confrontational today. I think Tim Keller wrote in his latest book that people believe that the only salvation we need today is just this idea that we just need to be saved from something, that we don't need a Savior; we can fix our own problems because we aren't that bad, and God isn't real. And they take away this idea that we need salvation from something but not from God. And many don't believe that Jesus' death was a substitute for us, that He overcame death, and that He died in our place. They don't believe that He took what we deserved, that He took our condemnation, that He took the sin and the curse of death and He paid the penalty for you and me.

Why did Jesus do this? We don't deserve it. He did it because He loves us. The only reason why Jesus covered our offenses, paid the penalty was because He loves us.

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Look what it says in verse 17. ***“Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*** That word propitiation means ‘to satisfy the wrath,’ God’s wrath against sin.

God’s justice against sin had to be satisfied and the only way it could be satisfied is through the sacrifice of someone who was perfect. Jesus fit that description perfectly. He is literally the only way for us to escape death. He is the only way for us to have our offenses covered. It is not Jesus plus if I come to church. It is not Jesus plus I give money. It is not Jesus plus I act well. It is not Jesus plus anything. Our salvation is only through Jesus’ blood and His death and nothing else. Nothing else can save us. Nothing else can redeem us. Nothing else can solve the death problem that we have. And He did this for us because He loved us.

Number two – not only did He overcome death for us but He identified with our suffering. Jesus turned death into glory by identifying with our suffering. Look at verse 10 where it says: ***“For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”*** Now what does that mean? Again we need to read the Bible with questions. How in the world can Jesus be made perfect? Some people want to believe that Jesus wasn’t fully God because He had to be made perfect, but that is not what they are talking about here. Perfect is a Greek word that means ‘to bring to completion.’ It doesn’t mean morally perfect; it means that there is something that was incomplete and it was brought to completion.

It wasn’t Jesus’ divinity that needed to be made perfect; it was His humanity that needed to be made perfect, because in our humanity we all face death. Jesus had to suffer death for a reason, because if He could face death, experience death, and taste death for us and then rise again after conquering death then He could provide a way to overcome death. In His humanity He had to experience death so that He could experience resurrection and be made perfect. That is why He did it.

Next there is this idea of suffering, this description of suffering in what He did for us. This is what is so beautiful about Jesus. Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate and then He was crucified. Why is this significant that Jesus suffered and was made perfect? I believe that Jesus had to show us that He wasn’t coming down to just fix our problem. Sometimes we can have someone fix our problems, but it completely different for someone to identify with your problem. Through Jesus’ suffering on the cross He endured injustice, He endured betrayal, He endured rejection, He endured humiliation, He endured shame, He endured physical and emotional abuse and He endured mockery.

The worst trauma that you and I can experience as human beings in this world where evil is present, where sin and brokenness is present, Jesus experienced it all. You and I live a life in a way where we can sometimes avoid suffering, but other times there is

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suffering that we can't escape from. There is some suffering that we may have experienced that we did not choose for ourselves. There have been times when people have betrayed us, times that we have experienced injustice, when we have experienced shame, rejection and abuse, and we did not choose it. But the difference is that Jesus did choose it. He chose every single moment of humiliation, rejection and suffering.

And do you know why He did it? It was so that He could come down to our level and we would be able to know that He knew what it felt like. He knew what suffering was. There are some human experiences that are so difficult to walk through, that are really hard for us to share from the depths of our soul with another human being. But when we share the depths of our soul with the God/Man Jesus Christ and we tell Him of our pain, we tell Him of our hurt and suffering, He can look into our eyes and say, '*I understand. I have experienced that. I have suffered as well.*' And He chose that suffering because He loves us.

My kids are getting older and they are experiencing different things in their lives. I now have one in college and two in high school. When our children get older they begin experiencing life in different ways and with different relationships, and there are things when it happens to them I can sit with them and say, '*I know what that is like. I know what that feels like.*' It is in those moments that our relationship with our children changes. And think about how much greater our relationship with God changes when the God/Man Jesus Christ came down and took on suffering for us, just so that He could let us know that whatever we are feeling or going through He could identify with us. That is an amazing God.

Number three – how Jesus changed death into glory. He changes our state from enemy to family. Now this is awesome. Look at verse 11 where it says: "***For He who sanctifies***, (this is Jesus). And don't let that word sanctify scare you as there are a lot of theological words in this passage. And the word 'sanctify' means 'to be made holy. So it is the verb form of the noun 'holiness,' and to be sanctified means 'to be made holy.' Jesus is who makes us holy. If His blood covers our offenses, then He is making us holy, He is changing our identity and He is changing the state of our soul from sinner to saint, from the enemy of God to something special.

“For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified (and that is you and I; we are being sanctified, we are being made holy like He is), ***all have one source.***” Now that is a tricky translation. Really what the Greek meaning for He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one; just the number one there. Some Bibles translate it Father, but here is the idea, here is what He is saying. That Jesus because of His death makes possible this reality that we now share whatever was Jesus' to now be ours. The identity of Jesus, the fullness of Jesus, the privileges of Jesus, the blessings of Jesus, the honor of Jesus are now shared with you and I.

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What does that mean? Look at the next sentence. *“That is why He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers.”* Through the death of Jesus, when His blood covers, when the atonement is applied to our lives His death is now our death, and what happens is He brings us into His family. Who is Jesus’ family? This is significant. This is huge. Jesus’ family is the Trinity. It is not like we become the step-children of God. It is not like God loves us because He really loves Jesus so He has to love us. *‘I guess you are going to get loved because I love Jesus so much, but really I love Jesus more.’* No, that is not what He is talking about here. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers. The relationship of the three persons of the Godhead, God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit is that God the Father loves the Son and the Spirit, and the Son loves the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit loves the Father and the Son.

There is love that goes on between this amazing Trinity relationship, and it is a beautiful Trinitarian family of love for eternity past. And what Jesus came to do was to die for us and then when we enter into this relationship through His blood, His righteousness covers us, and what happens is the very nature of the love that God the Father has for the Son and for the Spirit now includes us into the Trinity because we are now family. We get into this relationship where God the Father loves the Son and the Spirit and now He loves us as well.

Think about that for a moment. He is not ashamed to call us a brother or a sister. He doesn’t look at us with disdain even though He knows the deepest darkest sins that we have ever thought of or did; He just loves us greatly. He doesn’t look at those sins and is repelled; He looks at Jesus blood over us and He wraps His arms around us and says, *‘I know that those things that you have done, those sins, that wickedness, is no longer yours. They are now mine. I am the one who paid the penalty for them. That sin was taken on the cross and that sin is not yours anymore. Here is my righteousness.’* And because of that the fullness of this relationship that we now have with God the Father is so beautiful. He is not ashamed to call us His children. He is not ashamed to call us brothers.

If you were to invite me to your family reunion, I promise every single one of you would say something like, *‘Now I have this uncle.’* Right? *‘I have this cousin and you need to avoid him at all costs.’* We all have that family member that we are just a little embarrassed by. And if you don’t have one of those - then it is you. *(Laughter.)* We all know what I’m talking about. We all have these family members and because they are family we have to love them, but we are also a little ashamed of them. Think about this – Jesus Christ is not ashamed of us; He is not ashamed of us. No matter what we did last night or last week. No matter what our problems are, or what our addictions were, or how much the weight of our sin and shame is, the cross of Jesus and His shed blood came to pay for them so that we can now be entered into this relationship with God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit and we are now made a part of His family.

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John Chapter 17 and verses 24 through 26 tells of Jesus praying to His Father and He says: ***“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”***

Jesus invited those who God had given to Him to experience the fullness of the love that God had for Him. We need to understand that God is not holding back anything from us. He is not holding back any of His love from us. He isn't telling us to clean up our lives and then He will love us more and give us His goodness. No, He is giving it fully to us on the account of Jesus. And it was only the death of Jesus that made this possible. That is what changes death into glory.

Number four – Jesus changed death into glory by destroying the power of our common enemy. Look again at what it says in verse 14 and 15. ***“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”*** So as I am writing this and studying this I see that the devil has the power of death and it kind of freaked me out. What does that mean? So I continued to study and realized it doesn't mean that the devil somehow is in charge of death. God didn't give the devil the death part and He had the life part. No, that is not it.

In fact Jesus says in Revelations Chapter 1, ***“Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”*** Jesus has the ultimate power over death. But there is a power here that the devil has of death and I think his power is mainly manifested in two ways. He has a real desire to kill us. Now that's not nice to think about on a Sunday morning, but we can't get away from the words of Scripture. In John Chapter 10 Jesus talks about the enemy coming in to steal, kill and destroy. That is the devil's plan for our lives. He wants to steal everything good from us, he wants to kill us and he wants to destroy us. The devil's will for our lives is those three things, steal, kill and destroy.

So the devil has the desire to kill us. And in fact we see this played out in Job Chapter 1 when the devil wanted to attack Job who was under God's covering and God told him that he could touch Job's body physically but he could not kill him. So the devil has the desire to kill us. There is also another power here that is explained in verse 15 and that is that God delivers us from that power. It says that Jesus can ***“deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”*** You see here that it is a beautiful thing to be a follower of Jesus, to be a Christian, and that is we don't have to be afraid of death anymore.

DEATH INTO GLORY THE APOSTLES CREED - Part 2 Ben Rudolph

Death doesn't have to scare us; it doesn't have to be the end. In fact if the worst thing that could happen to you is that you die, as a follower of Jesus it is not that bad. Think about that for a moment. I do not want to make light of the value and the preciousness of human life. When I watch these people on You Tube that ski down avalanches I am like, *'That's dumb. I don't get it.'* I don't get it when I see people jump out of things that are moving. I don't get people like the parkour who want to jump off these 30 foot high brick walls. I just don't get it. I watch it but I don't get it. I value my life and I don't want to break bones and I don't want to die.

Death in its own way is tragic, but the fear of death is different. The fear of death is slavery. The fear of death means you are very scared of dying because you don't know what is going to happen. And we have seen that this year, haven't we? We have seen that through this pandemic that spread throughout our nation. I am not talking about the people who are taking precautions, not the people who are careful and doing things that are safe. I am talking about the people who are completely and totally gripped by an irrational fear because they are so afraid of dying.

And that is something God wants to rescue us from. He destroyed the power of the devil and delivered us from the fear of death. And we know that fear equals slavery. We are a slave to whatever we are afraid of. But we don't have to be afraid of dying. Growing up in the Christian faith did any of you ever make these 'deals' with God. *'God, don't kill me before I get married.'* Then you get married and you are like, *'God, don't kill me before I have children.'* We just want to experience certain things in life. But the beautiful thing about Jesus is there is nothing that we can miss out on this side of heaven that will not be given to us tenfold in eternity. There is something beautiful about how God changes death for us and we don't have to be afraid of it. We don't have to be enslaved by the fear of dying. It is one of the great things we get to enjoy as a follower of Jesus.

Lastly, He has changed death into glory by helping us when we need it most. I don't really have the time to get into this, but I do want to make a couple of points from verses 16 and 18. ***"For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham."*** Whatever we need help with He is there. The offspring of Abraham is not just the biologically Jewish people. He talks about this in Romans Chapter 4. The offspring of Abraham are the people of faith who believe in God.

What do you need help with from God? What is the help that you need? Whatever you are experiencing, whatever you are going through, whatever trauma or struggles that you have, whatever questions you may have, we know that we serve a God who came to help us. And if He helps us with our greatest enemy, sin and death, He will also help us with every problem that is smaller than that. That is our God and He invites us to share in His glory.

DEATH INTO GLORY
THE APOSTLES CREED - Part 2
Ben Rudolph

My hope for us today when we leave here is that we will remember that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, He was crucified, died, He was buried and that becomes something so significant and special to us that it motivates us and it changes us in how we live our lives.

I have three questions I want to leave you with. Number one – have you trusted in Jesus’ death for your salvation? Do you know for sure that you are saved from your sins and saved from the condemnation and curse of death? Are you certain today if you were to die that God would save your soul, that the offenses that you have committed against God are covered by His blood? If you have any questions about that, or you are wondering in any way about your spiritual state I invite you to go to the prayer room which is to the far right of the lobby. They would love to sit with you and to pray with you. Do not leave here unless you are certain that you understand that Jesus tasted death for you.

Number two – are you living free from fear, condemnation, guilt, shame and isolation? Jesus came and died for every one of those that we struggle with. If you are struggling with fear, Jesus died for that. If you are struggling with condemnation for your sins, Jesus died for that. If you are struggling with guilt and shame, Jesus died for that. Don’t let those things control you any longer.

Number three – how will you glorify Jesus today? Right now what is going on in heaven at this moment is there are angels, there are creatures, and there is humanity that is surrounding Jesus and they are singing ‘worthy is the Lamb who was slain.’ They are singing it and they never get tired of singing it. They never get tired of praising Him. And my prayer and my hope when we leave here today is that we become people that when we wake up we think about singing ‘worthy is the Lamb.’ Let the death of Jesus Christ mark your life and change life into glory for you.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.