



DOCTRINE IN THE REAL WORLD

A Series of Articles written by EFCA West Pastors on How Our Statement of Faith Helps Us Navigate the Challenges of Everyday Life.

Knowing God Brings Peace in the Chaos!

by Pastor Roger Horning

The coronavirus pandemic, political turmoil, and economic instability have touched every part of life. Many are in fear for their actual lives or the lives of loved ones. Some have faced excruciating personal tragedies – but great struggle brings great spiritual opportunity (James 1:2-5). In this last year, our church in Orange County has seen loved ones hospitalized, others have passed, and there is a burden that seems to affect everything – and I know this experience is shared by many throughout the country and world.

When we face adversity, it brings to the surface the cracks in our character. It exposes weakness, frailty, and misplaced trust which can only be resolved in God himself. It is times like these that provide both an opportunity for growth and to display the power of the Holy Spirit in a life built on a personal knowledge of God himself through Jesus Christ.

How does the truth expressed in the first point of the EFCA Statement of Faith speak powerfully and practically to our daily life? How is it that our thinking, feeling, and behaving is transformed by the truth expressed therein?

Let us consider the first point of our doctrinal statement in three sections.

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The very nature of God provides us with stability, confidence, and certainty; even amid instability, anxiety, and doubt. Because God is infinitely perfect, He is unchanging, independent, and has no personal needs. He will never have “personal problems” that will stop Him from keeping his promises or prove him to be unreliable. This is the contrast Elijah draws on Mount Carmel between our God and Baal (1 Kings 18:27), but which applies to any other substitute in which we place our confidence. God is actively engaged, even in those times it doesn’t seem so (Psalm 139:1-17). His unchanging nature has been communicated and proven since the beginning of time. If we internalize this theology, we will not

turn to national stability, political parties, financial resources, medical treatments, or human individuals for personal well-being.

When faced with these concerns, we can be content and at peace because He will never leave or forsake us (Heb 13:5-6). When things seem to be melting down around us, we can dwell on the holy, infinitely perfect, eternal God.

Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power,

God knows everything without exception. He works everything out exactly according to His will and for our good (Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28). When we really understand the *limitless knowledge and sovereign power* of God, we can face insurmountable obstacles, opposition, and persecution knowing that a good God is at the helm. When we genuinely understand God's power, we will stand faithfully, not only when delivered, but also in suffering. Before a watching world, our testimony is not only how we live, but also what we say. Speaking the gospel has become increasingly difficult.

In the Apostle Paul's charge to Timothy, he says, "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" (2 Timothy 1:8). Consider the boldness of the Israelite captives who saw Nebuchadnezzar's ruthless power displayed as they were deported to Babylon. When this same king demanded they bow down and worship or be burned alive, they did not shrink back or compromise. When every other captive blended in and bowed, they did not! These faithful men knew the furious rage of Nebuchadnezzar was not sovereign over their fate. They understood God's sovereignty and defied the king's order to worship his idol (Daniel 3:15-18). We may not face a literal fiery furnace, but in our increasingly anti-God cancel-culture we need to live in light of God's sovereign power to boldly proclaim the gospel – even when we fear being canceled by bosses, co-workers, friends, or neighbors.

God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

This is a staggering and immensely encouraging truth. We as humans are not the pinnacle of the universe. God is. However, that does not negate God's intimate and personal love for us. It intensifies it. God knew us personally before the foundation of the world and then *graciously purposed* to redeem us. We can take comfort in knowing that nothing we do will cause God to reject us – whether in our past, present, or future.

The foreknowledge of God (Rom 8:29) indicates that when He *purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself*, He did not choose and predestine a faceless mass for salvation. He knew each individual intimately and personally (Psalm 139:16). He knew none were good enough to merit his choice (Rom 3:10). However, because of his grace, He predestined, called, justified, and glorified those He knew would fall short of his glory (Rom 3:23).

Redemption is for *His own glory*. There is something so powerful about a redemptive love that cannot be lost (Rom 8:38-39). God redeemed us for “the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph 1:6). This takes all the pressure off us and places it on his steadfast grace. Consider the powerful promise of forgiveness based not on what we deserve but on the gracious character of God. “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25). Did you read that? “*for my own sake.*” God redeems for himself and for his glory. We will never stop repenting because we will always find mercy, forgiveness, and help in our time of need (Heb 4:16). The more we understand the gracious redemptive love we have received, the more we express God’s redemptive love toward others. What a contrast the gracious redemptive love described in scripture and reflected in the lives of believers has when set against the vitriol so prevalent in our day! With truth wrapped in this redemptive love, we make the church a place sinners can run to instead of running away from. Talk about an attractive gospel - that’s it!

These truths are relevant to our lives, as we globally face the novel coronavirus, a tumultuous political environment, widespread financial difficulty, and the resulting relational conflicts. Our hope for the future is not in a political party, prosperous economy, or a great nation. Our confidence for health is not in a mask, vaccine, or medical community. In a culture that is growing increasingly hostile toward God, our trust in the God we truly know makes us unmoved by cultural swings and persecution. Our hope rests firmly in the character of our independent, all-powerful, all-knowing, loving Heavenly Father, glorious Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, and indwelling, comforting, Holy Spirit.

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