

How Biblical Convictions become Christian Character

By Jay Wegter

What is a biblical conviction?

In terms of belief, a *conviction* is the mental state of being convinced—the fixed state of belief. **To hold a conviction is to ‘be held by’ an unshakeable belief without need of further proof or evidence** (see **Hebrews 11:1-3**). Biblical convictions are the very core and foundation of godly character and virtue.

The Bible stresses the central importance of truth and doctrine. In the pastoral epistles there is a very clear link between sound doctrine and godliness. “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following” (**1 Tim 4:6**). “If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing. . .” (**1 Tim 6:3-4a**). “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” “Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, sound *in* speech, which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us” (**Titus 2:1, 6-7**).

Our Savior was sent into the world to bear witness to the truth (Mt 18:37). The incarnation of Christ and His work on Calvary was the great cost necessary to put man back in possession of the truth. The Lie in Eden offered independence from God upon the false basis that God’s glory opposes our highest good. **The gospel of Jesus Christ restores believing sinners to the truth that God’s glory is our highest good**. And God’s glory is inseparable from His purpose to be merciful and benevolent to us His creatures. God’s righteousness, His commitment to His Name, and His zeal for His glory has become the cause of our salvation (**Rom 1:16-17; 3:23-26**). **Thus, to possess the truth is to be experiencing the knowledge of God and His glory, as well as the liberty it produces**. The knowledge of God in Christ, revealed in our salvation is the foundation of our Christian convictions (**Jn 17:3; Gal 4:9**).

Salvation in Christ changes our reliance from self and the world to God, who is the source of all we need.

The Lord has pledged to be our God and to pour His benevolence upon all those who rely upon Him—that reliance evidenced by trust in Him and living by His statutes (**Ps 31:19-21**). Faith in God’s Word allows us to continually ‘see’ God as our source of life. **The fight for security and satisfaction in God is a fight of faith (1Tim 1:18; 6:12)**—it is always about perceived source or supply. The prophet Jeremiah documents the nation of Judah’s tragic return to the world as its imagined source and supply. “For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (**Jer 2:13**).

God giving us Himself in Christ is the foundation for our biblical convictions. Christ prays thematically in this manner in His high priestly prayer in **John chapter 17**. “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as

You have loved Me” (Jn 17:22-23ff.). God giving Himself to His people, and the saints giving themselves to God is the pattern for holy living. This glorious plan will reach its consummation in eternity, and this is what will make heaven a place of endless bliss—**Revelation 21:3-4**.

Why is the Holy Trinity so crucial to our saving knowledge of God?

It is a remarkable and wonderful truth that our Triune God is a perfectly self-contained ‘community’ of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and as such our transcendent God is satisfied in Himself. In other words, He needs nothing from the creation. However, our Creator desires to share Himself and extend His glory. But, to accomplish His plan, He chose to deal decisively with the sin barrier that separates His creatures from His glory. **Hence, in sending the Son as Redeemer, He fulfills His absolute claim and demand for perfect righteousness. For in the cross He satisfies His holy and just demand to punish sin (2 Cor 5:21).** Through Christ, our righteous and suffering Substitute, God satisfies the claims He has upon us for perfect righteousness (**Rom 10:4**). Thus, the propitiation accomplished at the cross becomes the basis of God setting Himself free to pour out infinite grace upon us, beginning with forgiveness and justification, and consummating in glorification.

These areas of divine satisfaction—issuing in the revelation of, and fulfillment of His righteousness—become the basis for believers to pursue satisfaction in Him. Consider the beauty inherent in His purpose: **1)** As Triune God He is satisfied in Himself. **2)** In His plan to redeem sinners, He satisfies His just claims for righteousness and justice against our sins by means of the work of Christ. **3)** These two aspects of satisfaction above become the foundation for our full pursuit of satisfaction in God. **This immediately becomes relevant to practical theology—for satisfaction in who God is in Himself, and the satisfaction which Christ accomplished for His people become the reason we are called to pursue satisfaction in Him.** Thus, who God is toward us in Christ forms the foundation of our convictions. Praise be to God, our convictions are not merely cold hard doctrinal facts. They are grounded upon God’s loving purposes to share Himself by bringing us into an immutable, eternal family and thereby extending His glory (**Eph 1:9-14**).

Convictions are about doctrine—about embracing the Scriptural truths necessary for living righteously and wisely unto God.

We are to grow up into Christ and thus be protected from every ‘wind of doctrine’ (**Eph 4:14**). And how are we to guard against error? We are to follow the doctrine of the apostles (**1 Tim 4:6; 6:1**). We are to guard against those who promote a ‘different doctrine’ (**1 Tim 6:3**). **We are to commit ourselves to doctrine which conforms to godliness (1 Tim 6:3).** We are to retain the standard of sound words in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (**2 Tim 1:13**). The goal of biblical instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (**1 Tim 1:5**). Not one of these exhortations leaves doctrine in a sealed off theological vault, all of it is plowed into our Christian walk. **Hence, when these truths are ‘actualized’ in our practice, they become the character-shaping convictions by which we navigate through life as men and women of God.** Truth becomes practice when we are consciously building a repository of biblical wisdom by which we live unto God (**Prov 2:1-22; 8:32-36**).

Our convictions deepen as we are conformed to the truth of God—which describes a hearer of the Word being a doer of the Word (Jas 1:22-25). Convictions are truth in action; therefore, they build

character. Being conformed to the truth is essential if we are to imitate the Lord (**Eph 5:1-2**). “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” Convictions enable the believer to speak the truth of God with sincerity. **The man of God lives to speak the truth as a ‘truth-broker’—in so doing he is a spiritual influencer of others.** “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (**Col 3:16**). In our commitment to love, admonish, and instruct the brethren we are ‘imitating God’ (**Eph 5:1**) and thereby investing in eternal treasure.

Thus, biblical convictions tell us what will survive the coming judgment of God. Hence, our convictions totally shape our eternal value system, giving us kingdom values and moral authority (**2 Cor 10:3-5; Heb 12:25-29**). **Therefore, biblical convictions give the Christian profound wisdom and discernment in all life choices—discernment which is inseparable from character (1Cor 2:14-16; Heb 5:11-14).** Biblical convictions enable us to serve as ‘spiritual paramedics’ helping others recognize and mortify idols in their life. Biblical convictions enable us to gladly count the cost of following Christ (**Lu 14:25-30**)—refuting the world’s lie that love of self and love of pleasure will make us happy.

The Gnostic error: you don’t have to do the truth to have the truth.

Our aim is to conform our lives to God’s truth. This is one of the reasons the book of First John was written—to keep truth and life joined. **The Gnostic error was that you don’t have to practice the truth to possess the truth.** The book of First John puts that to the lie by indicating that it’s not enough to agree with the truth, or merely ‘audit’ the truth, we must walk in the truth. John’s first epistle puts forth several tests which show if a person is *of the truth*. “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are *of the truth*, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things” (**1 Jn 3:18-20**). **Truth liberates and sin enslaves.**

Sin and truth are at war; you cannot keep them both—one of them will have to go (Jn 8:31-36). But the great error in the church today is that we may hold truth theoretically, in the abstract without diligently practicing it. The proposition that you may possess biblical convictions, but not Christian character is a lie. **The apostle John continually asserts that truth is highly ethical. You actually only know what you do—if you don’t practice the truth, you don’t really possess the truth.ⁱ** The goal of First John is to make certain that we are operating and living completely in the realm of God’s truth. **To live so that the truth dominates exceptionally in your life means you are a product of your convictions—you are ‘a product of the product’ so to speak.** What you are in life and character is because the truths of Scripture are exerting the transforming power necessary to shape and mold your life and character (**1Thess 2:13**).

God’s will is conformity to Christ in holiness (Rom 8:28-30).

The book of Ephesians is the book of God’s loving, gracious, and glorious purpose for His people. And the great evidence that the believer is the object of God’s redeeming mercy is that the saint **radically aligns himself with God’s purpose.** Thus, the genuine believer is diligent in doing God’s will—and God’s

will for us is our conformity to Christ in holiness (**Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4**). *The purpose of mortification of sin is to arrive at the goal for which God in His grace laid hold of us—namely, conformity to Christ (2 Thess 2:14; Rom 8:29ff.)*. God always accomplishes His purposes with a precise goal in view. He declares the end from the beginning (**Is 46:10**). God decrees, He predestines, He foreordains—He works with the end in mind (**Eph 1:9-12**).

We must learn to cultivate the habit of mortification of sin with the end in mind. We are not putting sin to death merely for the purpose of being practical moralists, or because a virtuous life is superior to an unethical life. **No, in our struggle with the flesh we must begin with the right goal in mind.** For, the destination of mortification of sin is life with God in glory. All we do in our efforts at sanctification by way of putting sin to death should serve an ultimate end—the end for which we were created anew in Christ Jesus (**2 Cor 5:17; 1 Jn 3:1-3; Eph 5:27**). Sin has twisted the image of God. The Lord recreates and restores His people to His perfect image. As new creatures we are to abandon the old sinful behaviors and attitudes and adopt the new. Our efforts at mortification are not merely focused on abstinence, but upon replacement behaviors. In mortification we *put on the behaviors and character of the new man and put off the attitudes and behaviors of the old man* (**Eph 4:22-32; Col 3:8-17ff.**).ⁱⁱ

As a redeemed child of God your life is now defined by, filled with, and encompassed with God's loving purpose to make you like Christ. These purposes of God are spiritual realities which are intended to fill your consciousness, vision, and desires. **They are to shape your goals, your hope, and your motives—in other words: they must become your core convictions.** To be “filled with the knowledge of His will” is only possible if we are paying close attention to His Word (**Col 1:9-12**). Your relationship to God's Word is a faithful barometer of your walk with God. **A genuine believer studies God's Word to understand it because he knows he can't live without God's Word.** He also studies the Word because those who have salvation live lives of ongoing fellowship with God (**1 Jn 1:1-9**). They continue seeking God through His Word, through prayer, and through Christian fellowship—that is daily ‘foundry’ in which biblical convictions are forged.

God's Word gives us an urgent mandate, *be transformed by the truth by the renewal of your minds* (Rom 12:1-2; Eph 4:23).

Developing biblical convictions means becoming utterly serious about God's claim upon our lives. **We are not our own, we are bought with a price—as God's own possession we live as belonging to Him** (**1 Cor 6:19-20; Titus 2:14**). **To live as His possession involves constantly renewing our minds by the Word.** “Therefore. I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (**Rom 12:1-2**). “That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (**Eph 4:20-24**).

Biblical convictions are filled with ethical obligation because all truth is moral in nature—truth always calls for action. When Christ said we cannot serve two masters, He was indicating that no man can live a dichotomized worldview with divided loyalties (**Mt 6:24**). **Your devotion to whom and what**

you serve is like a laser beam: it is focused. **Head and heart cannot pull in opposite directions for long—you will be conformed to what you love, and what you love you will serve.** “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (**Rom 6:16**).

Truth is not safe in a theoretical category or compartment.

Scripture indicates that the larger the gap between faith and practice, the greater the danger of hypocrisy. This is why we need to develop first-hand convictions. **Having first-hand convictions is much different than merely sitting under a strong pulpit ministry.** Countless Christians have ‘secondhand convictions’—secondhand meaning that, “I believe such and such because my pastor teaches it.” **By contrast, first-hand convictions mean that you personally diligently study the truth, love the truth, live the truth, and proclaim the truth.** The Berean believers in Paul’s day showed the diligence necessary to develop firsthand convictions: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so” (**Acts 17:11**).

Biblical convictions are held by both our mind and by our affections.

When you have first-hand convictions, your heart affections are conformed to biblical truth. Therefore, you love the truth in the inner man. “Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom” (**Ps 51:6**). Even the battle to mortify sin takes place at the level of our convictions. John Piper says it this way: “All spiritual warfare takes place at the level of spiritual sight. Your pleasure is the measure of your treasure.” This is why truth is never held at the theoretical level only—it is to be rooted in our desires and heart affections.

Scripture warns that if we hear the truth and agree with it, but don’t practice it, we have deceived ourselves. “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (**Jas 1:22-25**). Many in Christendom today are attempting to do what they hate (practice holiness) and stop doing what they love (sinning).ⁱⁱⁱ It is a cardinal principle that God’s truth will only effectively order your life if you are a new creature who seeks the highest satisfaction in God.

Because heart and head operate in unison, to believe the truth so as to do the truth is a ‘whole soul’ act. This means that your mind, affections, will, and conscience are all joined in embracing the truth, relying upon it, and acting upon it. In his high priestly prayer, Jesus indicated that the Word of God has the power to sanctify us, setting apart to God and His purposes. “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (**Jn 17:17**). **A true believer is set apart to God in all his faculties of soul: in his mind, his body, and his heart.** For Scripture makes it clear, true believers don’t merely agree with historical facts of Christ’s life, they follow Jesus (**Lu 9:23**). Therefore, a believer is a true disciple or follower of Christ whose time, talent, affections, and resources are poured into aligning himself with God’s purpose. Christ’s cause has become his cause. **Hence, to follow Jesus is to be controlled by biblical convictions.**

Our convictions are also joined to a clear perception of the desirability of Christ. As we keep on believing the promises of God in the gospel, we exhibit Christ to our heart affections. As a result, we adore Him as advocate, as High Priest, and righteous covering, and as our covenant and propitiation. When we love Christ, we have a deep appreciation of His work for us (1 Pet 1:3-9). His atoning work exerts a transforming power in our lives—the application of His cross to our lives shatters our cowardice, it breaks up our undercover ‘stealth Christianity’. We find ourselves emboldened in His service, and we welcome the truth that God reserves the right to define every square inch of our experience. The strongest Christians are those of deep conviction—they are ‘Christ-learners’ who follow the Savior; their surrender to Him produces endurance and boldness in service (Eph 6:18-20).

Why are so many professing believers apathetic about deepening their biblical convictions?

*Are you basing your level of consecration on your comfort, or your calling? The normal Christian life is one of striving to live out our identity in Christ (1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:3; 2 Cor 10:1-6). “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:24-27; Heb 12:1-2).*

Now the question arises, “Why aren’t more believers pouring their energies into this endeavor of developing their convictions?” In part the answer is that they don’t see the value in it because they do not understand the nature of their calling (Col 1:9-12). For, without aggressive faith in gospel promises, it can seem like more trouble than it is worth. After all, if one has been experiencing defeat in his Christian life, why would he want to set a higher standard? Many believers already tend to be discouraged and so rather than developing their convictions, they often turn to others for personal validation. But others can’t stabilize the foundation of our identity. The only real source of solid identity comes through reckoning our sonship in Christ (1 Jn 3:1-3). Then as the Word of God reshapes our motives, we will count it a privilege to keep believing the gospel and consenting to receive God’s love for Christ’s sake. The Holy Spirit is ready to manifest Christ’s love to those who are taken up with Christ, and who find abundant life in abiding in Him (Rom 5:1-5ff.; Jn 14:21).

What is required to develop our biblical convictions?

*By ongoing repentance and by conforming ourselves to the truth we ‘close the gap’ between faith and practice. Biblical convictions put steel in the backbone, enabling us to fight for joy, fight for purity, and fight for holiness. Scripture calls this *renewing the mind* (Rom 12:1-2; Col 3:10ff.). As we walk through this corrupt world, we tend to pick up contamination like dirt on our shoes. We are assaulted with a litany of false offers of fulfillment, and at times we’re tempted to pursue happiness through lust. Our flesh seeks to usurp the role of the Spirit as it proposes and offers temporal objects of desire in place of God. It’s at this point that our biblical convictions play a key role in our success in spiritual warfare. God has called us to a kind of activism designated the *mortification of sin* (Rom 6:11-13; Col 3:1-5).*

That activism involves a proper use of our freedom. We’re instructed in Galatians chapter five

that Christ has called us to freedom. But boundless freedom is dangerous if not used properly. “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal 5:13). **The believer’s remarkable freedom in Christ is to be harnessed in service to His Body. We are set free to serve.** This liberation in Christ prepares us to commit ourselves to the needs of others. “Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil 2:1-4). As we walk by faith in Christ by means of His gospel promises, He manifests His love to us and the ‘overflow’ is a compelling desire to invest in others by serving them.

Living by faith is difficult because it is filled with the necessity of spiritual discipline and self-denial, therefore the life of faith is totally self-renouncing (Heb 6:11-12). In other words, to live by faith is to live upon Another, upon Christ instead of upon our own strength and wits. This goes against the grain of self. In our fallenness, we gravitate toward pride, comfort, and complacency. **Biblical convictions give us the ‘horsepower’ necessary to swim against the current of our lower natures through the enabling power of the Spirit (Gal 5:16-18ff.).** Firsthand convictions pay wonderful dividends such as intimacy with God, “The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant” (Ps 25:14) (see also Prov 4:23; 30:5-6).

Biblical convictions work together with reckoning our sonship in Christ.

God describes the blessing of the new covenant in the relational terms of sonship. Sonship is the very motive and meaning of gospel holiness (2 Cor 6:14-7:1).^{iv} In the blessing of sonship God ‘harnesses’ His glorious attributes and puts them to work in the salvation of His people. “He is our God, and we are His people” means that God has pledged His power, care, wisdom, and love to work for the temporal and eternal good of His people (1 Pet 2:9-10). We see these ‘harnessed attributes’ most clearly in the promises of the gospel (2 Pet 1:2-4). **It is the believer’s responsibility to live upon these promises which is living the life of sonship.** As sons of the Father, we live for His approval under His watchful eye, relying upon His love and care (1 Jn 3:1).

Living by the promises of sonship involves esteeming our sonship very highly—to walk worthy of our calling (2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Eph 4:1ff.). As a spiritual discipline, we will need to frequently explain the infinite blessings of sonship to our own souls. This can be formed as questions such as, “**Who is God toward me in Christ?**” **How is my sonship in Christ tied to my security, happiness, and goals?** **How is the gift of sonship the result of union with Christ?** The ‘spirit of sonship’ will assist us in these meditations; for the Holy Spirit produces the consciousness of our sonship (Rom 8:14-17). “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Gal 4:6). The Father’s claim upon us is ever joined to the bountiful promises inherent in our sonship (2 Cor 6:14-7:1). **Living our convictions is all about “be who you are as sons of the Father.”** May the reader strive to gain valuable insights into why our sonship identity is so closely tied to our biblical convictions. Christ first opened this topic of the life of sonship in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:9, 45), but also developed it further in additional discourses (Jn 12:36).

Serving others in love manifests our sonship and yields a byproduct of Christian character. We

assume responsibility and care on behalf of others, and God expands our sphere of influence. Believers are called to be a clear channel of agape love to others—making His love to them ‘specific’ (1 Jn 4:19). This involves allowing the gospel to repeatedly order our inner world and our relationships (Lu 6:35ff.). **By obediently living out our convictions we prove to be His sons. This has a rectifying effect upon our life direction—continually calibrating us to the purposes of God.** “As obedient children (sons), do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:14-16). We are commanded to refuse fellowship with darkness. Hence, to live as His ‘temples’ is to experience His fatherly affection, ““And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”” says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:18).

The new covenant reality of sonship means that our Heavenly Father *contemplates us* in Christ.

Believers are reconciled to God because Christ has borne their liabilities and clothed them in His righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). **When we cease defining ourselves by our sonship and adoption, it is incredibly easy to fall into cynicism, sensuality, and self-direction.** Only the gospel can correct this slide by renewing our minds, allowing us to see ourselves from the gracious vantage point of God’s perspective in Christ. Divine viewpoint is the infallible perspective from which we must think and operate. **For the growing believer, how we think about ourselves is to be conditioned upon how God thinks of us in Christ.** This is why sonship is so vital to our identity, and to our security, treasure, direction, and priorities (1Thess 5:5-6).

Says my missionary friend in India, Michael Graham, “In Christ eats up all else.” In other words, **the finality and immutability of our identity in Christ must hold sway over us, for God has the last word in this matter as well as in all others matters.** Sonship living is reckoning that the Father is for us in Christ (Lu 12:30-32), and that He wants our sonship to shape our character and the controlling motives in life. The very shape and contours of the believer’s life is to be scribed by sonship. **Living out our sonship is about the controlling reality that ‘God is for us’ (Ps 56:9; 118:6; Rom 8:31ff.). ‘God for us’ produces loyal sons who possess a passion for His glory.**

One of the most important truths for believers to process is, “how do I receive God’s love?”

We must know that the gospel gives us God. Hence, joy, hope, peace, and love are ‘byproducts’ of God giving us Himself in the promises of the gospel. “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13). **What is needed for us to be lifted above the allure of created things so that we look for ultimate satisfaction and delight in God?** Why is it so important to receive God’s love? The gospel makes possible for forgiven sinners to experience endless satisfaction in our holy God. **Christ ‘exports’ the wealth of joy of the Godhead into the lives of the redeemed. That becomes the power for holy living, and the motive for pursuing Christian character out of grace motives.** The gospel captures our affections by opening our understanding to the floodgates of God’s boundless desire to share Himself (Eph 3:8-12).

Biblical conviction taking root in our affections is joined to denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily (Lu 9:23). God has committed in His sworn covenant (**Heb 6:17-20**) to love us and care for us; therefore, it is reasonable and rational to regard denying ourselves and serving Him as the most logical thing in the world (**Rom 12:1-2**). **The conviction of who we are in Christ shapes everything. As we grow spiritually, and as we are discipled, our identity in the Lord becomes more and more tangible to us.** As a result, we are motivated by our controlling convictions to ‘step into’ the sonship ‘script’ without reservation. We feed on gospel promises which urge us to abide in Christ. And, as we abide in Christ, *life on life* ministry flows out of us, shaping our character. For it is impossible to receive constant tokens of Christ’s love and then not want to pour your life into others (**1 Jn 4:19**).

The sonship ‘script’ is the part we are to play in the drama of redemption.

We’ve seen that biblical convictions flesh out our identity in Christ as sons. God is for our happiness by way of holiness. When we are controlled by these sonship realities, we reckon God’s love, and as a result, obedience is easy. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome” (**1 Jn 5:3**). **In that sense, our sonship identity becomes a kind of ‘script’ that marks out our path in this drama of redemption. We could describe that path as:**

1) sonship, God the Father is ‘for me’—He is for—*who I am in Christ in my adoption*, **2) satisfaction**, the believer has delight in God, *for His glory and our good are woven together in Christ*, **3) soma (body)**, the Spirit of God has placed me in the Body of Christ *where I edify others and enjoy the deep community of body life* (**1 Cor 12**), and next, **4) surrender**, the Lord has bought me, *but I daily present myself back to God as His beloved possession* (**Rom 6:11-13**)—this results in, **5) sanctification**, *and the outcome, eternal life* (**Rom 6:22**). God’s script for me is “**sonship**” God holds me in His heart of love and cares for me. It is “**satisfaction**” in that our deepest desires are met in the Lord. It is “**soma**” in that we experience deep community in our fellowship with the saints. It is “**surrender**” which means our “**sanctification**” progresses as we submit to Christ and are gladly ruled by His word.

We have seen that the basis for our convictions is God’s satisfaction in Himself, and His satisfaction in giving Himself to us in Christ and adopting us as His beloved sons and daughters. He did so that we might live unto Him and find our ultimate satisfaction in knowing, trusting, and serving Him. Thus, Christian character is our response to being invited into God’s plot, His glory story. Growth in Christian character cannot be reduced to moral striving. For, the Christian character God desires in us flows from His love relationship with us as we give ourselves back to Him in filial fear (loving reverence) and in obedient love (**Rom 8:18-23**).

Endnotes:

ⁱ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*

ⁱⁱ Chris Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within*

ⁱⁱⁱ Paul Washer

^{iv} Lewis Sperry Chafer, “Lectures on the Spiritual Life,” Dallas Theological Seminary