

How Biblical Convictions become Christian Character

(part one)

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 the need of further proof or evidence (See Hebrews 11:1-3.). In the next two articles we will explore how conviction becomes character and why biblical convictions are at the very core of godly character and virtue.

The Bible stresses the central importance of truth and doctrine: “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). “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 benevolent to us in Christ. 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 and the liberty it produces. In these two articles we will discover that the knowledge of God revealed in our salvation is the foundation of our Christian convictions.

Salvation in Christ changes our reliance from self and the world to God who is the source of all that we need. The Lord has pledged to be our God and to pour His benevolence upon all those who rely upon Him in daily trust. 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 fight of faith (1 Tim 1:18)—it is always about perceived source or supply. The prophet Jeremiah documents Judah’s tragic return to the world as its imagined source. “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 (Rom 12:1-2; 6:11-13). This glorious plan will reach its consummation in eternity making 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 with the sin barrier that separates His creatures from His glory. The sin barrier could only be shattered by a perfect Substitute who acts on behalf of His own.

In sending His Son as Redeemer, the Father satisfies His infinite claim and demand for perfect righteousness. And in the cross He satisfies His righteous and just demand to punish all sin. Through Christ, our suffering and righteous Substitute, God satisfies the claims He has upon us for righteousness. Thus, the propitiation accomplished at the cross becomes the basis of God setting Himself free to pour our infinite grace upon His elect, beginning with forgiveness, justification, and adoption, and consummating in glorification.

These areas of divine satisfaction then become the basis for believers to pursue satisfaction in Him: 1) First, our Triune God is satisfied in Himself. 2) Second, in fulfilling His plan of redemption, He satisfies His own just claims for righteousness and justice on behalf of all who will ever believe. 3) As a result of these first two aspects of satisfaction, the believer can now rationally pursue full satisfaction in God (for abandonment to Him in joyful consecration is our ‘reasonable service of worship’—Romans 12:2).

This all-consuming spiritual reality immediately becomes relevant to practical theology—for satisfaction in who God is in Himself, and what He has done in Christ becomes the reason we 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 facts, but are grounded upon God’s loving purposes to share Himself His bride, and thereby extend His glory.

Convictions are about the doctrines necessary for living unto God

We are to grow up into Christ and thus be protected from the instability of every ‘wind of doctrine’ (Eph 4:14). We are to follow the doctrine of the apostles (1 Tim 4:6; 6:1). In so doing, we will be actively guarding 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). The goal of biblical instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5). When these truths or doctrines are ‘actualized’ in our practice (through trust and obedience), they become the convictions by which we navigate through life as men and women of God.

Our convictions deepen as we are conformed to the truth of God. Convictions are truth in action therefore they build Christian character (2 Pet 1:5-8). They are essential if we are to imitate our Heavenly Father as commanded in Ephesians 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 or woman of God lives to speak the truth as a ‘truth-broker’—in so doing he or she develops as a *spiritual influencer* of others (Col 3:16). The truth in action is a character-shaping activity. As theologian John Frame has said, “you really only know what you do.”

By his convictions a believer aligns himself with God's purposes

Consecrated believers must align themselves with what God is doing in the world and thereby 'imitate' the Father (Eph 5:1-2). In other words, Christ's cause (His glory through The Great Commission) must become our cause (Mt 28:18-20). We ought to diligently study what will remain after Judgment Day, for the world is passing away (1 Jn 2:15-17). Biblical convictions tell us what will survive the coming judgment of God. Thus, our convictions totally shape our eternal value system, giving us 'Kingdom values' and moral authority as we follow Christ (Heb 12:25-29).

Therefore, biblical convictions give the Christian profound discernment in all life choices (1Cor 2:14-16; Heb 5:11-14). As we act upon our convictions they become worked into our character. And these convictions enable us to serve as a 'spiritual paramedics' helping others recognize and mortify idols in their lives. Biblical convictions enable us to gladly count the cost of following Christ (Lu 14:25-43). By doing so, we refute the world's lie that love of self and love of pleasure will make a person happy.

This means that 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 do the truth to have 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, or assent to the truth) we must walk in the truth. John's first epistle puts forth a number of 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).

Biblical convictions drive single-minded devotion to Christ

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 apostle John continually asserts that truth is highly ethical. You really only know what you do—if you don't practice the truth, you don't really possess the truth.¹ The goal of First John is to make sure that we are not operating in the realm of theory, but living completely in the realm of God's truth. States John the apostle, "The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever" (2 Jn 1:1-2). To live in the realm of truth means you are a product of your convictions—'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).

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*. To be *aligned to God's purpose* is to be diligent in doing God's will—and God's will is that we be conformed to Christ in holiness (Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4). The purpose of mortification (putting sin to death) 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. God 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.

Mortification of sin is not an end in itself. We are not putting sin to death merely for the purpose being practical moralists, or because a virtuous life is superior to an unethical life. In our struggle with the flesh we must begin with the right end in mind. The goal of mortification is life with God in glory. All we do in our efforts at sanctification by way of mortification 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 the perfect image of God. Since we are new creatures created anew in Christ, 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. Therefore, in mortification we are to *put on the behaviors of the new man, and put off the 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. This purpose of God is a spiritual reality which is intended to fill your consciousness, vision, and desires. God's purpose is to shape your goals, your hope, and your motives—in other words: God purpose must become your core conviction. But for God's loving purpose to control us, we must be “filled with the knowledge of His will” by 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 in order 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 characterized by ongoing fellowship with God. True believers continue seeking God through His Word, through prayer, and through Christian fellowship—that is the daily ‘foundry’ in which convictions are forged—producing the ‘metal’ of Christian character.

God's Word gives us an urgent mandate, *be transformed by the truth*

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; we are God's own possession, thus we are to live as His possession (1 Cor 6:19-20; Titus 2:14). This is only possible by constantly renewing our minds by the Scripture. “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).

To deepen our biblical convictions is to be conformed to the truth so that it dominates

exceptionally in your life. Convictions are filled with ethical obligation because all truth is moral in nature—truth always calls for action. When Christ told us that 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, not scattered. Head and heart cannot pull in opposite directions for very long—you will be conformed to that which you love. You will live and do your functional worldview. At the university where I teach, we have conferences called “Truth & Life Conferences.” We want to help students address the ‘disconnect’ between what they profess to believe, and how they actually live. By deepening biblical convictions, we keep faith and life joined.

Truth is not safe in a theoretical category or compartment

Scripture indicates that the larger that gap between faith and practice, the more danger there is that we’re living a life 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 “borrowed,” or “I believe such and such because my pastor believes 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 both by our mind and 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 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” (James 1:22-25). Many in Christendom today are attempting to do what they hate (holiness) and not do what they love (sinning).ⁱⁱⁱ

It is a cardinal principle that God’s truth will only effectively order your life IF you are seeking your highest satisfaction in God. Because heart and head operate in unison, to believe the truth and then obey the truth is a ‘whole soul’ act. This means that your mind, affections, will, and conscience are all joined in embracing the truth and relying upon it. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus

indicated that believers are set apart to God in holiness and it is the Word of God that has the power to sanctify believers, setting them 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: in his mind, his body, and his heart. For Christ has made 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. That person’s time, talent, affections, and resources are poured into aligning himself with God’s purpose. Thus, 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 believing the promises of God in the gospel, we exhibit Christ, and display Him to our heart affections. As a result, we adore Him as advocate, as High Priest, as our sealing and righteous covering, as our covenant, and as our 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 privatized ‘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 follow Christ. And, out of that devotion comes power and courage, for surrender to Christ produces endurance and boldness in service (Eph 6:18-20).

Why are many Christians apathetic about their biblical convictions?

Paul told us that in the normal Christian life we are 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?” Part of the answer is that they don’t see the value in it because they do not understand their calling (Col 1:9-12). In addition, 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 only to feel more intense failure?

Many believers already tend to be discouraged and rather than developing their firsthand convictions, they often go to others for comfort—seeking personal validation. But leaning upon another redeemed sinner may encourage us, but it can’t really deepen the foundation of our identity. The biblical answer is as follows: the only real source of immutable love, security, stability, and significance comes through reckoning our sonship in Christ (Jn 1:12; Gal 4:4-7; 1 Jn 3:1-3). Then 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 eager and ready to manifest Christ’s love to those who are taken up with Christ and who abide in Christ (Rom 5:1-5ff.; Jn 14:21).

What is the cost of developing biblical convictions?

By ongoing repentance and by conforming ourselves to the truth we ‘close the gap’ between faith and practice (only then do faith and practice operate in unison). Biblical convictions are necessary for us to successfully fight for joy and to fight for purity. Scripture refers to this continual appropriation of the truth as *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 sticking to our shoes. We are assaulted with a litany of false offers of fulfillment, and at times we are tempted to pursue happiness directly through lust. Our flesh seeks to usurp the role of the Spirit as it proposes temporal objects of desire in place of God. It’s at this point that our convictions play a key role in Spiritual warfare.

God has called us to a kind of activism called the mortification of sin (Rom 6:11-13; Col 3:1-5). That activism involves a proper use of our freedom. We’re told in Galatians 5 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). Sinful behavior is to be put off, and godly behavior put on (Col 3:5-4:6). Actually doing this is a byproduct of abiding in Christ. 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 commune with Him, and to invest in others (to serve). This changes our character, making us more and more like our Savior.

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. 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 our lower natures—for the self-life is attracted to self-reliance and self-indulgence. People gravitate toward pride, comfort, and complacency. **Biblical convictions give us the ‘horsepower’ necessary to swim against the current of our lower natures by the power of the Spirit** (Gal 5:16-18ff.). Convictions come with a cost but accrue dividends that extend into eternity (Ps 1:1-6; 25:14; Prov 4:23; 30:5-6).

Reckoning our sonship advances our progress in Christian character

God describes the blessing of the new covenant in relational terms such as 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. It is the believer’s responsibility to live upon these promises and in so doing, live the life of sonship for His approval under His watchful eye (1 Jn 3:1).

Living by the promises of sonship involves esteeming our sonship very highly—so as 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, goals?” The ‘Spirit of sonship’ will assist us in these meditations; for He produces the consciousness

of sonship in us (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 joined to the bountiful promises inherent in our sonship (2 Cor 6:14-7:1). Living our convictions is all about “being 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 expanded its teaching in other discourses of His (Jn 12:36).

How we need to believe the gospel at this point—to grasp that our Heavenly Father contemplates us, and sees us in Christ. To see ourselves in Christ is to see Christ as having borne all of our liabilities and to see Him as clothing us in His righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). This is much needed good news, for we are disappointing sons and daughters, and we are tempted to define ourselves by our failure to obey God adequately. When we slip into that mindset, and cease defining ourselves by sonship and adoption, it is incredibly easy to fall into *cynicism, sensuality, and self-direction*.

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, security, treasure, and priorities (1Thess 5:5-6). “In Christ eats up all else” says my missionary friend, Michael Graham in India. 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 all others matters. Life under grace in sonship establishes our priorities and keeps our ongoing conformity to Christ on track. Sonship living is reckoning the Father is for us in Christ (Lu 12:30-32), and that He wants our sonship to shape our controlling motives in life. The very shape, contours and path of our lives are to be scribed by sonship. Living by the conviction of our sonship means the new man puts off the old man deeds and asserts himself in new man (sonship) behaviors (Col 3:9-11).

Sonship is about ‘God for us’ (Ps 56:9; 118:6; Rom 8:31). We must know that the Father sees us in Christ and is for us (Eph 1:3-9). One of the most important truths for believers to process is the question, “how do I receive God’s love?” To answer aright, we must know that the gospel gives us God. 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. The gospel opens the floodgates of God’s boundless desire to share Himself and to extend His glory thereby (Eph 3:8-12). Out of this overflow of divine favor and love comes the desire to love others. “By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:17-19).

Thus, our service of the body of Christ through love yields a byproduct of Christian character. When we assume responsibility on behalf of others, and God advances our sphere of influence. The Lord is calling believers to be clear channels of agape love to others (1 Jn 4:19). This involves allowing the gospel to repeatedly order our inner world and our relationships (Lu 6:35ff.).

Living out our convictions has a rectifying effect upon our life direction ‘tuning’ us to the purposes of God for us. “As obedient children, 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).

Biblical sonship forms a life ‘script’ for living newness of life in Christ

We have seen that 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 for us to view self-denial and service to 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 true identity in the Lord becomes more and more visible to us by faith. As a result we are motivated by our controlling convictions to step into the sonship ‘script’ without reservation. We feed on the gospel promises of sonship in order to abide in Christ. And, as we abide in Christ, *life on life* ministry flows out of us, 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).

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. Sonship maps out our course. We could describe that path as: ***sonship*** (God the Father is ‘for me’ Christ has purchased my adoption), ***satisfaction*** (delight in God is my inheritance), ***soma*** (the deep community of body life means I belong to His forever family), ***surrender*** (consecration and presentation of myself to Christ is my reasonable response to His perfect love), and ***sanctification*** (becoming who I am in Christ as a child of God). development of Christian character (Rom 6:22).

Out of the conviction of sonship comes the character of a son. Thus, our relationship to God is “sonship” in that 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, and it is “surrender” which means our “sanctification” progresses as we submit to Christ and are ruled by His word. We have seen in this article that the basis for our convictions is God giving Himself to us in Christ and adopting us as His beloved sons and daughters that we might live unto Him and find our ultimate satisfaction in knowing and trusting Him.

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