

This We Teach (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Here's the passage that I want us to read that will get us started on our subject this morning.

! And it starts with verse 1 of chapter 4, Paul's second letter to Timothy. I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word.

I take that command very seriously, of course, because I've been called to be a preacher. Preach the word. Be ready. Be ready. In season and out of season. Convince. Rebuke. Exhort. All long-suffering and teaching.

And why? For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables or lies.

That's where we live today. Now, obviously, I think we could say without any uncertainty that that was certainly the way it was in Paul's day, too.

[1 : 46] He would not have written to Timothy regarding these things. But I think it's safe to say that false teachers spreading lies, as well as those who stand in pulpits like this one here in our church, standing and preaching false doctrine, or maybe even more prevalent, just not preaching sound doctrine at all.

This is intensifying in our days, our day, in our world, in our country specifically. Paul wrote something similar to another young preacher by the name of Titus, And you might remember this passage in Titus chapter 2 and verse 1.

But as for you, speaking to Titus, as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine. That is, those things that are in accord with sound doctrine.

Some of you are familiar with the name A.W. Tozer. And Tozer wrote this about sound doctrine. I love it. He said, we have gotten accustomed to the blurred puffs of gray fog that pass for doctrine in the churches, and we expect nothing better.

I love that. Gray, blurred puffs of gray fog. And that's what's happening in a lot of churches today. And he's saying that we have grown accustomed to it, and we don't really expect anything better.

[3 : 29] He goes on to say, one evidence is that increasing numbers of people in church are becoming ashamed to be found unequivocally on the side of truth.

That's so true. They say they believe, but their beliefs have been so diluted as to be impossible of clear definition.

And it's why I think we ought to very clearly define sound doctrine. And then Tozer said this. He said, we need to return to a gentle dogmatism that smiles while it stands stubborn and firm on the word of God.

Amen, amen. What a great quote. What a great thing to say. And Tozer said that way back in the 1950s. I wonder what he would say today. Well, he'd say the same thing.

Let's go back to the Bible again and hear what the Bible says about sound doctrine. Titus chapter 1 verse 9. Speaking of the qualifications for elders, he said, He must, that is, he must, that is, an elder must, hold firm in trustworthiness, in the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

[4 : 58] Pretty strong word. And it is so true. 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 13. Follow the pattern of sound, the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love, a faith and love and that are in Christ Jesus.

Sound words. The word of God. 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 15. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

1 John chapter 4 and verse 1. Behold, or beloved rather, do not believe every spirit, that's with a small s, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

For many false prophets have gone out into the world. Now let me ask you something based upon that passage. Upon what standard? What truth? What rule?

What objective truth? Shall we test the spirits? Well, is it going to be based upon reason? Or rationalism?

[6 : 14] What seems reasonable? What seems rational? It's going to be on the basis of what is practical, you know? What practically works? And so we will apply and embrace those truths in our church because it's practical.

It doesn't close the door on anyone. Are we going to base it upon that? Are we going to base it upon church tradition or emotion or consensus or popular opinion?

How we could go on with the possibilities? And many have done this. That is, the test of spirits based upon these things that are external, these things that are earthly, these things that are pragmatic and so forth.

The only infallible source that we have for accurately testing the spirits is the word of God. Of course.

You know this, don't you? The word of God. Objective truth. Divine truth. The inspired word of God. That's the only way we can test the spirits.

[7 : 30] And we need to get back. I hope I'm not saying this about our church because I think we are preaching and teaching sound doctrine.

But the church as a whole in this country, we need to get back to teaching and preaching from the pulpits sound doctrine.

Someone has said, and I love this, and I really hate it that Mike and Marsha are out on vacation because this would, I think he'd like this one. Someone has said that an excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent theologian.

The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and at the same time tolerates shoddiness in theology because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing or good theology.

Neither its pipes or its sermons will hold any water. I love that. I love that. Now, all that is an introduction to my title here.

[8 : 51] And that is what we teach. Actually, I changed it to this we teach. Highland Park's five doctrinal statements.

Now, these are not new to us. Maybe new to some of you because you have become a member of Highland Park before these were adopted back in 2009.

And I think they were explained, but it's time to revisit those doctrines. Five doctrinal statements.

They're available, of course, in our bylaws. They appear there. We have copies of them out here on the table. If you want to grab one, they're on our website.

If you can't find it in any of those places, then let me know and I'll get it to you. But these are five doctrinal statements. Now, last week, or not last week, last time, a couple of weeks ago, we focused on what I call the non-negotiables.

[9 : 58] The non-negotiables. The essential doctrines of the Christian faith. The basic Christian beliefs. So then this morning, we'll begin to look at our five doctrinal statements.

And here they are, all five of them, just to name them. What we teach about God. What we teach about the Holy Scriptures.

Third, what we teach about man or humanity. Fourth, what we teach about salvation. And then fifth, what we teach about the church.

Those are the five doctrinal statements. And I want us to go through these one by one and take as long as it takes. Now, these are doctrinal statements that really go further than just the basics.

Okay? Now, even though there will be the basics included in these five doctrinal statements, we'll have a repeat of what we looked at a couple of weeks ago. But we'll go further than that.

[11 : 04] Now, these are five doctrinal statements that take us deeper. And there may be some points that you don't agree with.

There may be. Because, you know, these doctrinal statements touch on aspects of biblical theology where there are, in some cases, a range of orthodox views.

I'm not just talking about a range of views in the larger sense. But I mean a range of orthodox views. Acceptable views. And so, there may be some disagreement on some points of this. And so, we'll just have to agree to disagree, I guess. But I really think that we're going to find far more here to agree with than to disagree with.

And I think we will all be in substantial agreement with these five doctrinal statements. Now, I really cannot adequately just cover all of these in one Sunday morning, okay?

[12:19] It's going to take us a little bit of time. So, we'll take several weeks. And so, here's the first one. What we teach about God. What we teach about God. And so, let's walk through this.

And here is the general statement. Appears in our five doctrinal statements under God. The teacher, what we teach about God. And here it is. You can read this on your own.

I'm not going to have us read it aloud like I did the basic beliefs. Let me read it to you. And you follow along as I read them. We teach that there is but one living and true God.

We covered that a couple of weeks ago, didn't we? An infinite, all-knowing spirit. Because he's not flesh and blood.

Perfect in all his attributes. One in essence, eternally existing in three persons.

[13:22] Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each equally deserving worship and obedience. So, there's just the general statement that we have in our five doctrinal statements under what we teach about God.

Just a general statement. Now, we covered most of this when we looked at the non-negotiables. There's very little new here. There's just kind of an expansion of some of the things that we said then and have printed in that document.

This is a basic, really, we could call this a very basic Christian belief. But let me highlight a few additional features of what we teach about God.

He's perfect in all his attributes. Now, that's important. He's perfect. You know, we have a lot of the same attributes that God has.

Because we were created in his image. We can love and do love. And we can have wisdom and do have wisdom. We can do many of those same things.

[14:30] And yet, the attributes, our attributes are not perfect. But God's are perfect. God is perfect in everything that he is.

He's perfect in holiness. He's not becoming more holy like, hopefully, all of us are. He's not becoming more holy.

He is perfect holiness. He's perfect righteousness. He's perfect love. We're growing in our love. We're learning how to love better, hopefully. Part of our growth as a believer. Our maturing in the faith. But God has arrived. Well, he didn't arrive because he always was perfect love.

Perfect love. Perfect strength. God is not getting stronger. Perfect wisdom. Through the years, he has not become more wise as God.

[15:35] He always has been perfect in his wisdom. Perfect in his knowledge. We talked about this a couple of weeks ago. God is not learning anything. Therefore, you can't inform him about anything.

You think about that next time you pray. And you have the idea that you need to let God know something. He knows. He has perfect knowledge.

Perfect in his knowledge. Perfect in his grace and mercy. Perfect in judgment. Now, that's a big one. You know, we judge. Some of us, some men and women have been placed in positions as judges.

They're all imperfect in their judgment. Primarily because they're imperfect in their knowledge. But God is not only perfect in his knowledge.

He's perfect in his judgment. When he judges, he judges right. Every single time. And at the end of the age, when both the living and the dead will stand before the Lord at his judgment.

[16:41] He will judge rightly. There will be many who will object. But his judgments are perfect. God is perfect in all of his attributes.

Let me highlight another part of this. Eternally existing in three persons. Now, I don't want to spend a lot of time on this because we talked about this a couple of weeks ago.

But I do want to give you a couple of passages. And really just a few of many, many places in Scripture where this is taught. Where this is revealed. In Matthew 28, 19. Which is a very famous passage.

The Great Commission. Go therefore make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the what? Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Three persons.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Let me give you another example. In 2 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God.

[17:47] That's the Father. And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. There are all three persons. Are mentioned here. So, we have the Scripture teaching dogmatically.

That there is one God. Our God is one. One God. Not three gods. One God. Not even one God with three heads.

You know, like the Jehovah's Witnesses talk about. Some three-headed monster. That's what we Christians believe in. It's baloney. But one God. That. Is identified as three persons.

God the Father. God the Son. God the Holy Spirit. Now, no one can explain this. Okay. I've had the question asked.

How do you explain the Trinity? And I can't explain it. I just believe it. Why do I believe it? Do I believe it just blindly? Really? No, because the Scripture teaches it.

[18:51] The Scripture is not denying. Whether you can explain it. Whether you can understand how it works. There is no denying that the Bible teaches it.

God is one in essence. That the Father, he is one in essence. I mean, God is one in essence. But eternally existing in three distinct persons.

And then the latter part of that, each equally deserving worship and obedience. And so that's a general, kind of general doctrinal statement about God.

And so let's look then at the first person. First of the three persons exist eternally in God.

God. And that's the Father. The first person of God. The Father. We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes.

[20:01] Disposes means he brings about. He not just decrees or orders these things. He also brings about what he orders. He orders and disposes all things according to his own purpose and grace.

He is the creator of all things. Now that's just part of the statement on God the Father. We'll just take this in chunks here. Small chunks.

Bite-sized chunks. And so first of all, the thing we need to notice is that he orders and disposes all things according to his own purpose and grace. 1 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 6.

For us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we for him.

Of whom are all things and we for him. Romans 11. I used this passage a couple weeks ago.

[21:06] In regard to God as the creator and all things exist and consist according to him. But in Romans chapter 11, you know the latter part of that chapter is a kind of a doxology of the apostle Paul.

And Paul begins really in that passage by quoting from Isaiah and Jeremiah and also from Job. And he says, That is implied.

No one. And he goes on to say, And who has first given to him and it shall be repaid to him. That is, you can't give anything to God. You can't add anything to God.

You're not going to come to God and serve and say, I'm going to help you out, God, and then I expect some kind of reward in return. Who has given to God? No one. And God is perfect.

How can he add anything to himself? And then he closes by saying, For of him and through him and to him are all things.

[22:41] All things. That is either things directly ordered by him or those things that are sovereignly permitted by him.

He for of him, coming from him and through him, his agency and to him for his glory are all things. All things to whom be glory forever. Amen. This is God the Father. What else do we teach about God the Father?

As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, he is sovereign in creation, in providence, in redemption, and redemption.

And again, this is just another little chunk of it. We'll get to more of it here in a moment. Now we talked about God the Father as creator last time. We're going to talk about the God as creator when we get to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

[23:50] Because we'll find in Scripture that all three are involved in the creation. All three are involved in everything that God does. But let's look at these other two aspects of God's sovereignty.

First of all, his providence. His providence. Psalm 103 verse 19. The Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all.

You know, we have all these, the word all appears so many times in Scripture. This all conclusive word that is used. His kingdom, he rules over all. Over all.

All people. All things. Not just on this planet, but in his entire creation. God is sovereign in providence. All the things that happen, God is sovereign over these things.

We can look at a few other verses of Scripture that speak to this. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 45. He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

[24 : 59] That's everyone. Sovereign in his providence over mankind. How about this one? Psalm 66 and verse 7.

He rules by his might. Forever. His eyes keep watch on the nations. Even those nations that have come into existence long after David wrote this psalm.

All nations. He keeps watch over the nations. Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. That is, the rebellious among the nations. Think that we're somehow calling all the shots.

That God is somehow uninvolved. Or maybe he, kind of like you, would throw a top, you know, want to spin a top and let it just spin until it runs down. And you're not involved in its direction or how it spins.

God didn't just get it all started. He just let it go on and wind down eventually. God is sovereign in providence over all things on this planet and all things throughout all of history.

[26 : 05] He keeps watch over all the nations. And so don't let anyone be rebellious by exalting himself or herself. This is God the Father.

Luke 15. He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. And all you have to do is go back and look at history and you see it over and over again.

Now what you don't see, but what you ought to assume because of Scripture, is that the rise of nations and fall of nations, the rising of kings and the fall of kings and replacing with other kings, that's all a part of the sovereign providence of God.

And you say, you mean even the wicked nations? Yes. The providence of God. God the Father is sovereign in providence.

He is also sovereign in redemption. And we'll talk a whole lot more about this when we get to the doctrine of salvation, when we teach about salvation.

[27 : 11] But how about this passage in John 1, 12 and 13? But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God.

To those who believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Of God. That's a passage that deals with salvation. Born, being born again, being birthed from above. That's the whole idea behind that term that Jesus used when he spoke to Nicodemus in John chapter 3.

You must be born again. You must be birthed from above. Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. God is sovereign over redemption.

And we'll talk a whole lot more about that in the weeks to come. Next, his fatherhood involves both his designation within the Trinity and his relationship with mankind.

[28 : 24] As creator, he is father to all men. But he is spiritual father only to believers. And this is very important.

And it really answers the question, in what sense is God the Father? Well, in two. In two senses. In the first place, in his designation within the Trinity.

I mean, this is how the Bible identifies God the Father. The first person of the Trinity identifies him as Father.

In fact, it was Jesus who identifies him as Father. That's why the Pharisees had... One of the reasons why they had such a big problem with Jesus is because in their theology, there was no sense of God being their Father.

But Jesus identifies him as Father. So, in... To distinguish him among the other two members of the Trinity, the Bible calls him Father.

[29 : 30] Identifies him as Father. So, he is Father. There's the fatherhood of God. In this sense, his designation within the Trinity. But also, in his relationship with mankind.

His relationship with mankind. He is Father in the sense of his relationship with mankind. And we need to qualify this a little bit in our doctrinal statement.

And we do. As Creator, he is Father to all men. In that sense, in the sense of creation.

In the sense that God is the Creator. He is, correctly understood, the Father of all. The Father of all men as Creator. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 6.

One God and Father of all. Who is above all. And through all. And in you all. Now that, by the way, is not teaching some kind of a pantheistic theology.

[30 : 32] That God is all and in all. You know, that God is inside the molecules of this pulpit. And, you know, some kind of Star Wars idea. You know. He is just the Father.

He is God above all. And through all. Through all agencies. And in you all. As Creator. He is the Father of all.

Also, but in the sense of a spiritual sense. He is the spiritual Father. Only to believers.

Only to those who are of the faith. Who have been born again by God. Followers. Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans chapter 8.

14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God. These are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear.

[31 : 34] But you received the spirit of adoption. By whom we cry out, Abba, Father. I love that passage too. This whole statement that really defines our relationship with God.

Through faith. As believers. As his children. He is Abba, Father. Abba. Speaking of our intimate relationship with him.

Father. Speaking of really the creator of our redemption. Our salvation. The author of our salvation. We call him Abba, Father.

2 Corinthians 6. 17. Come out from among them and be separate. Says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you.

I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters. Says the Lord Almighty. So by his spiritual father.

[32 : 34] Only to believers. Alright, let's move on. This is what we're teaching. What we teach about God the Father. He has decreed for his own glory.

All things that come to pass. He has decreed. He has decreed. What does that mean? He has ordered.

Divinely ordered. For his own glory. All things. That come to pass. He has decreed all things.

This is huge. And this is something you really need to think about. Search the scriptures about. There will be some disagreement on this. Even the mention of the word decreed.

Caused some people to kind of bristle up a little bit. He has decreed all things. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11. In him also we have obtained an inheritance.

[33 : 36] Being predestined according to the purpose of him who works. What? All things. According to the counsel of his will. I don't know how you can define that any other way.

Than just exactly what it says. He works all things according to the counsel of his will. That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory.

Now see. It is staggering to contemplate the way that's worded here. It's not saying all things that he works he's decreed.

Implying you know that some things are not his works. And therefore they have not been decreed. But the plain sense of the passage.

Whether you look at it just on the surface. Or even if you delve into it grammatically. The plain sense of it is. He works all things.

[34 : 40] He works all things. That's God. The Father. And so what things are included in all things? Well. Be a lot easier to try to decide what things are not included.

And actually when you start to go that route. You find out no things. Nothing. Now what else do we teach about this?

He continually upholds, directs, governs all creatures and events.

Now think about that. 1 Chronicles 29 verse 11.

Yours O Lord is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty. For all that is in heaven and in earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom O Lord.

[35 : 40] And you are exalted as head over all. Notice all of the all's there. And the concept of all conclusive that's in that passage.

You know. Really today there's a lot of really bad stuff happening in our world today. Bad stuff. See it on the news every day. I get tired of watching the news. And not just in our world but even in our own country.

Terrible things. Things that are absolutely contrary to the word of God. Things we thought would never happen in our culture. And in our lives. And in our God bless America. Every day.

I mean it's a really terrible thing. Now should we be concerned about it? Yeah. Sure. Even if we didn't want to be. We really can't help it.

We ought to be concerned about it. Should we be worried? No. Should we be fearful?

[36 : 44] Some of us are. But the answer is no. We should not be fearful. God hasn't given us a spirit of fear. But power.

Sound mind. Should we be depressed? Well. Some of us are. All we have to do is turn on the news. And we get depressed. Maybe some of us are even walking around in kind of a funk. Kind of this dark oppression over us.

But what is happening? We're just overwhelmed by it. And discouraged by it. Should we be? Well no. We should not be.

Should we be angry? Well I would say to a particular degree. And in one biblical sense we should be.

[37 : 41] Concerned about those things that are an affront to God. And the holiness of God. Very much like Jesus became angry. When God was offended in the temple.

With the money changers. And the only time you find in scripture. That Jesus became very angry. Righteous indignation. Certainly. We're not angry at people and things.

We should not be angry. And I really think what we ought to do is remember this passage I just read. It ought to be part of our prayers. Every time we get a little bit depressed about things.

Or angry about things. Or discouraged about it. Or worried. Or fearful. We ought to just quote this verse. Yours oh Lord is the greatness. And the power. And the glory.

And the victory. And the majesty. For all that is in heaven and earth is yours. Do we really believe that by the way? That's what the Bible said.

[38 : 42] Yours is the kingdom oh Lord. And you are exalted as head over all. Now that. That's true.

Whether we see it. Or not. One day we will see the reality of that. I hope it's soon.

You know our grandparents. And I say it this way. Because this kind of expression is not really heard very much today. But our grandparents used to say. What's this world coming to?

Perhaps you still say that. We have some of my generation older. We say that all the time. What's this world coming to? Well don't we know? It's all coming to Jesus.

One way. Or the other. In fact even those that are condemned. To eternity. And judgment in hell. Belong to him.

[39 : 49] It all belongs to him. Now let me finish this up. About God the Father. Next week we'll. Talk about what we teach.

About God the Son. And God the Holy Spirit. Those are two big things. And so. To wrap this up. In his sovereignty.

He is neither the author. Nor approver of sin. That's an important point of doctrine. Nor does he abridge. The accountability of moral intelligent creatures.

Now that's the statement. That wraps up the doctrinal statement. Under God the Father. What we teach about God the Father. And so. Let me just highlight a few things here.

I think we all know. Intuitively really. Whether we understand. How this could work. I mean on the one hand. God is sovereign.

[40 : 50] He is the. You know. He orders. And he governs. All things. On that side of it. We say. That's right. That's what the Bible teaches. And then we have. Wickedness.

And sin. And how does. How does that fit together. I don't think any of us. Would necessarily come to the conclusion. That God is the author of sin. That God is the approver of sin.

In any sense. In any degree. In any context. For any purpose. That it might. Somehow serve. We might think it might serve. God is not the author of it. He's not the approver of it.

We have a couple of. Several actually. Scriptures. That teach this. Habakkuk chapter 1 verse 13. You are of purer eyes. Than to behold evil.

And cannot look on wickedness. James chapter 1 verse 13. God cannot be tempted by evil. Nor does he himself tempt.

[41 : 50] Anyone. God is not the. Neither the author. Nor the approver of sin. So how. How do we explain this thing?

Well. How about if I let Jonathan Edwards explain it. I like the way he. Wrote about this. He wrote. If by.

The author of sin. Be meant. The sinner. The author of the sinner. The agent. Or the actor of sin. Or the doer of a wicked. In that sense. If we're talking in that sense. He's the author of the sinner. The actor. Of sin. The agent of sin. It would be a reproach.

And blasphemy. To suppose God. To be the author. Of sin. But. Goes on to argue. Willing.

[42 : 49] That sin. Exist. In the world. Is not the same thing. As being the author. Of it. You understand. God clearly. Allows sin.

To exist. But that's not the same thing. As saying that he's the author. Of it. And Edwards. Used the analogy.

Of the way the sun. Brings about. Light. And warmth. By its essential nature. The sun does it. Brings light. And warmth. And yet.

When the sun. Goes down. From the horizon. What happens? Dark. And cold. But those are not. Essential natures. Of the sun. The sun does not.

Is not the author. Of cold. And darkness. Any more than God. Is the author. Of sin. And wickedness. And so.

[43 : 46] What does that tell us then? Well. Edwards goes on to say. Sin. Is not the fruit. The result.

Of any. Positive agency. Or influence. Of the most high God. But on the contrary. Sin. Arises. From the withholding.

Of his actions. And energies. As God. And under certain. Circumstances. Sin. Necessarily. Follows. In the absence. Of his influence.

Sin. And that's what we have. Today. And God. Allows sin. And. God. Even.

Accomplishes. His purposes. Through it. But he's not the author. Of it. Now that being true. Then we. Need to note this.

[44 : 42] Nor does he. A bridge. And some of you have. You know. Reader's digest books. And a bridged. Version.

Of a. Of the larger work. He doesn't abridge. He doesn't minimize. He doesn't reduce. He doesn't shorten. The accountability.

Of moral. Intelligent. Creatures. Accountability. The accountability. For sin. Even though God is not the author of it. And even though God allows it to exist.

That does not mean that we can use that as an excuse. And say well. God you allowed me to be the way I am. And so. That's part of my excuse. For acting the way that I do.

And yet scripture is very clear. That he does not minimize. Or reduce. Or shorten. The accountability. For sin. First Peter 1 17.

[45 : 43] The father. Without partiality. Judges according to each one's works. Each one's work. So.

You know. In conclusion. Life is short. Death is sure. Sin.

The curse. The curse. Christ. The cure.