

Basic
Christian Theology

PART
ONE

The essence of Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Christian faith is also a revelation of truth from God to man, which He has given us in the scriptures. There are certain fundamental truths that make Christianity what it is, and it is important that every Christian be grounded in these basics of the faith. With that in mind, we begin a new series of articles on the essential truths of Christianity, with a prayer that it will be a blessing and will help encourage further study of God's Word.

First, let's ask: What makes the essentials essential? What principles and guidelines are used by which we determine what the non-negotiable essentials of Christianity are? Here are a few observations and suggestions.

The center of Christianity is Jesus Christ. Therefore, nothing can be more basic to the Christian faith than that which directly concerns Jesus' identity and mission. Who is Jesus? Is He God? What relation is Jesus to the One He addressed as Father? These questions are tied up with the whole subject of the nature of God. The basis of any religion is, of course, its concept of God. All this is basic and essential to the Christian faith.

At the heart of Christianity is also the idea of the salvation of man. What is this salvation? Why do we need it, and what do the Person and Work of Christ have to do with it? All this is basic to our faith.

The simple answer that Paul gave to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16 presupposes some basic truths that make the Christian faith distinctively Christian. Paul's answer "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" assumes: 1) that we understand what he means by "Believe". What is biblical saving faith?; 2) that we believe on the biblical Jesus, and; 3) that we know something about the nature and need for salvation. So we see in this command to Paul and Silas certain truths are basic necessities to one being saved. And what is more vital than knowing how to be saved and applying that knowledge in one's life? Other related scriptures include Romans 10:9-10 & I Corinthians 15:1-4 (defining the Gospel).

We could say that those truths that directly identify and describe the person and work of Christ, and which answer the question "What must I do to be saved?" are the absolute essentials of the Christian faith. These truths distinguish orthodox biblical Christianity from any other

philosophy, religion, or counterfeit system of belief.

So, based on these principles and guidelines, the essentials would include: one God in three persons (the Trinity), the deity of Jesus Christ, the incarnation and virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, the ascension and second coming of Christ, and salvation of human beings from sin and its consequences by grace through faith alone. This is not the only way the essentials can be listed. Other lists may vary slightly depending on how specific the list may be.

We will cover many of these doctrines in this new series. Next time we will see how the ancient creeds of the church help in communicating and defending our faith.