**Seamless Doctrine**

Based on [1 Peter 3](https://biblia.com/books/esv/1Pe3)

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Lenten Midweek 3

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St. Peter wrote his first epistle to the “elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” From the beginning, the one true catholic and apostolic church has been dispersed…*scattered* throughout the world as exiles. But the church is still a whole,--one in mind, one in spirit, one in baptism, one in faith, one in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Just as the soldiers divided Jesus’ outer garments, but his inner tunic remained seamless, so too the church may be scattered outwardly, but is inwardly united by the seamless doctrine and faith delivered once for all to the saints.**

This seamless doctrine spreads across both time and space. The doctrine is not only the same from one side of the world to the other, it is the same today as it was 2000 years ago when Christ ascended into heaven. The doctrine is given in Holy Scripture. 1Peter 3 is a valuable piece of sacred scripture, because it attests to so many teachings of the catholic faith that are in dispute within Christianity today.

**The first doctrine is (1) the headship of the husband.** I saw a picture of this recently, depicting an umbrella covering a smaller umbrella which is covering a still smaller umbrella: They are Christ…over husband…over wife…and children under all. What it shows is that the wife protects or covers the children, the husband covers the wife and children, and Christ covers whole family. That is the order of God’s creation.

That order has an authority structure. Children are not called to rule their parents, but to obey and respect them. Wives are not called to rule their husbands, but obey and respect them, quote :”**even as Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him “Lord”**.” Husbands are not supposed to rule Christ, but respect and obey him as Lord. And with rule comes sacrifice…wives are to suffer and die for their children; husbands for their wives and children; just as Christ died for all.

With authority comes responsibility. So it is required of husbands to love their wives and rule them in an understanding way, to show honor to her as the weaker vessel. Likewise, wives are not to rule over their husbands, but are to set their efforts at respectful and pure conduct. Men and women are equal in dignity before God, equally human, equally precious in his sight. But they are built differently, physically, emotionally and psychologically and this means each were created to suit different roles in the family and society and the church. So said the Holy Spirit 2000 years ago; so says God today.

But not a few Christians today think that they know more about men and women than their Creator. With the rise of second and third wave feminism, women have been taught to reject their roles as submissive spouses. Instead they are taught at a very young age to use their sexuality to exert power and influence over men and society. This is satanic; no less satanic than men who beat women into submission. It is coercion, it is force. It is **an abomination to the Lord of power and might who did not come in the power of the sword, but the weakness of the cross; who did not come in attractive appearance, but had no form or majesty that we should look at him, or beauty that we should desire him.** Scripture teaches women to be Christlike. They need to be assured that adorning themselves internally with gentleness and quietness, is infinitely more precious in God’s sight than external beauty.

**The second doctrine is the (2) Articulation of the Faith.**  Just as Christ came not in power but in weakness, we too are not to force our way upon the world, but rather to live “the way of Christ” and suffer for it when opposed. As Christians, we are to have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. So Peter says, “**In your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect…**” The loving and humble person will articulate the faith that is in them…not only what they believe, but why they believe it.

When the Evangelical Lutheran Church was formed, they articulated their faith in a document called the Augsburg Confession. They were required to, not only by the Emperor, but by God. They were compelled to put into clear words why they were contradicting the Pope’s doctrine. And they did it. They articulated (in 28 “*articles*” no less)…the reason for the faith that was in them. And when their confession was contradicted, as it was destined to be…they drafted a defense, an “Apology” for the faith that was in them, the faith that prevented them from participating and worshipping according to the abuses that the Roman Pontiff’s had brought upon the church of God. They were still threatened, persecuted, slandered, and none of them lived to know what would become of their struggles. But they believed and so they articulated their faith, regardless of the consequences. And they suffered knowing, “**It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.”**

The only valid reason for a christian or church to break fellowship is in order to follow sound doctrine. For this reason all Christians and Churches need to have an articulation of the faith that is in them. “We confess the bible” isn’t enough…everyone claims to. Peter requires an explanation of how they claim to rightly confess the bible. Otherwise they are needlessly dividing the body of Christ.

**The third doctrine is (3) Jesus’ victorious descent into hell.** This is an important doctrine today insofar as many Christian churches deny the literal existence of hell, or, as one liberal protestant scholar quipped something like, “**Yes I believe in hell, but I expect it will be empty in the end**.” Well, Christ descended into hell, but he didn’t find it empty. He found it full of disobedient souls to whom he preached his victory over sin, death and the devil…and over them.

That Jesus descended into hell after he died is confessed in the Apostles Creed. In the entirety of Holy Scripture, the purpose of this descent is explained only here. Christ “**went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah.**” The flood foreshadows the final judgment to come. Just as Christ will separate sheep from the goats, so too the floodwaters separated the wicked from the righteous, vindicating Noah and his family, and judging the wicked. And so too, the recently crucified and risen Jesus trampled hell and all its occupants underfoot, with the power of his gospel.

**The fourth doctrine is that (4) Baptism saves.** Baptism is not an outward sign of an inward faith. It is an act of salvation from God.

We believe that the Bible is God’s Word, and what it says God says. That being the case, God says “Baptism now saves you”, and everyone who says the opposite, who says “**Baptism doesn’t save you**” is calling God a liar. They don’t think they are, but the logic is irresistible. If the Holy Spirit says “**Baptism now saves you**”, only an unholy spirit would say they opposite.

And this is how it saves: “**Not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** A good conscience is the peace giving knowledge of being right with God. Baptism does that, gives that, assures that, and signifies that when it is received and remembered in faith.

These four doctrines (1) **Husbands and Wives**, (2) **Articulating faith**; (3) **Judgment in Hell** and (4) **Baptismal Salvation** are under assault today in the world and in the church which has let the world in. These the true church has always known and confessed and they are presently under attack by the world. But the bible doesn’t change, and1 Peter 3 teaches with a clarity that leaves nay sayers without excuse. So keep the word and spread it, write these doctrines on your hearts and talk about them with your Christian friends. Christ will advocate for us before his father in heaven; let us not keep silent about what he has taught us to speak.