

DOXA - in our goal of unlocking glorious living, are unpacking seven core Christian beliefs, and we've asked the question how does this belief instruct the way that I LIVE?

So far in the series we've looked at: *God is one, The Bible is true*
Mankind is helpless, Eternity is real, The Church is central
Next week we close it out with: *Jesus is Life*
Tonight: *The Cross is Enough*

The ROOT of the Greek word DOXA is *to think. Consider. Imagine.*

So yes, we're talking about belief. But this doesn't stop at mere mental ascent. DOXA is a Greek word for glory... *It means splendor, grandeur, honor... its used to talk about the revealed presence of God...*

Creeds and lists of beliefs are good. The Nicene Creed is famous for the foundational doctrines within it. But your **deeds** speak louder than your **creeds**. No matter how loud you shout them – what you DO says more to the world about who YOU, and more importantly GOD is.

For example - many of us believe Easter happened. The Nicene Creed speaks to the fact he suffered, was crucified, was buried, and rose again on the third day. We believe this. The cross purchased our salvation, bridged the gap, and reconciled us to God the Father. But typically the events of Easter don't having an abiding significance in our day to day lives. We're back to trying to earn what's already been bought...

And tonight we've got to ask the question tied to Easter – **how does my belief that the Cross is Enough affect the way I live daily?**

Jesus paid it ALL. He didn't split the tab. He said "I got the check."
He was the ALL sufficient sacrifice

Jesus is salvation **and** life. We love to slide other elements into the equation.
But Jesus + nothing = salvation.

THE CROSS

Crucifixion was intentionally inhumane. It was done gruesomely and in public as the Romans empire wanted to remind people in the areas they ruled of what would happen if they rebelled. The Romans empire crucified so many people that they had it down to a science. They'd have public locations set up and the vertical post set up permanently and readied. Then the one to be crucified- after being whipped and scourged - would carry the horizontal beam to the place of execution. Romans even had specialized teams of people to fix them to the cross and oversee their death.

It sounds like a horror movie.

And yet fast-forward... this same torture device of death decorates our churches.
I also wear a **cross** daily. Without the work of Jesus all of this would be plain disturbing!

But Jesus didn't stay on the cross!

Sure, as Galatians 2:20 says, we've been "crucified with Christ,"

but we've also been made "alive with Christ" as it says in Ephesians 2:5

In the same passage Ephesians doesn't say we've been raised up and united with him on the cross, it says we've been raised up and seated in the Heavenly realms.

And yet you can't get around the cross.

In fact Paul says to the church in Corinth that he preached only Christ and him crucified.

He makes it clear elsewhere that his only boast is in the cross. Why?

He says in **Colossians 1:20** - *Through [Jesus] God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth – **HOW?**- by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

The author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 10:14

By that ONE offering [Jesus] made perfect those who are being made holy.

Peter takes it a step further... 1 Peter 3:18 - *Christ suffered for our sins ONCE for ALL TIME.*

It's why Jesus' last words on the cross were "It is finished" and not "I did my part"

What does that mean for you?

There is nothing you can do to make God love you less.

There is nothing you can do to make God love you more.

Which means you are secure.

You aren't your worst moments.

You aren't your latest job review.

You aren't your last report card.

You aren't the condition of last week's parenting.

You are secure in God's love.

I first encountered and responded to God's grace in salvation, October 10th of 2005.

And for whatever reason... I don't know why... but I didn't start with the Gospels like I would tell a new believer to. I started in Romans.

I was reading it as an English major about to graduate from W&M.

So I remember breaking out the academic outline...

Section I would include **Romans 1-4 – Justification by grace through faith.**

Romans 3:23 is the famous one – all have sinned and fallen short.

Romans 3:25 and on is crucial to our discussion tonight of the cross being enough...

God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.

Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

This is where we see once again in scripture: **The Cross is Enough.**

But like this series Doxa, Paul isn't just trying to present apologetics. He too would ask: ***How does this belief that the Cross is enough effect the way I live?***

The next section of Romans outline (chapters 5-8) helps us dig into that question tonight. Paul recognizes that the glorious grace of the Gospel has the scent of scandal to it. Some theologians even call this declaration of grace in advance dangerous. And Paul anticipates and addresses some of these responses to God's glorious grace.

A misunderstanding of the implications of the grace can derail our very lives. The belief that the Cross is enough could adversely effect the way we live when we apply it in two ways:

- 1.) Use it as a **loophole** to keep sinning
- 2.) Use **legalism** to plug what seems like loopholes.

What am I talking about with loopholes?

If the cross is enough... if nothing we do affects God's love and his grace available to us... can't we just DO anything?

Mike Belderrain's story – the elk shooting in Yellowstone that exposed a hole in the Constitution

We mythologize the constitution. We talk about it like it's a perfected, finished product. And yet within this document, we find that there are loopholes.

I share this because we clearly hold the Bible dearly. We study it. We apply it. Why? Because as Pastor Fred preached just weeks ago we believe it is true, the Word of God given to us. And within it this explosive belief that the cross is enough... that it's all sufficient... that it opens the floods of God's grace and love to all... it sure seems to set up a giant loophole that the Bible has to address repeatedly, and Paul does in Romans.

At the end of Romans 5 Paul says: *As people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.*

So Paul starts Romans 6 with a hypothetical question – What shall we say then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?

He asks a similar question later in the same chapter – *since the cross... since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning?*

If nothing I do can earn my salvation, can't I just do anything and receive grace along the way?

Paul replies to each with a heck no. By no means. Or as the KJV puts it: God forbid.

What Paul is anticipating is the potential for grace abuse.

A grace mishandled that says if I'm saved by faith alone, obedience sure seems optional.

Mishandled grace transforms from a healthy "God will forgive what I've done"

Into a premeditated "God will forgive what I'm about to do"

Sin now. Repent later.

Jude 1:4 – *some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God’s marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives.*

The message version of Paul’s intro to Romans 6 –

So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we’ve left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn’t you realize we packed up and left there for good?

You can’t truly accept grace *and* make a home amidst sin. True repentance means moving out! And when take this word picture a step further and look at the country we move into when we embrace grace, we realize there are still commands to adhere to.

And this is where in our discussion of the Cross is Enough, we see it’s easy to drift into legalism.

LEGALISM

In light of “The Cross being Enough,” we can define legalism as any attempt to add to the finished work of the cross with extra rules and regulations.

Legalism says look *this whole grace thing is downright scandalous.*

The legalist sees proverbial elk hunters and alike potentially getting off the hook without payment for their sins... and thinks... this has to be some loophole that needs fixing.

Our constitution, for instance, has 27 ratified amendments.

The religious leaders went to TOWN on God’s law though...

The Pharisees cooked up **613**. Six hundred and thirteen additional details to adhere to.

We are naturally drawn to legalism just like this for two big reasons:

- 1.) It offers a method of measurement.
- 2.) It offers a feeling of superiority.

Legalism isn’t just about rules for others and applied to others.

Legalism is the idea that we can satisfy God by obeying the laws through our good works.

And Paul says this was Israel’s biggest problem and what kept them from coming to Christ.

You could contend that Romans third Roman numeral in its outline is chapters 9-11.

The Problem of Israel - What problem?

They were clinging to the law to the point they couldn’t come clean in God’s grace.

Romans 9:30-33

The Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him.

Paul goes on at the start of Romans 10:

The longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

Paul is saying in yet another way. The cross is enough.

Legalism as a term in our day has become defined as the legislation of any specific Christian truth or law.

Paul says in Romans 7 the problem isn't with the law, for it is spiritual and good.

Jesus says in the MSG version within the Sermon on the Mount:

God's Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God's Law will be alive and working.

So Paul's problem here and in books that focus on legalism like Galatians – it isn't with moral law or obedience of rules. His beef was that moral rules and adherence to them had supplanted the sufficiency of Jesus. The cross was no longer enough.

The Cross + circumcision, the cross + dietary laws, or the cross + checking these boxes ...that was enough.

We too drift into this because the checking of boxes gives us a means of measurement, or of measuring up... not just to God, but against other people... people we often look down on.

Legalism fills me with self righteousness.

But genuine grace? That's humbling. Because I didn't earn it... and can never earn it.

And this is exactly what made Jesus' ministry so confusing to the Pharisees.

He came and spent time with and ministered to all the people they looked down on!

When they confront him on this, he says in Mark 2

that he didn't come for the people who have it together and appear healthy, but the sick.

Matthew 21:31 – “I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you do.” How? Jesus said it was because they heard and responded to John the Baptist and Jesus not with works, but simple faith and belief. Repentance by grace through faith.

But the pharisees were so focused on boasting in their works that they didn't see the need to repent. And they see tax collectors and prostitutes with all their unchecked boxes getting into Heaven before them and think - we've got to fix the loophole.

But the loophole – if you want to call it that - is grace.

And this grace is for all... The deathbed convert. The lifelong addict. The tax collector and the prostitute. All it takes is repentance by grace through faith.

And God doesn't ask us to fix this seeming loophole in grace.
He asks us to embrace it.

How? Jesus tells us simple and plain how to receive the kingdom in Mark 10.

Like children.

Children haven't done anything. They can stake no claim. They simply come.

How do I personally know I've drifted into legalism?

I fail to read or pray as much as I planned to. When that leads to me feeling like somehow God looks at me differently... I've fallen into legalism. I've forgotten the cross is enough.

Does the Word help me grow in Christ and draw near? Sure.

But my discipline doesn't make me acceptable to God. Jesus does.

How else does the Cross is Enough effect the way we live daily?

How does this play out ultimately in Romans?

Well you could say that the last part, the fourth Roman numeral of the Romans outline is about Christian Conduct.

Starting in Romans 12 Paul notably pivots from orthodoxy to orthopraxy.

Right belief to right behavior - from generosity, to leadership, to loving our neighbor, to citizenship, all the way down to paying taxes.

Romans 12 begins with the famous and oft quoted passage about our worship being an act of living sacrifice. I love the Message version, because it says: *Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.* Paul realizes just like we're driving home in this series... all of our head knowledge and beliefs better effect the way you live your *"everyday, ordinary, going to work, walking around life."* It should be a living sacrifice.

And Jesus tells us our sacrifice will have parallels to his, as he tells us if we're to follow him we're to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow.

"Timeout, we've spent all of this time talking about how THE cross is enough, why would I need to carry my own?"

In the paintings we celebrate and movies we watch we almost always see Jesus carrying the entire cross. But according to the Roman practice of crucifixion- this prolific system of execution that they made most proficient - the vertical beam was already taken care of, permanently in place at Golgotha.

The beam that Simon of Cyrene was tagged and responsible for carrying was what was called the transverse beam – the horizontal beam of the cross.

So it is with us. With me and with you.

Jesus has taken care of the vertical beam.
He's taken care of vertical reconciliation with God the Father.
We don't carry our cross to earn some approval.
When Jesus tells us to carry our cross and follow him it's not the work of salvation.

But we're still called to carry our cross.
And the part of the cross we carry is what people of Jesus' day would have carried:
The horizontal beam.
We're called to labor horizontally.
To love our neighbor. To seek reconciliation.
As Paul calls the Church in Corinth, ministers of reconciliation in a world of division.

I mean when you look at weeks like this week and see so much death and division.
When you see so much injustice and tragedy.
When you see brothers and sisters hurting.

Let that discomfort hit you... that discomfort is a good thing when it reminds you this isn't how God intended it to be, and that there's horizontal work to be done by me and you.

But we love our comfort. And the inclination when weeks like this week hit us with discomfort or the realization that things are the way they should be... its easy to adopt a Christian cocoon. To sit back on the couch and say "God is on the Throne," and "Jesus is coming back," so I'll just sit back until then.

The world needs the hope of the finished work of the cross, and the reconciliation that comes with it.

The world needs more than our mental ascent that the cross of Jesus was enough.
The world needs us to do our part, walk in obedience and carry the horizontal beam and labor horizontally. Loving neighbor. Loving mercy and doing justice.
Bearing one another's burdens and weeping with those who weep.

And as we carry our cross, as we work practically, may we forever point to the cross of Jesus as enough, enough for reconciliation with God and the hope of reconciliation with our fellow man.

May we forever point vertically as we work horizontally.
That is how the finished work of the cross will bring God glory and DOXA *through* your life.

2 Q's

Am I working for God's approval and not out of assurance?

Have I picked up a weight of legalism I was never supposed to carry? Lay it down.

Have I embraced the vertical beam of reconciliation with God and not picked up my horizontal beam? Do I share the hope I have? Do I operate in Christ like compassion or settle into comfort?