

## Doctrinal Distinctives of Tom Bear

Many Christians prefer to read writings of people they trust within their own group. On occasions that they read something from an author outside their group, they tend to read with a critical mindset, looking for content that they deem erroneous because it does not align perfectly with teachings that they have heard from those inside their own group.

Before taking the time to read one of my books, Christians typically would like to know what theological group to which I belong. Which label best fits?

- evangelical?
- Baptist?
- Arminian?
- Calvinist?
- Reformed?
- dispensational?
- etc.

While many authors proudly identify themselves with labels like these, I am not able to do so for two reasons. First, all of them fall short of describing me. Second, the meanings of these labels are no longer well defined. For example, if someone identifies himself as a Calvinist, “non-Calvinists” typically assume many things about him that are probably not even true. Worse yet, some people will occasionally use such labels to demean other Christians who hold to **a view different from their own**.<sup>1</sup> Because such labels often fail to convey the truth about people, I try to avoid using them. When I do use them, I might say something like, “*Mr. Smith identifies himself*<sup>2</sup> as reformed.”

Though I try to avoid using such labels, I understand why a Christian would like to know the theological perspective of an author before investing the time to read his writings. And I believe it is good for authors to be transparent about their perspectives so prospective readers might know them up front.

Many Christians don’t know what to think of me because they don’t know how to label me. I suppose this might be because some things I have written have bothered certain people (for different reasons) from **every one of those groups**.<sup>3</sup> And those who do take objection usually don’t even understand what I said. Often, people just assume I meant “such and such” because it “seemed” like something they would expect to hear from people **outside their group**.<sup>4</sup>

**I have written this article to help prospective readers and other Christian friends understand some of my theological mindset.** Hopefully, this will help some people avoid making false assumptions about **what I believe and teach**.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, I doubt that it will satisfy anyone who insists on categorizing me as the means to determine whether I should be taken seriously.

Before listing some of my doctrinal distinctives, I wish to state that I believe and teach these things **dogmatically**<sup>6</sup> because I am convinced that the Bible clearly teaches them. If I thought otherwise, I would not teach them dogmatically. If I do not consider a doctrine to be clearly taught by the Bible, I try to say something like, “This SEEMS to be what the Bible teaches,” (rather than teaching it dogmatically). Many **eschatological doctrines**<sup>7</sup> fit this category in my opinion.

In addition to these doctrinal distinctives, there are other things I teach dogmatically that are spelled out to some degree in the Stones Cry Out Doctrinal Statement on the “[What we believe](#)” page of the Stones Cry Out website. It contains foundational New Testament doctrines that you would expect to find on any decent Christian doctrinal statement.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, on several occasions, I have heard those who identify as “Calvinist” call others “Arminian” in order to discredit them. It seems that in their minds, whatever such a person says should simply be ignored since he obviously is not as enlightened as them. Brethren, these things ought not be.

<sup>2</sup> And I would not even do this unless the person proudly identifies himself as *reformed*.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps I could be labeled, “An equal opportunity offender.”

<sup>4</sup> To make such assumptions, they usually first assume I belong to that group outside their own.

<sup>5</sup> I have noticed that many Christian friends and associates assume things about my theological views that are simply not true.

<sup>6</sup> (As if they are certain.)

<sup>7</sup> Eschatological doctrines are those that teach what will happen just prior to, during and after Jesus comes back.

### ***Some of Tom Bear's doctrinal distinctives:***

#### **Without the perfect substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus, everyone who ever lived would rightly perish.**

In my opinion, this is one of those foundational New Testament doctrines I should not even have to mention as a “doctrinal distinctive.” But this doctrine has been under attack from the beginning and wolves who speak against it are on the increase greatly as the Day of Christ draws near. Because God’s righteousness is absolute, He cannot excuse sins. They all have to be righteously punished. God sent His only begotten Son into the world to take that punishment. Jesus’ sacrificial death satisfied God’s righteous demands. There is no other Way of salvation possible. For more on this, see [my article on the Stones Cry Out website](#), or my ***Commentary on Romans*** beginning at Romans 3:22.

**ALL Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (See II Timothy 3:16-17.) I also believe that this doctrine is one of those foundational New Testament doctrines that I should not have to mention as a “doctrinal distinctive.” But I feel it is necessary to do so because there are now millions of people claiming to be Christian who teach that since we are in “the age of grace,” only the things written since the day of Pentecost apply. They teach that even Jesus’ teachings do not apply to Christians since they were given during the dispensation of the Law. May God rescue those caught in this web of lies.

**To be saved from the coming wrath of God, a person must repent and believe the gospel.** The New Covenant in Jesus’ blood promises remission of sins and eternal life to all who believe. But it required the spilling of the precious blood of God’s only begotten Son. Therefore, the New Covenant is not to be entered into flippantly. Anyone coming to Jesus, must relinquish the ownership of his life completely over to Jesus as Lord over it from now on. Nobody who insists on living autonomously is fit for the Kingdom of God. To stress the seriousness of this, Jesus said that anyone who is not willing to die for Him cannot be His disciple. It is not sufficient to merely give assent to the tenants of the Christian faith. Only those who suffer with Christ will be glorified together with Him. (See Romans 8:17.)

**The Scriptures trump systematic deductions.** God did indeed create us with the ability to use deductive reasoning and even to use it to help us understand the Bible. But if a deductive conclusion contradicts or “goes beyond” the Scriptures, it should not be taught as authoritative. Many, if not most churches that claim absolute loyalty to the Scriptures, teach doctrines of men that were developed using deductive reasoning while ignoring Scriptures that seem to contradict their doctrines. Their denominational tradition seems to trump the very Scriptures they claim to be authoritative.

**Accurate interpretation of New Testament Scripture must consider Greek syntax (grammar).** I do not want to discourage students and pastors that rely solely on English when attempting to learn and teach the New Testament. Much good can be accomplished even without the knowledge of Greek and its grammar rules. But because the New Testament writers communicated precisely using the Koine Greek language, accurate interpretation is less likely when one ignores Koine Greek grammar rules. Relying on commentaries will not suffice since they were written by men who may have said things erroneously because of their bias or ignorance. Those who do not take Greek syntax (grammar) into account when interpreting Scripture should proceed cautiously because their interpreting skills are unavoidably handicapped. I advise all students of the New Testament to make it their goal to increasingly acquire knowledge of Koine Greek grammar rules and use them in their studies of the New Testament.

**The entire textual criticism industry is founded on a false premise and their message should be rejected.** The textual criticism industry claims that because there are so many variances between some of the ancient Greek manuscripts (in some New Testament passages), it is up to “scholars” to consider all of the variances and decide which one is correct using deductive reasoning (which I consider foundationally faulty). The entire premise requires those who accept it to believe that **God has failed to preserve His Word<sup>8</sup>** (even though He promised to preserve it). I teach (dogmatically) that we should assume (believe) that God has indeed preserved His Word perfectly, and because this preservation was supernaturally

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<sup>8</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that they consider it best to rely mainly on two demonstrably inferior manuscripts (Aleph and B) which disagree with each other over 3000 times just within the gospels. If they believed that God has preserved His Word as He promised, they would never rely on such mistake-ridden manuscripts, especially when there are so many other manuscripts that agree with each other, and some perfectly.

superintended by God, the exact wording of the autographs of the New Testament is evident by careful observation of all the manuscripts. When we observe many ancient Greek manuscripts from various places that agree perfectly, we should consider that to be evidence of God's supernatural preservation of His Word. ("God's fingerprints.") Because He preserved it (as He promised He would do), we have complete confidence that these words are the Words that the Holy Spirit intended and indeed, preserved. (I own a Greek New Testament with these very words.)

**Whenever N.T. authors used present tense commands (imperatives), they were commanding ongoing action (ongoing obedience).** When a single action was being commanded, such as Jesus commanding Peter to **come walk on the water**,<sup>9</sup> the authors used the aorist tense. This was the go-to tense for imperatives that command a single action. A **careful analysis of New Testament imperatives**<sup>10</sup> demonstrates that when the authors specified present tense imperatives, they were commanding ongoing obedience that does not stop.

**When N.T. authors used present tense verbs,<sup>11</sup> they customarily were communicating continuance rather than a one-time action.** I teach this because it is a fundamental rule of Greek grammar that should not be ignored. So, in verses like John 3:16, "whosoever believes" should be thought of as "whosoever believes and continues to believe." As in, *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes (and continues to believe) into Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

**All who identify as Christians should take heed so that they do not end up turned away unto perdition.** Over 8% of the New Testament warns those who identify as Christian, and strongly admonishes them to take heed lest they fall away and perish. Therefore, I strongly warn and admonish Christians to stay on high alert, asking God daily to keep them from turning away. Many Christians object to this teaching claiming that it suggests a Christian can "lose his salvation." I suggest that their understanding of the word "salvation" is far too fixated on the idea of conversion. They probably don't realize that the Greek word for salvation (soteria) predominately refers to salvation from the coming wrath of God (future, rather than conversion or regeneration in their past). When salvation is defined this way, then my teaching does not convey that a Christian can "lose his salvation" because he really does not have his salvation (from the coming wrath of God) yet. Any sincere, Bible-literate "Christian" must admit that if he (or any other person who identifies as "Christian") turns away from Christ and stays that way, he will not be saved from the coming wrath of God. (He will perish.) Therefore, it is my responsibility to warn people to pray and take heed lest they fall away and perish forever. Only those who confess Jesus and continue to confess Him will be saved from the coming wrath of God. Those who deny Him (and continue to deny Him), He will deny. (See II Timothy 2:12.) For more on this, see my book *Finish*, or my article, ["Know what you must do to be saved from the wrath of God that is coming."](#)

**In accordance with passages like Romans 8:30, those God predestined (to be conformed to the image of His Son), He calls, justifies and glorifies.** (Jesus loses none of them.) In other words, all of "the elect" will be glorified.

**Family planning (birth control) is not a "Christian liberty" or a Christian responsibility.** We do not find ourselves discussing this topic as often as we did during our childbearing years because we tend to spend less time around young Christian parents. But if a young Christian couple seeks advice from us, we teach about it and suggest they read my book, *"Birth Control, A Spiritual Shackle."*

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<sup>9</sup> See Matthew 14:28-29.

<sup>10</sup> See *Aspect in Imperative Construction in New Testament Greek*, McKay, K.L., Novum Testamentum, Vol. 27, Fasc. 3 (July 1985), pp201-226, published by Brill.

<sup>11</sup> (indicative mood verbs and substantive participles)