

Statements of Salvation Testimony,
Call to Ministry, and Doctrinal Beliefs

of
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TESTIMONY AND CALL

Testimony of Salvation

I grew up in a Christian home, attending a Christian Reformed church until I was ten when my parents became convinced of errors in that church and we began attending a local Baptist church. Shortly thereafter I clearly heard the gospel from my pastor, recognized my sinfulness and inability to save myself, repented and trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. When I was 12 I was baptized by immersion in the same church.

As a teenager I regularly attended our church, but allowed this world to influence my mind, affections, and choices, especially through rock music. During the summer before my senior year in high school, the Lord used His Word through my youth pastor to convict me of my worldliness and I repented of these things. At that same time the Lord gave me a strong passion for the Word of God.

Testimony of God's Call to and Preparation for Christian Ministry

During that summer the Lord continued to work in my life, and I began having serious thoughts about pastoring and preaching. This was confirmed by several godly adults (from my church and my grandmother) who gave me their unsolicited counsel about whether the Lord would have me serve in full-time ministry. The more I served in my local church, the greater my interest grew. I enrolled in 1988 at Pillsbury Baptist Bible College, graduating in 1993 with majors in Bible and Pastoral Studies. While at Pillsbury I married Trisha Price in 1990 and in 1992 we had our first child, Ashley. I furthered my training at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in 1994, graduating with a Master of Divinity in 2000. During that time the Lord added to our family three more children, Andrew and Meagan in 1994, and Hannah in 1996.

I am so thankful for the ministry preparation I received at these two institutions. During college my love for and knowledge of God's Word increased greatly; my passion for preaching grew as I was trained in its mechanics; the central place of the local church was inculcated, especially in regard to evangelism in its intended context (the local church) and goal (church planting); and the Lord gave me a firm commitment to giving Christ the preeminence in all things. During seminary everything I received built upon, sharpened, and enhanced all prior training. I received the most thorough preparation for ministry in the local church in biblical languages and content, church history, ministry in the local church, and a correlated understanding of the Bible's message through systematic theology. While in seminary I came to an understanding of, appreciation for, and commitment to militant separatist fundamentalism through my professors at DBTS (especially Dr. McCune).

After graduation from seminary, the Lord called us to a small church in Belleville, Michigan, Victory Baptist Church, in an effort to help it grow spiritually and numerically stronger. During our four and a half years there we saw the Lord work in the lives of several individuals, welcomed Josiah into our family in 2003, and we are thankful for the privilege Christ gave us to serve Him there. Late in 2004, the Lord directed us to serve Him in a church planting capacity in Orwell, Ohio. Last year the Lord added Lydia Grace to our family. It has been thrilling to see the work the Lord has done here during our first year of ministry, and we pray He will be pleased to continue to build His church in this needy area.

I must express a large debt of gratitude to my wife and family. Trish has been a consistent source of encouragement and exhortation through extremely challenging times. She has been there to enjoy and give thanks for the many blessings God has so graciously given us. My children have patiently endured their daddy's absences and been a source of joy to an undeserving father.

All thanksgiving and credit must be directed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him I am eternally lost, my earthly life is meaningless, and ministry is impossible and fruitless. I pray that Christ will have the preeminence in my life that He so richly deserves.

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea.
A great high Priest whose Name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,
My perfect spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of Glory and of Grace,
One with Himself I cannot die.
My soul is purchased by His blood,
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Savior and my God!

BIBLIOLOGY

I believe that the Bible is the Word of God. It was delivered to man through verbal (Matt 5:18; 1 Cor 2:13), plenary inspiration (2 Tim 3:16), in which the Holy Spirit so influenced and supervised the human authors that as they wrote, he protected them from error and guided them in the selection of words consistent with their own individual personalities and stylistic differences. The result was a written revelation from God to man that is divinely authoritative (2 Pet 1:21).

The inspired character of the Bible renders it fully inerrant (John 17:17) and infallible (John 10:35) so that everything that Scripture affirms, whether in doctrine, practice, history, geography, or science, is wholly true. Inspiration applies only to the original autographs (cp. 1 Cor 14:37 with 1 Cor 2:13). All copies and translations that faithfully reproduce the message of the inspired autograph may be said to partake of inspiration and its corresponding authority in a derivative sense.

God has prevented the distortion, loss, or destruction of His Word by providentially preserving it (not miraculously, 2 Kings 22:8) in the extant manuscripts. This is a logical corollary of inspiration and is required through the continuing authority of God's Word (Matt 5:18; John 10:35), the warnings against corrupting the text or neutralizing its message (Rev 22:18-19), and commands to study and know the Scripture (1 Pet 2:2; 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17). The 66 books of the Bible constitute the complete canon of Scripture. Canonicity is the historical process by which the Spirit of God led Israel and the church to recognize those writings that were genuinely inspired (inspired at the time of writing, not canonization). This canon is closed (1 Cor 13:8-10; Rev 22:18, 19) as the apostles and prophets have passed off the scene (Eph 2:20).

Scripture does not depend upon sources outside itself to establish its authority or veracity; it is self-authenticating and self-attesting (John 10:35; 17:17; 1 Thess 2:13). In spite of this, the unbeliever does not submit to the authority of Scripture (1 Cor 2:14). Once regenerated, however, the Holy Spirit removes his inborn hostility toward the Word, imparts a certainty of the Scripture's divine origin (1 Thess 1:5), and illuminates his mind to understand its significance (Eph 1:17-18; 1 John 2:20, 27). The Bible is entirely sufficient for its God intended purposes (Luke 16:31; Acts 20:32; 2 Tim 3:14-17). Because of the univocal nature of language, the Scripture's central message is clear (perspicuous, Psa 119:105; 119:130) and self-interpreting, being understood through the normal, plain sense of human language as given through the image of God in man. Thus the Scriptures must be interpreted in a consistently normal (literal) manner. This is achieved only through a grammatical-historical-theological method of interpretation.

My commitment to this method of interpretation necessarily identifies Israel and the church as fundamentally and theologically distinct (1 Cor 10:32) in origin, character, purpose, and destiny (1 Cor 12:13; Col 1:18, 25-28; 1 Thess 4:16), and views the glory of God vis-à-vis the salvation of man as His underlying purpose in all that he does (Eph 1:6, 12, 14). The ultimate purpose and unifying principle of God's activity in history is to glorify Himself by entering into a rule of loving sovereignty with creatures made in His image and dwelling with them forever, beginning with the messianic Kingdom (Zech 2:10-12) which will merge into the eternal Kingdom (Rev 22:1, 3, 5). God is administering this purpose through the progressive unfolding of His revelation in the dispensational program (John 1:17).

THEOLOGY PROPER

I believe that God is the infinite and perfect Spirit in whom all things have their source, support, and end (Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16-17). Scripture never sets out to prove God's existence; it is assumed (Gen 1:1). Man is born with an innate knowledge of God (Rom 1:19-20; 2:14-15) which he must assent to but nonetheless tries to suppress (Rom 1:28). God has also revealed himself to man through general revelation in creation (Ps 19:1-4; Acts 14:17; Rom 1:20), which he also rejects (Rom 1:18).

God is a person as he manifests the qualities of personality: spirituality (John 4:24), life (1 Thess 1:9), intelligence (Rom 11:33), purpose (Isa 14:24-27), action (John 5:17), freedom (Eph 1:11), self-consciousness (Exod 3:14), and emotion (John 3:16). Those qualities that are inherent in and manifest his divine nature or essence are termed attributes. The attributes of God's greatness are self-existence (John 5:26; Acts 17:25), infinity (Ps 147:5), perfection (Matt 5:48), omnipotence (Gen 18:14), omniscience (1 John 3:20), omnipresence (Ps 139:7-10), wisdom (Rom 11:33), eternity (Ps 90:1-2), immutability (Mal 3:6), and incomprehensibility (Rom 11:33). The attributes of God's goodness are holiness (1 Pet 1:15-16), which is His fundamental or controlling attribute (Isa 5:16; 6:1-3; 57:15; John 17:11), truth (Isa 65:16), love (John 3:16), righteousness (Psa 11:7), faithfulness (Lam 3:23), mercy (Eph 2:4-8), and grace (Eph 1:7).

God exists wholly and indivisibly, simultaneously and eternally, in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). God is three persons in one essence. Thus, the persons of the Godhead are ontologically equal. Economically, however, they each function differently as they relate to the world and to each other for all eternity: the Son is subordinate to the Father (John 14:28; 1 John 4:10), and the Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 15:26). The Old Testament provides at best only intimations of the three divine persons (e.g., Isa 48:16); the Trinity is only conclusively seen in the New Testament (e.g., Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14).

The eternal God has a single, all-inclusive (Eph 1:11), and comprehensive eternal (Eph 3:11) plan. By this decree he freely (Ps 135:6) renders certain (Isa 43:13) all the events of the universe, past, present, and future (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11). This decree is unchangeable (Ps 33:11) and unconditional, not depending upon anything that has not itself been decreed (Eph 1:11), having His own glory for its final purpose (Rev 4:11; Isa 48:11). God's plan does not absolve human responsibility (Acts 17:30), as man is always completely responsible for his actions (Ezek 18:20; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:5-6; Col 3:25), but rather establishes certainly what man would freely do (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28).

The initial aspect of God's decree to be accomplished was his work of creation. Everything that is external to God came into existence through his supernatural and instantaneous work without the use of preexisting materials (Gen 1:3, 6, 9) in six, literal, twenty-four hour days (Exod 20:11). Creation ceased on the sixth day of the creation week (Gen 2:2) and was perfect and flawless (Gen 1:31). The Triune God (John 5:17; Ps 104:30) upholds the entire universe with all its laws, properties, powers, and processes (Col 1:17).

CHRISTOLOGY

I believe that Christ existed eternally as the second person of the Trinity and the divine Logos before his incarnation (Mic 5:2; John 1:1-3; Phil 2:5-7). He is coequal (John 10:30) and coeternal (John 8:58) with the Father; he is eternally God (John 13:19; 17:1, 5, 24). The eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ (Matt 1:23). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20) and born of a virgin (Isa 7:14) to preserve Him from original sin (John 3:6), to save mankind from sin (Matt 1:21), and fulfill OT prophecy (Matt 1:22-23).

At the incarnation Christ voluntarily humbled himself by adding to His fully divine nature (Col 2:9) a fully human nature (1 Tim 2:5), taking on the likeness of sinful man in order to accomplish the redemptive plan of God (Isa 53; Phil 2:5-8). In this voluntary humiliation Christ set aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God (Phil 2:6-7), living as a servant and dying as a criminal (Phil 2:8-9), while never divesting Himself of the divine essence or His divine attributes (Col 1:19; 2:9). In the Person of Christ God and man are united without any mingling or confusion of the two natures so He is forever fully human and fully divine (Phil 2:5-8; 1 Tim 2:5), the God-man. By virtue of His divine and indivisible person, Christ has no sin nature (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15), and remains eternally incapable of sinning (Heb 13:8).

Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, keeping the divine law perfectly on our behalf by His personal, active obedience (John 15:10; Rom 5:19), restoring the believer to favor with God through the imputation of Christ's righteousness (Rom 5:12-19). His one-time (Heb 9:28) genuine (Matt 27:50) death on the cross was in fulfillment of the eternal plan of God (Acts 2:23; Rev 13:8). Christ's death was a vicarious atonement for the sin of man (1 John 2:2), fully paying the penalties of God's broken law of holiness (Heb 10:4-10), providing pardon and forgiveness to the believer (Col 1:14). Christ's death is of infinite value, sufficient for the sins of the world (Isa 53:6; 1 John 2:2; John 1:29) but applied only to the elect (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 4:10) in expiating guilt (Eph 5:2), redeeming from bondage (Eph 1:7), propitiating wrath (1 John 2:2), and reconciling enmity (Isa 59:2). By virtue of His perfect sacrifice (Heb 1:3; 10:12; 12:2) Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5) so that the one true God can only be approached through Jesus Christ (John 5:23; 17:3; Acts 4:12; Heb 10:19-22).

Jesus Christ rose miraculously and bodily on the third day (Luke 24:39; 1 Cor 15:4). He ascended visibly and bodily into heaven (Acts 1:11) and then sent the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). Christ presently intercedes for all the saints (Rom 8:34), who wait for his return for them (1 Thess 4:16) and the establishment of the messianic kingdom (Mark 14:25; Rev 19:11ff).

PNEUMATOLOGY

I believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, is God (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor 3:18), eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 15:26). He is equal in essence with the Father and the Son (Matt 28:19). The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force but a person, as seen from the use of personal pronouns (John 15:26; 16:7-8, 13-14), and his possession of the attributes of personality: intellect (1 Cor 2:11), volition (1 Cor 12:11), emotion (Eph 4:30), and communication (Acts 8:29). Furthermore, as God he possesses the attributes of deity: he is eternal (Heb 9:14), omnipresent (Ps 139:7-10), omnipotent (Rom 15:19), and omniscient (1 Cor 2:10-11).

In his work in the world, the Spirit's involvement included creation (Gen 1:2; Job 33:4), the exaltation of Christ (John 16:14), the conviction of sinners (John 16:8-11), and the restraining of sin (2 Thess 2:6-7). In his work with respect to Jesus Christ, he prepared a body for him (Luke 1:35), anointed him at his baptism (Matt 3:16-17), led him at his temptation (Luke 4:1), and empowered him in his ministry (Luke 4:14, 18). In his work concerning the Scriptures, he was the active Agent in inspiration (1 Pet 1:11; 2 Pet 1:21). In his work in believers, the Spirit illumines them to understand the significance of the Scriptures (1 Cor 2:14-16), regenerates (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5), indwells (1 Cor 6:19), seals (Eph 1:13-14), baptizes (1 Cor 12:13), controls (Eph 5:18), assures (Rom 8:16), convicts (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18), intercedes (Rom 8:26), and is their earnest of salvation (Eph 1:14). The fruit of the Spirit evidences his control of a believer's life (Gal 5:22-23).

In the Old Testament, besides regenerating and indwelling believers (Deut 5:29; John 3:3; Num 27:18), the Holy Spirit exercised a unique ministry, that of the theocratic anointing. This was a temporary Spirit-given ability to the theocratic king for leading the theocratic kingdom (1 Sam 10:6; 16:13-14; Ps 51:11). In this dispensation the Holy Spirit incorporates believers into the body of Christ (Acts 2:1-4; 11:15; 1 Cor 12:13) and distributes spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6; Heb 2:4), God-given abilities for use in the service of the local church (1 Cor 12:18; 1 Pet 4:10). Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7). Certain of the gifts (e.g., tongues, prophecies, miracles, healing) were inherently miraculous, serving as signs or confirmations of the apostolic message and messenger until the canon of Scripture (Acts 10:45-48; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4) and the foundation of God's Church was completed (Eph 2:20). Once these were completed, however, the miraculous gifts were no longer needed and therefore ceased (1 Cor 13:8-10). The modern charismatic movement has no biblical basis, and may be explained as psychological or demonic in nature (cf. 2 Thess 2:8-10; Rev 13:13-15; 16:14), but not of God.

ANGELOLOGY

I believe that angels were created on the first day of the creation week (Col 1:16; cp. Gen 1:1 with Job 38:6-7). They are finite (Matt 24:36) spirit beings (Heb 1:14) whose purpose is to glorify God (Isa 6:1-3; Rev 4:6-11) and to minister for him (Ps 103:20). The angels were created with great intellect and power (2 Pet 2:11; Dan 10), sinless (Gen 1:31), immortal (Luke 20:36), and unable to procreate (Matt 22:30; Luke 20:35-36). Angels belong to two classifications: those who kept their holy position and are now confirmed in holiness (Matt 25:31; 1 Tim 5:21), and those who left their original holy position and followed Satan in his rebellion against God (Matt 12:24-26; 25:41).

Those angels that kept their holy position are ministers of God and carry out his work (Dan 10:12-13, 12:1), act as agents of his will and messengers of his word (Ps 103:20; Matt 28:5-6; Luke 1:28-37). They minister to believers (Heb 1:14) and will execute judgment on unbelievers (Rev 14:15-20).

Those angels that left their original holy position are evil angels, known as demons. These actively oppose the people of God (Eph 6:12), attempt to hinder the work of God (Dan 10:13), and afflict God's people (2 Cor 12:7).

The head of this demonic race is Satan (Matt 12:24) who is a personal being (Eph 6:11-12; John 8:44), powerful (Jude 9), the author of sin (1 John 3:8), and the enemy of God and His people (Rev 12:10, 20:7-9). Satan was originally created in unconfirmed holiness, but fell through pride (Isa 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17; 1 Tim 3:7), leading a large band of evil angels in rebellion against God (Matt 12:24-26), sometime after the end of the creation week, but before the fall of man (cp. Gen 1:31 with 3:1ff). For this offense God judged Satan and his angels (Job 4:18) and cast them out of the highest heaven to the lower heavens and the earth (Isa 14:12), where Satan presently reigns as the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2). Satan was defeated at the cross (John 12:31; 16:11; Heb 2:14-15) and will be cast down to the earth during the Tribulation period (Rev 12:7-12), imprisoned in the abyss at the outset of the Millennium (Rev 20:1-3), loosed for a brief time (Rev 20:7-9), and will ultimately be cast with his followers into a literal lake of fire forever (Rev 20:10).

ANTHROPOLOGY

I believe man was created on the sixth day of the creation week in the image of God to glorify Him forever (Isa 43:7; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 10:31; Rev 4:11). This creation was God's direct and supernatural act apart from any evolutionary process (Gen 1:26-27, 2:7). The image of God is man's finite replication of his Creator, consisting of personality (Col 3:9-10), spirituality (Eph 4:24), and morality (Gen 9:6; Rom 2:14-15; Eph 4:24). This image, although severely marred at the fall, is not totally lost (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Man has a will by which he is able to make voluntary, spontaneous, rational, morally responsible decisions (Rom 2:6; Col 3:25). His will responds to his nature (Rom 8:7-8) and is not free from his own limitations (Gen 27:22; Job 38:12-24; John 5:6-7), God's will and decree (Exod 4:21; Josh 11:20; Acts 4:27-28; Rev 17:17), or the power and effects of sin (Rom 3:10-11; 6:20).

Man is composed of both material and immaterial parts; the former consists of the body, the latter of soul and spirit (Matt 10:28; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12; Jas 2:26). Man was immediately created in Adam, both material and immaterial parts, and both are propagated from him by natural generation (Gen 5:3; Ps 51:5; John 3:6; Rom 5:12). Physical death results in the separation of man's material and immaterial parts (Acts 7:59; Jas 2:26).

Adam possessed unconfirmed and untested creaturely holiness before the fall (Gen 1:31). He chose to disobey God and fell into sin, bringing spiritual and physical death upon himself and the whole human race (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12-19). All men are thus declared sinners (Rom 5:18-19), are born sinners (Job 5:7; 25:4; Ps 51:5; 58:3), and sin by choice (Rom 3:23; 7:19). All men are totally depraved and spiritually dead, alienated from God and the life that is in Him, completely and entirely unwilling and unable to remedy their condition (Rom 3:10-19; Eph 2:1-3).

HAMARTIOLOGY

I believe that sin is lack of conformity to the moral law and character of God, in both voluntary and involuntary acts (Rom 7:19; Psa 19:12), state/ disposition (Jer 17:9), thought (Gen 6:5; Matt 5:27-28; Acts 8:22) or omission (Jas 4:17). The essence of sin is selfishness, as all sins have self as their goal and end. Thus autonomous man desires to free himself from the bonds of the Creator-creature distinction (Gen 3:5; Rom 1:21-23). Man makes self the object and affection of his life (Ps 10:1-4), the supreme end and center of his existence instead of God his Creator (Ps 14:1; Ezek 28:2; 2 Thess 2:4).

Sin entered the universe through the fall of Satan (1 Tim 3:6; 1 John 3:8) and the human race through the fall of Adam (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12-19). Each individual stands guilty before God and is under condemnation due to Adam's transgression, mankind's federal representative (Rom 5:12). All men in Adam immediately have Adamic sin and guilt (the old man) imputed at conception. The corruption of that guilt from man's legal connection with Adam issues in the sin nature (complex of attributes) by natural generation (Rom 5:12-19). All actual transgressions proceed from this original corruption.

The extent of depravity is total, so that man's entire being is thoroughly penetrated and corrupted by sin, including his body (Rom 8:10), mind (Rom 8:6-7), emotions (Eph 4:17-19), and will (John 8:34). As a result, man by his nature does not desire salvation (Ps 10:4; 36:4; Rom 3:11, 18; 8:5-8), is not able to save himself (John 6:44, 65; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), and left to himself he cannot and will not seek salvation (John 1:13; 3:3, 5; Rom 3:11).

The consequence of man's imputed and individual sin is death (Rom 6:23): physical death, the separation of the body from the soul (Jas 2:26); spiritual death, the separation of the person from God (Eph 2:1); and the second death, eternal damnation in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15).

The believer is no longer totally depraved because Adamic guilt (the old man) is removed and no longer exists after salvation (Rom 6:6; Col 3:9), and because of the new nature imparted at regeneration (2 Pet 1:4). The sinful (old) nature remains in the believer but it no longer reigns supreme (Rom 6:6-14), though the believer must continually fight against its cravings (Gal 5:17; 1 Pet 2:11).

SOTERIOLOGY

I believe that since man is spiritually dead (Eph 2:1) and stands condemned before God (John 3:18), that God in his mercy and love provided a means for his salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Rom 5:8-10). God's plan to save lost sinners was made in eternity past (Matt 25:34; Eph 1:4-5; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8) and is entirely of God from initiation to completion (2 Thess 2:13; Phil 1:6). Salvation is a gift from God that cannot be earned in any way by man (Acts 18:27; Eph 2:8, 9; 2 Tim 1:9).

Salvation is composed of the following components given in their theological order:

Election: God's sovereign, unconditional choice in eternity past of individual sinners (regardless of their merit and by his own good pleasure) to salvation in Christ with all its attendant blessings and obligations (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:4-5; 2 Pet 1:2-3; 2 Thess 2:13).

Calling: God's urgent invitation to all who hear the gospel to come and be saved (general call; Isa 45:22; 2 Thess 2:14) and his bringing of the elect to salvation (effectual call; John 6:65; Rom 8:30; 2 Tim 1:9).

Regeneration: God's instantaneous, supernatural impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead (John 1:13; 3:3-8; 1 Cor 2:13-16; Eph 2:4-5; Titus 3:3-5; 1 John 5:1).

Repentance: A change of mind away from sin and toward God (Heb 6:1; Acts 20:21). It is the immediate and voluntary response of the regenerated heart expressed in a change of view, feeling and purpose concerning God, sin and the sinner himself (Acts 26:20; 1 Thess 1:9). It involves a recognition of sin (Ps 51:3), a regret for sin (2 Cor 7:9-10), and a forsaking of sin (Acts 26:20).

Faith: Saving faith is the knowledge of (Rom 10:17), assent to (Heb 11:1, 6), and unreserved trust (Acts 16:31) in the finished work of Christ as revealed in Scripture. It is a gift of God (Acts 14:27; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29) and the voluntary act of the sinner in which he turns to Christ (Acts 20:21). Only the elect exercise saving faith (John 10:26; Acts 13:48).

Union with Christ: That inseparable spiritual bond between the believer and Jesus Christ that results from the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which judicially places the believer into the Body of Christ, the church (1 Cor 12:13).

Justification: The judicial act of God by which he declares the sinner righteous and treats him as such (Rom 5:1, 9).

Adoption: The judicial act of God whereby he places the believer into the family of God as an adult son with all attending rights and privileges (Gal 3:26; Eph 1:5).

Sanctification: The setting apart of the believer from sin unto God. It is the progressive outworking of spiritual life received in regeneration (1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Pet 1:5).

Perseverance: The work of God whereby he renders certain that believers will neither

totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but will certainly continue therein to the end (1 Cor 1:8-9; Phil 1:6; 1 Pet 1:5), thus assuring them of eternal security (John 6:39; Rom 5:9-10; 8:30, 38-39).

Glorification: The consummation of salvation whereby God frees man eternally from the presence of sin (1 Thess 3:13; Jude 24).

Though God desires all to be saved (2 Pet 3:9), only those who are elect by God from the foundation of the world will be saved (Eph 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13). Essential to the salvation of the elect is the proclamation of the Gospel so they may appropriate it (Rom 10:13-17; Acts 11:14), thus the Gospel must be universally proclaimed (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). God's absolute sovereign and exclusive work in the salvation of man does not negate man's responsibility to seek the Lord (Acts 17:27, 30) nor the Christian's obligation to present the gospel clearly and urgently (Rom 10:14; 1 Thess 2:9). Final correlation of these truths in man's finite mind will prove fruitless because of the Creator-creature distinction (Isa 55:8-9). The end result, however, will be endless praise offered "to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" (Rev 5:13), "to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph 1:4-14).

ECCLESIOLOGY

I believe that the church is the body of Christ (Col 1:18, 24), formed by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), which began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:15) and will continue until the rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Cor 10:32). All Spirit-baptized believers, whether in earth or in heaven, constitute the universal or “body” church (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:22-23). The church is the God-ordained vehicle for carrying out his plan in this dispensation (Eph 3:8-10).

A local church is the visible expression of the universal church in any one place on earth (1 Cor 1:2, et al). It consists of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47; 5:14), who have been immersed publicly as a testimony to their faith (Acts 2:41) and share a common body of doctrine (Acts 2:42). The constitution of Christianity and charter of the local church is the New Testament with Jesus Christ as its head (Eph 1:22-23; 5:23).

The church exists to glorify God by making and maturing disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20; Eph 4:11-16). This mission is accomplished as its members meet on the first day of the week at regular and stated times (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2) for worship, instruction, fellowship, and prayer (Acts 2:42, 47; Eph 4:11-16), as they spread the gospel (Acts 6:7; 8:4; 1 Pet 3:15) and carry out the Great Commission in other geographical areas by establishing new local churches (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal 1:2; Phil 1:1; et al).

The local church is an autonomous body (Acts 6:3; 1 Cor 5:4-5; 2 Cor 8:19). The practical and ecclesiastical exercise of authority for church government lies with the congregation, the voice of the body being the final court of appeal on any issue (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-2; 1 Cor 5:4-5; 2 Cor 8:19). The local church must preserve unity (Rom 12:16) and maintain pure doctrine and practice (1 Tim 3:15; Jude 3; Rev 2-3). It alone has the authority to observe and guard the ordinances (1 Cor 11:23-24), elect its own officers, leaders, and messengers (Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; 15:3; 1 Cor 16:3), ordain men to the ministry (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Tim 4:14), discipline its members (Matt 18:15-17; 2 Thess 3:6), settle its internal affairs (1 Cor 6:1-5), and determine its relationship to other ecclesiastical bodies (Acts 15).

The biblical offices of the local church are pastor (also called elder and overseer, Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-2) and deacon (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1, 8). These are to be men (1 Tim 2:12; 3:2; Titus 1:6) who meet the qualifications stipulated by Scripture (1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9) and are elected by the congregation to office (Acts 6:3; 14:23). A church may have a plurality of elders (Acts 20:17; Jas 5:14), but they do not all have equal authority (Acts 15:13f; 21:18; Gal 2:12; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1; Rev 2-3). The pastor is charged with shepherding the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-3), overseeing the work (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:7), presiding as moderator of the assembly (1 Tim 3:2, 4-5; 5:17), preaching and teaching the Word (Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:17), and therefore holds the highest office in the church. Each church selects its own pastor(s), is to follow his leadership (Heb 13:17), and he is accountable to the congregation. The deacon is charged with serving the needs of the church (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13), is thus subordinate to the pastor, and is selected by the church.

Christ gave only two ordinances to the local church, baptism (by immersion, Acts 2:41; 8:38) and the Lord’s Supper (close communion, Acts 2:42; 20:7, 11). As they were given to the local church they are only legitimately observed by a local church. No salvific grace is conferred

through these ordinances. Baptism is the public portrayal and testimony of a believer's identification with Christ and is incumbent upon every believer (Matt 28:19). The Lord's Supper is a public remembrance of the work of Christ by a local congregation, and they are to observe it regularly, corporately, and meaningfully (1 Cor 11:17-34).

As holiness is grounded in God's character, is his fundamental controlling attribute, and is expected of his people (Rom 12:1; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:15-16), the local church as an assembly of followers of Christ must be holy, separate from all that is sinful or morally unclean. Members of local churches must be personally separated from the world and to God (Rom 12:1-2). This involves fostering and exercising an exclusive, devoted love for God and a concomitant rejection of the thought patterns, amusements, affections, fads, habits, philosophies, goals, and lifestyles of this evil world system (Rom 12:1-2; Jas 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). The purity and testimony of a church must be maintained through the discipline of unrepentant members (Matt 18:15-17; 2 Thess 3:8-15).

The local church must organizationally reflect God's holy character through ecclesiastical separation. This involves refusing to collaborate with religious organizations or individuals that reject the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith (2 Cor 6:14-18; 2 Tim 2:19; 2 John 10-11), as well as separating from organizations or individuals who identify or walk with those who reject the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith (2 Thess 3:6, 14). The church as the pillar and support of the truth must defend the faith against such errors by opposing, exposing and separating from them (1 Tim 1:18; 6:12; Jude 3).

ESCHATOLOGY

I believe that since the Bible is to be interpreted by a consistently literal hermeneutic and through a dispensational approach, the next event on God's prophetic calendar is the Rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18). This is the literal (Acts 1:11), imminent (1 Thess 1:10; 5:2), premillennial (1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; Rev 19-20), pretribulational (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; Rev 3:10) return of Christ for Church age saints. Those Christians who have died before Christ's return will be resurrected and those who are alive will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:16-17). These believers will then appear before the judgment seat of Christ where their post-conversion lives will be judged (2 Cor 5:10). The Church will then enjoy the wedding supper of the Lamb near the end of the Tribulation (Rev 19:7-9).

Once the church is removed to heaven and the Restrainer is taken out of the way (2 Thess 2:7), the Day of the Lord will come (Zeph 1:14-18; 2 Thess 2:1-3) with the Antichrist's pact with Israel (Dan 9:27). This is the prophesied seven years of great Tribulation (Dan 9:27), during which God will deal with depraved mankind and turn his attention back to Israel ("Jacob's trouble," Jer 30:7). Upon the Antichrist's breaking of his covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27) a time of unprecedented wrath and judgment (Zeph 1:15-17) will erupt. God will judge confirmed sinfulness (Joel 3:13; Rev 9:20-21) and chasten Israel (Jer 30:7a) who will then turn to God in salvation (Jer 30:7b; Zech 12:10) as well as a great number of Gentiles (Rev 7:9-17).

At the end of the Tribulation Christ will return with his saints (church-age believers) to conquer his enemies (Rev 19:11-21) and cast Satan into the Abyss for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3). Christ will reign on earth (Ps 2; Rev 19:20) in the millennial kingdom, which will be inhabited by church saints (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21), Tribulation survivors who pass the judgment of the nations (Matt 25:31-46), resurrected believers of the Tribulation (Rev 20:4), and the Old Testament economies (Gen 13:15; Isa 26:19; Dan 12:1-2).

At the end of the Millennium Satan will be loosed and will deceive the nations to launch his final rebellion against God (Rev 20:7-9a). This revolt will be stamped out and Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:9b-10). The unsaved of all ages will be raised from the dead, judged at the Great White Throne of Judgment, and condemned to the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15). The eternal state will be ushered in upon the destruction of the existing heavens and earth (2 Pet 3:10-11) and the creation of a new heavens and earth in its place (Rev 21:1). Then the redeemed of all ages will enjoy their God and reign with him forever (Rev 21-22).