



SOVEREIGN GRACE
BAPTIST CHURCH

Confession of Faith



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Confession of Faith

The purpose of this confession of faith is to set before all who are interested those Biblical truths that we hold to be essential to the faith and practice of the child of God, and for regulating the corporate life of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is not to be held as an infallible and authoritative rule, since believers are bound by Holy Scripture and Holy Scripture alone. At the same time, however, it is highly necessary and useful to have a clear statement of faith that seeks to maintain doctrinal precision with a reasonable degree of fullness.

The content of this confession of faith relies heavily on and has borrowed extensively from the 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH, including some of the comments in this introduction.

Well established believers will find little if any difficulty in accepting most of the truths in this document. On the other hand there are matters set forth that are not universally accepted and on which opinions are divided. We include them, however, because they are clearly taught in Scripture and are matters of eternal significance. These truths have been embraced by the saints in the true church of all ages, and the accepting of them is essential for a proper understanding of saving grace and the preaching of the gospel.

Those newly converted to Christ are not expected at the outset, either to know or understand all the great truths set out in this confession, but acquaintance with all the facets of THE FAITH is something to be desired and pursued. This is especially true in this present day and age since there is a great controversy raging in the church over the most basic of doctrines. Decades of shallow, superficial preaching and teaching has had a devastating effect on the church, in that it has left many professed believers biblically illiterate. This "...famine... of hearing the words of the Lord..." has made many vulnerable to a false "man centered gospel" that is so popular today. This "other gospel" often produces and promotes a counterfeit faith that can prove ruinous to unwary souls.

This confession of faith helps form the doctrinal foundation of SOVEREIGN GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH. The truths contained herein are to be embraced, taught, defended and passed on to future generations.

Chapter 1 - THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Bible is the all-sufficient, certain, and infallible Word of God. Holy men of old wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Inspiration literally means "God breathed". Thus, the Bible is fully inspired of God.

(II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:19-21)

Inspiration of Scripture has two important aspects, which in turn oppose two erroneous theories of inspiration.

The first is verbal inspiration. This means that the very words of Scripture were given by the Holy Spirit. The writers were not left absolutely to themselves in the choice of the words they should use, but were divinely directed in their selection. This allowed the writers' own distinctive personality to come into play in the choice of the words and expressions. Thus they wrote the exact words intended by the Holy Spirit in a way that was uniquely characteristic of their individual personalities. This opposes the false theory which claims that only the thoughts and concepts of Scripture are inspired.

(Exodus 34:27, Jeremiah 1:6-9, 36:1-32, Proverbs 30:5-6, I Corinthians 2:10-13, Jude vs 17)

The second aspect is plenary inspiration. This means that the entire Bible, made up of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books are fully and equally inspired of God. This is supported by our Lord's endorsement of the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Prophetic books. He also endorsed the miraculous narratives of the Old Testament as true: creation, the flood, the destruction of Sodom, Lot's wife, Jonah, and the healing of Naaman the leper. The epistles of Paul were embraced by Peter as inspired Scripture. This second aspect opposes the subtle and dangerous theory of inspiration which basically holds that the Bible only contains the Word of God.

(Matthew 12:40; 19:4; 22:23-32; 24:15, Mark 12:36, Luke 4:17-21, 27; 17:27, 29, 32; 24:25-27, II Peter 3:15-16)

The Scriptures are self-authenticating. Its authority does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but entirely upon God, its author. It is to be received because it is the Word of God. Even though there are many external, as well as internal, evidences of divine inspiration,

we must recognize that our full persuasion and assurance of its infallible truth and divine authority is the outcome of the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

(I Thessalonians 2:13, John 8:47; 16:13-14, I Corinthians 2:10-12, I John 4:6)

Having given us His inspired and infallible word in the original autographs, God has preserved and kept them pure by His particular care and providence. They are therefore authentic and for the church, constitute the final court of appeal in all religious controversies. All theological and religious debates are to be settled by Scripture and Scripture alone. All decrees of Councils, opinions of writers, and doctrines of men are to be accepted or rejected according to the verdict of Scripture.

(Psalm 119:89, Matthew 5:17-18; 15:1-9, Mark 7:6-13, John 10:35, Colossians 2:8, Galatians 1:14, I Peter 1:18, 32, Acts 15:1-21)

Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture. That is to say, one part by another. Any dispute as to the true, full, and evident meaning of a particular passage must be determined in the light of clearer and comparable passages.

(I Corinthians 2:11-16)

Chapter 2 - GOD AND THE HOLY TRINITY

There is but one, and only one, true and living God. He is self-existent and infinite in His being and perfections. He is pure Spirit, invisible and without the changeable feelings of men. He alone possesses immortality and dwells amid the light insufferable bright to mortal man. He is immutable, that is He never changes. He is great beyond all our conceptions, eternal incomprehensible, almighty and infinite. He is most holy, wise free and absolute. All that He does is the outworking of His changeless, righteous will and for His own glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful and compassionate. He abounds in goodness and truth. He forgives iniquity, transgressions and sin. He will not overlook guilt or spare the guilty. He is perfectly just in executing judgment.

(Isaiah 44:6, Genesis 17:1, Exodus 3:14; 34:6-7, Deuteronomy 4:15-16: 6:4, Nehemiah 9:32-33, I Kings 8:27, Psalm 5:5-6; 90:2; 115:3, Proverbs 16:4, Isaiah 6:3; 46:10; 48:12, Jeremiah 10:10; 23:23-24, Nahum 1:2-3, Malachi 3:6, John 4:24, Romans 11:36, I Corinthians 8:4-6, 1 Timothy 1:17, Hebrews 11:6)

God is all-sufficient and all life, glory, goodness and blessedness are found in Him and Him alone. He does not stand in need of any of the creatures that He has made, nor does He derive any part of His glory from them. Over all His creatures, He is absolutely sovereign. He uses them as He pleases and does for them or to them all that He wills. His knowledge is infinite and infallible. Nothing is to Him at risk or uncertain, for He is not dependent upon created things. In all His decisions, doings and demands He is most holy. Angels and men owe to Him as their creator all worship, service and obedience and whatever else He may require at their hands.

(Job 22:2-3, Psalm 119:68; 145:17; 148:13, Ezekiel 11:5, Daniel 4:25, 34-35, John 5:26, Acts 15:18, Romans 11:34-36, Hebrews 4:13, Revelation 5:12-14)

Three divine Persons constitute the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are one in substance and in power. Each is fully God and yet the Godhead is one and indivisible. These Persons, one infinite and eternal God not to be divided in nature or in being, are distinguished in Scripture by their personal relations within the Godhead, and by the variety of works which they undertake. The doctrine of the trinity is the essential basis of all our fellowship with God and of the comfort we derive from our dependence upon Him.

(Exodus 3:14, Matthew 28:19, John 1:1-2, 14, 18; 14:11; 15:26, I Corinthians 8:6, II Corinthians 13:14)

Chapter 3 - GOD'S DECREE

From all eternity God decreed all that should happen in time and this He did freely and unalterably, consulting only His own wise and holy will. Yet in so doing He does not become in any sense the author of sin, nor does He share responsibility for sin with sinners. Neither, by reason of His decree, is the will of any creature whom He has made violated; nor is the working of second causes put aside; rather is it established. In all these matters the divine wisdom appears as also does God's power and faithfulness in effecting that which He has purposed.

(Psalm 33:11, Isaiah 14:24-27; 46:10, Acts 4:27-28; 15:18, Romans 9:15-18, 10:5-10, Ephesians 1:3-5, 9-11, Hebrews 6:17, James 1:13, I John 1:5)

God's decree is not based upon His foreknowledge, that under certain conditions, certain things will take place, but is independent of all such foreknowledge. In other words God's foreknowledge of the future is based on what He, Himself, has decreed.

(Acts 15:18, Romans 9:11-18)

By His decree and for the manifestation of His glory, God has predestined certain ones to eternal life through Jesus Christ, thus revealing His grace. Others, who He has left to perish in their sins, show the terrors of His justice.

(I Kings 20:42, Proverbs 16:4, Matthew 25:34, Romans 9:22-33, I Peter 2:8)

Those who are the subjects of God's predestination are clearly and irreversibly designated and their number is unalterably determined.

(John 6:36-40, 44, 65; 13:18, II Thessalonians 2:13, II Timothy 2:19)

Before the foundation of the world, God's eternal, immutable purpose, which originated in the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, moved Him to choose (or to elect), in Christ, certain of mankind to everlasting glory. Out of His mere free grace and love, He predestined these chosen ones to eternal life, although there was nothing in them to cause Him to choose them.

(Romans 8:28-30, 9:13-16, Ephesians 1:4, 9, 11; 2:5, 12-13, II Thessalonians 2:13, II Timothy 1:9)

Not only has God appointed the elect to glory in accordance with the eternal and free purpose of His will, but He has also foreordained the means by which His purpose will be effected. Since His elect are children of Adam and therefore among those ruined by Adam's fall into sin, He willed that they should be redeemed by Christ and effectually called to faith in Christ. Furthermore by the working of His Spirit in due season, they are justified, adopted, sanctified and "...kept by His power through faith unto salvation." None but the elect partake of these great benefits.

(John 6:44, 65; 10:25-28; 17:1-2,9, Romans 8:30,11 Thessalonians 2:13, I Peter 1:2-5)

Chapter 4 - CREATION

In the beginning it pleased the Triune God, (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) to create the world and all things in it in six literal days. All was very good. In this way God glorified His eternal power, wisdom and goodness.

(Genesis 1:1-31, 2:1-7, Nehemiah 9:6, John 1:2-3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2)

All creatures were made by God, the last to be fashioned being man and woman who received dominion over all other creatures on the earth. They were created in His image, possessing knowledge, righteousness and true holiness.

The divine law was written in their hearts and they had power to obey it fully. Yet, being left to the liberty of their own wills, transgression of the law was a possibility.

(Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; 3:6, Ecclesiastes 7:29, Romans 2:14-15)

Chapter 5 - DIVINE PROVIDENCE

God who, in infinite power and wisdom, has created all things, upholds, directs, controls and governs them, both, animate and inanimate, great and small, by a providence supremely wise and holy and in accordance with His infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable decisions of His will. He fulfills the purposes for which He created them, so that His wisdom, power and justice, together with His infinite goodness and mercy, might be praised and glorified.

(Job 38:1-11, Psalm 135:5-7, Isaiah 46:10-11, Matthew 10:29-31, Ephesians 1:11)

Nothing happens by chance or outside the sphere of God's providence. As God is the first cause of all events, they happen immutably and infallibly according to His foreknowledge and decree, to which they stand related. Yet by His providence God so controls them, that second causes operating either as fixed laws or in dependence upon other causes, play their part in bringing them about.

(Proverbs 16:33, Isaiah 10:5-12, Acts 1:23-26)

Ordinarily, in His providence, God makes use of means, yet He is free to work without them, to give them efficacy above what they normally possess and to work contrary to them, at His pleasure.

(Isaiah 55:10-11, Daniel 3:27, Hosea 1:7, Acts 27:31-44, Romans 4:19-21)

God's almighty power, unsearchable wisdom and infinite goodness are so far-reaching and all-pervading, that both the fall of the first man into sin, and all other sinful actions of angels and men, proceed according to His sovereign purposes. It is not that He gives His bare permission, for in a variety of ways He wisely and powerfully limits, orders and governs sinful actions, so that they effect His holy designs. Yet the sinfulness involved in the actions proceeds only from angels and men and not from God who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

(II Samuel 24:1, II Kings 19:25-28, I Chronicles 21:1, Psalm 50:21; 76:10, Isaiah 10:5-12, James 1:13-15)

God, who is most wise, righteous and gracious, frequently allows us to stumble into various trials and tribulations and to experience the sinfulness of our own hearts. This he does in order to chastise for sins committed or to teach humility by revealing the evil and deceitfulness remaining in the heart. His purpose is also to cause us to realize our total dependence upon Him and to be on guard against sin in the future. In these and other ways His just and holy purposes are worked out, so that all that happens to His elect is by His appointment, for His glory and their good.

(II Chronicles 32:24-31, Romans 8:28, II Corinthians 1:8-10; 12:7-10)

God, as a righteous judge, deals otherwise with wicked and ungodly men. He awards them blindness and hardness of heart for their sins. He withholds from them the grace which might have enlightened their minds and exercised their hearts. In other words, He abandons them to their own innate corruptions, to the temptations of the world, and to the power of Satan, with the consequence that they harden themselves by use of the very means which God employs for softening the hearts of others.

(Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:12, Deuteronomy 2:30; 29:1-4, II Kings 8:11-13, Psalm 81:11-12, Isaiah 6:9-10, Matthew 11:25-28, Romans 1:24, 26, 28; 11:7-8, II Thessalonians 2:9-12)

God's general providence reaches out to all creatures, but in a very special way it is directed to the care of His people. All things are controlled providentially for the good of His people.

(Isaiah 43:3-7, Amos 9:8-9, Matthew 5:45, I Timothy 4:10)

Chapter 6 - THE FALL OF MAN: SIN & ITS PUNISHMENT

Man, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was upright and perfect. The righteous law which God gave him spoke of life as conditional upon his obedience, and threatened death upon his disobedience. Adam's obedience was short lived. Satan used the subtle serpent to draw Eve into sin. Thereupon she seduced Adam who without any compulsion from without, willfully broke the law of God. To fulfill His own wise and holy purposes, God permitted this to happen, for He was directing all for His own glory.

(Genesis 2:16-17; 3:12-13, Ecclesiastes 7:29, II Corinthians 11:3)

By this sin our first parents lost their former righteousness, and their happy communion with God was severed. Their sin involved us all, and by it death appertained to all. All became dead in sin and totally polluted in all parts and faculties of the body, mind, soul and spirit.

(Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-19, 23; 5:12-21, Titus 1:15)

The family of man is rooted in the first human pair. As Adam and Eve stood in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was reckoned by God's appointment to the account of all their posterity, who also from birth derived from them a polluted nature. Conceived in sin and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin and the subjects of death, all men are now given up to unspeakable miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus Christ sets them free.

(Job 14:4, Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12-19, 6:20, I Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 49, Ephesians 2:3, I Thessalonians 1:10, Hebrews 2:14-15)

The actual sins that men commit are the fruit of the corrupt nature transmitted to them by our first parents. By reason of this corruption, all men become wholly inclined to all evil; sin disables them.

They are utterly indisposed to and indeed, rendered opposite to all that is good.

(Matthew 15:19, Romans 8:6-8, Colossians 1:21, James 1:14)

During this earthly life, the law of sin remains in those who are born of God, that is to say, regenerated. Through Christ it is pardoned and mortified, yet both the corruption itself and all that issues from it, are truly and properly sin.

(Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 7:18, 23-25, Galatians 5:17, I John 1:8)

Chapter 7 - GOD'S COVENANT

The distance between God and man is so great that, although men endowed as they are with reason, owe obedience to Him as their Creator, yet they could never have attained to life as their reward had not God, in an act of voluntary condescension, made this possible by the making of a covenant.

(Job 35:7-8, Luke 17:10)

Furthermore, since man, by reason of his fall into sin, had brought himself under the curse of the law, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant, in which He freely offers life and salvation by Jesus Christ to sinners. On their part He requires faith in Him that they may be saved. He gives spiritual life to all those who are elected unto eternal life, in order that they may be made able and willing to believe and repent.

(Genesis 2:17, Psalm 110:3, Jeremiah 24:7, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Mark 16:15-16, John 3:16, 6:44-45, Romans 3:20-21; 8:3, Galatians 3:10)

Chapter 8 - CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

To give effect to His eternal purpose God chose and ordained the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man. He was also to be Prophet, Priest, King, Head and Savior of His church. He is heir of all things and judge of the world. From all eternity God had given to his Son, those who are to be saved. The Son, in time, (as distinct from eternity) is actively engaged in calling, justifying, sanctifying and glorifying them.

(Psalm 2:6, Isaiah 42:1-9; 53:10, Luke 1:31-33, John 17:2, 6-9, Acts 3:22, Romans 8:30, Ephesians 1:22-23, Hebrews 1:2, I Peter 1:19-21)

The Lord Jesus most willingly undertook the office of mediator, and in order that He might discharge it, He became subject to God's law, which He perfectly fulfilled. He also underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have borne and suffered, for He bore our sins and was accursed for our sakes. He endured sorrows in His soul and sufferings in His body far beyond our ability to understand. His death was by crucifixion. The third day saw His bodily resurrection from the grave. He ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for His own. At the second coming He will return to judge men and angels.

(Psalm 40:7-8, Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 3:15; 26:37-38; 27:46, Mark 16:19, Luke 22:44, John 10:18; 20:25-27, Acts 1:9-11, Romans 8:34; 14:9-10, I Corinthians 15:3-4, II Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13; 4:4, Hebrews 9:24; 10:5-10, I Peter 3:18, II Peter 2:4)

By His perfect obedience to God's law, and by a once-for-all offering up of Himself to God as a sacrifice through the Spirit, the Lord Jesus has fully satisfied all the claims of divine justice. He has brought about reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those given to Him by the Father.

(John 6:37-40; 17:2, Romans 3:25-26, Hebrews 9:14-15)

The price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ until after His birth in the world. But the value, efficacy and benefits of His redemptive work availed for His elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world. This was accomplished by the promises, the types and the sacrifices in which He was revealed and which signified Him to be the "...seed of the

woman... "who should bruise the head of the serpent (the devil), also the "...Lamb slain from the foundation of the world... "As the Christ He is"...the same yesterday, today and forever."

(Hebrews 4:2; 13:8, I Peter 1:10-11, Revelation 13:8)

Christ certainly and effectually applies and communicates eternal redemption to all those for whom He has obtained it. His work of intercession is on their behalf. He unites them to Himself by His Spirit. He reveals to them, in and by His word, the mystery of salvation. He persuades them to repent, believe and obey, by opening their hearts by His word and His Spirit. All these things are carried out in His free sovereign grace, and unconditionally, nothing of merit being foreseen by Him in the elect.

(Psalm 110:1, John 3:8; 6:37; 10:15-16; 17:6-9, Acts 16:14, Romans 5:10; 8:9, 14, I Corinthians 15:25-26, Ephesians 1:8-9, I John 5:20)

Christ, and Christ alone, is fitted to be mediator between God and man. This office of mediator cannot be transferred from Him to any other, either in part or in whole.

(I Timothy 2:5)

Chapter 9 - FREE WILL

In the natural order God has endued man's will with liberty and power to act upon choice, so that it is neither forced from without, nor by any necessity arising from within itself, compelled to do good or evil.

(Deuteronomy 30:19, Matthew 17:12, James 1:14)

In the state of innocence man had freedom and power to will and to do what was good and acceptable to God. Yet, it was possible for him to fall from his uprightness. As the consequence of his fall into a state of sin, man has lost all ability to will the performance of any of those works that accompany salvation. As a natural man, he is spiritually dead in sin and "...does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. ..nor can he know them... " Hence he is unable, by His own strength to turn himself to God or even prepare himself in any way to receive the truth.

(John 6:44, Romans 5:6; 8:5-8, I Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1, 5, Titus 3:3-5)

When a sinner is converted by the sovereign grace of God and brought out of sin into the state of grace, he is freed from his natural bondage to sin and by grace is enabled to freely will to do that which is spiritually good. Nevertheless, certain corruptions remain in the believer, so that he is never free from the struggle with indwelling sin. He has been made free from the reign of sin but must continue to struggle with remaining sin. It is not until man enters into the glorified state that he is made perfectly and immutably free to will that which is only good.

(John 8:36, Romans 6:1-14; 7:15-23, II Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 2:13, Colossians 1:13, Ephesians 4:13)

Chapter 10 - EFFECTUAL CALLING

At a time appointed by and acceptable to God, those whom He has predestined to life are effectually called by His word and Spirit out of the state of death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation. They are made alive spiritually, He takes away the heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh, their minds are given spiritual enlightenment, and as those who are being saved, they begin to understand the things of God.

He renews their wills and by His power, sets them to seek and follow that which is good, while at the same time effectually drawing them to Christ. And to all these changes they come most freely, for they are made willing by divine grace.

(Deuteronomy 30:6, Psalm 110:3, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Acts 26:18, Romans 8:29-30; 11:7, Ephesians 1:10, 11, 17, 19; II Thessalonians 2:13-14)

God's effectual call is the outcome of His free and special grace alone, until a sinner is given life and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is "... dead in trespasses and sins..." and is entirely passive in this work of salvation. A work that does not proceed from anything good foreseen in him, nor from any power or agency resident in him. The power that enables him to answer God's call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, is no less than that which effected the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

(John 5:25, I Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 1:19-20; 2:5, 8, II Timothy 1:9)

Those who are not elect, even though they may be called upon to embrace salvation by the preachers of the gospel and maybe subjects of some common operations of the Holy Spirit, cannot be saved, and have no interest in being saved because they are not effectually drawn to Christ by the Father. Much less can men who do not receive the gospel be saved, no matter how diligent they are to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the teachings of the religious system they have chosen to follow.

(Matthew 11:20-27, 22:14, John 4:22; 6:44-45, 65; 17:3, Acts 4:12, Romans 9:18, Hebrews 6:4-6, I John 2:24-25)

Chapter 11 - JUSTIFICATION

God freely justifies the persons whom He effectually calls. He does this, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and declaring them righteous in Christ Jesus.

This He does for Christ's sake alone and not for anything wrought in them or done by them. The righteousness which is reckoned to their account, is neither their faith nor the act of believing nor any other obedience to the gospel which they have rendered but Christ's obedience alone. The obedience of Christ was two fold: His active obedience rendered to the whole law of God and His passive obedience rendered in his death. Those thus justified receive and rest by faith upon Christ's righteousness; and this faith they have, not of themselves but as the gift of God.

(John 1:12, Romans 3:24; 4:4-8; 5:17-19, 8:30, I Corinthians 1:30-31, Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10, Philippians 3:8-9)

The faith which receives and rests on Christ and His righteousness is the sole means of justification, yet it is never alone in the person justified, but is invariably accompanied by all other saving graces. Nor is it a dead faith, for it works by love.

(Romans 3:28, Galatians 5:6, James 2:17, 22, 26)

By His obedience and death Christ paid in full the debt of all those who are justified. By the sacrifice of Himself in the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and His suffering on their behalf, the penalty they had incurred, He fully and absolutely satisfied all the claims which God's justice had upon them. Yet their justification is altogether of free grace. First, Christ was the free gift of the Father to act on their behalf, secondly, Christ's obedience and His satisfying the demands of the law was freely accepted on their behalf. Thirdly, nothing in them merited these mercies. Hence God's exact justice and His rich grace are alike rendered glorious in the justification of sinners.

(Isaiah 53:5-6, Romans 3:26; 8:32, II Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 1:6-7, 2:7, Hebrews 10:14, I Peter 1:18-19)

From all eternity God decreed to justify all the elect, and in the fullness of time Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification. Nevertheless they are not justified personally

until, in due time, the Holy Spirit actually applies to them the benefits of Christ's Person and work.

(Romans 4:25, Galatians 3:8, Colossians 1:21-22, I Timothy 2:6, Titus 3:4, 7, I Peter 1:2)

God continues to forgive the sins of all the justified. They can never lose their justification,. but they may, by reason of sin, fall under God's fatherly displeasure; in which case, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, and repent, God will not usually restore to them "...the light of His countenance."

(Psalm 32:5, 51; 89:31-33, Matthew 6:12; 26:75, John 10:28, I John 1:7-9)

Believers in the Old Testament were justified in precisely the same way as New Testament believers.

(Romans 4:22-24, Galatians 3:9, Hebrews 11:1-40)

Chapter 12 - ADOPTION

For the sake of His only Son, Jesus Christ, God has been pleased to make all justified persons sharers in the grace of adoption, by means of which they are numbered with, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of children of God. Furthermore, God's name is put upon them, they receive the Spirit of adoption, and they are enabled to come boldly to the throne of grace and to cry "... Abba, Father..." They are pitied, protected, provided for and chastened by God as by a Father. He never casts them off, but, as they remain sealed to the day of redemption, they inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

(Psalm 103:13, Proverbs 14:26, Isaiah 54:8-9, Lamentations 3:31, John 1:12, Romans 8:15-17, II Corinthians 6:18, Galatians 4:4-6, Ephesians 1:5; 2:18, 4:30, Hebrews 1:14; 6:12; 12:6, I Peter 5:7, Revelation 3:12)

Chapter 13 - SANCTIFICATION

Those who are united to Christ, effectually called and regenerated, have a new heart and a new spirit created in them, and His Spirit dwelling within them. This personal work of sanctification is indeed carried further. Sin's mastery over them is broken, the evil desires are increasingly weakened and dealt their death blow and saving graces in them are increasingly enlivened and strengthened. The practice of all true holiness is as much a part of God's grace as is our salvation. In fact when there is no "pursuing of holiness" in the-life of a professed believer, it is a real possibility that they are yet in their sins.

(John 17:17, Acts 20:32, Romans 6:5-6, 14, II Corinthians 7:1, Galatians 5:24, Ephesians 3:16-19, Colossians 1:11, I Thessalonians 5:21-23, Titus 2:11-13, Hebrews 12:14)

Sanctification, as defined in this way, extends to every part of man, yet remains incomplete in this life. sin's corrupt remnants continue to defile all parts of man, causing within him a continual warfare. "The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh"

(Romans 7:18, 23, Galatians 5:17, I Thessalonians 5:23, I Peter 2:11)

In the war of flesh versus Spirit, sin's corrupt remnants may for a time gain the upper hand, yet the continual supply of strength from the Holy Spirit enables man as a new creature to gain the victory. So the saints grow in grace, moving on towards a fullness of holiness in the fear of God. They earnestly endeavor to live according to God's laws and to render gospel obedience to all the commands which Christ, their Lord and Master, has laid down for them in His Word. Our sanctification is not to be considered an option to be pursued only by certain ones, but it is the natural out growth of our salvation and will be present in every true child of God, although in varying degrees.

(Romans 6:14; 7:23, II Corinthians 3:18; 7:1, Ephesians 4:15-16, Titus 2:11-14)

Chapter 14 - SAVING FAITH

The fact that the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls is the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Saving faith is brought into being through the preaching of the Word of God. By the Word and its ministry, by prayer and also by other means appointed by God, faith is increased and strengthened.

(Luke 17:5, Acts 20:32, Romans 10:14, 17, 11, Colossians 4:13, Ephesians 2:8, I Peter 2:2)

By faith a Christian believes everything to be true that is made known in the Word, in which Gods speaks authoritatively. He also perceives in the Word a degree of excellence superior to all other writings, indeed to all things that the world contains. The Word shows the glory of God as seen in His various attributes, the excellence of Christ in His nature and in the offices He bears, and the power and perfection of the Holy Spirit in all the works in which He is engaged. In this way the Christian is enabled to trust himself implicitly to the truth thus believed, and to render service according to the different requirements of the various parts of Scripture. The principal acts of saving faith relate in the first instance to Christ as the believer accepts, receives and rests upon Him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.

(Psalm 19:7-10: 119:72, Isaiah 66:2, John 1:12; 8:47; 15:14, Acts 15:11; 16:31; 24:14, Galatians 2:20, II Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 11:13)

Saving faith has its gradations. It may be weak or strong. Yet, like all other kinds of saving grace, even at its lowest ebb it is quite different in its nature from the faith and common grace of temporary believers. In consequence, though it may be frequently attacked and weakened, it wins through to victory, developing in many Christians until they attain to full assurance through Christ, who is both the "... author and finisher of our faith...

(Matthew 6:30, Romans 4:19-20, Ephesians 6:16, Colossians 2:2, Hebrews 5:13-14, 6:11-12; 12:2, II Peter 1:1, I John 5:4-5)

Chapter 15 - REPENTANCE

Some of the elect are not converted until well on in life, having continued in the state in which they were born, and having followed after all kinds of evil cravings and pleasures. Then God's effectual call reaches them and He gives them repentance leading to eternal life.

(Titus 3:2-5, II Timothy 2:24-26)

The repentance that leads to salvation is a gospel grace by means of which a person who is caused by the Holy Spirit to feel the manifold evils of sin is also caused by faith in Christ to humble himself on account of sin. This humiliation is characterized by godly sorrow, a detestation of the sin, and self-loathing. It is accompanied by prayer for pardon and strength of grace, to conduct himself in the sight of God with the consistency of life that pleases Him.

(Psalm 119:6, 128, Ezekiel 36:31, Zechariah 12:10, Acts 11:18, II Corinthians 7:9-11)

God has made full provision for the preservation of believers in a state of salvation, so that, although even the smallest of sins deserves damnation, there is no sin so great that it will bring damnation to them that repent. This renders the constant preaching of repentance essential.

(Isaiah 1:16-18; 55:7, John 6:37-40; 10:27-30, Romans 6:23; 8:28-39)

Chapter 16 - GOOD WORKS

Only the works that God has commanded in His word are to be accounted good works, such works as men have invented out of blind zeal or upon the mere pretense of good intentions, are not good, for they lack the sanction of Holy Scripture.

(Isaiah 29:13, 64:6-7, Micah 6:8, Matthew 15:9, Hebrews 13:21)

Works that are truly good, and which are done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith. By means of them, believers make known their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance of salvation, edify their brethren, adorn their Christian witness, and deprive their opponents of arguments against the gospel. In summary, they glorify God, who has made them what they are, namely, new creatures in Christ; and as such they yield fruit that evidences holiness.

(Psalm 116:12-19, Matthew 5:16, Romans 6:22, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:11, I Timothy 6:1, James 2:18-26, I Peter 2:15, II Peter 1:5-11, I John 2:3-6)

Chapter 17 - THE PRESERVATION & PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

The saints are those whom God has "... accepted in the Beloved..." and effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit. To them He has given the precious faith that pertains to all His elect. The persons to whom such blessings have been imparted can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but they shall certainly persevere in grace to the end and be eternally saved, for God will never repent of having called them. Consequently He continues to beget and to nourish in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope and all the graces of the Spirit that issue in immortality. Many storms and floods may arise and beat upon them, yet they can never be moved from the foundation and rock on which by faith they are firmly established. Even if unbelief and Satan's temptations cause them for a time to lose the sight and comfort of the love of God, yet the unchanging God remains their God. He will certainly keep and save them by His power until they come to the enjoyment of their purchased possession; for they are engraved on the palms of His hands, and their names have been written in the book of life from all eternity.

(Psalm 89:31-34, Isaiah 49:16, Malachi 3:6, John 10:28-29, Romans 8:29-39, I Corinthians 11:32, Philippians 1:6, II Timothy 2:19, I John 2:19, Revelation 17:8)

Chapter 18 - ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

All who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and love Him in sincerity, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace. They may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, knowing that such hope will never put them to shame.

(Romans 5:2-5, I John 5:13)

This assurance comes to them through the witness of the Holy Spirit that they are children of God and through evidences of saving grace in their lives.

(Romans 8:16-17, I John 2:3-5; 3:10-15; 3:24-4:6; 5:13)

Chapter 19 - THE CHURCH

The church of Jesus Christ has two important aspects to it. First there is the universal church which consists of all believers throughout the world, who have been, who are being, or who yet shall be gathered into one under Christ, and who by one Spirit were baptized into one body and have been made to drink into one Spirit. Secondly there is the local church which is made up of believers in a particular geographical location. Even though these two aspects are different they are inseparable. The universal church does not exist apart from the local church. The local church is the only legitimate manifestation of the universal church.

(I Corinthians 1:2; 12:13, 27, Ephesians 4:4-12)

The beginning of the church was still a future event during our Lord's earthly ministry. It has as its foundation, apostles, prophets with Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone. The gifts of apostle and prophet were given to the church after our Lord's work of redemption and His ascension into heaven. Therefore the church came to birth at Pentecost: the foundation being laid after His resurrection and ascension back to the Father. As a result of His work of redemption our Lord was made Head of the church.

(Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:1-4, 40-47, Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:19-22; 4:7-12)

In building the tabernacle and later the temple, under the old covenant, specific and detailed instructions were given by our Lord, from which there was not to be the slightest variation. This is an example of how detailed and precise our Lord is and how intolerant He is of adding or subtracting from His instructions. Since Christ is the Architect and Builder of His church, it behooves those who are called upon to build His church, to follow the blueprints as set forth in Scripture with the same degree of preciseness, and with the determination not to deviate in anyway. This will regulate the sum and substance of the corporate worship services, the outreach ministries, and all other aspects of the corporate life of the church. This is especially true at this time in the history of the church, when many have adopted the pragmatic approach of "whatever works do it." or "whatever is popular use it."

(Exodus 25:40, Psalm 127:1, Matthew 16:18, I Corinthians 3:9-17)

A local church, gathered and fully organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members. By Christ's appointment, the officers to be chosen and set apart by the church as called and gathered are "elders and deacons." It is their special responsibility to arrange for the carrying out of what the Lord has ordained, and to use the powers entrusted to them for the execution of their duties; and such arrangements are to continue in the church until our Lord's return.

(Acts 20:17, 28, Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9)

By Christ's appointment, any person who has been qualified and given the necessary gifts by the Holy Spirit for the work of elder or pastor-teacher in a church, must be chosen and called to that office by the common suffrage of the church itself. Deacons are to be recognized and set apart in the same manner.

(Acts 6:3, 5, 6, I Timothy 4:14)

Pastors are required to give constant attention to the service of Christ in His churches. They are to be engaged in the ministry of the Word and prayer, and to seek the welfare of men's souls as those that must give account to the Lord. It is therefore imperative that the churches to which they minister give them, according to the churches' ability, not only all due honor, but such abundance in this world's material goods as will enable them to live in comfort, without the need to entangle themselves in secular employment, and which will also suffice to enable them to exercise hospitality toward others, such an arrangement is required by the express command of Scripture that "... they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

(Acts 6:4, I Corinthians 9:6-14, Galatians 6:6-7, I Timothy 3:2; 5:17-18, II Timothy 2:4, Hebrews 13:17)

All believers are under obligation to join themselves to local churches when and where they have opportunity to do so. It follows that all who are admitted to the privileges of the church fellowship also become subject to the discipline and government of the church in accordance with the rule of Christ.

(Acts 2:40-47; 11:19-25-26, I Thessalonians 5:14, II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15)

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament instituted by Jesus Christ. It is intended to be, to the person baptized, a sign of his union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. As all believers were baptized spiritually, into the universal body of Christ at conversion, it follows that they be baptized in water before joining the local body of Christ. Since this ordinance is a picture of being joined to Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, and because the word itself means to dip or plunge under, immersion is the mode of baptism that is to be practiced.

(Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:40-47, Romans 6:3-5, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12)

The only persons who can rightly submit themselves to this ordinance are those who actually profess repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, being willing to yield obedience to Him.

(Mark 16:16, Acts 2:41; 8:12 , 36 , 37; 18:8)

The "Lord's supper" or "communion" was established by our Lord on the night when He was betrayed and arrested, in the upper room, while celebrating Passover with His disciples, unlike baptism, which is practiced once, as an ordinance of initiation into the church, communion or the Lord's supper is an ordinance of continuation by the church and is to be practiced until our Lord's return. The purpose of this ordinance is to proclaim His death until He come and to remind us of His work of redemption. It is not a reenactment of Calvary but a memorial of Calvary. The elements of the bread and the wine are symbols of His broken body and shed blood. There is no saving grace conveyed in the partaking of them. Only believers are to participate and only those believers who can do so in a worthy manner.

(Matthew 26:17-30, I Corinthians 11:23-26)

Chapter 20 - THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

Theologians, serious Bible scholars and Christians throughout the church are not in agreement in their understanding of the Biblical data concerning the end times i.e. the events which precede and follow our Lord's return. This has been the case throughout the history of the church. Much of the tension that exists between God's people because of these differences could be greatly reduced if it was recognized and honestly acknowledged that no one view of eschatology [doctrine of last things] is supported by or adequately deals with all that God's Word has to say on the subject.

As important as it is to have convictions regarding eschatological matters, it is good to keep in mind that they vary in significance. It is essential to have agreement on such basic matters as the second coming of Christ and the life hereafter. On the other hand, holding to a specific position on less central and less clearly expounded issues such as the millennium or the tribulation, should not be made a test of orthodoxy or a condition of Christian fellowship and unity. Emphasis should be placed upon the points of agreement, not the points of disagreement.

Therefore let it be known that differences in understanding of and contrary opinions on less significant and non-essential areas of eschatology, will not be a factor and should not be a hindrance to becoming a part of this local body of believers.

The Biblical data concerning the doctrine of last things is not as vague as some seem to indicate nor is it as precise as others believe it to be. If the literal, grammatical approach used by all true believers in interpreting the whole of Scripture, was consistently applied to the prophetic portions of Scripture most of the differences that exists would evaporate. This is especially true when it comes to the controversy as to whether a distinction exists between Israel and the church and whether the covenant promises made to Israel are presently being fulfilled spiritually in the church or are yet to be literal and actually fulfilled in national Israel.

All agree that if the literal and grammatical approach were applied in the interpretation of the prophetic portions of Scripture it would bring one to the basic position that the promises made to Israel will be literally fulfilled.

God made many covenant promises to Israel which include: the permanent possession of the promised land, the Messianic rule of Christ over the kingdoms of the earth, and the redemption of the people.

These promised blessings will come to pass as literally as did the promised curses, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

(Genesis 13:14-17, Exodus 32:13, Psalm 105:8-12; 132:10-18, Zechariah 14:9-11, Amos 9:14-15, Ezekiel 37:26-28, Jeremiah 23:5-8; 32:36-44, Romans 11:26-27)

As a result of apostasy, God brought judgment upon Israel and as the natural olive branches they were broken off and the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been grafted in. God's program for the salvation of His elect is being presently fulfilled through His church until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. After this, He will fulfill His covenant promises to Israel which will usher in the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth.

This will take place only after the nation of Israel has been purged and purified by a time of tribulation upon the earth such as has not been since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be. At the end of this period of unprecedented tribulation, the son of Man will return to set up His kingdom.

(Zechariah 12:1-14; 13:1-9; 14:1-15, Matthew 24:1-44, Romans 11:1-36)

God is the Judge of all, but He will perform His work through Jesus Christ. He has given all judgment to the Son and has done so because He is the Son of Man. Of this fact, He has furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

(Hebrews 12:23, John 5:22 ,27, Acts 17:31; 10:42, II Timothy 4:1)

Christ will judge the believers for their works, whether good or evil. They will also give an account of their stewardship, the use they have made of their talents and the opportunities that have been entrusted to them. The "... day will declare..." whether the believer has built of "... wood, hay and straw or of gold, silver and precious stones.." If of the former, their works will be burnt up, and yet they will be saved so as through fire if on the latter, they will receive a reward.

(Romans 14:10, I Colossians 3:11-15; 4:5, II Colossians 5:10, Matthew 25:14-30; 20:1-16, I Colossians 3:12, 14, 15)

All the unrighteous small and great will appear before Christ at the great white throne. They too will be judged according to their works. All whose names are not written in the Book of Life are cast into the Lake of Fire which is called the "... second death..." They will be relegated to everlasting torments and "... punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power".

(Matthew 11:23-24, II Peter 2:20-22, II Thessalonians 1:7-10, Romans 2:3-6, Revelation 20:11-15)

God's purpose in appointing a day of judgment is to make known the glory of His mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and the glory of His justice in the eternal damnation of the wicked and disobedient. In that day the righteous will inherit everlasting life, and receive a fullness of joy and glory in the Lord's presence as the eternal reward. But the wicked, who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, will be relegated to everlasting torments and banished from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

(Matthew 25:21-46, Mark 9:48, Romans 9:22-23, II Thessalonians 1:7-10, II Timothy 4:8)

To deter all men from sin on the one hand, and to give greater comfort to the godly in their adversity on the other, Christ would have us firmly persuaded that a day of judgment lies ahead. He has kept the day's date a secret so that men may shake off all confidence in themselves, and in ignorance of the hour, may be ever on the watch, and ever prepared to say "Even so, come Lord Jesus, Amen."

(Mark 13:32-37, Luke 12:35-48, Matthew 24:27, II Corinthians 5:9-11, II Thessalonians 1:5-10, II Peter 3:11-14, I John 3:1-3, Revelation 22:20)