

What We Believe

A. The Scriptures

The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were written by men divinely inspired and are God's revelation of Himself to man. They have God as their Author, salvation for their end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for their content. Therefore, all Scripture is authoritative, infallible, and inerrant as originally written. It is the only sufficient rule for faith and practice. All Scripture is a testimony to Jesus Christ, who is Himself the focus of God's revelation (Psalm 12:6; John 5:39; 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

B. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being; the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. He is full of both holy love and holy justice. God is all-powerful and all-knowing; His perfect knowledge extends to all things—past, present, and future—including the future decisions of His creatures. To Him, we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience (Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 145:3; 147:5; Isaiah 45:22; 46:8-10; John 1:3; 1 Timothy 1:17).

C. The Trinity

The Scriptures reveal that the one, true God eternally exists as one Being in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity has distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

D. Providence

God, from all eternity, decrees and permits all things that come to pass and perpetually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and all events—yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the agency and responsibility of people (Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 46:9-11; Psalm 33:11; Proverbs 16:33; Matthew 10:29; Luke 22:22; Colossians 1:16-17; 2:10; James 1:13-15).

E. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto eternal life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but out of unconditional mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice He calls, justifies, sanctifies, and

glorifies sinners. Election is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility and thankfulness (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:27-31; Ephesians 1:3-8, 11; 2:4-9).

F. The Fall of Man

God originally created man in His own image and free from sin. However, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God and fell from his original holiness and righteousness. As a result, all of his descendants inherit a nature that is corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His rule, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, actively rebel against God themselves (Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-7; 6:5; Romans 3:9-18; 5:12-19; 8:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-3).

G. Jesus Christ, The Mediator

There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who is both fully God and fully human. Living without sin, He perfectly fulfilled God's Law. He suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners, was buried, and rose again the third day. He ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He lives forever to make intercession for His people. Jesus Christ is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the universe (Isaiah 53:10-12; John 1:1, 14; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 3:21-26; 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 3:13; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:1-3; 7:25).

H. Justification

Justification is the gracious act of God by which all sinners who believe in Christ, resting on Him alone for salvation, are declared not only "forgiven" but also "completely righteous" in His sight. This blessing is not connected with any good deeds which we have done, but is given *as a free gift by His grace* through the perfect life and obedient death of Jesus Christ in our place. Having been given the very righteousness of Christ, believers are brought into an instant and permanent state of peace and favor with God (Romans 3:21-28; 4:3-8; 5:1-10; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:7-9; Titus 3:3-7).

I. Faith

Saving faith is trusting in everything revealed in God's Word concerning Christ, receiving and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. Genuine faith is produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit and works itself out

practically in love toward our fellow man and confidence in the character and promises of God (Romans 3:21-28; Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 5:6; Hebrews 11:1, 6).

J. Repentance

Repentance is a change of mind and heart brought about by the Holy Spirit. It is an act of God's free and special grace by which we, being made aware of our sin and guilt before God, humble ourselves in godly sorrow and submit to the will of God, desiring to please Him in all things.

Repentance is not equivalent to regret or shame (both of which can be prideful and self-centered) but is a deep awareness that sin offends our God who deserves all honor and obedience and is a sincere, God-wrought commitment to turn from it. Because of the ongoing battle against sin, the entire life of believers should be one of repentance and continual turning to Christ for pardon and the power to *put to death the deeds of the body*.

Evidences of repentance in the Christian walk are a mind renewed by the gospel of grace, a nature that detests sin but loves and pursues righteousness, and a life increasingly conformed, through the grace of God, to the image of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 17:30; 26:20; Romans 8:12-13; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:25).

K. Regeneration

Regeneration or "the new birth" is a change of heart produced by the Holy Spirit, by which those who were once *slaves of sin* become *slaves of righteousness*. At the moment of salvation, we are given *new hearts*, are made *new creations*, are brought to *new life*, and are made to share in *the divine nature*, leading to genuine love and obedience to God *from the heart*. Regeneration is a work of God's free grace, inseparable from justification and is made evident by joyful submission to God and genuine good works (Ezekiel 36:25-32; John 3:3; Romans 6:4-18; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:4).

L. Sanctification

God has promised all believers that He will work to *conform them to the image of His Son* morally and spiritually. Having taken the initiative to save us from sin, we are promised that *He who began a good work in us will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*. At the same time, believers are commanded to heartily pursue Christ-likeness in our lives and character by submitting to the leadership of God's Spirit, the truth of God's word, and the

encouragement of God's people (Proverbs 27:17; Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; Hebrews 12:14).

M. Perseverance of the Saints

All true believers—those whom God has justified through Jesus Christ—will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; they will certainly persevere in faith to the end. They may fall into sin through neglect and temptation and thereby *grieve the Holy Spirit*, bring reproach on the Church, and prompt God's discipline upon themselves. However, by grace, they will be restored again to repentance and will be *protected by the power of God through faith* unto salvation by means of the ministry of God's Spirit, God's word, and God's people (John 6:37-40; 10:27-29; Ephesians 4:30; Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 3:12-14; 7:25; 12:4-11; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Jude 24-25).

N. The Resurrection

On the third day after His death by crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, leaving an empty tomb. He appeared in His glorified body to the disciples and many others before ascending *to the right hand of God* where *He always lives to make intercession* for all believers.

There will also *certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked*. Those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness have a *living hope* because of His resurrection. At Jesus' return, believers' bodies will be resurrected and glorified, and we will live forever with the Lord on a restored earth, enjoying complete freedom from the penalty, power, and even the presence of sin.

Though the unrighteous will not live with God, they too will be resurrected. Because of their rebellion, they will be raised to face judgment and *will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power* (Matthew 10:28; Luke 24:36-43; John 5:28-29; Acts 1:3, 9-11; 2:25-33; 24:15; Romans 8:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:3; Revelation 21:1-8).

O. The Return of Jesus

Jesus has promised to return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised, and Christ will judge all people in righteousness. God has not revealed the exact time of Christ's coming. Therefore, believers are commanded, "*Prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your*

hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

When Christ returns, He will establish His Kingdom on earth; believers will be priests of God, and *they will reign* with Christ *forever* (Matthew 24:29-47; 25:31-46; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 22:5).

P. A Gospel Church

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all His true disciples and includes the redeemed of all the ages—believers *from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*. According to His commandment and the example of the apostles, Christians are to unite in local bodies under the Lordship of Christ for the purposes of gospel instruction and proclamation, encouragement, accountability, worship, and the celebration of the ordinances. The ultimate goal of the Church is to glorify God by making disciples of all the nations and serving others in Jesus' name. Under godly pastoral leadership, each autonomous, local church is to be governed through democratic processes in which each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord (Matthew 18:15-17; 28:18-20; John 20:16; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 10:23-25; 13:7; Revelation 5:9).

Q. The Priesthood of the Believer

The New Testament teaches that all believers are priests, offering themselves to God as living sacrifices and enjoying direct and equal access to the Father through Jesus Christ, the sole Mediator and our Great High Priest. This doctrine celebrates the importance, gifting, equality, and responsibility of every believer but in no way contradicts the clear biblical teaching that God has designed specific roles that are to be exercised and honored in the home and in the Church (Romans 12:1; Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 4:4-16; 5:22-6:4; 1 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 13:7; 1 Peter 2:4-9; Revelation 1:6).

R. Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, commanded for every believer, in which one is immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a sign of union with Christ's death and resurrection, of forgiveness for sins, and of the believer's new life in Christ. As such, baptism is a prerequisite for church membership (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

S. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a new covenant ordinance of Jesus Christ in which believers share together bread and the fruit of the vine. It is in no sense a sacrifice but is designed for the Church to remember, celebrate, and proclaim Jesus' death until He returns (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-34).

T. Worship and Fellowship

The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. We are called to live all of life to His glory. We are also commanded to meet together on a regular basis to worship, receive biblical instruction, and build each other up in the gospel through music, teaching, service, prayer, accountability, and mutual encouragement (Acts 2:41-47; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 10:24-25).

U. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience. Believers are in no way obligated to obey any teaching, commandment, or expectation rooted in human wisdom or tradition contrary to God's word or not contained in it. Although all legitimate human authority is ordained by God's decree, it is also limited by God's ultimate authority. *Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.* When, however, human authorities call us to disobey God, then *we must, with a clear conscience, obey God rather than men* (Matthew 15:9; Romans 13:1-7; 14:4; Acts 5:29; Colossians 2:20-23).

V. Marriage and the Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman committed in covenant for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church. It provides the husband and the wife the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the intended means for human procreation.

The husband and wife are of equal dignity and worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife *just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up for her*. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant-leadership of her husband; *as the Church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything*.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to diligently teach their children all of Christ's truth, leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to enjoy and embody the love of Christ. Children are to *be obedient to [their] parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord* (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalms 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 13:24; 17:6; 18:22; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20; 1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4).

W. Evangelism and Missions

The privilege and calling of every Christian and every church is to seek to extend the gospel to our families, our communities, and to the ends of the earth. *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us*. Consequently, on behalf of Christ, we are to beg anyone who will listen, *"Be reconciled to God"*!

Central to our worship and service to others, the "Great Commission" ought to be at the heart of this Church's activities as we earnestly pray, *"Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come"* (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 11:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

X. Mercy Ministry

Jesus Christ was sent *to preach* the good news of His reign *to the poor*. The kingdom of God is good news because it means an end to the kingdom of Satan—a kingdom plagued by chaos, injustice, racism, poverty, hopelessness, suffering, and death. Through His life, death, and

resurrection, Jesus Christ is bringing a new kingdom where He will rule eternally with perfect justice, righteousness, and peace. In His incarnation, Jesus modeled genuine love by entering into people's pain and working for their good. As those who follow Christ, we proclaim Jesus as King by aiding and empowering the orphan, the elderly, the helpless, the oppressed, and the weak so as to promote their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 61:1-4; Mark 1:14-16; Luke 4:18; John 1:14; Galatians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 5:14).

Y. Stewardship

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from our heavenly Father. Having received abundantly, our natural response ought to be to share our time, talents, and material possessions lavishly. Our giving actually reflects the gospel: *though our Lord Jesus Christ was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, so that we through His poverty might become rich.* The New Testament encourages us to respond to His goodness with an *abundance of joy* that overflows into liberally contributing to the advancement of the Savior's mission.

Having personally set the example, God motivates His people to generosity with both promises and instructions: *he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed. . . . Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.* (2 Corinthians 8:2, 9; 9:6-8, 10-11; James 1:17).