



The Scriptures

We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is an essential and infallible record of God revealing Himself to mankind. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Given by God, the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God and are, thus, free of error. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession or theology, must be tested by the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture.

The Triune God

There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty and perfect in holiness, truth and love. In the unity of the Godhead, there are three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal. The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father. Yet each is truly Deity. One God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is the foundation of Christian faith and life.

God the Father

God the Father rules over all and, together with the Son and the Spirit, is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love Him and, in His unfathomable grace, gave His Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption. He made all things for the praise of His glory and intends for man, in particular, to live in fellowship with Himself.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the eternal Word made Flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He is fully God and fully man. Through Him, all things came into being and were created. He was before all things, and in Him, all things hold together by the word of His power. He is perfect in nature, teaching and obedience and is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having shed His blood and died a vicarious death on the cross. By His death in our place, He revealed divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Redeeming us from sin, He rose bodily from the grave on the third day, victorious over death and the powers of darkness and performing many convincing proofs of His resurrection. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, He intercedes for His people and rules as Lord over all, awaiting His return. He is the Head of His body, the Church, and should be adored, loved, served and obeyed by all.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Through the proclamation of the gospel, He persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit, a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth and dwells within the regenerate. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son who, in turn, came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored and worshiped as God, the Third Person of the Trinity.

Man

God made man—male and female—in His own image, as the crown of creation so that man might glorify Him through enjoying fellowship with Him. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God. Being estranged from his Maker yet responsible to Him, man became subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and, apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to his mind, will and affections. Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan. He is at enmity with God, hostile toward God and hateful of God. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or attainments, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ alone.

The Gospel

The gospel is the good news of God's grace invading the darkness of this world. It is the grand narrative of creation, fall, redemption and consummation ordained by God and orchestrated through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel. His resurrection is the power of the gospel. His ascension is the glory of the gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins. It satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases His holy wrath. It also demonstrates His mysterious love and reveals His amazing grace. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men can be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have in glorifying God because of what He has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches and ministries to proceed from and be related to the gospel.

Man's Response to the Gospel

The proper response to the gospel is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a faith that is naturally accompanied by repentance from sin. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service and works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross and follow Christ, he cannot become His disciple. This response to the gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and unconditional election of God for His own pleasure and glory. This gospel of grace is to be sincerely preached to all men in all nations.

Man's Inheritance Through the Gospel

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone repenting of sin by the miracle of regeneration and looking to Christ and His substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is justified and fully accepted by God. Through Christ's atonement for sin, an individual is reconciled to God as Father and becomes His child. The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit.

Sanctification

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification, seeking to produce His fruit in us. Our minds are renewed, and we are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, the Spirit leads us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping His commandments and endeavoring to so live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith, knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship and confession, are a vital means of grace in this regard. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve His people until the certain end.

Empowered by the Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit empowers believers for Christian witness & service. While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion. Being indwelt by the Spirit & being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life & witness, & imparts his supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body & for various works of ministry in the world. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the first-century church are available today and are to be earnestly desired and practiced in an orderly manner. This includes those gifts that are considered miraculous, as well as those which might be seen as more mundane, as both are works of the Spirit. The healthy exercising of diverse gifts within a unified body is essential to the mission of the Church in the world today.

The Church

God, by His Word and Spirit, creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's body. By the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that newly redeemed humanity. The Church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, the Church is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the gospel. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on earth. This service involves a commitment to see the gospel preached and churches planted in the entire world.

The ultimate mission of the Church is to bring glory to God by making disciples. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer. All members of the Church are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. In this context, they are called to live out the implications of the gospel as the people of God and demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God. The ascended Christ has given gift ministries to the Church, including prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the equipping of Christ's body so that it might mature and grow. In the context of the local church, God's people receive pastoral care and oversight and the opportunity to steward their gifts for His glory and the good of the others.

Ordinances of the Church

Water baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become His disciple. In obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin.

As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we come to the table with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

The Consummation

The consummation of all things includes the future, physical, visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the consummation, Satan, with his hosts and all those outside Christ, is finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, will live and reign with Him forever, serving Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Then the eager expectation of creation will be fulfilled, and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God, who makes all things new.