

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

by

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Introduction

It is important, first of all, to define what a philosophy of ministry is. It is a statement of purpose that describes how a Christian ministry is to be accomplished.¹ However, it is not a philosophy based on human wisdom, but rather on what the Scriptures teach. Hence, it should plainly disclose what God, through the Scriptures, teaches about the nature of the Church, about the purposes of the Church, and thereby about the accomplishment of the ministry in the church. Simply put, a biblical philosophy of ministry becomes a guide for the pastor, so that he knows what the purposes of his ministry in the church are, and yet *how* he is to accomplish his ministry.

In sum, a biblical philosophy of ministry is not the goal of the pastor, but rather a means to an end, namely, the biblical accomplishment of that which is the purpose of the church. Yet, it is a great tool that keeps the pastor faithful to the Scriptures and his ministry (1 Tim 4:13–16), that defines the *goals* of his ministry—which are aligned with the goals of the church (1 Tim 3:14–15), and also that makes the church *efficient* (Acts 6:1–7). In the following, it will be conveyed first of all the nature of the church, and then the threefold function of the church.

The Nature of the Church

Today there is a lot of confusion about the nature and function of the church. There are, in fact, local churches that have become man-centered, which are based on pragmatism and unbiblical practices. However, the Bible portrays the nature and the function of the church in a different way. In order to understand what the function of the church is, it is foundational first of all to fully comprehend what the church actually is.

¹ Alex D. Montoya, “Approaching Pastoral Ministry Scripturally,” in *Pastoral Ministry: How To Shepherd Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary Faculty (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 48.

What the Church Is

An accurate theology of the church is so foundational for Christians, since they themselves constitute the church that is the body of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:23; 4:12). The church is not a building in which people meet together, rather it is the gathering of people who are purchased by God with the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28)—who is her foundation (Matt 16:18). Thus, the church refers to the believers of this dispensation who by their faith belong to Christ Jesus. To this regard, Eph 1:22 displays clearly that the church is a New Testament entity. Therefore, for an accurate definition of the church, one must take into account the reality that the church is born in the New Testament. This implies that there was no church in the Old Testament, and that Israel and the church are two distinct entities.

However, in order to understand what the church is, it is crucial to fully comprehend who her constituents are. The church is constituted by those are chosen or elected by God in His preordained will (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:2; Col 3:12; etc.). Thus, she is not the gathering of people who simply like God, but rather of those who are God's own possession (1 Pet 2:9).² The church is called the body of Jesus Christ, who is her head (Eph 5:23), and yet her source of vitality.³ This implies that the believers who belong to the church must be members of Christ, that is, made alive in Christ, and raised up with Him (Eph 2:5-6). Also, those who belong to the church are identified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is what characterizes the New Testament believers: they are baptized by one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), and thus have the fellowship of the Spirit (Phil 2:1; 2 Cor 13:14).

² Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1972), 19–20.

³ *Ibid.*, 29.

What the Church Is Not

In Ephesians 2, Paul describes that the church is “one new man,” with no division between Jews and Gentiles believers. In other words, there is a soteriological unity. However, this does not mean that there is a replacement of Israel by the church, or that the Gentiles are incorporated in Israel. Rather, Paul in Eph 3:6 speaks of the Gentiles believers as *fellow heirs and fellow members of the body*—the church. Simply put, neither the church replaces Israel, nor are the Gentiles assimilated in the nation of Israel.

Although some would argue that the church replaces Israel, the Scripture itself demonstrates instead that the church starts at Pentecost, after the ascension of Jesus, with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).⁴ From that point on both Jews (Acts 2) and Gentiles (Acts 10:45) received the Holy Spirit, as a partial (or initial) fulfillment of the New Covenant. Another proof that the church is not Israel is her connection to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:20-23), as well as to the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20). Therefore, on the basis of Scripture one can say without any doubt that *the church is not Israel*.

In sum, the church can be defined in the following way: it is the community (not a nation) of believers from every nation who are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and who live in the dispensation between Acts 2 (the birth of the church) and the pretribulation rapture of the church. The church is not the replacement of Israel, but rather a New Testament entity since it is built on the foundation of the apostles, whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ (Eph 2:20).

⁴ Ibid., 70.

The Purpose of the Church

It is critical now to be acquainted with the purpose of the church, because in order to understand the pastor's role as a minister, one needs first of all to be familiar with the role of the church according to the Scriptures.⁵ In the following sections, it will be presented in details the *biblical* purposes of the church: the worship of God, the edification of the saints, and the evangelization of the world.

The Worship of God

One of the purposes and roles of the church is to exalt, glorify, and worship God. However, in order to properly worship God one must understand what the term "worship" means. Saucy defines worship in the following way, "To worship God is thus to ascribe to Him the supreme worth to which He alone is worthy."⁶ MacArthur describes worship in this way, "It begins with the giving first of ourselves, and then of our attitudes, and then of our possessions—until worship is a way of life."⁷ Simply put, worship is the adoration that one offers to God not only with his words, but yet with his attitudes, actions and deeds, so that his whole life becomes a spiritual worship to God (Rom 12:1).

Nevertheless, there is a very important aspect that must be pointed out. Since the church is not Israel, the worship that Christians offer to God is to be different from the worship Israel offered in the Old Testament dispensation. In fact, in the Old Testament there was a specific order of worship as well as a specific place (tabernacle and temple). Not only this, there was a

⁵ Montoya, "Approaching Pastoral Ministry Scripturally," 50.

⁶ Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, 166.

⁷ John F. MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 14.

select group of people—priests—that was called to worship, yet in a specific manner, namely, using a sacrificial system. It is crucial for the church to comprehend that there is a different way she is called to worship. Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit, and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). Jesus discloses that for the church there is a new order of worship, which is not anymore based on what Israel did in the Old Testament. Therefore, there are four important implications for the church with regard to worship. First of all, God does not give any specific format of worship. Secondly, there is not anymore a specific place where to worship. Thirdly, there is not a sacrificial system to follow, since they are substituted by spiritual sacrifices (Rom 12:1-2). And lastly, *all* believers are called to worship (1 Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6), not only the priests.

Practical Applications in a Local Church

The New Testament portrays various ways (spiritual sacrifices) by which believers should worship God. Some of these are the ministry of gratitude (Heb 12:28; 13:15, Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16-17), the ministry of holy living (Rom 12:1-2; 1 Pet 1:13-16), the ministry of giving (1 Cor 16:1; 1 Tim 5:17–18; 2 Cor 8:3–5; 2 Cor 9:7-15), the ministry to others (Heb 13:16; Rom 12:1-8; 15:27; Phil 2:17, 25, 30), and also the edification of one another (1 Cor 14). However, there are essential elements which are to be incorporated in the worship service of a local church, so as to worship God biblically, and thereby accurately. First of all, the church should worship God through the preaching of the Word, with the edification of the saints and the evangelization of the lost (Rom 15:16; Acts 6:5; 2 Tim 4:1-5), as also through the public reading of Scripture (1 Tim 4:13). As MacArthur remarks, “We worship God by proclaiming His Word with clarity.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, ‘Brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did with you’ (2 Thessalonians 3:1). When His Word is given exposure, when people hear it and are saved, God is glorified.’⁸

The church should worship God through the ministry of prayer (1 Tim 5:5; Acts 13:2-3), which involves adoration (1 Chron 29:16ff; 2 Chron 6:14ff), invocations, intercessions (1 Tim 2:1ff; Acts 12:5), confessions (Neh 1:5ff), and benedictions (Rom 16:23–27; 2 Cor 13:14). A local church is to worship God through songs of praise, such as with hymns and spiritual songs that are to be God’s centered. Very importantly, music should not be confused with worship. The use of music is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end, which is to glorify God. Thus, the praise through songs should not be music-centered, but God-centered.

A local church is also called to worship God in her service through the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 11:17-34), so as to remember the Lord’s death, but yet anticipating His coming. This is not an option; it is rather an act of obedience to the Lord’s command. The church is called to worship God through the offering, which is to be regular, proportional, and most importantly it should be given sacrificially (2 Cor 8:3–5), cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7), and yet by faith (2 Cor 9:6, 10–11). As the Bible portrays, the offering should be given to ministers (1 Tim 5:17–18), to missionaries (Phil 1:15–20), and to the poor (1 Cor 16:1). Finally, the church should worship God in her gathering through the disciplining service (1 Cor 5:1ff.), as well as through the baptismal service. Regarding baptism, it must be said that according to the Bible it is not a means of salvation, but rather a sign of belief, and yet a symbol of identification with Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom 6:3–6).

⁸ MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority*, 146.

In sum, every local church is called to worship God through all these essential elements that can be found throughout the New Testament. By implication, every single Christian is called to worship God by his words and attitude as a response to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.⁹ This is the purpose of God's gift of salvation: the praise of His glory (Eph 1:3-14). A local church who does not worship God as the Bible conveys is not fulfilling her role.

The Edification of the Saints

The second purpose of the church, and by implication of the ministry performed in the church, is the edification of the believers. The Bible is very clear on this, in fact the apostle Paul outlines the purpose of his ministry saying that it was to present every man complete in Christ (Col 1:28). He plainly states that he was made minister of the church (1:25). Hence, the purpose of every pastor is to carrying on the stewardship received by God in his calling, that is, to faithfully shepherd the flock of God. The church is not to be only the object of the pastor's ministry, but yet the purpose of his entire ministry.

There are other Scriptural passages that point out the edification of the saints as one of the aims of the church. In Eph 4:7-16 Paul reminds the Ephesians that the purpose of the gifts was the edification of the church. He explicitly says that God gave pastors and evangelists not for the sake of themselves, but rather for the *equipping of the saints for the work of the service*. This is a critical aspect, since the purpose of the pastor is not to make money or self-promotion, but the building up of the body of Christ (Eph 4:12). Furthermore, Paul writes that those gifts are given for the growth of believers as well as for their protection from false doctrines (4:13-16).

⁹ Ibid., 23.

Another important passage that emphasizes this function is 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14. These three chapters portray in a crystal clear way what the aim of the spiritual gifts is, and also how these gifts are to be used in the church. Paul in chapter 12 points out that the gifts are given to each believer individually (12:11) by the Holy Spirit according to God's will and purpose. Hence, these gifts are not something that man can learn. But most importantly Paul specifies *why* these gifts are given. He says that they are for the common good, that is, for the edification of the church (12:7; 14:5).

He also devotes an entire chapter, in between chapter 12 and 14, explaining *how* these various gifts are to be used in the church. He conveys how crucial it is to use the gifts in love, because otherwise the gifts may become useless, or even worse distracting. Therefore, in order to edify one another the gifts must be exercised in love, and as he conveys in chapter 14 with orderliness, decency, and always with the focus on God (1 Cor 13:1ff; 14:12, 25–26, 33). There are other passages that disclose the importance of the edification of the saints as one of the purposes of the church, such as Acts 20:17-35 where Paul displays his attitude in his ministry, as well as the content of his entire ministry. The apostle Peter, in his epistle, calls the readers to employ the gifts received from God for the service of one another, so that God may be glorified (1 Pet 4:10-11).

Practical Applications in a Local Church

The edification of the saints is one of the main purposes of a local church, which does not involve only the pastor but every single Christian. The means to be used in order to accomplish this function are the preaching of God's Word and the equipping of the saints (2 Tim 4:1–5; Acts 20:27; Eph 4:12; Col 1:24–29; Matt 28:18–20), discipleship and baptism (Matt 28:19–20), the proper use of spiritual gifts by *all* saints (1 Cor 13:1ff, 14:5, 12, 26), and yet church discipline

(Matt 18:15–20). The aim of this function is the building up of the body of Christ (Eph 4:12), the unity of the faith (Eph 4:13), discernment and protection from false doctrines (Eph 4:14), and growth (Eph 4:15). Nonetheless, the ultimate purpose of the edification of the saints is the glory of God (1 Pet 4:11).

All that has been said about the edification of the saints put in display the centrality of *church membership* in a local church. There are, in fact, professed Christians who claim that to be a member of a local church is not so fundamental. Rather, without being a member of a local church, it would be impossible to exercise the spiritual gifts, to grow into maturity, to be edified by others, and yet to edify others by one's own gifts. Dever writes, "A few passages in the New Testament seem to refer to the church in the abstract, or universally, but the overwhelming majority of references to the church are to a local, living, and loving collection of people who are committed to Christ and committed to each other."¹⁰ Therefore, the edification of the saints is the proof that church membership is biblical and fundamental for every newborn Christian.

In sum, the Bible portrays the edification of the saints as one of the purposes of the church, which is what causes the believers to grow into maturity, in order to be "the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). However, a local church has also another function, which is so essential since it is the means by which she makes new worshipers of God.

The Evangelization of the World

In order to understand accurately what evangelism is, it is crucial to point out that the church is called to be God's witness in a different way Israel was called during the Old Testament dispensation. In other words, dispensationalism should affect the Christian's view of

¹⁰ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 149.

the Great Commission. As a matter of fact, the Scriptures convey very clearly what the differences are between Israel's role in God's plan of redemption and the church's. It is noteworthy to point out, though, that God's plan of redemption has always been the same: the salvation of all nations without any distinction (Gen 3:15; Is 66:18-24; Joel 2:28; Amos 9:11-15; Hab 2:14; John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim 2:4).

Thus, although there are some similarities between Israel and the Church, such as to be a holy people, as well as God's witness (Is 43:10, 12; 44:8; Acts 1:8), there is nonetheless a great difference between them. First of all in the Old Testament God chose a particular nation (Israel) to be His witness, whereas in our dispensation God chooses people of every nation without any distinction. But most importantly, Israel was called to be the center that was designed to draw people to herself, and thereby to God. Contrary, in the New Testament God calls the Church not to be the center so as to draw people to herself, but rather to go out in order to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to those who are lost (Matt 28:19–20).¹¹ In sum, the mandate of Israel and the Church are completely different, even though the goal of God's redemption has always been the same, namely, the world. Therefore, according to this dispensation Christians are not called to wait for the world to come, but rather are *commanded* by Jesus Himself to reach the world with the Gospel (Matt 28:19–20; John 17:17–18; 20:21; Acts 1:8).¹²

Practical Applications in a Local Church

A local church is called to an active commission (“Go and make disciples” Matt 28:18–20), as well as to a commission which includes all the nations, without distinction (Rom 15:18–

¹¹ George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 21.

¹² Montoya, “Approaching Pastoral Ministry Scripturally,” 249.

25). Thus, whole the world is the scope of the church in evangelism. However, the Bible clarifies yet *how* a local church is to be a witness in this world. First of all she is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Acts 20:21 Paul summarizes his ministry saying that he solemnly testifies of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here Paul is not talking only about believing, but also about repentance toward God. The preaching of the gospel is, in other words, the means by which unbelievers are converted (Acts 2:47), since it is the power of God for the salvation of unbelievers (Rom 1:16–17). This is so critical; because the way a local church understands the gospel will have for certain an impact on the way she does evangelism.¹³ The preaching of the gospel is so foundational then, because it is in itself the true power for salvation (Rom 10:17), and yet it is what the Holy Spirit uses in His ministry (Eph 6:17).

The Bible portrays others means by which a local church can carry out her ministry of evangelism, which are the baptism of those who are converted and yet the teaching of the whole counsel of God. In the book of Acts, it is unveiled that the apostles were devoting to an on-going instruction of the whole counsel of God (Acts 2:42; 20:27). The Bible puts in display that the power of evangelism is not in the methodology used by Christians—which today seems to be manipulative most of the time—but rather in the power of God’s Word itself (Rom 1:16), as well as in the power of the Holy Spirit. To this regard, before His ascension, Jesus said to the apostles that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit will come upon them (Acts 1:8), for the sake of being His witnesses even to the remotest part of earth. Another power by which a local church can be a witness in this world is the ministry of prayer (Eph 6:18–20; Col 4:2–4).

¹³ Mark Dever, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 51.

In conclusion, there are three practical aspects concerning the application of the Great Commission to which every local church should be committed. First, the evangelization of the local community. This is the means by which a local church grows with new conversions. Secondly the establishment of churches in areas that are beyond the reach of the local church (church planting). Thirdly, a local church should be involved in supporting missionaries, and if necessary with the use of para-church organizations.

In sum evangelism is the proclamation of the Gospel—in a God-centered manner—with a call to repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, whose aim is to win the people for Christ, so that He would get all the glory and honor. Packer writes, “We glorify God by evangelizing, not only because evangelizing is an act of obedience, but also because in evangelism we tell the world what great things God has done for the salvation of sinners. God is glorified when his mighty works of grace are made known.”¹⁴

Conclusion

A biblical philosophy of ministry is not the goal of the pastor, but rather a means to an end, namely, the fulfillment of the threefold function of the church. It is so foundational for a local church to have a philosophy of ministry, because it forces the pastor, as well as the whole local church, to remain faithful to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20), to be a community that worship God alone, and yet a community that worship God through the edification of one another. Without a philosophy of ministry a local church would become inefficient in her role, ineffective in her ministry to the local community and to the whole world, and ultimately unbiblical in her approach to ministry.

¹⁴ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 83.

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Appendix: Doctrinal Statement¹⁵

The Holy Scriptures

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the 66 books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7–14; 2 Peter 1:20–21). We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17). We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12–13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20–21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture,

¹⁵ Doctrinal Statement taken from Grace Community Church, <http://www.gracechurch.org/distinctives/>.

recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

God

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5–7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38–47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4–6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5–9).

God the Son

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man (Philippians 2:5–8; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9–10; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26–35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7–9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 7:25–26; 1 Peter 1:18–19).

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5–8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24–25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8–9; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38–39; Acts 2:30–31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26–29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5–10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22–23): believers (1 Corinthians 3:10–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10), living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31–46), unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11–15).

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31–33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14–46; Acts 17:30–31).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7–10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13–14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3–4; 28:25–26; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31–34 with Hebrews 10:15–17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20–21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5–7).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7–9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible (2 Peter 1:19–21). Every

believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13–14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 13:8–10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7–12; Hebrews 2:1–4).

Man

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15–25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that

which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16–17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–3; 1 Timothy 2:13–14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that, because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1–3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9–18, 23; 5:10–12).

Salvation

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8–10; 1 Peter 1:18–19).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3–7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17–21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4–10). This

obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2–3).

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:4–11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1–2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18–19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22–23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37–40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4–7; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11–

16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9–10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God,

becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1–22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16–25; Ephesians 4:22–24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9–10; 1 Peter 1:14–16; 1 John 3:5–9).

Security

We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God’s power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 5:9–10; 8:1, 31–39; 1 Corinthians 1:4–8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God’s Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15–22; 13:13–14; Galatians 5:13, 25–26; Titus 2:11–14).

Separation

We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1–5).

We teach that, out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such

a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1–2, 1 Corinthians 5:9–13; 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; 1 John 2:15–17; 2 John 9–11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12; Hebrews 12:1–2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2–12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11–14; 1 John 3:1–10).

The Church

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12–13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23–32; Revelation 19:7–8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–21, 38–47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51–52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11–3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1–6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body

are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18–20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastorteachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–5).

We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17–22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19–20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5–14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15–22; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15; 1 Timothy 1:19–20; Titus 1:10–16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other

matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19–31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4–7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1–4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13–16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16–17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38–42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7–12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–31; 1 Peter 4:10–11).

We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3–4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8–12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13–14:12; Revelation 13:13–14). The only gifts in operation today are those nonrevelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6–8).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today, but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1–6; John 5:7–9; 2 Corinthians 12:6–10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14–15).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38–42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1–11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41–42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28–32). We also teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Angels

Holy Angels

We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9–14; Hebrews 1:6–7, 14; 2:6–7; Revelation 5:11–14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12–17; Ezekiel 28:11–19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1–14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1–15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13–14; Matthew 4:1–11; Revelation 12:9–10); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12–17; Ezekiel 28:11–19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Last Things

Death

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9–11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21–24), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4–6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35–44, 50–54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10–11, 19–23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13–15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19–26; Revelation 20:13–15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28–29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11–15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41–46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41–46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

The Rapture of the Church

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

We teach that immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12; Revelation 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27–31; 25:31–46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2–3; Revelation 20:4–6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24–27; Matthew 24:15–31; 25:31–46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

We teach that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31–33; Acts 1:10–11; 2:29–30) and establish His messianic kingdom for 1,000 years on the earth (Revelation 20:1–7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21–28; Daniel 7:17–22; Revelation 19:11–16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17–27; Revelation 20:1–7).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God’s promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17–25; Ezekiel 37:21–28; Zechariah 8:1–17) to restore them to the land that they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15–68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1–26), but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:22–32; Romans 11:25–29).

We teach that this time of our Lord’s reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17–25; Ezekiel 36:33–38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the 1,000-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10), whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne Judgment.

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (John 5:28–29), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11–15).

Eternity

We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7–15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15; 21:1–27; 22:1–21). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21–22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24–28), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

What It Means to Be a Christian

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation. Consider the following truths found in Scripture.

God Is Sovereign Creator

Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).

Therefore, He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

God Is Holy

God is absolutely and perfectly holy (Isaiah 6:3), therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil (James 1:13). God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Mankind Is Sinful

According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: "There is no man who does not sin" (1 Kings 8:46). That doesn't mean we're incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we're utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own. (Romans 3:10–12).

Sin Demands a Penalty

God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death: (Ezekiel 18:4). That's why simply changing our patterns of behavior can't solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences.

Jesus Is Lord and Savior

The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (Colossians 1:16). Therefore He owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Even though God's justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for sinners (1 Peter 3:18). Christ's death

satisfied the demands of God's justice and Christ's perfect life satisfied the demands of God's holiness (2 Corinthians 5:21), thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26).

The Character of Saving Faith

True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin (Luke 13:3, 5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9) and pursue Christ (Matthew 11:28–30; John 17:3) and obedience to Him (1 John 2:3). It isn't enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they don't love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Ephesians 2:10).