

# A Summary of Bible Doctrine

By Pastor Gary Carter

**Introduction:** A doctrine is a theme traced throughout the Scriptures and summarized. So a doctrine is a summary of a thematic Bible study. For example, what does the Bible say about creation, sin, salvation, or the church? Since the Bible is God's revelation of Himself, a doctrine is a description of the ways of God with our souls. We see this when we note that God is the actor in many key words of the Bible. God chooses, God saves, God justifies, God sanctifies, and God glorifies. Doctrine tells us how the living God deals with us! By using the term "sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1; sound=healthy), the apostle commends doctrine as healthy, nourishing, and strengthening to the life of the believer. May God make us strong and vital Christians by being well-grounded in biblical doctrine!

**Our Confessional Standard:** We find a summary of the great doctrines of the Bible in the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Baptist Confession of 1689 (a.k.a. 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith). The messengers from about one-hundred churches met in London to declare what God had taught them in the Scriptures. By using many of the same phrases as the famous Westminster Confession, these Baptist pastors wanted to show their great unity with the believers of their day in the important areas of the nature of repentance, faith, the new birth, sanctification, the law of God, that God is the first and final cause of a man's salvation, the nature and being of God, the importance of God's salvation covenants, etc. To help preserve this great heritage of such a clear understanding of the ways of God from the Scriptures, perhaps a modern summary would encourage a more thorough study of these truths. This brief overview before you aims at clarity, brevity, and simplicity. It is designed to help get you started in the study of God's ways.

## Section 1: Fundamental Truths

*The Bible plainly declares the great universal truths that anyone must hold to in order to call themselves a Christian.*

### **a. The Trinity and the Glorious Being of God**

There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God (Being), the same in substance, equal in power and glory. Our God is infinite, all-wise, ever-present, unchanging, eternal, majestic, invincible, incomparable, intervening, condescending, sovereign, transcendent, all-sufficient, self-existent, blessed, glorious, irresistible, gracious, loving, merciful, compassionate, just, severe, a consuming-fire, faithful, covenant-making, covenant-keeping, thrice-holy, pure, Spirit, invisible, all-controlling, near-at-hand, Creator, Lawgiver, Judge, King, Savior, Sustainer, Sanctifier, incomprehensibly great, supreme,

independent, bountiful, good, and is worthy of our deepest reverence, devotion, faith, affection, and obedience at all times. He is the Living God!

### **b. The Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Bible**

The Bible in its entirety and all of its parts is God-breathed and without error. It is our first and final authority in what we believe and how we live. It is our “lamp,” “light,” “mirror,” “food,” “treasure,” “honey,” law, and rule of life.

How do we show others that the Bible is the word of God? Consider these three principles in regard to biblical apologetics: 1) The Bible is self-attesting (it claims to be God’s word). 2) The Bible is self-evidencing (it bears the stamp of a divine work in many ways, just as creation does). 3) The Bible is also Spirit-authenticated; that is, it is ultimately God who proves that the Bible is His word when He regenerates the soul in salvation. When God attends His word and savingly reveals Himself through it, this settles the question as to the Bible’s authorship and truthfulness.

### **c. Creation and Divine Providence**

God created the world out of nothing, in six days, and that by His spoken word. He formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

God’s providence is His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all his creatures and all their actions. He works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. He makes the wrath of man to praise him and the remainder of wrath he restrains.

### **d. Everlasting, Final Judgment and Reward**

Heaven and hell are both real and final. As the Savior said, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

### **e. Necessity and Nature of Biblical Conversion**

No man can be saved without repentance and faith. “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3, 5). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk. 1:15).

Question 94 of the Baptist Catechism (commonly called Keach’s Catechism) asks, “What is repentance unto life?” Answer: “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience.” [Acts 2:37,38; 11:28]

Question 93 of the Baptist Catechism asks, “What is faith in Jesus Christ?” Answer: “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.” [Heb. 10:39; Jn. 1:12; Isa. 26:3,4; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 2:26]

The Catechism for Little Children states it as follows: “What offices has Christ? Christ has the offices of prophet, priest, and king. How is Christ a prophet? He teaches us the will of God. How is Christ a priest? He died for our sins and pleads with God for us. How is Christ a king? He rules over us and defends us. Why do you need Christ as a prophet? Because I am ignorant [of God and His ways]. Why do you need Christ as a priest? Because I am guilty [as a sinner]. Why do you need Christ as a king? Because I am weak and helpless.”

## **Section 2: God’s Sovereign Grace & the Free Offer of the Gospel**

*The Bible teaches that salvation is by God’s sovereign grace. It also teaches the free offer of the gospel. (Related to these truths is the biblical teaching of the denial of free-will to fallen man. God must intervene to save, bringing fallen man to conversion.)*

### **a. The Depravity of Man**

We are part of a fallen race. In this lost state we are blind and ignorant of spiritual things. We desire things that God forbids. We do what God condemns. We live for ourselves and not for the glory of God. The Bible calls us enemies and haters of God who do not desire to obey God for the right reasons and cannot even do so (Jn. 8:37-47; Rom. 3:10-20; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17,18). Our best deeds are unclean and all of our religious efforts are dead works until God saves us. We cannot repent or believe without God’s effectual intervention (Eph. 2:4-10).

In the face of this reality, God has been pleased in His common grace to restrain much that lost men would do; and He prompts unregenerate men to acts of social kindness and things that benefit others. If it were not so, every society would be a Sodom and Gomorrah.

### **b. The Election of Sinners To Salvation**

The fountain of saving grace is the Father’s electing love (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8-11; Eph. 2:4,5; 1 Jn. 4:10). When Adam sinned all mankind was condemned. In viewing a fallen race, before the world began, God, out of His own good pleasure, chose a multitude, which no man can number, to be saved. He determined to save them, not on any merit in themselves or because they would respond to the gospel. He did not choose them because of foreseen faith, but in spite of foreseen unbelief. God’s choosing of these sinners is the cause of their faith (not vice versa). This secured the fact that the gospel would be effective in their hearts. The reason for God choosing us has not been revealed to us, except that it was His good pleasure; that is, He wanted to, for His glory (Eph. 1:5,6). The believer can say God freely, graciously, truly, and everlastingly loved me. In addition to this free, unmerited love, God chose us in order to honor Christ in giving him a people (Jn. 17:2) who cleave to Him and serve Him. So ultimately we are saved because God mercifully chose us and determined to save us, otherwise we would have perished in our sin. Salvation is of the Lord!

It is still our moral responsibility to repent and believe the gospel, but it is the work of God in us that mysteriously and supernaturally brings it to pass.

### c. The Atonement of Christ and the Free Offer of the Gospel

Christ died to secure the salvation of those the Father had given him. He is their great High Priest and their names are written on his breastplate. He died for his people, the church, the sheep of His fold (Matt. 1:21; Jn. 10:15; Eph. 5:25; Tit. 2:14). Christ arose from the dead and sends the gospel offer to all men—come unto me! (Matt. 11:28). We invite every man to come to the risen Christ who died for sinners. We proclaim forgiveness in His name on the terms of repentance and faith.

Christ's death is a *ransom*, which means a purchase. This purchase secured our salvation, which was paid in full when He said, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). Now He is determined to possess what He has already purchased (i.e. salvation accomplished and applied).

Christ's death is a *substitution*, and God's justice demands the release of those for whom He was the substitute (Rom. 8:31-34).

Christ's death was an *offering* up of His perfect righteousness to the Father on behalf of His people that they might stand in His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). This is judicial grace, and our standing as justified before God cannot be increased, diminished, or altered.

All who will finally be saved will be saved because Christ determined to save them by dying for them on the cross. No sin is forgiven unless its punishment was put on Christ. All sins put on Christ will be forgiven (God is just). The universal statements in reference to Christ's death (i.e. the whole world) do not mean all will be saved. The Bible never says He died for all men. It says He died for all. The question is "all of who?". The first reference to all gives us the answer. It is those who are called "all families of the earth" who shall be blessed in Messiah (Gen. 12:3). It is not just those among the Jews who will be saved, but those among the whole world (i.e. the people groups). As it says in Revelation 5:9, "For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

Christ's atoning death was for definite, particular persons (i.e. particular atonement). It was not hypothetically for all, which would mean that it actually guaranteed the salvation of none. No, it did not just make salvation possible, His death actually secured the salvation of His people. His great agonies and sufferings cannot fail; they are effectual and certain to succeed. To say otherwise is to dishonor Christ by saying He tried to save all, but He failed. No, He secured the gift of the Spirit's work in us (Gal. 3:13), and He shall see the seed He purchased and be satisfied (Isa. 53:10-11).

Here we see a blessed combination of truths that only God's wisdom could join together, namely, the sovereign design of Christ's victorious death joined with the free offer of the gospel to all men. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

#### **d. Regeneration of Our Fallen Souls by the Holy Spirit**

Redemption was accomplished by Christ on the cross. Redemption is applied by the Spirit's work in our hearts. The preaching of the gospel is the outward means of bringing us to repentance and faith, but the gospel is only effectual due to the Spirit's work of regeneration (1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13,14). This work of the Spirit in us and upon us is supernatural, almighty, invisible, sovereign, effectual, mysterious, and immediate (i.e. His direct personal touch—the hand of God without the use of secondary means).

Regeneration makes us alive spiritually. New desires are put within our hearts that come from God; or as the parable says of the hidden seed: it springs and grows up, he knows not how (Mk. 4:27; see Jn. 3:8).

Regeneration is a spiritual resurrection from the dead (Eph. 2:1-5), a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and a new birth (Jn. 3:3,5). Regeneration has been described as irresistible grace. This means it is invincible—the Spirit has the keys to the inner springs of the heart, which when He opens this hidden spring, it does no violence to the free-flowing agency of the human soul. He changes the very nature of this fountain. Now holy desires arise where only sinful, earthly ones arose before. An unregenerate man is not the co-creator of his new life, nor does he cause his own spiritual resurrection, or deliver himself in his own new birth (Jn. 1:12,13). This glorious work is something done to us. The conscious result is a saving response to the gospel. This makes the preaching of the gospel most necessary. Viewed from the standpoint of human agency, it is we who repent and believe, yet due to the divine causation behind them, repentance and faith are called the gifts of God (Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29).

The Spirit's hidden, secret, mysterious work opens our hearts (as with Lydia's) under the preaching of the gospel (Acts 16:14) resulting in our conversion to God (1 Cor. 2:4,5).

#### **e. The Perseverance of God's People In Faith and Holiness**

It is both our duty to persevere, or continue repenting and believing until the end of our lives, and it is God's promise that we will persevere. "He who endures to the end shall be saved," is our duty (Matt. 24:13). "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" is our promise from God (Phil. 1:6).

The Spirit of God creates spiritual graces in us at the new birth (repentance, faith, love for God, love for one another, love for His word, humility, reverence, a merciful and forgiving spirit, a delight in spiritual things, etc.). True believers will continue to manifest these marks of grace as evidence of their regeneration and as the means of maintaining a biblical assurance. This is God's wisdom: to arrange it so that the means of usefulness and blessing are at the same time a means of our assurance of salvation. To say it again, we must continue to nurture and manifest these graces in our hearts and lives through the word of God and prayer; and this we will do with God helping us the whole way.

The Father will work all things for our good so that the predestined purpose that we should be conformed to the image of His Son will not fail (Rom. 8:28,29). The Son will protect us as our faithful Shepherd so that we will never perish (Jn. 10:27-29), and as our captain He will, without fail, bring the many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). The Spirit is sent on a sacred commission from the

Father and Son to seal us and deliver us to heaven by sustaining our faith through the power of God attending the means of grace and making them effectual to us (Eph. 4:30; 1 Pet. 1:5-7).

**A Summary of the Five Points of Salvation:** These great truths of salvation have been called Jehovahism or Yahwehism from the name of God, the great I AM. Just as we are dependent on God for the very being of our existence, we are just as equally and absolutely dependent on Him for our salvation.

This five-point summary of God's sovereign grace shows that God receives all the glory in our salvation (1 Cor. 1:26-31). These doctrines are dear to the people of God because they describe to us what it means to be dearly beloved by God. It may be of help to some to remember these as a mnemonic. The D.E.A.R. People of God hold firmly to these great truths. D (depravity) E (election) A (atonement) R (regeneration) P (the people of God persevere).

These can also be summarized as the Triune Gospel. The central three points describe a saving relationship to the Trinity—*chosen* by the Father; *redeemed* by the Son; and *regenerated* by the Spirit. The first point (depravity) shows the great need of salvation and the reason God must accomplish it Himself (for we cannot even respond to God's offer of salvation since we are utterly sinful in our lost state). The last point (perseverance) shows the result of salvation—a repentant and believing people continuing on in holiness and in all the Spirit wrought graces.

This is the same order as the familiar mnemonic, T.U.L.I.P.: T (total depravity) U (unconditional election) L (limited atonement) I (irresistible grace) P (perseverance of the saints).

**Concerning the Term Limited Atonement:** We know that the atonement of Christ is unlimited in its worth due to Christ's unlimited and infinite divine dignity. Everyone agrees that the atonement is limited in its application to those who repent and believe. The atonement is unlimited in its offer. Its benefits are offered to all who repent and believe. All of this being true, we still must assert that the final day will prove that those who were saved were designed to be saved; they were saved because Christ died for them in particular; God designed the atonement for them and His determination to apply the atonement was limited to them (Note: Christ continues to mediate or intercede for those whom He died for; Rom. 8:31-34; Heb. 2:17,18; 9:11-15). The fact that the atonement is sure to save and is the cause of salvation shows that it is limited, for all are not saved.

### **Section 3: The Divine Covenants**

*The Biblical order, structure, and unity of God's revelation is found in the divine covenants.*

The summary promise of the Bible from beginning to end is: "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 24:7; 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 1 Pet. 2:9,10). This means all that God can be, He will be to us (1 Chron. 17:24). That the true and living God is our Father in redemption is a summary of the covenant. Christ Himself is the sum and substance of the covenant to us (Isa. 49:8; Lk. 22:20). He is our all in all. He is our life. The essence of the covenant can also be defined as possessing the Spirit of God (Gal. 3:14). He applies the covenant

blessings to us. He is the earnest of all that is yet to come. He brings us in union with the ascended Christ. Thus we see that the summary of God's covenant grace (Heb. 13:20) is a saving relationship with each person of the Triune God (cf. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). This is the central message of the whole Bible. This is the dominant theme throughout. This saving relationship to the Trinity is what defines the people of God. They are the elect of the Father, the redeemed of the Son, and the regenerate of the Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14). This is an Israelite indeed, the Israel of God (Rom. 2:28,29; Gal. 6:16). This is the church of God purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). If we miss this message as the central message of the Bible, we have been sidetracked. The Bible is one book and this is what unifies it from beginning to end.

#### **a. The Covenant of Grace**

The first redemptive covenant is in Genesis 3:15. It is the covenant of conquest. Messiah (i.e. Christ) will crush the serpent's head and redeem a seed (a people) from among men. This is a summary of the Bible and the gospel at the very beginning.

#### **b. The Noahic Covenant**

The covenant with Noah can be called the covenant of redemptive preservation. God will preserve this earth until all of His elect are brought in (see 2 Pet 3). The rainbow around the throne in Revelation 4 shows that the storm of God's wrath (which destroyed the ancient world) is over for God's people.

#### **c. The Abrahamic Covenant**

The covenant with Abraham is the covenant of world-wide blessing by saving union with Messiah. "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Galatians 3 is the apostolic interpretation of this covenant. It is the gospel promise of the blessing of the Spirit to come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ (3:14). The apostles are our teachers as to how to interpret the Old Testament. Abraham was not just to be heir of Palestine, but of the world (Rom. 4:13), in the new heavens and the new earth. The meek inherit the earth finally. Abraham did not look for an earthly inheritance but a heavenly one (Heb. 11:10,16). Circumcision was a sign of the need for a circumcised heart (i.e. regeneration; Col. 2:11). Thus a true Jew is one that is so inwardly (Rom. 2:28,29).

#### **d. The Mosaic Covenant**

The covenant given through Moses was one of the enduring moral law. The Ten Commandments were written in stone never to be done away with, spoken by the voice of God (Exod. 20:1ff), written with His finger (Exod. 31:18), and placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 31:26; 1 Kings 8:21). This is the believer's rule of duty responding in loving gratitude to God his redeemer (Exod. 20:2). This is the royal law of liberty that believers adorn the doctrine of God with today also (1 Cor. 9:21). It is the law written on our hearts (Jer. 31:33).

The covenant through Moses also contained the temporary, typical modes of worship under the Levitical priesthood until the Messiah came and offered the once for all sacrifice and did away with these shadows (read the book of Hebrews).

The covenant also contained the civil statutes for the nation of Israel to organize the tribes into a nation and keep them distinct from the nations around them until Messiah came (Gal. 3:23). Now the Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26).

#### **e. The Davidic Covenant**

The Davidic covenant reflects the new stage of redemptive history when Israel is ruled by God through a human king, but a perfect king cannot be found. Messiah will be that perfect king over the people of God, giving them willing hearts in the day of His power (Psalm 110:3), from the Father's right hand. He is Immanuel ("God with us"), born of a virgin, the God-man. Here is our confidence of the triumph and victory of God's cause and kingdom: the government shall be upon his shoulders (Isa. 9:6-7); the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands (Isa. 53:10). He has begun His reign now—"He [God the Father] put all things under His [Christ] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22). When Christ returns the end of all things is at hand (1 Pet. 4:7) and we go right into eternity (2 Peter 3:10-13). This is the covenant of Messiah's triumphant and glorious rule (cf. Matt 28:18; Acts 2:24-36).

#### **f. The New Covenant**

The New Covenant is the last order of things; it will never be done away with (Heb. 13:20). This is the covenant of the historic accomplishment of the long awaited redemption (Jn. 19:30). The redemption is accomplished already on the cross; all that remains is for it to be applied. The risen, ascended, Christ is at the right hand of God and has poured forth the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:30-33) to accomplish a world-wide preaching of the gospel and a bringing in of a kingdom from among all nations. There is the increased revelation of the 27 New Testament books. There is a simplicity of ritual: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This corresponds to that which is fitting for a worldwide work and the spirituality of focus of the New Covenant on the ascended Christ in heaven, not a focus on one earthly city, temple, and lineage (Jn. 4:23,24). There is a New Covenant body of a church where Jew and Gentile are equal in status and privilege. Even with all of this the New Covenant has only begun to be applied. It yet holds in store for us the removal of sin, the resurrected body, the immediate presence of God, and the new heavens and the new earth. Eternity to come is under the New Covenant to bring us incomprehensible union and communion with the Triune God.

Here again we see this is the message of the Bible. The Old Testament had a gospel hope that it looked forward to. The Old Testament is to be interpreted by the New, because the New is the fulfillment of the Old. The New is the body, the Old is the shadow that reflects the body (Col. 2:17).



#### **g. The Covenant of Redemption**

All of the redemptive covenants revealed in time are an outworking of the eternal covenant (often referred to as the Covenant of Redemption) where God chose a people for Himself and Christ pledged Himself to be their representative (Jn. 17:2; 15:16; 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:11) to die for them and establish their justification before God (Heb. 10:7-17). All of the merit and righteousness that believers need in order to stand before God is found in Christ, and all the blessings of eternal life are deposited with Him (Jn. 3:35) and dispensed by Him to us as He sees fit (Phil. 4:19).

**The Headship of Adam and of Christ:** Let us consider one other matter concerning covenants in the Bible. In Romans Chapter 5, Christ's work of salvation is paralleled to Adam's headship over mankind and his fall into sin. As God constituted Adam as the representative of all mankind, if he obeyed all would be blessed; if he sinned all would be condemned. Christ is now the second Adam, the representative for those who are saved. The saved stand before God as righteous because their head, Christ, is righteous (Phil. 3:7-11; 1 Jn. 2:1). We see that since Christ's headship is a covenant (Heb. 13:20), a covenant of grace for us, by this comparison we can say that Adam's headship was a covenant, a covenant of works, where Adam and ourselves are judged by his works of disobedience and lack of continuing in obedience. All men are born in Adam (with sinful natures); only those who are redeemed are in covenant union with Christ.

#### **Section 4: The Commands of Our Lord**

*Jesus is Lord. He reveals His will in His commands. His commands are not burdensome. There is a sweetness to His authority to all who are born again.*

We say, "We delight to do Your will," just as Jesus did. We say "I have food to eat of which you do not know," and "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me," as Jesus said (Jn. 4:32,34). We say "Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." (Psa. 119:97). We find God meets with us as we delight to walk in His paths of obedience (Isa. 64). We find that the Father and the Son manifests themselves to us in a life of loving Him and obeying Him (Jn. 14:21). We find by God's grace that love is a fulfilling of the law of God. God's will is what pleases Him and we find it our joy to please Him. We make it our aim to please Him (2 Cor. 5). We are constrained by God's love for us, and to live our lives unto Christ who died for us and rose from the grave. These realities in us are all of grace! God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13), or we could do nothing. Jesus says the same in John 15:5. So we delight in our Creator, Lawgiver, Judge and King (Isa. 33); and we find his commands are for our good (Deut. 10:13). We thank God that He calls us to live a life before His face that is also under His authority. So we find His law as our wisdom (Deut. 4:6-8) and believe that it is His will, that the law of God must order our life, worship, and hearts. This includes the fact that the law is spiritual and we must delight in Him and meditate on the richness of salvation. The motives of our obedience are a love to Him who first loved us. We live out of gratitude for His mercies (Rom.

12:1). We also thank God that He has put the fear of Him in us so that we do not depart from Him (Jer. 32:40).

Our goal is to have a biblically ordered life lived in the presence of God our Father, Jesus our Savior, Lord, and Heavenly Friend, and the Blessed Holy Spirit of God our Sanctifier and Comforter. We must also ask ourselves questions like the following: Do I believe the Bible is the very word of God, that it is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), and must order all of my life? Do I take the Bible seriously enough that it can be said I tremble at His word (Isa. 66:2)? Do I really submit to the Bible as the authority for my life?

Below are listed some of God's commands that will produce a divine pattern and order to our lives. God's way with us is to order or arrange our lives around the use of the means of grace in the various contexts of life. He will bless them. He will meet with us in all of His ways. In all your ways 'get to know Him better' (Prov. 3:5-6). These means of grace (the word of God and prayer) are conduits or pipelines from heaven by which He sends strength to our souls. Orienting our lives around these means in the various contexts of life is the Spirit's way of commending us to the word of His grace, which is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among those that are sanctified. Examples of these contexts are our corporate gatherings, personal devotions, family settings, our life oriented around one special day in seven (the Lord's Day), relationships in the body of Christ, special ordinances, self-denying commitments, etc. All of these are to be seasoned by the word of God and prayer.

A believer must ask himself, Do I seek to obey these commands in dependence on God's grace in thankful response to His redemption (Exod. 20:2)?

### **1. Obedience to the Gospel Call of Repentance and Faith**

Have I repented of my sins and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and continue to do so?

Repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15).

### **2. The Duty of Corporate Worship**

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:24,25)

"And they [all the disciples] continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

### **3. The Privilege, Joy, and Responsibility to Honor the Lord's Day—The Christian Sabbath**

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exod. 20:8).

It is the continuation of the one-day-in-seven principle as an appointed day of worship (Gen. 2:2,3).

#### **4. The Duty of Individual Private Worship**

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matt. 6:6).

“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12).

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4).

“Blessed is the man...his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psa. 1:1-2).

#### **5. The Duty of Domestic Piety and Family Worship**

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6,7).

“Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

“Food which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:3,5).

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:25,22).

#### **6. The Duty of Believer’s Baptism**

Repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38).

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized....” (Acts 2:41; see also 8:35-38).

#### **7. The Duty and Privilege of Observing the Lord’s Supper**

“Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24; see also Lk. 22:14-20).

#### **8. The Duty of Personally Caring for the Other Members of the Church**

Bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2).

There should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care of one for another (1 Cor. 12:27).

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Heb. 10:24).

### **9. The Responsibility of Regular Proportionate Giving to Uphold the Ministry of God’s Word In the Local Church**

“Of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You” (Gen. 28:22).

“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.... Bring all the tithes into the storehouse....” (Mal. 3:8,10; see Gal. 6:6-9)

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity [compulsion]; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Cor. 9:7,8).

### **10. The Duty of Maintaining Unity In the Local Church**

“With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2,3).

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12,13).

### **11. The Duty of Restoring Broken Relationships**

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17; see also 1 Cor. 5).

### **12. The Duty of Biblical Responsiveness to Pastoral Care**

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).

### **13. The Duty of Bearing A Faithful Witness to Christ and His Gospel**

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (1 Pet. 3:15,16).

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:5,6).

### **Is our life marked by the pursuit of obedience?**

**a.** God’s commands must be the convictions of our conscience (1 Tim. 1:5,19; Heb. 9:14).

**b.** Do you find in each of these commands God’s wisdom and goodness? Do you find each one profitable (2 Tim. 3:16)? Do you see how it brings honor to God, how God’s peace and presence accompanies them (Prov. 3:17; 4:12,13)? Do you see the combined graces that flourish in obedience to each command (love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, etc.—the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22,23)? Do you see in each one that which is worthy of the gospel, that which reflects the gospel, how the gospel is adorned (Phil. 1:27; Tit. 2:10)?

**c.** These commands are principles of our repentance (Lk. 3:9-14). This is our turning to God daily as our all in all.

**d.** These are the battles we must fight and not give up on, regardless of how many times we fail (Eph. 6:10-18).

**e.** These are the things written on our hearts (Heb. 8:10) that the Spirit of God gives us a delight to do, and they are not grievous to us (1 Jn. 5:3). We count the yoke of Christ to be light with His presence and the Spirit sustaining us (Matt. 11:30). Our goal is not to reach some plateau where we have arrived, but to be established in dependence on Christ and devotion to Him. We want to be established in the habit of constant awareness of our need of Him (Col. 2:6,7). We want to be taught by the Living God and look to Him in all of His means, including God’s use of human instrumentality.

**f.** These are areas we want to be taught more on, to be nurtured in, encouraged toward, and that we ask to be held accountable to. How do you seek to encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ in these areas when appropriate (Heb. 10:24; 3:12,13)?

**g.** Here we seek God’s wisdom to be patient as each grows in grace, while we all confess it is our mutual aim to live a Biblically-ordered life (discipline yourself unto godliness; 1 Tim. 4:7; Col. 2:5; Phil. 3:14-16).

Another value of a Biblically-ordered life is that we do not live by fits and spurts, but by regular exposure to the word of God in many ways that God sovereignly uses to send us help in advance of our trials, or else we are not far from the comfort we need in them.

Our obedience to God is still mixed with indwelling sin (Rom. 7:21), but it is still received by God because of our union with Christ (Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:10; 1 Pet. 2:5) and because the good in it flows from the Spirit's regenerating work. Along with this, though there are defects, there is the presence of true faith and love to God. This truth encourages the struggling saint, but deflates or enrages the Pharisee who thinks he can do many things without sinning.

Therefore, in light of God's commands and our pursuit of obedience, we are not afraid of the terms: duty, responsibility, well-ordered church and family, conscience, principle, accountability, submission, obedience, Lordship, discipline, must, ought to, "you shall not," law, evidence, self-examination, rebuke, Biblical authority, repentance and its fruits. They are all filled with faith and the love of God to give us the knowledge of his ways and enable us to continue growing in the pursuit of walking near to him.

"For the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King; He will save us" (Isa. 33:22).

God's commands for us are called his "law" in the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament (Jms. 1:25; 2:10; 4:11,12; Gal. 6:2). The Ten Commandments were written in stone to show that they were never to be done away with. They are still the way we show our repentant, believing, and grateful obedience in response to God's redemption (Exod. 20:2; 1 Cor. 9:21). The law of God is written on the hearts of God's people in the New Covenant blessing of regeneration (Heb. 8:10). The grace of God molds our life in the pattern of God's holy character, which is His law (Rom. 8:3,4). Therefore a grace-molded life will be a law-molded life (Tit. 2:11-12). This is a Biblically-ordered life and thus a well ordered life. This is to be grounded and settled on a life of dependence upon Christ and communion with Him through His appointed means.

The way out of the fog as to what is the will of God for us is to be well acquainted with the Ten Commandments (Scripture primarily speaks of God's will in the sense of moral wisdom). They are not just ten simple commands, but are ten categories of life summarizing the nature of worship (the first four) and godliness (the fifth through the tenth commandments).

## **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

Exodus 20:1-17

### **1. The Object of Worship**

- The only true and living God.
- You shall have no other gods before Me.

## **2. The Means of Worship**

- We are to worship God only as He has specified in His word, as in this commandment forbidding the use of idols (i.e. images).
- God has ordained that His worship be conducted by the preaching, teaching, and reading of His word, by the singing of His praises, and by corporate prayer. (Note: There were many temporary rituals instituted in the Old Testament. In the New Testament there are two: the ordinance of baptism and the Lord's Supper.)

## **3. The Manner of Worship**

- We must always maintain a deep reverence for God, and not take God—His name or His word—in vain or lightly.

## **4. The Time of Worship**

- Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
- A special day has been set aside for worship, one day in seven. The New Testament affirms this perpetual creation ordinance (Gen. 2:2,3) by calling one day in seven “the Lord's day” (the whole day is a special day for God, the first day of the week—resurrection day; Rev. 1:10).

## **5. The Sanctity of God-Given Authority**

- We are to obey God-given authority in the home, church, and government. These three were one when the Israelites were under the individual patriarchal heads and leaders of tribes (i.e. religious or covenantal nation).

## **6. The Sanctity of Life**

- You shall not kill/murder (see Matt. 5:21,22).
- God gives life and God takes away life.

## **7. The Sanctity of Marriage and Human Sexuality**

- You shall not commit adultery (see Matt. 5:27,28).
- This area of life is to be enjoyed and guarded under the rule of God.

## **8. The Sanctity of Property**

- You shall not steal.
- God gives and God takes away

## **9. The Sanctity of Truth**

- You shall not bear false witness.

- God is the God of truth.

## 10. The Sanctity of Heart Desires

- You shall not covet.
- Our desires are under the eye of God and are to be pleasing in His sight. What goes on in our hearts is also the domain of God's kingdom.
- God supplies our needs.

## Section 5: The Nature & Centrality of the Church

*The local church is God's agency for furthering His kingdom upon the earth. It is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).*

### **a. Regenerate Membership**

True members of a local church must be members of the redeemed body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). They must be regenerate or true believers. It is those who were saved that were added to the church (Acts 2:47). Baptism is necessary before membership (Matt. 28:19-20). Repentance and faith are necessary before baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

### **b. Government and Nurture Through Qualified Elders Under the Spirit**

Christ's church is led by His Spirit, in using His word through the appointment of godly men to teach His word and shepherd His flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2,3). These men are called elders, pastors, and overseers or bishops. Deacons assist the elders by fulfilling responsibilities that would free the elders to devote themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer. Elders bear the responsibility before God for the oversight of the local church.

It is important to note the relationship between the sufficiency of the word of God (2 Tim. 3:15-4:5) and the independence of the local church. To summarize the 1689 Confession: to each church gathered according to the mind of Christ, He has given all the power and authority needed to carry on the worship and discipline which He has established (Chapter 26.7).

### **c. Regulative Principle of Corporate Worship**

God's glory among men is especially furthered on earth in the corporate assembly of His people. They are summoned there by divine authority to solemnly, reverently, and with believing joy to meet with God Himself and worship Him only as He has commanded. To be received as obedience what we do must be sent forth from heaven as a command. We must therefore ask ourselves, "What is the Scriptural warrant for this practice in our corporate worship?" Deuteronomy 12:32 says, "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." The 1689 Confession explains this principle as follows: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men, or any other way



not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures” (Chapter 22.1). Further, “The reading of the Scriptures, preaching, and hearing the Word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord; as also the administration of baptism, and the Lord’s Supper are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience to Him with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear” (Chapter 22.5).

#### **d. Leadership of Men In Corporate Prayer Representing Heads of Households (1 Tim. 2:8)**

The book of Acts is marked by the example of dependence on God through corporate prayer (2:42; 4:31-33). The concern is not whether the place where we assemble is shaken, but whether the fear of man is shaken from us and we speak the word of God with boldness and with great grace upon all. In corporate prayer we soon learn how great our vision of God is. Seeing Him to be sovereign, invincible, and almighty, we pray, “Cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!” (Psa. 80:19). May God give us the holy boldness and importunity to wrestle in prayer crying with Jacob, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” (Gen. 32:26).

It takes a clear purpose of mind to keep our prayer meetings from degenerating into rehearsals of mundane requests without a focus on worship in prayer. We are “a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

#### **e. Biblical Terms of Church Membership and Discipline**

We must take seriously the word of God as the authority for how we live before God in order to make a credible claim to be a servant of God in the Kingdom of Christ. “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31,32). It is by nourishing the evidences of regeneration and pursuing a Biblically-ordered life that we grow in grace and make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10; assurance comes with diligence). This is the way we “discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him” (Mal. 3:18). These are those who manifest themselves to be living members of the body of Christ in true saving union with the risen Christ. We know there are many who profess but are in reality “enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things” (Phil. 3:18,19). Though they profess to know God, they deny Him by their works (Tit. 1:16). We fear this would be to many an unacceptable way to speak, of taking seriously the Biblical marks of a true Christian and so also the terms of church membership. But these are the words of God. It shows what a solemn matter church membership is and why Christ has instituted a form of discipline to maintain His honor in the local church (see Matt. 18:15-20). We must also acknowledge we are a repentant people, daily dependent on God’s mercy and on one another’s forbearance, as well as the love that covers a multitude of sins. Let the believer taught of God be discerning. “Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2:7).

#### **f. Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

God has ordained two symbolic ordinances to strengthen and confirm the believer's faith. Baptism is a picture of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection, as well as the washing away of our sins by His blood. This is the believer's individual public profession of Christ's saving intervention in his life.

The Lord's Supper is Christ's own commendation of His love to us by pointing to His agonies on the cross as the seal of His lovingkindness toward us. Here He pledges to us the triumphant grace of the New Covenant as engaged toward us. Christ's will is that His people be confirmed in His almighty love for them. The Lord's Supper regularly observed and attended with the Spirit's presence makes a cross-centered people who commune with their Risen Lord. Our meat and drink must be His dying love and ascended glory or there is no life in us (Jn. 6:53)!

What an awakening it ought to be to one's lost condition to see others enjoying the special love of Christ, and ourselves being passed by. The thought of being barred from the Lord's Table, because of an infatuation with some open sin, ought to hasten our repentance!

#### **g. Mutual and Pastoral Care and Oversight**

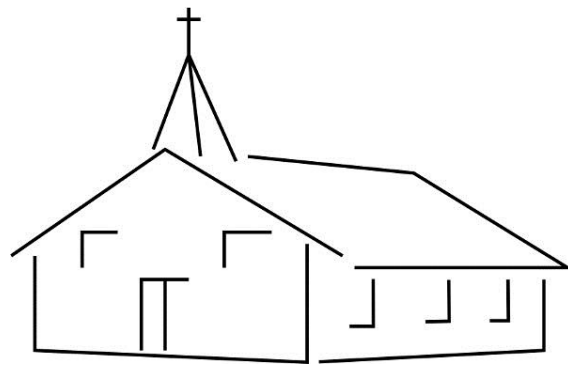
Christ, who now sits at the right hand of God in glory, is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. By His word and Spirit He sovereignly rules in our hearts as the only Master of our conscience. The Devil is a subtle enemy with many ways to divert us from Christ. But the Savior has many ways of preserving His saints in the highway of holiness (Isa. 35:8). It is a great mercy of Christ that he puts us on the hearts of his under-shepherds (the leaders of the church). They are burdened over our trials and are earnest before the throne of grace for our spiritual growth. They are commanded by Christ and given a willing heart for the work to take a special interest in us and care for our souls. They seek to bring us the help that we need from God's word, that we might go to Christ ourselves (He alone is our Mediator) and find by person-to-person-dealing-with-Christ the strength that comes from Christ alone. They seek to bind us fast to Christ that we might grow even more in the immediacy of the New Covenant (that is, the person-to-person-dealing-with-Christ without a human mediator).

We must pursue God by the Spirit's work in us. Although Christ has put us upon the hearts of His under-shepherds, it is still the responsibility of every member of the body to exercise a brotherly care and interest in one another's spiritual welfare. We must have the vision of the church as a body and a family where iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17), and we bear one another's burden. "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (Heb. 10:24). "Exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). The church is built up in strength as each member fulfills his responsibility to use the grace given him to strengthen the others (Eph. 4:16).

**"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."**

*-2 Peter 1:2*





## Free Grace Church

19111 N. Livingston Ave.  
Lutz, FL 33559

*[www.tampareformedbaptistchurch.com](http://www.tampareformedbaptistchurch.com)*

(813) 909-8949