

TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH

A DOCTRINAL POSITION  
WITH A PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY  
A PHILOSOPHY OF COUNSELING  
AND A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

SUBMITTED TO THE ELDERS OF TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH  
FOR EXAMINATION OF ORDINATION

BY  
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PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 2026

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: ON HOLY SCRIPTURE .....	1
Interpreting Scripture .....	2
CHAPTER 2: ON GOD.....	4
The Trinity .....	4
God’s Decrees .....	5
God’s Work of Creation .....	6
God’s Work of Providence .....	6
On The Son Assuming Human Flesh.....	7
CHAPTER 3: ON MAN .....	9
CHAPTER 4: ON SIN AND THE FALL .....	10
The Desire to Sin is Sin .....	10
CHAPTER 5: ON SALVATION.....	11
The Accomplishment of Salvation .....	11
The Extent of the Atonement .....	12
The Application of Salvation .....	12
“Those whom He foreknew” .....	13
“He also predestined” .....	13
“These whom He predestined, He also called” .....	13
Conversion .....	14
“Whom He called, He also Justified” .....	14
Sanctification .....	15
“Whom He justified, He also glorified” .....	15

Union with Christ.....	15
CHAPTER 6: ON HOLY AND UNHOLY ANGELS .....	17
CHAPTER 7: ON THE CHURCH.....	18
Church Leadership.....	18
Local Church Rule is Given by Christ to the Church.....	19
Church Membership.....	20
The Marks of the Church .....	20
The Mission of the Church .....	20
The Church and Israel.....	21
CHAPTER 8: ON THE THINGS TO COME .....	22
Personal Eschatology .....	22
Cosmic Eschatology.....	22
The Resurrection of the Christian Dead and Pretribulational Rapture .....	22
The Bema Seat Judgment of Christ .....	23
The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.....	23
The Tribulation Period .....	23
The Millennial Kingdom.....	24
The Great White Throne Judgment.....	24
The Eternal State.....	24
CHAPTER 9: A PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY.....	26
Regulated Worship.....	26
Regulated Evangelism .....	27
Regulated Practice .....	28
Conclusion .....	28

CHAPTER 10: A PHILOSOPHY OF COUNSELING .....	29
Counseling is a Ministry of God’s Word .....	29
Counseling is Heart Ministry .....	29
Counseling in Dependence .....	30
Counseling is Not Reserved for Professionals.....	30
CHAPTER 11: MY TESTIMONY .....	31
APPENDIX 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND REPENTANCE .....	34
Some Definitions .....	34
Faith .....	34
Repentance.....	35
Faith and Repentance Considered Logically .....	35
A Pastoral Concern .....	37
Conclusion .....	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	40

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Before coming to the body of this document, I want to first express my appreciation to the elders of Trinity Bible Church and Hillcrest Bible Church who, along with Dr John Street, compose my ordination council. My doctrinal formation, while being refined at The Master's Seminary, was built on the foundation I received from Hillcrest Chapel (now Hillcrest Bible Church) and the ministry of Gary Custis. I am writing this document and standing for ordination because of the labor of Pastor Gary. I cannot express adequately how much I owe to him.

I also desire to note the historical influences that have helped me and so have contributed to this document. I owe much to the Particular Baptists who wrote the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, to the Reformed Orthodox in the 16th through 18th centuries, to Herman Bavinck in the 19th century, and to the much more recent calvinistic ministers of the 20th and early 21st century such as S Lewis Johnson, Martyn Lloyd Jones, RC Sproul and John MacArthur. While I will be footnoting and citing sources as I utilize them, these are the main doctrinal influences which will inform my writing of this document. My indebtedness to them should be stated from the outset.

It is my belief that this document expresses a broadly reformed and dispensational articulation of Christian doctrine. I trust that it is faithful to the Bible, the Church, and the Lord Jesus. May He be pleased to find it so.

James Wierson III  
February 2026

## CHAPTER 1: ON HOLY SCRIPTURE

Although God has implanted the knowledge of His existence, His moral law, and His final judgment in the heart of every person so as to leave them without excuse<sup>1</sup> (Psalm 19:1–6; Rom 1:19, 32; 2:15), sinful man’s knowledge is so darkened (1 Cor 2:14; Eph 4:17–19) that a saving knowledge of God is not possible through this general revelation (Rom 10:14–17). Therefore, in order to show Himself and His will more fully, especially unto the salvation of sinners, God chose to reveal Himself through special revelation (Psalm 19:7–11; Hebrews 1:1), most especially by communicating His Word through writing in the texts of Holy Scripture (2 Peter 1:19–21).

The books which are Holy Scripture—to be received as the very words of God—are the

### 39 books of the Old Testament

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

### And the 27 books of the New Testament

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the language of 2LCF, see Stan Reeves, ed., *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith: In Modern English* (Cape Coral, Florida: Founders Press, 2017).

These books were received by the people of God as God’s Word (Luke 24:27, 44; 2 Peter 3:16).<sup>2</sup> Later additions or redactions from this canon are to be rejected (Proverbs 30:5–6 Revelation 22:19).

All 66 books of Holy Scripture are to be confessed as the very Word of God (2 Tim 3:16–17), totally without error in the original autographs, and fully sufficient for salvation and growth in godliness (Psalm 19:7–11; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:3, 19). As the Word of God, Scripture is the final authority over all matters relating to life and godliness. This is best articulated in 2LCF:

The supreme judge for deciding all religious controversies and for evaluating all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, human teachings, and individual interpretations, and in whose judgment we are to rest, is nothing but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit. In this Scripture our faith finds its final word (1.10).<sup>3</sup>

While a local church may have as its authorities its statement of faith, confession, the ancient creeds, and its leadership, the ultimate authority for matters of faith and practice of every church and believer is the Word of God, and no authority is to be followed where it opposes or violates God’s Word.

### **Interpreting Scripture**

Scripture is to be interpreted with a literal sense of each passage. This means that the meaning of each passage is to be discerned through a consideration of the passage’s author

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<sup>2</sup> The church has historically used three criteria to decide whether to receive a writing into the biblical canon, “First, the writing had to have been authored by a recognized prophet or apostle or by someone associated with one, as in the case of the books of Mark, Luke, Hebrews, James, and Jude. Second, the writing could not disagree with or contradict any previous Scripture. Third, the church had to display a general consensus that a writing was an inspired book” (John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017], 119).

<sup>3</sup> 2LCF cites Matt 22:2, 31, 32; Eph 2:20; Acts 28:23. Reeves, *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith: In Modern English*.

(human and divine), purpose, grammar, historical context and preceding revelation from the standpoint of the time of writing. This is called the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. While the New Testament will aid in clarifying doctrine which is either articulated in or consistent with an Old Testament passage, the New does not reinterpret the Old into a meaning foreign to the Old's human author or original audience. Any use of the Old Testament in the New Testament is in keeping with the meaning of the Old Testament in its Old Testament literary and historical context.<sup>4</sup> Any interpretation of the Old Testament that voids the meaning of the Old in its original literary and historical context should be rejected.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, any system of interpretation which uses the experiences of the reader/interpreter as a ruling scheme for understanding the Bible is to be rejected.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This view is most succinctly articulated and defended by Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> This is said while still affirming the words of Robert Saucy: "Everyone involved in the discussion [of biblical prophecies] would agree that the biblical writers are the final source of reference in this matter. Dispensationalists have sometimes been accused of putting a priority on Old Testament teaching while non-dispensationalists emphasize the teaching of the New Testament. In truth, both sides must use all the Bible with the recognition that the principle of progressive revelation obviously gives the New Testament writers the last word" (*The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993], 33). Again, the most succinct articulation of this view is provided by Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*.

<sup>6</sup> Contra contemporary schemes such as Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, and any articulations of standpoint epistemology.

## CHAPTER 2: ON GOD

2LCF needs no alteration when articulating an orthodox doctrine of God.

The Lord our God is but one only living and true God (1 Cor 8:4, 6; Deut 6:4); whose subsistence is in and of Himself (Jer 10:10; Is 48:12), infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself (Ex 3:14); a most pure spirit (John 4:24), invisible, without body, parts, or passions,<sup>7</sup> who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto (1 Tim 6:16; Deut 4:15–16); who is immutable (Mal 3:6), immense (1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:23<sup>8</sup>), eternal (Ps 90:2), incomprehensible, almighty (Gen 17:1), every way infinite, most holy (Is 6:3), most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will (Ps 115:3; Is 46:10), for His own glory (Prov 16:4; Rom 11:36); most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty (2LCF 2.1).

God, having all life (John 5:26), glory (Ps 148:13), goodness (Ps 119:68), blessedness, in and of himself, is alone in and unto himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them (Job 22:2, 3), but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things (Rom 11:34–36), and he hath most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever he pleases (Dan 4:25, 34, 35); in his sight all things are open and manifest (Heb 4:13), his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain (Ez 11:5; Acts 15:18); he is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works (Ps 145:17), and in all his commands; to him is due from angels and men, whatsoever worship (Rev 5:12–14), service, or obedience, as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them (2LCF 2.2).

### The Trinity

The one God subsists in three Persons, also called Hypostases or Subsistences. Again, 2LCF articulates this well,

In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7; Mat 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14), of one

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 14:15 should be included here, but it is not cited by the confession. The Greek *ὁμοιοπαθής* includes the term “pathos” where we derive the concept of being subject to passions, or passible. It is human to be passible, Yahweh is not passible, God is not subject to passions and cannot be acted upon or stirred up to behave by forces or stimulæ external to Himself. Positing that God is subject to external forces violates the creator-creature distinction and compromises His immutability. This means that language in Scripture which speaks of emotional changes in God (i.e. Genesis 6:6) should be understood as God stooping to communicate in a manner we can understand, using anthropopathisms, similar to how Scripture speaks of God, who is pure Spirit, having a strong right arm (see Ps 118:15ff). This doctrine is necessary if God is immutable, as Scripture claims, and simple.

<sup>8</sup> Where verse 23 declares God’s transcendence, verse 24 declares his immanence (nearness). These are two aspects of His immensity (what could vulgarly be stated as His *bigness*). He is so vast as to fill all space, thus He is far and away beyond us, while also being entirely near us.

substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided (Ex 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Cor 8:6): the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 18); the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son (John 15:26; Gal 4:6); all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him (2LCF 2.3).

These Persons are to be ordered with the Father first, the Son second, and the Spirit third, but this is not to be understood as any of the persons deriving their existence or divinity from the others—expressing the order “is a means of expressing the nature of the Trinitarian personal relations.”<sup>9</sup>

To these Persons we ascribe particular external works, especially regarding the accomplishment of salvation. We ascribe to the Father the election of sinners unto salvation (Eph 1:3–6); to the Son—who alone became incarnate—we ascribe the purchasing of salvation for these elect sinners through His death and life (Eph 1:7); to the Spirit we ascribe the application of redemption to these elect sinners through regeneration (Titus 3:5), sanctification (Rom 8:13; 1 Peter 1:2); and empowering them for New Covenant life in the Church (1 Cor 12:4–11).

### **God’s Decrees**

God has decreed by the exercise of His own will all things which will be, not based on anything other than His own counsel (Is 46:10; Eph 1:11; Heb 6:17; Rom 9:15, 18; see 2LCF 3.1). God’s decrees are accomplished through the free agency of His creatures and through all manner of secondary causes—all of which He ordains and providentially directs (Gen 50:20; 1

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<sup>9</sup> James M Renihan, *To The Judicious and Impartial Reader: A Contextual-Historical Exposition of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2022), 99.

Sam 2:25). God is “neither the author of sin nor has fellowship with any in their sin”<sup>10</sup> (Jam 1:13; 1 John 1:5). God’s decrees are accomplished through creation and providence.

Among God’s decrees is predestination, under which heading is conceived the decrees of election and reprobation. God has elected—chosen—some sinners to be saved (Eph 1:4, 9, 11; Rom 8:30; Acts 13:48), regenerating them by the power of the Holy Spirit in time (John 3:5–8; 6:63) and granting to them the gifts of repentance and faith, providentially leading and drawing them to a discovery of the gospel (John 6:37), and preserving them in faith and obedience unto glory (John 10:28–29; 1 Thess 5:23–24; 1 Pet 1:3–5). Those not elect are reprobate: not chosen to be saved (John 10:26), and predestined to receive the just penalty for their sins at the final judgement (2 Thess 1:8–9; Rev 20:11–15).

#### God’s Work of Creation

God created the world out of nothing by His own power, exercising perfect wisdom, in six 24-hour days, resting on the seventh (Gen 1; Ps 33:6; Prov 8:12ff). He created and upholds all things through His Son (Hebrews 1:3; Col 1:16–17). All theories of creation which require a strict materialism or posit an evolutionary process of creation are impermissible based on the witness of Scripture. The world was created in a state of innocency, uncorrupted by sin, which God called “very good” (Gen 1:31).

#### God’s Work of Providence

“God’s works of providence are his most holy, (Ps. 145:17) wise (Is. 28:29, Ps. 104:24), and powerful preserving (Heb. 1:3) and governing all his creatures, and all their actions (Ps.

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<sup>10</sup> Stan Reeves, ed., *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith: In Modern English* (Cape Coral, Florida: Founders Press, 2017), 3.1.

103:19; Mt. 10:29, 30, 31)” (Baptist Catechism, Answer 14).<sup>11</sup> Considering the doctrine of Providence, the Baptist Confession of Faith can be quoted at length.

God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things (Heb 1:3; Job 38:11; Is 46:10–11; Ps 135:6), from the greatest even to the least (Matt 10:29–31), by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy (Eph 1:11). (2LCF 5.1)

Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly (Acts 2:23); so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without His providence (Pro 16:33); yet by the same providence He ordered them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently (Gen 8:22). (2LCF 5.2)

God, in his ordinary providence makes use of means (Acts 27:31, 44; Is 55:10, 11)<sup>12</sup>, yet is free to work without (Hosea 1:7) above (Rom 4:19–21), and against them (Dan 3:27) at His pleasure. (2LCF 5.3)

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that His determinate counsel extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men (Rom 11:32–34; 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chron 21:1); and that not by a bare permission, which also He most wisely and powerfully binds, and otherwise orders and governs (2 Kings 19:28; Psalm 76:10), in a manifold dispensation to His most holy ends (Gen 50:20; Is 10:6, 7, 12); yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceeds only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin (Ps 50:21; 1 John 2:16). (2LCF 5.4)

### **On The Son Assuming Human Flesh**

The Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, being fully and truly God by nature, condescended to become man by assuming human nature (Phil 2:7–8),<sup>13</sup> in order to accomplish salvation for His people (John 3:16), in accordance with His Father’s will (Is 42:1–4; 49:1–7;

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<sup>11</sup> From Thomas J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life*, with Steve Weaver (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> cf. Exodus 14:1–9 where God directs the people of Israel to go beside the Red Sea to be the means by which Pharaoh’s hard is hardened.

<sup>13</sup> On the assumption of human nature by God the Son, see James Dolezal, “Neither Subtraction nor Addition: The Word’s Terminative Assumption of Human Nature,” *Nova et Vetera (English)* 20, no. 1 (2022): 133–57.

53:10–12; Heb 10:5–7) and through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (Is 61:1–2; Luke 4:1, 14, 18–21).

In assuming human nature, The Person of the Son neither ceased to be God (whether conceived in His being or in His acting) nor augmented His divine essence with human nature. The Person of the Son was, is, and always will be in full possession of the Divine Nature (Col 2:9; Heb 13:8).

This Eternal Son of God became incarnate by the Holy Spirit, being conceived in the virgin Mary (Luke 1:35). He lived a true human life, subject to all the weaknesses and temptations of humanity, yet without sin (Luke 2:52; Heb 2:9–18), exercising perfect righteousness, obedience to God’s will (Matt 3:13–15; 4:1–11; Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8), in dependence upon the Holy Spirit and in exercising true faith (Matt 26:36–46; 1 Pet 2:21–23). He never ceased to be God in His incarnation, and He remains forevermore in possession of His human nature as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, in whom “two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man” (2LCF 8.2).

## CHAPTER 3: ON MAN

God created man “male and female” from the dust of the ground on the sixth day of the creation week (Gen 1:27). The man, Adam, was formed first and afterwards, in order that he would not be alone, the woman was made from one of his ribs (Gen 2:18, 21–22). The man was made first, to rule over God’s creation, the woman was made second, to aid man in this task (Gen 1:26; 1 Cor 11:8–9).

The edenic ideal (Gen 1:23–25) of human marriage is revealed in that God made one man and one woman for each other, from whose sexual union the whole human family comes. Marriage is a sacred union because of this good design and is to be protected and promoted (Gen 1:28; 9:1). All perversions of this ideal are sinful (Prov 5:15ff; Rom 1:26–26; 1 Cor 6:9, 15–20; 7:10–11; 39). From creation the family order is such that the husband is the ruler and owes his wife love as she is the “weaker vessel” (1 Pet 3:7) while the wife is his helper who owes him submission (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:ff; Col 3:18–19; 1 Pet 3:1–7).

Man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27), with a rational soul and body (James 2:26), in a righteous state, though corruptible (Ecc 7:29). In eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam fell from a state of innocence and cast his whole posterity into a damnable state and enslaved them to sin and the Devil (Rom 5:12–14, 18–21; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:1–3; Hebrews 2:14).

In this fallen state, mankind is morally depraved (Gen 6:5; Rom 3:9–18); opposed to God, and has freely “given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness” (Eph 4:19).

## CHAPTER 4: ON SIN AND THE FALL

“Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of, the law of God (1 John 3:4)”  
(Baptist Catechism, Q&A 17).

Sin entered the world through the work of the Devil and the fall of man. Genesis chapter three shows that the Devil, using the cunning nature of the serpent (Gen 3:1; Ez 28:13; Rev 12:9; 20:2), tempted Eve to violate God’s law by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She succumbed to the temptation, took, and ate; after which she gave some to Adam who also ate. Adam, acting as the head and representative of all his posterity by natural generation, fell from his original righteousness and cast the whole human race into bondage to sin (Rom 5:12, 2LCF 6.2 & 6.3).

As a result of the fall, every human conceived by natural generation receives a fallen (sinful) nature (Psalm 51:5) and, by imputation, is guilty of committing Adam’s first sin (Rom 5:12–19); all people are “by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3), the servants of sin, and partakers of death (Rom 6:20; 5:12) and all other miseries—spiritual, temporal, and eternal—unless the Lord Jesus sets them free (Heb 2:14, 15; 1 Thess 1:10)” (2LCF 6.3).

Sin requires spiritual and physical death as its due, and no man can escape this fate by his own works since even the best of these are accounted as filthy rags (Is 64:6; Rom 3:9ff; 6:23).

### **The Desire to Sin is Sin**

The Word of God clearly states that the desire to commit sin is truly sinful itself, and not becoming sin only when acted out (Matt 5:21ff; Rom 7:8; James 1:14–15). This is further explored in chapter 10.

## CHAPTER 5: ON SALVATION

The Doctrine of Salvation considers some of the most glorious items in all of theological consideration. These will be considered under two headings: First, the accomplishment of salvation and second, the application of salvation.

### **The Accomplishment of Salvation**

Salvation is accomplished entirely by the work of God alone (Rom 11:6; Eph 2:8–10). While the means by which sinners receive the benefits of salvation is through exercising faith and repentance, the salvation applied to sinners upon meeting these conditions of faith and repentance is a work wholly planned, accomplished, and applied by our Triune God (Is 43:11; Acts 4:12; Rom 8:1–4).

This salvation was planned by God, and is a work of the whole Godhead, with each member working according to the plan of redemption (Is 42:1–4; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12; Luke 4:17–21).

This salvation was purchased by the mediating work of Christ, who alone is able to bridge the gap between Holy God and fallen man (John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5). He willingly obeyed His Father's will (Matt 3:15), and fulfilled the Law and Prophets (Matt 5:17–20), providing for His people a righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, indeed, that surpasses any sinful human effort to obey God's law as a condition of inheriting Heaven.

In His death, the Son fully atoned for His people's sin by bearing the just penalty of the wrath of God as a substitute in their place (Is 53:4–5; 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 5:18; Gal 3:13–14). Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion (Matt 28; 1 Cor 15:1–4), demonstrating that the Father was fully satisfied with His Son's work (Rom 4:25). Commenting

on this verse, Matthew Henry writes: "...on the third day an angel was sent to roll away the stone, and so to discharge the prisoner, which was the greatest assurance possible that divine justice was satisfied, the debt paid, or else he would never have released the prisoner..."<sup>14</sup>

### The Extent of the Atonement

The atonement of the Son was a purchasing of salvation for those whom He represented, called His flock, and not for the whole world in a general sense (John 10:15; 26). The work of Christ is not deficient and so only able to save a relatively few number of people, nor is His work accomplished universally—whether truly or hypothetically—and only activated for sinners when they believe. Scripture is clear that Christ's death was a true accomplishing of redemption for Christ's people, he bore *their* sins (Is 53:11, Rom 4:25). His sacrifice is totally sufficient for the salvation God intended to provide through Him, and there is no other work needed to replace or shore up Christ's work in any way (Heb 10:1–18).

### The Application of Salvation

Romans 8:29–30 provides the order of salvation, and will make up the outline for this section.

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, New modern ed (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009) vol. 6, 318.

“Those whom He foreknew”

The foreknowledge of God here refers to the setting of His love upon a select group of people—the elect—in eternity past.<sup>15</sup> God determined to love certain people and those people are foreknown in Christ (Eph 1 Pet 1:1–2).

“He also predestined”

Predestination has been discussed already in this document. It is the decree of God to save select people—the elect—without reference to their worthiness but purely as a choice of His free will.<sup>16</sup>

“These whom He predestined, He also called”

In view in Romans 8:30 is the effectual calling of God’s elect unto salvation wherein they are spiritually called to believe and do believe (John 6:44; Rom 1:1, 6–7; Rom 9:24; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 2:9). While the church is to proclaim the gospel to all people—this being the general call—only those predestined by God are effectually called, resulting in their exercising saving faith.

*Regeneration*

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<sup>15</sup> “In the six occurrences of these words in the NT, only two mean “know beforehand” (Acts 26:5, cited above, and 2 Pet. 3:17); the three others besides the occurrence in this text, all of which have God as their subject, mean not “know before”—in the sense of intellectual knowledge, or cognition—but “enter into relationship with before” or “choose, or determine, before” (Rom. 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2).” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 532. Moo goes on to show the connection between the use of this term *foreknowledge* to translate the Hebrew word for *know* in the LXX.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 2

Connected to being effectually called, the individual is made spiritually alive (John 3:3–7). Those regenerated are able to respond to the gospel call to repent and believe (Jn 1:12–13; 1 Jn 5:1).

### *Conversion*

In the experience of conversion, after being made spiritually alive, the individual exercises the two evangelical graces of saving faith and repentance. Both of these actions are necessary parts of conversion (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 16:30–31; 26:19–20). There is no salvation without both faith and repentance (Mark 1:15), and when a person converts he exercises both repentance and faith simultaneously.<sup>17</sup> These are the requirements of salvation, faith being the means by which one appropriates Christ’s benefits for himself and repentance being the first fruit of that faith.

### “Whom He called, He also Justified”

Justification is a legal declaration by God concerning believers wherein those who believe savingly are imputed with Christ’s righteousness and declared to be righteous according to God’s law (Rom 3:21–26; 4:21; 5:1, 18–19). Justification is declared upon the condition of faith (Gal 2:16) and bears fruit in a believer’s life in godly conduct (James 2:21–24). At the moment of justification, a believer is reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18–20) and adopted into God’s family (John 1:12; Eph 1:5).

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 1 for the logical order of faith and repentance.

## *Sanctification*

Sanctification is the growth in practical righteousness over the course of a believer's life after conversion that they experience. It is not mentioned by Paul in Romans 8:29–30, but is mentioned in other passages, such as Philippians 2:13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Philippians 2:13 reveals both that believers are responsible to become more righteous in their conduct and that the Lord is at work to motivate and empower that pursuit.

“Whom He justified, He also glorified”

Paul places glorification in the aorist tense, indicating its certainty. This is the experience which every believer will undergo at the resurrection/rapture (for the church) and at the end of the tribulation (for the OT and Tribulation saints).<sup>18</sup> Glorification includes the saints receiving bodies like the resurrected Lord's in terms of quality and sinlessness, described most clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:35–58.

## **Union with Christ**

All of salvation is conceived through uniting elect sinners to Christ. These sinners were chosen to be united to Him in eternity past (Eph 1:4), represented by Christ in His mediating work (Rom 6:3–5; 1 Cor 15:22; Gal 2:20; Col 3:1–4), and empowered by Christ for their earthly service this side of glory (John 15:4–5; Eph 2:10).

The believer's union with Christ simply means the experiences of Christ—His life of righteousness, His death, His resurrection, His heavenly presence—are spiritually the experiences of the one who has faith in Christ. [...] This union began with the believer's election before the foundation of the world. This union is the basis for the believer's new life and good works in the present. This union is the basis for the believer's hope of glory. The significance of this union is that

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 8.

all the blessings and benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection belong to the Christian.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kevin D. Zuber, *The Essential Scriptures: A Handbook of the Biblical Texts for Key Doctrines*, with John MacArthur (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2021), 254.

## CHAPTER 6: ON HOLY AND UNHOLY ANGELS

Angels are created spirits made to minister to God and serve His purposes (Dan 9:21; Luke 1:8–20, 26–27; Heb 1:7, 14). They do so by worshipping Him in heaven and accomplishing tasks for which they are commissioned.

All angels were created righteous, some were preserved in that state while others were led into sin by the Devil (Rev 12:4), these fallen angels we call demons.

Satan was created as one of the chief angels, called the Morning Star (Is 14:12) and the Anointed Cherub (Ez 28:14). In his pride he sought glory reserved only for God (Ez 28:17). His rebellion was followed by a third of the created angels (Rev 12:4) who now serve his purposes in their rebellion. Satan is called Beelzebub, the king of the demonic host, by Christ (Matt 12:22–29). After his fall, he tempted and led humanity into a state of sin (Gen 3:1ff). He is the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10, see Job 1:6–12), the tempter of Christ during his earthly ministry and the tempter and adversary of Christ's people (Luke 4:1–13; Matt 6:13; 1 Peter 5:8).

Demons are active in the world as Satan's agents seeking to corrupt humanity and to steal worship from God to whom alone it is due (1 Cor 10:20–22; 1 Tim 4:1; 1 John 4:1–3). Some demons are reserved in hell and pits of darkness for judgment (2 Peter 2:4). These will be released briefly to terrorize unbelieving humanity before the Lord returns in wrath (see Rev 9:1–11; 14–15).

Satan and all his demons are destined for God's wrath in the lake of fire (Jude 6–7; Rev 20:10).

In the providence of God some believers, when persisting in unrepentant sin, are delivered into the power of Satan to discipline them unto repentance (1 Tim 1:20).

## CHAPTER 7: ON THE CHURCH

The church is considered universally and locally. Universally, the church comprises the people of God saved by the Lord Jesus during the present dispensation of time between Pentecost (Acts 2) and the Tribulation (Rev 4–19). The universal church thus includes the saints currently living who await Christ’s return while living godly lives (1 Cor 15:58) and those who have died with a good testimony and reside with Christ spiritually, awaiting the resurrection of the dead at the rapture where they will be reunited with their bodies, glorified (1 Cor 15:20–23; 1 Thess 4:14–17).

The local church “is a body of (professed) believers who assemble in a particular location or setting, with recognized leadership, with mutual commitments, and with a recognized membership.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Church Leadership**

The leadership of the church is provided by God in the offices of Elder and Deacon. Both offices are restricted to men who meet the requirements laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9.

The eldership is the highest office, provided to edify the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11–12), to watch over their congregants’ souls (Heb 13:17), to protect the local church from false teachers (Acts 20:28–31), to pray for their congregants (James 5:14), and to shepherd primarily through preaching and teaching the Word of God (1 Tim 4:11; 2 Tim 4:1–2). Elders also have the authority of training and ordaining other men to the same office and commissioning these to the ministry (2 Tim 2:2; Acts 13:1–3).

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<sup>20</sup> Zuber, *Essential Scriptures*, 277. I closely follow Zuber’s articulation and reasoning in this chapter.

Deacons receive delegated authority from the eldership to administrate practical ministry which would otherwise distract the elders from their primary duties of ministering the Word of God and praying for the people of God (Acts 6:1–6). In this way, deacons serve to protect the ministry of the Word of God. The deacons may teach the Word of God (Acts 8:5) but ability to teach is not a qualification for this office. Deacons are to be men tested and found to be qualified according to 1 Timothy 3:8–13.<sup>21</sup>

### Local Church Rule is Given by Christ to the Church

While prudence and church history encourage faithful churches to associate with each other as they are able and to even convene representatives together for the purpose of working through doctrinal disputes (Acts 15:2), each local church is an independent body of believers, subject to the Lord Jesus as its head, who mediates His rule through the particular government of each particular church (Eph 1:22–34; 4:15; Rev 2–3). With the time of the Apostles having closed at the turn of the first and second century AD, no higher court of church government rightfully exists over a local church—it’s highest earthly authority is contained in its eldership. Furthermore, as local church government has been given to its eldership, under the authority of Christ, so rule over the local church is not given to Caesar or any other human institution (Mark 12:17; 1 Cor 6:1–6).

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<sup>21</sup> While some churches are convinced that women deacons, or deaconesses, is a permissible office, it is the opinion of this candidate that leadership in society, family, and the church is properly confined to men; in keeping with this I understand 1 Timothy 3:11 to be referring to deacons’ wives. I appeal to the argument provided by Alexander Strauch, (*Paul’s Vision for the Deacons: Assisting the Elders with the Care of God’s Church*, Sixth printing [Colorado Springs: Biblical Eldership Resources, 2024]) as the most clear and exegetically sound articulation of this view.

## **Church Membership**

The local church is composed of professed believers who join together in corporate commitments (Acts 2:42; Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 12:7), for corporate worship (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), under the authority of a common leadership.<sup>22</sup> Membership in the local church ought to be open to all professing believers who are not living in open sin who desire to join together in the same local congregation.

## **The Marks of the Church**

The local church is first marked by the preaching of God's Word (Acts 2:42); second, by the ordinances of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23–26) and Baptism (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:37–38; 36–38); third, by the practice of church discipline (Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:1–13; Titus 3:10). The pattern of the New Testament church is that baptism is given to those who make profession of faith; baptism is not to be given to infants who are incapable of exercising faith.

## **The Mission of the Church**

The church serves the Lord by working to fulfill the great commission (Matt 28:19–20). Each member of the church, whether church officer or not, as a member of Christ's body, engages in the work of the body which is to make disciples and teach them to observe Christ's commands. The Holy Spirit accomplishes this mission in part by gifting believers for ministry to one another (1 Cor 12:1–7). How the church practically orders itself for the accomplishing of this mission is articulated in Chapter 9: A Philosophy of Ministry.

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<sup>22</sup> By which I mean "common to all," not "exercised by all." This should be clear from the section on leadership above.

## The Church and Israel

It is the contention of this candidate that the church and believing Israel are two distinct groups who together make up the people of God within the new covenant and that the church is the present entity through which the Lord is building His kingdom. The church should not be identified as Israel because the New Testament reserves this title for the corporate, ethnic people of Israel—the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Saucy articulates this well:

Believing Israel and the members of the church are one in their participation in the eschatological salvation of the new covenant. Because of the relationship to God that this entails, they are equally and together the “people of God.”

Their difference lies not on the spiritual plane in their relationship to God, but in their specific identity and corresponding function in God’s historical kingdom program. In both Testaments, the identity of “Israel” is always that historical people descended from Abraham through Jacob that became a nation. [...] The church, by contrast, is identified in the New Testament as a people called out of *all* nations. In distinction to Israel in her being a witness as a “nation,” the church is called to proclaim the kingdom salvation as individuals and as a community living in the midst of the nations, but not yet in the totality of a “nation.”<sup>23</sup>

In the analogy of the olive tree, the apostle Paul teaches that corporate Israel—in its unbelief—has been set aside for a time while the Lord gathers in his elect from all the nations after which time corporate Israel—exercising faith—will be saved (Rom 11:11–36). During this church age there is a believing remnant of ethnic Jews who serve as a guarantee that God has not abandoned corporate Israel (Rom 11:1–5).

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<sup>23</sup> Saucy, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 218.

## CHAPTER 8: ON THE THINGS TO COME

The events which will happen in the future can be categorized into two sections, *Personal Eschatology* and *Cosmic Eschatology*. Under the first heading is understood the destinations of individual persons, while under the second is understood the events that occur to the whole of creation.

### **Personal Eschatology**

As a consequence of the fall of humanity into sin, every person sharing in Adam's fallen nature will experience death,<sup>24</sup> upon which occasion they will be translated spiritually to Hell—from which they await the final judgment and the Lake of Fire (2 Thess 1:8–9; Rev 20:11–15)—or, if believers, they will be translated spiritually to Heaven (Luke 23:42–43; Phil 1:23)—from which they await the return of Christ, the resurrection of their bodies glorified and reunited with their souls (1 Thess 4:14, 16), after which they will dwell forever with Christ in glory (1 Thess 4:17), first in the Millennial Kingdom and afterwards in the eternal state of the New Heavens and the New Earth. Believers still alive on earth when Christ returns will not experience death but will be raptured and glorified in an instant (1 Thess 4:13–17; 1 Cor 15:51–52).

### **Cosmic Eschatology**

The future for creation can be most helpfully summarized in a roughly chronological fashion.

#### The Resurrection of the Christian Dead and Pretribulational Rapture

The resurrection and rapture occur in quick succession (1 Thess 4:16–17). The resurrection is of the Christian dead (“the dead in Christ”) who will be gathered to Christ in the

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<sup>24</sup> There are some noteworthy exceptions, such as Enoch or Elijah, but they don't militate against this truth.

air with the raptured church (“we who are alive and remain”). This will fulfill Christ’s promise to the disciples in the upper room that he was leaving like a bridegroom to prepare a place for them to live with him forever, after which preparation he would come and gather them and take them back to the place prepared (John 14:1–4).<sup>25</sup>

### The Bema Seat Judgment of Christ

This is the judgment of rewards for Christians coordinate to the faithfulness of the believer in his or her life (Rom 14:12; 1 Cor 3:12–13; 2 Cor 5:10). This is likely what Christ has in mind in the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14–30), and if so, it is here that the members of the church will discover what their role in Christ’s coming kingdom entails.

### The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

There will be a feast and celebration of the eternal union between Christ and His church. This will occur prior to Christ’s coming with His church to earth (Rev 19:7–9).

### The Tribulation Period

This period of tribulation is the seven years of God’s wrath. It will begin after the rapture, with an agreement between the Antichrist and Israel (Dan 9:27). It will be a period designed to bring Israel to faith in Christ, judgment to the nations, and to make way for Christ’s Millennial Kingdom to come into being (Dan 9:24; Matt 24:3ff; Rev 4–19). At the end of the Tribulation,

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<sup>25</sup> “The scene being imagined [in John 14:1–4] is not that of Jesus returning *with* the redeemed to establish His kingdom (as in Rev 19:11–15) but *for* His own, His bride to take them to Himself.” Zuber, *Essential Scriptures*, 300. Emphasis Zuber’s. Zuber rejects the metaphor of this being a city meeting a visiting dignitary who is greeted outside the city and then brought into into the city because this metaphor is not lexically required and because such a concept runs against the metaphor of bride/groom: “The first view imports a metaphor that is not found anywhere else to describe Christ’s relationship with His church. The second view incorporates several other key texts (see John 14:1–3; Eph 5:27; Rev 19:7–9) and provides a richer explanation of the event, using a recognized New Testament metaphor—Bride/church and Bridegroom/Christ.” *Ibid.*, 304.

the Lord will destroy the armies of the world amassed against him, and will throw the Antichrist and his false prophet into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).

### The Millennial Kingdom

After the tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom will be instituted by Christ. This will fulfill the physical and geographic elements of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenant promises (Gen 12:1–3; 15:17–18; 17:2, 6–7; 2 Samuel 7:11–13, 16; Ps 89; Luke 1:32–33; 69; Ez 36:24–28 and others). The kingdom will be marked by worldwide peace and prosperity, free from the deceiving work of the Devil (Is 11:1–10; Jer 23:5–8; Rev 20:1–3). The believers who are martyred during the tribulation are resurrected and reign with Christ, Old Testament saints and the church during these thousand years (Rev 20:4, 6).

Following the thousand years, Satan is briefly released and leads many people in one last desperate struggle against the Lord, but they will be destroyed by fire from heaven (Rev 20:7–9) and the Devil will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).

### The Great White Throne Judgment

Following this final battle and destruction of the Devil, the heavens and the earth are removed (2 Peter 3:8–12) such that all the unbelieving dead are judged based on nothing but the quality of their conduct (Rev 20:11–15).

### The Eternal State

After the Great White Throne Judgment, The New Heavens and New Earth are made by Christ within which he will live with his people forever (Rev 21:1–22:5). This is the ultimate

goal of all salvation history: redeemed humanity dwelling with God in perfect harmony in creation without the presence of sin or death (2 Peter 3:13).

## CHAPTER 9: A PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

The goal of Christian ministry is the salvation of the lost leading to the spiritual maturation of believers (Matt 28:18–20) as worshipers of God (John 4:23). To this end, it is imperative that ministry be performed in a way that ensures God’s people can grow and worship Him rightly. Jesus prayed that God would sanctify His people through His Word (John 17:17). Similarly, the Apostle Paul reminded Timothy that it was the Word of God that was able to make him wise unto salvation (1 Tim 3:14–17). Peter also stated that the Word of God was more sure than any of the miraculous experiences he and the other apostles had with Christ during Christ’s earthly ministry (2 Peter 1:19). In his first letter, Peter also told his readers that it was the Word which would nourish their spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:2). Therefore, ministry is to be performed in a manner sanctioned and regulated by the Word of God (John 4:24). Indeed, Scripture regulates all matters of faith and practice for the believer as well as the church.<sup>26</sup>

### **Regulated Worship**

Scripture teaches that churches are to give themselves to certain functions, in addition to the marks mentioned previously.<sup>27</sup> These are assembling and fellowshiping (Acts 2:42; Heb 10:25), Prayer (Acts 2:42), Singing (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), Giving (1 Cor 16:1–2; 2 Cor 9:6–7), partaking of the Lord’s supper (1 Cor 11:26) and administering the ordinance of baptism to new believers (Matt 28:19–20) and Reading and Preaching God’s Word (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:2).

When the church gathers as the church, it does these things. With the marks of the church, these

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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 1 above, “On Holy Scripture.”

<sup>27</sup> For the marks of the church, see Chapter 7 above, “On the Church.” This paragraph follows Zuber, *Essential Scriptures*, 294–7.

are the elements which the Lord has ordered to make up corporate church worship, as 2LCF 22.5 also says:

The elements of religious worship of God include reading the Scriptures (1 Tim 4:13), preaching and hearing the Word of God (2 Tim 4:2; Luke 8:18), teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19), as well as the administration of baptism (Matt 28:19, 20) and the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:26). They must be performed out of obedience to Him, with understanding, faith, reverence and godly fear. Also, purposeful acts of humbling with fasting (Esther 4:16; Joel 2:12) and times of thanksgiving should be observed on special occasions in a holy and religious manner (Exodus 15:1–19; Psalm 107)<sup>28</sup>

Privately, worship that is pleasing to God is made up of the same elements, except for Baptism and the Lord's Supper which in their very make up require a corporate gathering. Where each family engages in private worship, they ought to make use of the same means by reading God's Word, praying, and singing together to the Lord in faith and reverence.

### **Regulated Evangelism**

The Word of God is also the appointed means of God by which the gospel reaches the unsaved such that they can hear, believe, and enter into salvation (Rom 10:14–15). This proclamation can take the form of private conversation or public preaching, but the means by which the gospel is taken to the unbelieving world is the declaration of God's Word (Acts 8:4, 35). Scripture has no concept of evangelism that does not contain the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church proclaims the gospel each Lord's day when it gathers and preaches the Word of God<sup>29</sup> and the people share the gospel as they are able and give evidence of its

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<sup>28</sup> Reeves, *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith: In Modern English*.

<sup>29</sup> While not every sermon will be a gospel focused sermon, all preaching of God's Word will connect to the gospel as it is the grand story of the whole Bible. There is no way to preach any sermon without some reference to the gospel of Christ, whether it is anticipated in the Old Testament or accomplished in the New Testament. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible reveals the salvation of God and the judgement of sin.

power in their daily lives. This serves to fulfill the great commission's command to make disciples.

### **Regulated Practice**

Ministry in the church can be conceived formally or informally. Formally, the ministers of the church are the church officers, especially the elders engaged in the teaching and preaching of God's Word (2 Tim 4:5). The ones who minister the Word of God to the church must do so in a manner in keeping with the Word of God.<sup>30</sup> The formal ministry of the Word of God serves to meet the command of the great commission to teach disciples.

Informally, the ministers of the church are the church members who use their gifts and resources for the mutual edification and growth of the whole church (Eph 4:12; 1 Cor 12:7; 14:26). In their daily lives, believers interact with each other ministering their gifts, praying for and with each other, and meeting the spiritual and physical needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Each of these sections has emphasized that the Word of God regulates christian ministry, whether that ministry be public in the gathered church or private in the individual lives of believers. The Word of God is the guiding rule for all ministry. Through these regulated facets of Christian ministry God grows His church, whether that growth be conceived as numerical through the salvation of the lost or whether it be conceived in terms of sanctification as believers are matured in their faith. When God's Word is followed the Church thrives and God is honored.

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<sup>30</sup> Much on this has been included in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 10: A PHILOSOPHY OF COUNSELING

Inasmuch as counseling is a private ministry of God's Word by God's people to others seeking their sanctification, it is incumbent on ministers and churches to have a biblically based philosophy of the counseling mission and task.<sup>31</sup> Counseling is to be ordered by God's Word with a view to using the Word to help the recipient of counseling to grow spiritually; viz to put sin to death and to put on righteousness—in so doing, counseling is after a change of heart in the recipient, resulting in a change of life; and all this through the work of the Spirit.

### **Counseling is a Ministry of God's Word**

God's word is sufficient in all matters pertaining to life and godliness—subsumed in this statement are all manner of moral habits and practices.<sup>32</sup> Scripture is not only sufficient for teaching what believers are to believe about God and how they are to worship, but it is sufficient for teaching them how to live their lives (1 Tim 3:16–17). Therefore, counseling is to be a ministry of God's Word seeking to enable the counselee to know what God requires and to do what God requires. Furthermore, as Scripture alone claims authority and sufficiency over believers' lives, all secular models of counseling with their godless worldviews ought to be eschewed in counseling.

### **Counseling is Heart Ministry**

What a man thinks in his heart, so he is (Prov 23:7). All human action is a result of the thoughts, desires, affections—the lusts—of the heart (Mark 7:20–23). The heart is the inner

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<sup>31</sup> I am assuming the definition of Biblical Counseling provided by Dale Johnson, "Biblical counseling is the personal discipleship ministry of God's people to others under the oversight of God's church, dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit." Johnson and Stephens, "The Nature of Biblical Counseling."

<sup>32</sup> Appeal for this assertion is made to the sufficiency of God's word as articulated in Chapter 1.

person, it calculates, meditates, plans, and deceives (Gen 6:5; Prov 6:18; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:20–23; James 4:1–2). The inner person is what Christians are to be setting upon Christ (Col 3:2), resulting in seeking righteousness and doing the kind of good works which Scripture commands (Col 3:5ff). Counseling ought to be an application of Scripture in order to draw out the heart level motivations, affections, and lusts such that the counselee is able to see and confess them to be what Scripture shows them to be, to repent of them, and to practice the kind of godliness in mind and deed that accords with Christlikeness.

### **Counseling in Dependence**

The human heart is open only to God (1 Sam 16:7; Prov 21:2). It takes the wisdom of God to help someone see their heart clearly and to subject what they see to the Word of God (Prov 20:5). Therefore, anyone engaging in the counseling task ought to do so by seeking the Lord diligently in prayer for wisdom to accurately perceive the true heart issues at play, to know what Scripture says regarding these heart issues, and to help the counselee know and apply Scripture correctly.

### **Counseling is Not Reserved for Professionals**

Inasmuch as all Christians have received the Word of God so that they may know how to walk with God (2 Tim 3:16–17), and inasmuch as believers are required and gifted to minister to each other (1 Cor 14:26), and inasmuch as the Word of God is to be ministered by every member of the church to every other member (Col 3:16–17), all believers are equipped and have the tool—the Word of God—needed to help other believers mortify sin and exercise godliness.

## CHAPTER 11: MY TESTIMONY

I do not know for certain when the Lord saved me, having grown up in a Christian household and faithful local church where I assumed the truth of the gospel and the fact of my sinfulness and need of Christ. There are two events which stand out in my memory as being particularly formative. First was when I was probably 7 or 8 years old, and sleeping over at my grandparents' house with my twin sister. My grandma asked us when putting us to bed if we were trusting the Lord to save us, and both of us answered that we didn't know. She said all we had to do was trust him and ask him to save us and so we said we'd like to. She then prayed for us that this desire would be true and that the Lord would save us. I remember answering that I'd like to be saved both because I knew it was the right thing to say and because I genuinely didn't want to be unsaved and experience God's wrath. While this was a childlike understanding of the truth, I believe it was genuine faith, though small and weak.

As I grew my physical growth coincided with spiritual growth. When I sinned my parents disciplined me and brought me back to the truth concerning my disobedience, so my sanctification coincided with my childhood training. I was baptized in April 2006

Nearing adulthood, most likely in early high school, I can't be certain, the Lord chose to impress upon my conscience in a keen way the reality of my sinfulness. I had strayed in my affections, and was lazy in my piety. While reading something theological, the Lord chose to impress on my conscience the sinfulness of my sin, the wrath of God against sin, and the need for Christ. This was true godly sorrow for my sin, and I prayed for a lengthy amount of time, asking the Lord to forgive me for my sins and to establish me in righteousness.

My life has been full of evidences of my salvation, for these I am only thankful to the Lord. In high school I participated in the Training Christian Leaders program at Eagle Fern Camp for two consecutive summers. These summers, full of difficult and dirty work, were immensely formative for my character. I grew in leaps and bounds during these summers—so much so that I remember coming back to school after serving and being told by one of my classmates that I was different than before.

In college my focus on the Lord strayed. I was working in retail, trudging my way through college, but becoming increasingly spiritually truant. But the Lord protected me from my own deceitful heart by bringing me to repentance and a renewed focus on service and commitment to my church, Hillcrest Chapel (now Hillcrest Bible Church). After this I was asked by one of the teachers at Hillcrest to step into the adult Sunday School rotation. The Lord used the experience of teaching the Word to sanctify me, and confirm my desire to enter ministry, which had been present since adolescence in seed form. The Lord confirmed this desire in my own heart and also through the encouragement of the leaders at Hillcrest. These are the men, the friends of my dad and teachers at the church, who shaped me through many Sunday conversations and Sunday School lessons.

I attended Eastern Oregon University online, and wrapped up my undergraduate degree in English and Writing in 2018. During the last couple years of university, I taught junior high and some high school at Spring Mountain Christian Academy in Clackamas, Oregon. The Lord further confirmed my desire to enter teaching and preaching ministry while teaching in the classroom setting at this school. He also helped me learn to interact well with believers from

non-calvinist circles through both Eagle Fern and Spring Mountain, in both of which I was something of the resident calvinist.

Hillcrest Bible Church supported me in part during my time at seminary. It was after my first semester that I came back to Portland and married my wife, Kayleen. She has been the greatest companion and helpmeet that the Lord could have provided me, and I am humbled by her love and submission to such a weak man as me. The Lord has provided to us four wonderful children: Sophia (born in late 2019), James (the fourth of his name, born in January 2021), Gwenyth (born late 2022), and Albert (born March 2025).

Upon graduating from The Master's Seminary in 2022, I was called to minister as an associate pastor in L'Anse, Michigan at L'Anse Baptist Church. This lasted for a year and a half, after which time I resigned and we moved back to Portland in December 2023. The resignation was required after a church split, which, though not being something I planned or brought about, nevertheless required me to separate from the church, my convictions running counter to the collective decision of the church body. I still have many friends in that area who are prospering spiritually and with whom I stay in contact. The Lord was exceedingly kind to us. He is always kind to us.

In mid 2024 I was hired at Trinity Bible Church where I have been serving since. The Lord has used Trinity and the kindness of the people here to comfort and encourage me and my wife following our church conflict experience in Michigan, and to greatly strengthen me in my theology, Bible knowledge, and convictions. May He continue to strengthen me and prepare me for the ministry He has planned. *Deo Volente.*

## APPENDIX 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND REPENTANCE

The relationship between faith and repentance is one that has been discussed *ad nauseam*. However, despite all the words which have been said about it, much confusion remains. The position of this candidate is that of the so-called Marrow-gospel.<sup>33</sup> Faith precedes repentance in *logical priority*. This view is held while also affirming that faith and repentance are evangelical graces *exercised simultaneously*. I'll first provide some definitions and then show why repentance must proceed from faith logically if it is to be true and thus pleasing to God.

### Some Definitions

Requisite to discussing how faith and repentance relate to each other is articulating a sound definition of each. Scripture provides ample data to be able to do so.

#### Faith

For faith to be genuine it must include three things, knowledge, assent, and trust. First, one must know, or come to an awareness of, the facts of the gospel. This is seen in Romans 10:13–17 where the Apostle Paul is stressing that in order for people to believe the gospel, they must first hear the gospel which is to be believed. So the first element is knowing the gospel message.

Second, for faith to be genuine it must include assent—a belief that the facts and claims of the gospel are true. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 makes it clear that the gospel provided salvation to the Thessalonian believers when they heard the gospel *and accepted it as true*. From experience, we know of many people who have simply heard the truths of the gospel but rejected them as

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<sup>33</sup> A helpful treatment of the marrow controversy can be found in Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016) and John C. Biegel, *Offering and Embracing Christ: The Marrow Theology of John Colquhoun of Leith (1748–1827)* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2023).

mere fantasy. So to an intellectual awareness—knowledge—of the truth must be added this second element, a belief that these facts and claims are true.

Third, faith goes beyond awareness and agreement with the claim of the gospel as being true to a reception of the gospel claim for oneself. This is trust. Philippians 3:7–10 makes this clear. Here, the Apostle Paul explains his own rejection of trusting in his legalistic law-keeping to trusting in Christ for his eternal hope. An illustration of this trust is found in Psalm 20:7 “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, But we will trust in the name of the Lord our God.”

### Repentance

Repentance is a turning from sin to God. It is stated most clearly in 1 Thessalonians 1:9: “...you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.” This verse shows that in turning to God there was both a rejection of sin, specifically idolatry, and a determination to serve or obey God. As an action with reference to one’s conduct, repentance is a work done by a believer in Christ.

### **Faith and Repentance Considered Logically**

Having defined the two parts of conversion, faith and repentance, how these two relate in logical priority can now be discussed. It should be noted that logical order does not conceive of any reference to time. This needs to be stated bluntly at the outset. Logical order refers to what must be in order for other things to be. It is not saying that one occurs in our experience first and then after some time we exercise the other. Rather, the purpose is to discover whether repentance

flows from faith or whether faith flows from repentance. Is faith necessary for repentance to be true repentance? Or is repentance necessary for faith to be true faith?<sup>34</sup>

That faith is logically prior to repentance can be seen clearly in Scripture in the fact that faith is necessary in order for any work to be pleasing to God, and true repentance is certainly a work pleasing to God (Rom 14:23; Heb 11:6). John Biegel articulates the Marrowmen's reasoning from these texts, Romans 14:23 and Hebrews 11:6: "If whatever does not proceed from faith is sin, if it is impossible to please God apart from faith, and if true repentance is indeed pleasing to God, then it is impossible that there could be true repentance prior to faith."<sup>35</sup> This order is reflected in Acts 11:21, "a large number who believed turned to the Lord."

This does not vitiate repentance as a necessary component of conversion, nor does it vitiate the gospel call which is articulated in Scripture as a call to repent and believe (Mark 1:15). But as much as these are simultaneously exercised in time, Scripture indicates that all evangelical obedience—obedience produced by the power of God and is pleasing to God—flows from saving faith.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This is not a useless question, despite some theologians making statements to the contrary. This is a question that has deep pastoral implications. If faith is only real faith if it flows from repentance, if repentance is the element that qualifies faith, then one's assurance of whether one is truly a believer or not is really a question about whether one's repentance is real or not. This drives at the warrant for one to be able to believe in Christ savingly. If repentance is the qualifier of true faith, then one's right to justifiably believe in Christ savingly is not the quality of Christ's work and the free offer of the gospel but the quality of one's own repentance.

<sup>35</sup> Biegel, *Offering and Embracing Christ*, 197.

<sup>36</sup> These two points need to be held together: that repentance is a fruit of salvation, indeed the first fruit, but it is also so necessary that without true repentance saving faith is not real. Biegel summarizes Colquhoun's reasoning: "Saving faith will always be accompanied by true repentance (or it is not saving) and true repentance will always be accompanied by saving faith (or it is not true)." *Offering and Embracing Christ*, 227.

## A Pastoral Concern

It is common to find theologians and pastors today articulate a doctrine of faith that is both the classic reformed view of it containing the elements of knowledge, assent, and trust, and at the same time a view containing an element of works.<sup>37</sup> The concern of these men is to avoid the errors of the easy-believism that plagued evangelicalism in the 1980s and 90s especially.<sup>38</sup> The solution often appealed to was to inadvertently include an element of works into the definition of faith by making repentance a qualification of true faith definitionally.<sup>39</sup> The would be believer is consequentially encouraged to look at his own works—repentance—not at the work of Christ as what is meritorious for entering salvation. This is less than best, as it removes from the would be believer the freedom of coming to Christ unless that would be believer meet certain prerequisite qualifications. This is the case because in so far as faith is conceived as having some human work in it, and faith is necessary in order to receive salvation, at least some work is now necessary to receive salvation and to make one's initial act of faith legitimate. The Marrow-gospel protects against this mistake. It protects the definition of faith and the warrant for coming to Christ for salvation. At the same time it shows that repentance is necessary for salvation but not a condition which must be met order for one to legitimately believe in Christ. Here is how Thomas Boston articulated it,

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<sup>37</sup> See Zuber, *Essential Scripture*, 243, "Clearly faith includes the obedience the unbelievers lack."

<sup>38</sup> An example of a critique against easy-believism is John MacArthur's seminal work, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). All are in agreement that easy-believism is wrong and destructive.

<sup>39</sup> An example can be furnished from John MacArthur (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, 190–1), "True faith always embodies righteous works." It is clear from the chapter which contains this quote that MacArthur views faith as containing obedience, not that faith necessarily produces obedience as a fruit. While agreement exists where faith and repentance are considered *in time*, faith should not be defined as containing good works, obedience, or repentance. It may produce repentance, this is not the same as it be constituted in part by repentance.

In practice, it will be found, that requiring such and such qualifications in sinners, to warrant them to believe in Christ, is no great help to them in their way towards him; forasmuch as it engages them in doubtful disputation, as to the being, kind, measure, and degree of their qualifications for coming to Christ; the time spent in which might be better improved in their going forward to Christ for all, by believing. And since no man can ever believe in Christ, without knowing that he has a warrant for believing in him, otherwise he can but act presumptuously: to tell sinners, that none may come to Christ, or have warrant to believe, but such as have a true repentance, must needs, in a special manner, entangle distressed consciences, so as they dare not believe, until they know that their repentance be true repentance.<sup>40</sup>

Practically, this means that a pastor who is responding to a congregant that expresses concern about whether or not she has truly repented and believed should not urge the congregant to make sure her repentance is sincere, or real. Rather, he should urge her to seek Christ in prayer for the gifts of true repentance and faith; as Colquhoun put it: “If [any man] begin to suspect that his repentance is legal and counterfeit, let him without delay trust cordially in Jesus Christ for grace to exercise evangelical repentance.”<sup>41</sup> The distinction may be subtle, but it contains the difference between trusting in Christ for every New Covenant grace and trusting in one’s own ability to present works pleasing to God. That is nothing short of the divide between the gospel of free grace and the gospel of legalism.

### **Conclusion**

The argument articulated in this appendix is that faith precedes repentance in logical order and so while both graces are exercised in the believer’s conversion, a believer is not qualified to exercise saving faith based on the quality of his repentance. Colquhoun puts it like this, “Though the graces of faith and repentance are, in respect of time, implanted together and at once; yet in order of nature, the acting of faith goes before the exercise of true repentance. The

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston*, 12 vols, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2023), 7:277n. Cited in Biegel, *Offering and Embracing Christ*, 71.

<sup>41</sup> John Colquhoun, *Evangelical Repentance*, Originally Published 1826. Monergism Books, 2021.

sinner then must cordially believe and trust in Christ for pardon, in order to exercise evangelical mourning for sin, and turning from it unto God. True repentance is very pleasing to God, ‘but without faith it is impossible to please him’ (Heb 11:6).”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John Colquhoun, *Evangelical Repentance*.

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