



TRINITY FELLOWSHIP
CHURCHES

Confession of Faith

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1. The Holy Scriptures

1. Holy Scripture is the only inerrant,¹ sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. The light of nature and the works of creation and providence demonstrate God's goodness, wisdom, and power so clearly that they leave men without excuse. Nevertheless, these are insufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation. Therefore, it pleased the Lord at many times and in many ways to reveal himself and declare his will to his church. After this, the Lord preserved this revelation in writing to better guard and spread the truth and establish and comfort the church against the corruption of the flesh and the evil intention of Satan and of the world. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary as God's former means of revealing his normative will to his people have ceased.²

2. Holy Scripture, or the written Word of God, consists of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are the following.

Of the Old Testament:

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

¹ "Inerrant" here is understood according to the definition adopted by "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" (1978).

² 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Ephesians 2:20; Romans 1:19-21; Romans 2:14,15; Psalms 19:1-3; Hebrews 1:1; Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19,20

Of the New Testament:

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

All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.³

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha are not part of the canon or rule of the Scriptures as they are not divinely inspired and therefore have no authority over the church of God and are not to be viewed or used as anything more than human writings.⁴

4. The authority of Holy Scripture, the very reason that we believe in it, does not depend on the testimony of any man or church but entirely on God, the author, who is truth itself. Scripture is to be received because it is the Word of God.⁵

5. We may be moved and persuaded by the testimony of the church of God to a high and reverent esteem of Holy Scripture. Its heavenly content, powerful doctrine, majestic style, the harmony of all its parts, its unified aim to give all glory to God, the full revelation it makes of the only way of salvation, its incomparable excellence, and its unmatched perfection are arguments by which Scripture abundantly evidences itself to be the Word of God. Notwithstanding all this, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and its divine

³ 2 Timothy 3:16

⁴ Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:2

⁵ 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:9

authority is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.⁶

6. The whole counsel of God concerning everything necessary for his glory, man's salvation, faith, and life is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from it. Nothing, neither man's tradition nor personal revelations, is to be added to Scripture. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for a saving understanding of what is revealed in the Word and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the church, common to human actions and administrations that are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian wisdom according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.⁷

7. Not all parts of Scripture are equally clear, and not all people have an equal understanding of the Bible. Yet, all things necessary to know, believe, and observe for salvation are clear enough in the Scriptures that both the educated and uneducated may understand them sufficiently by the use of normal methods of interpretation.⁸

8. The original manuscripts, written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, are inspired and authoritative. These are now lost to us; we nonetheless possess a near-perfect duplication of them today in our best original language texts. Therefore, these can be trusted as authentic and the final authority for all religious controversies in the church. Yet, as these original languages are not known to all the people of God, who have a right to and interest in the Scriptures and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them, they are to be translated into the native language of every people, so, with the Word of God dwelling richly in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner and through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures have hope.⁹

⁶ John 16:13,14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20, 27

⁷ 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:8,9; John 6:45; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12; 1 Corinthians 11:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 14:26,40

⁸ 2 Peter 3:16; Psalms 19:7; Psalms 119:130

⁹ Romans 3:2; Isaiah 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39; 1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28; Colossians 3:16
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9. The infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself; therefore, when there is a question about the true and full intention of any Scripture (there is one, not many), it must be clarified by other passages that speak more clearly.¹⁰

10. The final judge for the examination and judgment of all religious controversies, decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits can be no other than Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit. Our faith must rest when Scripture speaks.¹¹

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16

¹¹ Matthew 22:29, 31, 32; Ephesians 2:20; Acts 28:23

2. God and the Holy Trinity

1. The Lord, our God, is one, the only living and true God. He exists in and of himself; he is infinite in being and perfection; his essence cannot be comprehended by anyone but himself; he is a perfectly pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions. He alone has immortality, dwelling in the light no one can approach. He is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, entirely infinite, completely holy, fully wise, totally free, and absolute. He works all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and perfectly righteous will for his glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful, and long-suffering. He is abundant in goodness and truth and forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him and is entirely just and to be feared in his judgments. He hates all sin and will by no means clear the guilty.¹²

2. Having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, God alone is all-sufficient. He does not need any creature that he has made, nor does his glory come from them, but he demonstrates his glory in what he does in them, by them, to them, and for them. He alone is the fountain of all being; all things are of him, through him, and to him. He has absolute sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or to them whatever he pleases. He sees all things so that nothing is hidden from him. His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent of all created things, so that nothing is contingent or uncertain to him. He is absolutely holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. He is due all worship, service, and obedience that creatures owe to their Creator, and whatever else he is pleased to require of them.¹³

¹² 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6; Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 48:12; Exodus 3:14; John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Deuteronomy 4:15, 16; Malachi 3:6; 1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:23; Psalms 90:2; Genesis 17:1; Isaiah 6:3; Psalms 115:3; Isaiah 46:10; Proverbs 16:4; Romans 11:36; Exodus 34:6, 7; Hebrews 11:6; Nehemiah 9:32, 33; Psalms 5:5, 6; Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1:2, 3

¹³ John 5:26; Psalms 148:13; Psalms 119:68; Job 22:2, 3; Romans 11:34-36; Daniel 4:25, 34, 35; Hebrews 4:13; Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:18; Psalms 145:17; Revelation 5:12-14

3. In this divine and infinite Being, there are three persons: the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are of one substance, power, and eternity. Each has the whole divine essence, yet they do not divide it. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Yet, all are infinite, without beginning, and are, therefore, one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations. This doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God and comfortable dependence on him.¹⁴

¹⁴ 1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Exodus 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:14,18; John 15:26; Galatians 4:6
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3. God's Decree

1. God has decreed in himself from all eternity all things, whatever comes to pass, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably. Yet he is neither the author of sin nor has fellowship with anyone in sin. Nor does he violate the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away but rather established. In this, his wisdom is displayed in directing all things, as is his power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.¹⁵

2. Although God knows everything that may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet His decree is not the result of what he foresaw or that which would come to pass upon such conditions.¹⁶

3. By the decree of God for the demonstration of his glory, some men and angels are predestined, or foreordained, to eternal life through Jesus Christ to the praise of his glorious grace, others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation to the praise of his glorious justice.¹⁷

4. These angels and men thus predestined and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.¹⁸

5. Those of mankind who are predestined to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, has chosen in Christ to everlasting glory out of his mere free grace and love without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him to it.¹⁹

¹⁵ Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 6:17; Romans 9:15, 18; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5–6; Acts 4:27, 28; John 19:11; Numbers 23:19; Ephesians 1:3–5

¹⁶ Acts 15:18; Romans 9:11, 13, 16, 18

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 5:21; Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:5, 6; Romans 9:22, 23; Jude 4

¹⁸ 2 Timothy 2:19; John 13:18

¹⁹ Ephesians 1:4, 9, 11; Romans 8:30; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Romans 9:13, 16; Ephesians 2:5, 12

6. As God has appointed the elect to glory, so he has by the eternal and most free purpose of his will foreordained all the means to it. As a result, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith to salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.²⁰

7. The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care that men obedient to the will of God as revealed in his Word may, from the certainty of their effectual calling, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine be a source of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.²¹

²⁰ 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10; Romans 8:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:5; John 10:26; John 17:9; John 6:64

²¹ 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5; 2 Peter 1:10; Ephesians 1:6; Romans 11:33; Romans 11:5, 6, 20; Luke 10:20
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4. Creation

1. In the beginning, it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the demonstration of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness to create, or make out of nothing, the world and all things in it, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days and all very good.²²

2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female. He created them with reasonable and immortal souls, making them fit for that life to God for which they were created. They were made in the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. The law of God was written in their hearts, along with the power to fulfill it. Yet there remained a possibility of transgressing God's law since they had liberty of their own will that was subject to change.²³

3. Besides the law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and while they kept this command they were happy in their communion with God and had dominion over the creatures.²⁴

²² John 1:2, 3; Hebrews 1:2; Job 26:13; Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:31

²³ Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 1:26; Romans 2:14–15; Genesis 3:6

²⁴ Genesis 2:17; Genesis 1:26, 28

5. Man

1. God created man, male and female, by special acts of divine creation. Man alone of all creation is in the image and likeness of God. Man was given dominion over all of creation and commanded to fill the earth. Though the fall distorts the image of God in man, it is not eradicated. In Christ, the image is progressively restored and his people shall become more fully conformed to the divine design.²⁵

2. Male and female are divinely-ordered sexes, designed and assigned by God for complementary roles. Both men and women are created in the image of God, equal in dignity and worth. Adam was created by God from the dust of the earth. Eve was created by God from Adam's rib, as a helper suitable to Adam. The Sovereign Lord of history creates each person male or female, and inherent in his design are good purposes for each person.²⁶

3. Jesus Christ, as the God-man, united both full humanity and fully deity in his person. In him, humanity reached its fullest expression, and through his Spirit, all of his people are empowered to live for his glory. At his resurrection, he received a glorified body, the firstfruits of the resurrection. Upon his return, his people will likewise receive glorified bodies, and they shall enjoy his presence with glorified bodies and souls made perfect forever.²⁷

²⁵ Gen 1:26-31; Gen 2:5-24; Gen 9:6; Col 1:21

²⁶ Gen 1:26-27; 2:5-7, 18-24

²⁷ Matt 1:23; Luke 1:26-35; Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:20-23, 50-57; Rev 21:1-5

6. Divine Providence

1. God, the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures and things from the greatest even to the least by his most wise and holy providence to the end for which they were created according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of his own will. This is all to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.²⁸

2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly so that there is not anything befalls any by chance or without his providence, yet by the same providence he orders them to happen according to the nature of second causes either necessarily, freely, or contingently.²⁹

3. God in his ordinary providence makes use of means, yet he is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure.³⁰

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far demonstrate themselves in his providence that it extends even to the Fall of Man and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also he most wisely and powerfully binds and otherwise orders and governs in a manifold administration to his most holy ends; 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.³¹

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God often leaves his own children for a season to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts to chastise them for their former sins or to reveal to them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts that they may be humbled, and to raise them to a

²⁸ Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:11; Isaiah 46:10, 11; Psalms 135:6; Matthew 10:29-31; Ephesians 1:11

²⁹ Acts 2:23; Proverbs 16:33; Genesis 8:22

³⁰ Acts 27:31, 44; Isaiah 55:10, 11; Hosea 1:7; Romans 4:19-21; Daniel 3:27

³¹ Romans 11:32-34; 2 Samuel 24:1, 1 Chronicles 21:1; 2 Kings 19:28; Psalms 76:10; Genesis 1:20; Isaiah 10:6, 7, 12; Psalms 1:21; 1 John 2:16; James 1:13-14, 17; Ps 50:21.

more close and constant dependence for their support on God and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin and for other just and holy ends. Thus, whatever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory and their good.³²

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin blinds and hardens; from them he not only withholds his grace, by which they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes an occasion of sin; and in addition, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, by which it comes to pass that they harden themselves under those means which God uses for the softening of others.³³

7. As the providence of God in general reaches to all creatures, so after a more special manner it takes care of his church and disposes all things for its good.³⁴

³² 2 Chronicles 32:25, 26, 31; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Romans 8:28

³³ Romans 1:24-26, 28; Romans 11:7, 8; Deuteronomy 29:4; Matthew 13:12; Deuteronomy 2:30; 2 Kings 8:12, 13; Psalms 81:11, 12; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Exodus 8:15, 32; Isaiah 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 2:7, 8

³⁴ 1 Timothy 4:10; Amos 9:8, 9; Isaiah 43:3-5

7. The Fall of Man, Sin, and Its Punishment

1. God created man upright and perfect and gave him a righteous law, which secured his life had he kept it and threatened death if he broke it. Yet Adam did not live long in this honor. Satan used the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, and by her, seduced Adam. Adam, without any compulsion, willfully transgressed the law of their creation and the command given to them in eating the forbidden fruit. God was pleased to permit this according to his wise and holy counsel, having purposed to direct it to his own glory.³⁵

2. By this sin our first parents fell from their original righteousness and communion with God. We fell in them, for by it, death came upon all. All became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.³⁶

3. By God's appointment they were the root and stood in the place and stead of all mankind. The guilt of this sin was imputed and their corrupted nature passed on to all future generations descending from them by ordinary reproduction. All are now conceived in sin and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries: spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus sets them free.³⁷

4. All actual transgressions proceed from this original corruption by which we are utterly unwilling, disabled, and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil.³⁸

5. The corruption of nature, during this life, remains in those that are regenerated. Although it is pardoned and mortified through Christ, yet both this corrupt nature and all actions arising from it are truly and properly sin.³⁹

³⁵ Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 3:12,13; 2 Corinthians 11:3

³⁶ Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12, etc; Titus 1:15; Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-19

³⁷ Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 49; Psalms 51:5; Job 14:4; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 6:20
Romans 5:12; Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 Thessalonians 1:10

³⁸ Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21; James 1:14, 15; Matthew 15:19

³⁹ Romans 7:18,23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8; Romans 7:23-25; Galatians 5:17

8. God's Covenant of Grace

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life except by some voluntary condescension on God's part. He has been pleased to express this by way of covenant.⁴⁰

2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam and in him to his posterity, upon the condition of perfect and personal obedience.⁴¹

3. Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace. In this, he freely offers life and salvation to sinners by Jesus Christ. He requires of them faith in him that they may be saved. He promises to give his Holy Spirit to all those that are ordained to eternal life to make them willing and able to believe.⁴²

4. This covenant is revealed in the gospel, first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman and afterward by further steps until the full discovery of it was completed in the New Testament. This salvation is founded in the eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect. It is by the grace of this covenant alone that all the future generations of fallen Adam who were ever saved have obtained life and blessed immortality. For man is now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocence.⁴³

⁴⁰ Luke 17:10; Job 35:7,8

⁴¹ Genesis 2:16-17

⁴² Genesis 2:17; Galatians 3:10; Romans 3:20, 21; Romans 8:3; Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:16; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; John 6:44, 45; Psalms 110:3

⁴³ Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 11:6, 13; Romans 4:1, 2, &c.; Acts 4:12; John 8:56

9. Christ the Mediator

1. It pleased God in his eternal purpose to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man. Jesus is ordained as the prophet, priest, and king. He is the head and Savior of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world. From all eternity, God gave a people to be his seed and to be by him, in time, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.⁴⁴

2. The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, is the true and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things he has made. When the fullness of time had come, he took upon himself man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities of it, yet without sin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary when the Holy Spirit came down upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. So he was born of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures. Two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. This person is truly God and truly man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.⁴⁵

3. The Lord Jesus in his human nature thus united to the divine, in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure. In him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and it pleased the Father that in Christ all the fullness should dwell. This was so that being holy, meek, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of mediator and guarantor. He did not grasp this office but was called by his Father to

⁴⁴ Isaiah 42:1; 1 Peter 1:19, 20; Acts 3:22; Hebrews 5:5, 6; Psalms 2:6; Luke 1:33; Ephesians 1:22, 23; Hebrews 1:2; Acts 17:31; Isaiah 53:10; John 17:6; Romans 8:30

⁴⁵ John 1:14; Galatians 4:4; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14, 16, 17; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 1:22, 23; Luke 1:27, 31, 35; Romans 9:5; 1 Timothy 2:5

it. His Father also put all power and judgment in his hand and commanded him to execute these.⁴⁶

4. The Lord Jesus took this office most willingly. So that he might discharge it, he was made under the law and perfectly fulfilled it. He underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have endured and suffered, being made sin and a curse for us. He endured very grievous sorrows in his soul and very painful sufferings in his body. He was crucified, died, and remained in the state of the dead, yet saw no corruption. On the third day he rose from the dead with the same body in which he suffered with which he also ascended into heaven. He sits there at the right hand of his Father making intercession and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world.⁴⁷

5. By his perfect obedience and sacrifice offered up to God once and for all through the eternal Spirit, the Lord Jesus has fully satisfied the justice of God. And through this, he also procured reconciliation and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father has given to him.⁴⁸

6. Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ until after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit of it were given to the elect in all ages. This was successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices where he was revealed and signified to be the seed which should bruise the serpent's head, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, being the same yesterday, today, and forever.⁴⁹

7. Christ in the work of mediation acts according to both natures by each nature doing that which is proper to itself. Yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that

⁴⁶ Psalms 45:7; Acts 10:38; John 3:34; Colossians 2:3; Colossians 1:19; Hebrews 7:26; John 1:14; Hebrews 7:22; Hebrews 5:5; John 5:22, 27; Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:36

⁴⁷ Psalms 16:10; Psalms 40:7, 8; Hebrews 10:5-10; John 10:18; Gal 4:4; Matthew 3:15; Galatians 3:13; Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 26:37, 38; Luke 22:44; Matthew 27:46; Acts 13:37; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; John 20:25, 27; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24; Acts 10:42; Romans 14:9, 10; Acts 1:11; 2 Peter 2:4

⁴⁸ Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:14; Romans 3:25, 26; John 17:2; Hebrews 9:15

⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:10; Hebrews 4:2; 1 Peter 1:10, 11; Revelation 13:8; Hebrews 13:8

which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.⁵⁰

8. To all those for whom Christ has obtained eternal redemption, he certainly and effectually applies and communicates this redemption and makes intercession for them. He unites them to himself by His Spirit, reveals to them in and by his Word the mystery of salvation, and persuades them to believe and obey. He governs their hearts by his Word and Spirit and overcomes all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are entirely consistent to his wonderful and unsearchable providence. All this is of free and absolute grace without any condition foreseen in them to procure it.⁵¹

9. This office of mediator between God and man is exclusively Christ's. He is the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God. This may not be either in whole or any part, transferred from him to any other.⁵²

10. This number and order of offices are necessary. For in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of his prophetic office. In respect of our alienation from God and imperfection of the best of our service, we need his priestly office to reconcile us and present us acceptable to God. In respect to our opposition to and utter inability to return to God and for our rescue and security from our spiritual adversaries, we need his kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.⁵³

⁵⁰ John 3:13; Acts 20:28

⁵¹ John 6:37; John 10:15, 16; John 17:9; Romans 5:10; John 17:6; Ephesians 1:9; 1 John 5:20; Romans 8:9, 14; Psalms 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:25, 26; John 3:8; Ephesians 1:8

⁵² 1 Timothy 2:5

⁵³ John 1:18; Colossians 1:21–22; Galatians 5:17; John 16:8; Psalms 110:3; Luke 1:74, 75

10. The Empowering Holy Spirit

1. It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Holy Spirit to be the life-giver and sustainer of the redeemed. He is the Spirit of regeneration, convicting sinners of their rebellion against God, granting them new life, and baptizing them into the Body of Christ. He is the Spirit of adoption, the guarantor of the promised redemption, and the seal of redemption unto God. He is the comforter, keeping his people in perfect peace and sanctifying them in all seasons unto the truth. He is the Spirit of love, securing the disciples in the love of the Father poured out upon them. He is the Spirit of freedom and fellowship. He is the Spirit of holiness.⁵⁴

2. The Holy Spirit of God, the third person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the fullness of the love between the Father and the Son, of one substance and co-equal with him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things he has made, did, when the fullness of time was come, conceive the Lord Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He empowered the Son throughout his earthly ministry, working to fulfill all of the purposes of the Godhead in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁵

3. Near the conclusion of his earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit upon his disciples that he might lead them into all truth, empower them for witness, and sanctify them in the truth. He is the Spirit of unity within the church of Christ. He is, indeed, the Spirit of Christ.⁵⁶

4. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in fulfillment of the promises of God under the Old Testament. He has united all persons who believe in Christ, from every nation, into the Church. He works still in the world to convict, regenerate and sanctify sinners, granting them new life and faith so that they might believe in Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Galatians 4:6; 5:18; Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 3:17; 5:5; 13:14; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.

⁵⁵ Romans 1:4; Galatians 4:29; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 3:5.

⁵⁶ John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:21.

⁵⁷ Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 4:4; 1 John 4:13.

5. He is the Spirit of the New Covenant, enlivening and empowering all the elect to know the Lord, to bear his fruits, and to serve one another in the church for mutual edification. He blows where he wishes, both enlivening the elect through the proclamation of the gospel and empowering them for service according to the sovereign purposes of the triune God.⁵⁸

6. The gifts of the Spirit are given freely by God for the good of his people. He gives gifts according to his good purposes and calls his disciples to earnestly desire these gifts. Both the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are granted to each Christian, testifying to the love, goodness, and almighty power of our God in transforming his people into his likeness. These gifts are to be earnestly desired in order that the church might be edified. They were granted unto the church until the Lord shall return.⁵⁹

7. All the gifts of the Spirit listed in the New Testament are available for the church today and should be earnestly desired and exercised for the edification of the church and the advance of the gospel.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 3:24.

⁵⁹ Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-16.

⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:1; Ephesians 4:11-13.

11. Free Will

1. God has endowed the will of man with a natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, so that it is neither forced nor, by any necessity of nature, determined to do good or evil.⁶¹

2. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God. But it was unstable so that he might fall from it.⁶²

3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. So a natural man is altogether averse from that good and dead in sin. He is not able by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself for it.⁶³

4. When God converts a sinner and transfers him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage under sin. God's grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good. However, due to his remaining corruptions, he does not perfectly nor exclusively will that which is good, but he also wills that which is evil.⁶⁴

5. Only in the state of glory will the will of man be made perfectly and immutably free to good alone.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Matthew 17:12; James 1:14; Deuteronomy 30:19

⁶² Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 3:6

⁶³ Romans 5:6; Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Titus 3:3-5; John 6:44

⁶⁴ Colossians 1:13; John 8:36; Philippians 2:13; Romans 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 23; Galatians 5:17

⁶⁵ Ephesians 4:13

12. Effectual Calling

1. Those whom God has predestined to life, he is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. He effectually calls them by his Word and Spirit out of their natural state of sin and death, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God. He takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. He renews their wills and by his almighty power causes them to do what is good. He effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.⁶⁶

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man nor from any power or agency in him. Being dead in sins and trespasses, he is wholly passive in this until being born again and renewed by the Holy Spirit. He is thus enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it. This is by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.⁶⁷

3. Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. The Spirit works when, where, and how he pleases. So also are all elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.⁶⁸

4. Others who are not elect, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word and may have some common operations of the Spirit, but are not effectually drawn by the Father, will neither come to Christ nor can come to Christ. Therefore they cannot be saved, much less men who do not receive the Christian religion cannot be saved, though they so diligently frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of whatever religion they profess.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Romans 8:30; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:10, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; Ephesians 2:1-6; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:17, 18; Ezekiel 36:26; Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:27; Ephesians 1:19; Psalm 110:3; Song of Solomon 1:4

⁶⁷ 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:5; John 5:25; Ephesians 1:19, 20

⁶⁸ John 3:3, 5, 6; John 3:8

⁶⁹ Matthew 22:14; Matthew 13:20, 21; Hebrews 6:4, 5; John 6:44, 45, 65; 1 John 2:24, 25; Acts 4:12; John 4:22; John 17:3

13. Justification

1. Those whom God effectually calls, he also freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous. This is not for anything done in them or done by them but for Christ's sake alone. They are not made righteous by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other gospel obedience to them. They are made righteous by imputing Christ's active obedience to the whole law and passive obedience in his death by faith. This faith they have is not of themselves. It is the gift of God.⁷⁰

2. Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness is the only instrument of justification. Yet it is not alone in the person justified but is always accompanied with all other saving graces. It is not a dead faith but works by love.⁷¹

3. Christ by his obedience and death fully paid the debt of all those that are justified. By his sacrifice in the blood of his cross in their place, he underwent the penalty due to them and so made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf. Since His obedience and satisfaction were accepted in their stead, their justification is wholly of free grace, for he was given freely by the Father for them, not for anything in them. This was so that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.⁷²

4. From all eternity God decreed to justify all the elect, and Christ, in the fullness of time, died for their sins and rose again for their justification. Nevertheless, they are not justified personally until the Holy Spirit actually applies Christ to them in due time.⁷³

⁷⁰ Romans 3:24; Romans 8:30; Romans 4:5-8; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; Romans 5:17-19; Philippians 3:8, 9; Ephesians 2:8-10; John 1:12; Romans 5:17

⁷¹ Romans 3:28; Galatians 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26

⁷² Hebrews 10:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Isaiah 53:5, 6; Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:26; Ephesians 1:6,7; Ephesians 2:7

⁷³ Galatians 3:8; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Timothy 2:6; Romans 4:25; Colossians 1:21,22; Titus 3:4-7

5. God continues to forgive the sins of those that are justified and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure. In that condition, they will not usually have the light of his countenance restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, seek pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.⁷⁴

6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9; John 10:28; Psalms 89:31-33; Psalms 32:5; Psalms 51; Matthew 26:75

⁷⁵ Galatians 3:9; Romans 4:22-24

14. Adoption

1. God has graciously guaranteed the gift of adoption to all those who are justified, for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ. By this, they are numbered with and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God. They have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, and have access to the throne of grace with boldness. They are enabled to cry, “Abba, Father.” They are pitied, protected, provided for, and disciplined by him as by a Father. They are never cast off but sealed to the day of redemption and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 4:4, 5; John 1:12; Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 3:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; Psalms 103:13; Proverbs 14:26; 1 Peter 5:7; Hebrews 12:6; Isaiah 54:8, 9; Lamentations 3:31; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 1:14; Hebrews 6:12

15. Sanctification

1. Those who are united to Christ, effectually called and regenerated, have a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection. They are also further sanctified, really and personally, through the same virtue, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them. The dominion of the whole body of sin is therefore destroyed and its various lusts are more and more weakened and put to death. Those who are united to Christ are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces so that they practice true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.⁷⁷

2. This sanctification is throughout the whole person, yet imperfect in this life. Some remnants of corruption still abide in every part, from which arises a continual and irreconcilable war—the desires of the flesh against the desires of the Spirit and those of the Spirit against those of the flesh.⁷⁸

3. In this war, the remaining corruption may prevail for a time, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part will overcome. Thus the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, pressing after a heavenly life, in gospel obedience to all the commands which Christ, as Head and King, has prescribed them in His Word.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Acts 20:32; Romans 6:5, 6; John 17:17; Ephesians 3:16-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-23; Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 1:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14

⁷⁸ 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Romans 7:18, 23; Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11

⁷⁹ Romans 7:23; Romans 6:14; Ephesians 4:15, 16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 3:1–8.

16. Saving Faith

1. The grace of faith is a work of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of the elect, where they are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls. This grace of faith is ordinarily brought about by the ministry of the Word. It is also increased and strengthened by the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, prayer, and other means appointed by God.⁸⁰

2. By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the Word as the authority of God himself. A Christian also perceives an excellency with respect to it above all other writings and all things in the world. For the Word bears forth the glory of God in His attributes, the excellency of Christ in His nature and offices, and the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit in His workings and operations. So the Christian is enabled to cast his soul upon the truth that he believes. He also acts differently based on what each particular passage contains: obeying the commands, trembling at the warnings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith have immediate relation to Christ, accepting, receiving, and resting upon him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.⁸¹

3. This faith varies in degree and may be weak or strong. Yet even in the least degree it is different in kind or nature, as in all other saving grace, from the faith and common grace of hypocrites. Therefore, though it may be many times assailed and weakened, yet it gets the victory, growing up in many people to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.⁸²

⁸⁰ 2 Corinthians 4:13; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 10:14, 17; Luke 17:5; 1 Peter 2:2; Acts 20:32

⁸¹ Acts 24:14; Psalms 27:7-10; Psalms 119:72; 2 Timothy 1:12; John 14:14; Isaiah 66:2; Hebrews 11:13; John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Galatians 2:20; Acts 15:11

⁸² Hebrews 5:13, 14; Matthew 6:30; Romans 4:19, 20; 2 Peter 1:1; Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 5:4, 5; Hebrews 6:11, 12; Colossians 2:2; Hebrews 12:2

17. Repentance to Life and Salvation

1. The faith that leads to salvation is also a faith that leads to true repentance. There is no saving faith that does not lead to true repentance and no true repentance that does not spring from saving faith. In their effectual calling, God gives the elect repentance unto life. This includes even those who have lived some time in the state of nature, and served various lusts and pleasures while in it.⁸³

2. There is no one who does good and does not sin. Even the best of men may fall into great sins and provocations, through the power and deceitfulness of their corruption dwelling in them, with the prevalence of temptation. But God has, in the covenant of grace, mercifully provided that believers so sinning and falling are renewed through repentance to salvation.⁸⁴

3. This saving repentance is an evangelical grace by which a person by the Holy Spirit is made aware of the numerous evils of his sin and, by faith in Christ, humbles himself for his sin with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, praying for pardon and strength of grace. By the supply of the Spirit, this person aims and endeavors to walk before God in a well-pleasing way in all things.⁸⁵

4. Repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives on the account of the body of death and its sinful desires and actions. So it is every man's duty to repent specifically of his particular known sins.⁸⁶

5. In the covenant of grace, God has made full provision through Christ for the preservation of believers to salvation. Although there is no sin so small that it does not deserve damnation, yet there is no sin so great that it would bring damnation on them that repent. This makes the constant preaching of repentance necessary.⁸⁷

⁸³ Titus 3:2-5, Mark 1:15; Eph 2:8-10; James 2:17

⁸⁴ Ecclesiastes 7:20; Luke 22:31, 32

⁸⁵ Zechariah 12:10; Acts 11:18; Ezekiel 36:31; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Psalms 119:6; Psalms 119:128

⁸⁶ Luke 19:8; 1 Timothy 1:13, 15

⁸⁷ Romans 6:23; Isaiah 1:16-18 Isaiah 55:7

18. Good Works

1. Good works are only those which God has commanded in his Holy Word. Works which are without such warrant are devised by men out of blind zeal or on a pretense of good intentions but are not truly good works.⁸⁸
2. These good works done in obedience to God's commandments are the fruits and evidence of true and lively faith. By them, believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brothers and sisters, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God. They are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, that having their fruit which leads to holiness, they may have eternal life at the end.⁸⁹
3. Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. Besides the graces they have already received and so that they may be enabled to do good works, there is an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit necessary to work in them to will and to do for his good pleasure. Yet they are not, as a result, to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty without a special motion of the Spirit. But, they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.⁹⁰
4. Even they, who in their obedience, attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life are far from being able to pay back beyond what they owe or to do more than God requires. For they fall short of much they are duty-bound to do.⁹¹
5. By our best works, we cannot merit pardon of sin or eternal life at the hand of God. This is due to the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come, and the infinite distance that is between us and God. By these works, we can neither profit nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins. But when we have done all

⁸⁸ Micah 6:8; Hebrews 13:21; Matthew 15:9; Isaiah 29:13

⁸⁹ James 2:18, 22; Psalms 116:12, 13; 1 John 2:3, 5; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Matthew 5:16; 1 Timothy 6:1; 1 Peter 2:15; Philippians 1:11; Ephesians 2:10; Romans 6:22

⁹⁰ John 15:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Philippians 2:13; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 6:11, 12; Isaiah 64:7

⁹¹ Job 9:2, 3; Galatians 5:17; Luke 17:10

we can, we have only done our duty and are unprofitable servants. These works, as they are good they proceed from his Spirit, but as they are worked by us they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of God's punishment.⁹²

6. Nevertheless just as the persons of believers are accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him. They are not accepted as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unproveable in God's sight, but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, even though it is accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.⁹³

7. Although works done by unregenerate men may be things which God commands and of good use to both themselves and others, yet because they do not proceed from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the Word, nor to a right end, to the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God. Nor can they make a man ready to receive grace from God, and yet the neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.⁹⁴

⁹² Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 4:6; Galatians 5:22, 23; Isaiah 64:6; Psalms 143:2

⁹³ Ephesians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5; Matthew 25:21, 23; Hebrews 6:10

⁹⁴ 2 Kings 10:30; 1 Kings 21:27, 29; Genesis 4:5; Hebrews 11:4, 6; 1 Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 6:2, 5; Amos 5:21, 22; Romans 9:16; Titus 3:5; Job 21:14, 15; Matthew 25:41-43

19. The Perseverance of the Saints

1. To those whom God has accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect, they can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace but will certainly persevere to the end. They are eternally saved, for the gifts and callings of God are irreversible. Consequently, he still brings life to and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit which incline to immortality. Though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, these shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened to. Notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet he is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God to salvation. There they shall enjoy their purchased possession, having been engraved upon the palms of his hands and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity.⁹⁵

2. This perseverance of the saints depends not on their own free will but on the immutability of the decree of election that flows from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father. It flows from the oath of God and depends on the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and union with him, on the abiding of his Spirit, the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace. From all of these the certainty and infallibility of this perseverance also arises.⁹⁶

3. Though they may fall into grievous sin and continue for a time in it, through the temptation of Satan and of the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation. Through this they may incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves. Yet they

⁹⁵ John 10:28, 29; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 John 2:19; Psalms 89:31, 32; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Malachi 3:6

⁹⁶ Romans 8:30 Romans 9:11, 16; Romans 5:9, 10; John 14:19; Hebrews 6:17, 18; 1 John 3:9; Jeremiah 32:40

will renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Matthew 26:70, 72, 74; Isaiah 64:5, 9; Ephesians 4:30; Psalms 51:10, 12; Psalms 32:3, 4; 2 Samuel 12:14; Luke 22:32, 61, 62
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20. The Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and fleshly presumptions of being in the favor of God and state of salvation, their hope will perish. Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace. They can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God and this hope will never make them ashamed.⁹⁸

2. This certainty is not mere conjecture or probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel. It is also based on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit to which the promises are made, and on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God. It is a fruit of the Spirit, keeping the heart both humble and holy.⁹⁹

3. This infallible assurance is not an essential aspect of faith but a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he is partaker of it. Yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given to him by God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of means, attain this assurance. Therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, and as a result, his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, which are the proper fruits of this assurance. So this assurance is far from inclining men to licentiousness.¹⁰⁰

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation shaken, diminished, and interrupted in various ways. This can happen by negligence in preserving it, by falling into some special sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit, by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance allowing even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no

⁹⁸ Job 8:13, 14; Matthew 7:22, 23; 1 John 2:3; 1 John 3:14, 18, 19, 21, 24; 1 John 5:13; Romans 5:2, 5

⁹⁹ Hebrews 6:11, 19; Hebrews 6:17, 18; 2 Peter 1:4, 5, 10, 11; Romans 8:15, 16; 1 John 3:1-3

¹⁰⁰ Isaiah 50:10; Psalms 88; Psalms 77:1-12; 1 John 4:13; Hebrews 6:11, 12; Romans 5:1, 2, 5; Romans 14:17; Psalms 119:32; Romans 6:1,2; Titus 2:11, 12, 14

light. Yet they are never destitute of the seed of God and life of faith, or the love of Christ and the brethren, or the sincerity of heart and conscience of their duty. By the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived. In the meantime, by the Spirit, they are preserved from utter despair.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Song of Solomon 5:2, 3, 6; Psalms 51:8, 12, 14; Psalms 116:11; Psalms 77:7, 8; Psalms 31:22; Psalms 30:7; 1 John 3:9; Luke 22:32; Psalms 42:5, 11; Lamentations 3:26-31
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21. The Law of God¹⁰²

1. God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart and a particular command to not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By this God bound him and all his future generations to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience. God promised life upon the fulfilling of it, threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.¹⁰³
2. The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables. The four first contain our duty towards God and the other six contain our duty to man.¹⁰⁴
3. Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel ceremonial laws. These ceremonial laws contain several typical ordinances, some of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and some hold forth various instructions of moral duties. All these ceremonial laws were appointed only until the time of reformation and are now abrogated and taken away by Jesus Christ. He is the true Messiah and only law-giver and was granted power from the Father for this purpose.¹⁰⁵
4. To Israel, God also gave various judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, and now do not bind any by virtue of that institution. The general equity of these laws are of moral use only.¹⁰⁶
5. The moral law forever binds all to its obedience, including those who are justified as well as others. This obligation is not only in regard to the content of the law but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Christ

¹⁰² Trinity Fellowship Churches allow a personal exception on the understanding of the tripartite law, subject to approval by the region.

¹⁰³ Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10, 12

¹⁰⁴ Romans 2:14, 15; Deuteronomy 10:4

¹⁰⁵ Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:17; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 2:14, 16, 17; Ephesians 2:14, 16

¹⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:8-10

in the Gospel does not in any way dissolve, but much strengthens this obligation.

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6. Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works to be justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to believers as well as to others as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty. It directs and binds them to walk accordingly. Through it, they also discover the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, and so examining themselves as a result, they may come to the further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, sin. Together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience, it is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin. The law's threat of punishment serves to show what their sins deserve and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, even though they are freed from the curse and its full severity. The promises of it likewise show them God's approval of obedience and what blessings they may expect upon keeping it, though these blessings are not due to them by the law as a covenant of works. Men doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourages one and deters from the other, is not evidence of them being under the law and not under grace.¹⁰⁸

7. These uses of the law are not contrary to the grace of the Gospel but sweetly comply with it. The Spirit of Christ subdues and enables the will of man to freely and cheerfully do that which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8, 10-12; James 2:10, 11; Matthew 5:17-19; Romans 3:31

¹⁰⁸ Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:16; Romans 8:1; Romans 10:4; Romans 3:20; Romans 7:7, etc; Romans 6:12-14; 1 Peter 3:8-13

¹⁰⁹ Galatians 3:21; Ezekiel 36:27

22. The Gospel and the Extent of Its Grace

1. The covenant of works was broken by sin and made unprofitable to life, but God was pleased to give forth the promise of Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling the elect and granting them life through faith and repentance. In this promise, the substance of the gospel was revealed and through it is effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.¹¹⁰

2. This promise of Christ and salvation by him are revealed only by the Word of God. The works of creation or providence with the light of nature alone do not reveal Christ or his grace, even in a general or obscure way. Even less are men, who are destitute of the revelation of him by the promise or gospel, enabled as a result to attain saving faith or repentance.¹¹¹

3. The revelation of the gospel to sinners has been made at various times and to varying degrees with the addition of promises and commandments for the obedience required in it. The nations and persons to whom it is granted is by the sovereign will and good pleasure of God alone. It is not seized by virtue of any promise due to the improvement of men's natural abilities, nor by virtue of common light received without the gospel. None have ever done this nor can do so. Therefore, in every age, the preaching of the gospel has been granted to persons and nations, in greatly various ways to a greater or lesser extent, according to the counsel of the will of God.¹¹²

4. The gospel is the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace and is, as such, abundantly sufficient for it. However, men who are dead in trespasses may be born again, quickened or regenerated, only if there is an effectual, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit upon the whole soul, producing in them a new spiritual life. Without this, no other means will affect their conversion to God.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Genesis 3:15; Revelation 13:8

¹¹¹ Romans 1:17; Romans 10:14,15,17; Proverbs 29:18; Isaiah 25:7; Isaiah 60:2, 3

¹¹² Psalms 147:20; Acts 16:7; Romans 1:18-32

¹¹³ Psalms 110:3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:19, 20; John 6:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6

23. Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

1. The liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the rigor and curse of the law, and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation. It also consists in their free access to God and their yielding obedience to him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and a willing mind.

All which were also common to believers under the law, but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of a ceremonial law, to which the Old Testament saints were subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God than believers under the law ordinarily partook of.¹¹⁴

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any way contrary to his word or beside it in matters of faith or worship.¹¹⁵ To believe such doctrines or obey such commands out of conscience is to betray true liberty of conscience. This requiring of an implicit faith, an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.¹¹⁶

3. Those who, on the pretense of Christian liberty, practice any sin, or cherish any sinful lust, as they do as a result pervert the main design of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction, so they wholly destroy the end of Christian liberty. This end, being delivered out of the hands of all our enemies, is so that we

¹¹⁴ Galatians 3:13; Galatians 1:4; Acts 26:18; Romans 8:3; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 8:15; Luke 1:73-75; 1 John 4:18; Galatians 3:9, 14; John 7:38, 39; Hebrews 10:19-21

¹¹⁵ From the Westminster Confession of Faith

¹¹⁶ James 4:12; Romans 14:4; Acts 4:19, 29; 1 Corinthians 7:23; Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:20, 22, 23; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 1:24

might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Romans 6:1, 2; Galatians 5:13; 2 Peter 2:18, 21
Confession of Faith

24. Religious Worship, the Sabbath, and the Lord's Day

1. The light of nature shows that there is a God, who has lordship and sovereignty over all. It shows that he is just, good, and does good to all and is, therefore, to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by him alone, and is so limited by his own revealed will that he may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.¹¹⁸

2. Religious worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to him alone. Worship should not be given to angels, saints, or any other creatures. Since the fall, worship should not be given without a mediator nor in the mediation of any other but Christ alone.¹¹⁹

3. Prayer, with thanksgiving, is one part of worship and is required of all men by God. But so it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of the Spirit, according to his will. It is to be made with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance.¹²⁰

4. Prayer is to be made for things lawful and for all sorts of men living or that will live in the future. But prayer should not be made for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin to death.¹²¹

5. 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 thankfulness in our hearts to the Lord, as well as the administration

¹¹⁸ Jeremiah 10:7; Mark 12:33; Deuteronomy 12:32; Exodus 20:4-6

¹¹⁹ Matthew 4:9, 10; John 6:23; Matthew 28:19; Romans 1:25; Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10; John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5

¹²⁰ Psalms 95:1-7; Psalms 65:2; John 14:13, 14; Romans 8:26; 1 John 5:14

¹²¹ 1 Timothy 2:1, 2; 2 Samuel 7:29; 2 Samuel 12:21-23; 1 John 5:16

of baptism and the Lord's supper, the giving of tithes and offerings, expressions of fellowship and Christian affection, stirring up one another to love and good works, and the exercise of spiritual gifts are all parts of the religious worship of God. These are to be performed in obedience to him with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear. Moreover, solemn humbling with fastings and thanksgivings on special occasions ought to be used in a holy and religious manner.¹²²

6. Under the gospel, neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship is now restricted to or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed or towards which it is directed. But God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself, and more so solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly nor wilfully to be neglected or forsaken when God by his word or providence calls his people to them.¹²³

7. On the seventh day of Creation, our God rested from all his labor and bids us to receive this Sabbath rest as a gift, for the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. This Sabbath was commanded through the Mosaic law to work six days and rest on the seventh. The New Testament promises a Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God. We should therefore strive to enter that rest by hearing his voice, not hardening our hearts, resting from our labors, and putting our faith and trust in Jesus, our true rest, rather than striving in our flesh.¹²⁴

8. In the New Testament, the church began to gather on the first day of the week (Sunday) for its corporate worship. This is commonly referred to as "the Lord's Day" in honor of the resurrection of our Savior. It is commendable to reserve this day for corporate and private worship.¹²⁵

¹²² 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 8:18; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 9:8-14; 11:26; 12-14; 16:1-2, 20; Esther 4:16; Joel 2:12; Exodus 15:1-19, Psalm 107; Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 5:18-20

¹²³ John 4:21; Malachi 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:8; Acts 10:2; Matthew 6:11; Psalms 55:17; Matthew 6:6; Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42

¹²⁴ Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:7, 9; Mark 2:27; Hebrews 3:10-11

¹²⁵ Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10

25. Oaths and Vows

1. An oath is a part of religious worship, wherein the person swearing in truth, righteousness, and judgment, solemnly calls God to witness what he promises and to judge him according to the truth or falseness of it.¹²⁶
2. The name of God is the only name by which men ought to swear. It is to be used with all holy fear and reverence. Therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and dreadful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred. Yet, as in a matter of weight and moment, an oath is warranted by the word of God, under the New Testament, as well as under the Old. So an oath being imposed by lawful authority in such matters ought to be taken.¹²⁷
3. Whoever takes an oath warranted by the Word of God, should duly consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and so affirm nothing but what he knows to be the truth. For by rash, false, and vain oaths, the Lord is profaned, and for them, this land mourns.¹²⁸
4. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation.¹²⁹
5. A vow, which is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone, is to be made and performed with all religious care and faithfulness. However, monastic vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 10:20; Jeremiah 4:2; 2 Chronicles 6:22, 23

¹²⁷ Matthew 5:34, 37; James 5:12; Hebrews 6:16; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Nehemiah 13:25

¹²⁸ Leviticus 19:12; Jeremiah 23:10

¹²⁹ Psalms 24:4

¹³⁰ Psalms 76:11; Genesis 28:20-22; 1 Corinthians 7:2, 9; Ephesians 4:28; Matthew 19:11

26. Civil Officers

1. God the supreme Lord and King of all the world has ordained civil officers to be under him and over the people for his own glory and the public good. To this end, he has armed them with the power of the sword, for defense and encouragement of them that do good and for the punishment of evildoers.¹³¹

2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute civil offices when called to them. In the management of them, they should especially maintain justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each nation and commonwealth. They may, therefore, lawfully, under the New Testament, wage war on just and necessary occasions.¹³²

3. Civil officers are set up by God for the ends mentioned. We should be subject to them in all lawful things commanded by them in the Lord, not only for wrath but also for the sake of conscience. We should make supplications and prayers for civil leaders and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.¹³³

¹³¹ Romans 13:1-4

¹³² 2 Samuel 23:3; Psalms 82:3, 4; Luke 3:14

¹³³ Romans 13:5-7; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2

27. Marriage

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. It is not lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.¹³⁴

2. God instituted marriage as a one-flesh union between one man and one woman. All other attempts at sexual unions are illegitimate and contrary to God's good design. Within marriage, husbands are called to exercise loving headship in imitation of Christ and his love for the church. Wives are called to exercise respectful submission in imitation of the church in relation to Christ. Those who are single are called to loving friendships and dedicated service within the body of Christ.¹³⁵

3. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with children, and for the prevention of uncleanness.¹³⁶

4. It is lawful for Christians and non-Christians to marry, so long as they are able to enter that union voluntarily in the right state of mind. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry in the Lord. Therefore those who profess the true religion should not marry unbelievers or idolaters. Neither should those who are godly be unequally yoked by marrying with those who are wicked in their life or maintain damnable heresy.¹³⁷

5. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of family relation forbidden in the Word. Nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful, by any law of man or consent of parties, which would allow those persons to live together as man and wife.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:15; Matthew 19:5,6

¹³⁵ Gen 2:18-24; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Cor 7:25-35

¹³⁶ Genesis 2:18; Genesis 1:28; 1 Corinthians 7:2, 9

¹³⁷ Hebrews 13:4; 1 Timothy 4:3; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Nehemiah 13:25-27

¹³⁸ Leviticus 18; Mark 6:18; 1 Corinthians 5:1

28. The Church

1. The catholic or universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible. The universal church consists of the whole number of the elect from the past, present, and future. They will be gathered into one, under Christ, its head. The church is the spouse, the body, and the fullness of him who fills all in all.¹³⁹

2. All persons throughout the world who profess the faith of the gospel and obedience to God by Christ according to it, who have not destroyed their own profession by any foundational errors or unholiness are and may be called visible saints. Individual congregations ought to be composed of those who profess such faith.¹⁴⁰

3. The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error. Some have so degenerated so as to become no churches of Christ but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, Christ has always had and ever will have a kingdom in this world until its end, of those who believe in him and profess his name.¹⁴¹

4. By the appointment of the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, who is bestowed a supreme and sovereign authority, with all power for the calling, institution, order, and government of the church.¹⁴²

5. The Lord Jesus, in the execution of this power by which he is so entrusted, calls those that are given to him by his Father out of the world to himself, through the ministry of his word, by his Spirit. He calls them, that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience, which he prescribes to them in his word. He commands those thus called to walk together in particular communities, or

¹³⁹ Hebrews 12:23; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:10, 22, 23; Ephesians 5:23, 27, 32

¹⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 11:26; Romans 1:7; Ephesians 1:20-22

¹⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 5; Revelation 2; Revelation 3; Revelation 18:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12; Matthew 16:18; Psalms 72:17; Psalm 102:28; Revelation 12:17

¹⁴² Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11, 12; 2 Thessalonians 2:2-9

churches, for their mutual edification and the proper execution of public worship, which he requires of them in the world.¹⁴³

6. The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly demonstrating, and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience to the call of Christ. They willingly consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ, giving themselves up to the Lord and one to another by the will of God, in professed subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel.¹⁴⁴

7. To each of these churches thus gathered, according to the mind of Christ, declared in his word, he has given the power and authority, which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which he has instituted for them to observe along with commands and rules for the proper and right exerting and executing of that power.¹⁴⁵

8. A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members. Elders (also called overseers or pastors) and deacons are the officers appointed by Christ and are to be chosen and set apart by the church (called and gathered) for the administration of sacraments and execution of power or duty, to which he entrusts or calls them. This office is to be continued to the end of the world. For the health of the particular church, and from scriptural examples, it is ideal that there is a plurality of qualified overseers or elders. While not every church is able to have a plurality of overseers or elders, each local church should strive toward the ideal.¹⁴⁶

9. The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, to the office of elder in a church, is that he be affirmed by the church itself. He is to be solemnly set apart by prayer, with the laying on of hands by the eldership of the church, if there be any before constituted in it. Deacons should be likewise affirmed by the church and set apart by prayer, and the laying on of hands.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ John 10:16; John 12:32; Matthew 28:20; Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁴⁴ Romans. 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 2:41, 42; Acts 5:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 9:13

¹⁴⁵ Matthew 18:17, 18; 1 Corinthians 5:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8

¹⁴⁶ Acts 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14

¹⁴⁷ Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14; Acts 6:3, 5, 6; 1 Timothy 3:1-8.

10. The work of pastors is constantly to attend to the service of Christ, in his churches, in the ministry of the word and prayer, watching over their souls, as those who must give an account to him. It is incumbent on the churches to whom they minister, not only to give them all due respect but also to share with them from all their good things according to their ability. This is so that the pastors may have a comfortable supply without being themselves entangled in secular affairs, and may also be capable of exercising hospitality towards others. Such provision is required by the law of nature and by the express order of our Lord Jesus, who has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.¹⁴⁸

11. It is essential that the pastors of the churches preach the word as an extension of their office. Yet the work of preaching is not so specifically confined to them but that other men also gifted and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved and called by the church, may and ought to preach.¹⁴⁹

12. All believers are bound to join themselves to particular churches, when and where they have the opportunity, so that all who are admitted to the privileges of a church are also under its censures and government, according to the rule of Christ.¹⁵⁰

13. If any offense is taken by church members, having performed their duty required of them towards the person who offended them, they should not disturb any church-order or remove themselves from the assemblies of the church, nor administration of any sacraments, because of the account of such offense at any of their fellow members. Instead, they are to wait upon Christ in the further actions of the church.¹⁵¹

14. Each church and all the members of it are bound to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all the churches of Christ, in all places, and upon all

¹⁴⁸ Acts 6:4; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17, 18; Galatians 6:6, 7; 2 Timothy 2:4; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Corinthians 9:6-14

¹⁴⁹ Acts 11:19-21; 1 Peter 4:10, 11

¹⁵⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15

¹⁵¹ Matthew 18:15-17; Ephesians 4:2, 3

occasions to further it. Everyone within the bounds of their places and callings are to exercise their gifts and graces for the benefit of every church. Churches, when planted by the providence of God, as they enjoy opportunity and advantage for it, should hold fellowship among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.¹⁵²

15. The unity of the Church as a single body with Christ as its head should be manifest in partnership. Therefore, it is appropriate for particular churches to unite with other churches for fellowship, accountability, and cooperation in mission and training.¹⁵³

16. The exemplary council of the early church in Jerusalem commends the regular gathering of the elders of churches in partnership for various purposes.¹⁵⁴

17. Such partnerships are voluntary and are thus established by the mutual consent of the particular churches. The authority of these assemblies shall be such as is agreed upon by the churches through their ordained elders and shall pertain to such things as ordination, the discipline of elders, appeals for church discipline, and shared participation in mission.

¹⁵² Ephesians 6:18; Psalms 122:6; Romans 16:1, 2; 3 John 8-10

¹⁵³ Eph 1:22-23; 1 Cor 12:20; 1 Tim 3:15; Rom 8:29; Eph 2:22

¹⁵⁴ Acts 15

29. The Communion of Saints

1. All saints are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by his Spirit, and faith, although they are not made one person with him, but do have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. They are united to one another in love. They have communion in each other's gifts and graces and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, in an orderly way, as to bring about to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.¹⁵⁵

2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as to care for their mutual edification. They are also to aid each other in outward things according to their several abilities and necessities. This communion, according to the rule of the gospel, is to be extended to all the household of faith, even all those, who in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, but especially in the relationships in their families or churches in which they are a part, as God offers opportunity. Nevertheless, their communion with others as saints does not take away or infringe the title or propriety which each man has in his goods and possessions.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ 1 John 1:3; John 1:16; Philippians 3:10; Romans 6:5, 6; Ephesians 4:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14; Romans 1:12; 1 John 3:17, 18; Galatians 6:10

¹⁵⁶ Hebrews 10:24, 25; Hebrews 3:12, 13; Acts 11:29, 30; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27; Acts 5:4; Ephesians 4:28

30. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

1. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments which are sovereign institutions, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church until he returns.¹⁵⁷
2. These holy ordinances are practiced according to the commission of Christ and under the oversight of the elders of the church.¹⁵⁸
3. As sacraments, the Lord's Supper and baptism are visible signs and seals of an invisible grace that comes from the Lord to the recipient of the sign. Such invisible grace comes through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹
4. Due to human frailty these signs will at times be given and received inappropriately, but their meaning remains unchanged.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:26

¹⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 5:17

¹⁵⁹ Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

¹⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:27-30

31. Baptism

1. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament which is ordained by Jesus Christ. To the participant, baptism is a sign of his fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection, being grafted into Christ, remission of sins, and submission to God's lordship to live and walk in newness of life through Jesus Christ.¹⁶¹
2. Those who profess repentance towards God, faith in him, and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of this sacrament.¹⁶²
3. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, in which the participant is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶³
4. Immersion, or dipping of the person in the water, is normative for the administration of this sacrament.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27; Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4

¹⁶² Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36, 37; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12; Acts 18:8

¹⁶³ Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 8:38

¹⁶⁴ Matthew 3:16; John 3:23

32. The Lord's Supper

1. On the same night he was betrayed, the supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by him to be observed in his churches, to the end of the world, for perpetual remembrance. The Lord's Supper shows the sacrifice of Christ in his death, the sealing of all its benefits to true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, and their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe to him. It is to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him and with each other.¹⁶⁵

2. In this sacrament, Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor is any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin of the living or the dead, but there is a commemoration of that one offering up of himself by himself on the cross, once for all, and a spiritual sacrifice of all possible praise to God for this.¹⁶⁶

3. In this sacrament, the Lord Jesus has appointed his ministers to pray and bless the bread and the cup and thereby set them apart from a common to a holy use and to lead the communicants in the taking of the elements. Though elders as part of their office are to oversee the Lord's Supper, others in the church may administer the elements under their oversight.¹⁶⁷

4. The denial of the cup to the people, worshipping the elements, lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament and to the institution of Christ.¹⁶⁸

5. The outward elements in this sacrament, duly set apart to the use ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, so that truly, although in terms used figuratively, they are sometimes called by the names of the things they represent, namely, the body and blood of Christ. Although, in substance and nature, they still remain truly and only bread and wine as they were before.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17, 21

¹⁶⁶ Hebrews 9:25, 26, 28; 1 Corinthians 11:24; Matthew 26:26, 27

¹⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Timothy 5:17.

¹⁶⁸ Matthew 26:26-28; Matthew 15:9; Exodus 20:4, 5

¹⁶⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:27; 1 Corinthians 11:26-28

6. The doctrines which add a physical presence to the bread and wine, whether by saying the substance of Christ's body and blood replaces or joins them, is contrary to Scripture and subverts the nature of the sacrament.¹⁷⁰

7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then spiritually and inwardly, rather than physically, really and indeed, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death. The body and blood of Christ are not physically but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that sacrament, just as the physical elements are to their outward senses.¹⁷¹

8. All ungodly persons are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ and cannot partake of these holy mysteries without great sin while they remain in unbelief. Indeed, whoever receives it in an unworthy manner is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and eats and drinks judgment on himself.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Acts 3:21; Luke 24:6, 39; 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25

¹⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

¹⁷² 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 11:29; Matthew 7:6

33. Mission

1. The great aim of the Lord our God is the magnification of his glory for the fame of his holy name. His mission in this fallen world, and a primary means of demonstrating his glory, is the redemption of sinful persons who are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁷³

2. These redeemed persons are united not only to Christ but also to one another in local churches. The church is the community of the redeemed, and as such is called to proclaim the glories of our Savior. Both individually and as churches, his people are called to proclaim his glory in word and deed in all of their varied vocations.¹⁷⁴

3. As those who have been saved and transformed by their Savior, Christians have the privilege of joining God in his mission on the earth. As the Father sent the Son and as the Father and Son sent the Spirit, so also the church has been sent out by the triune God to make disciples of all nations. As ambassadors of the risen Lord, Christians have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation.¹⁷⁵

4. The New Testament emphasis on mission is centered on local churches. These churches are called, in partnership, to strengthen and plant other local churches. The members of these local churches are called to personal evangelism, vocational fruitfulness, and good works as an expression of their role in God's mission.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Isaiah 48:9-11; Revelation 5:1-14; Colossians 1:20; Luke 10:25-37.

¹⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Colossians 1:28

¹⁷⁵ Matthew 28:18-20; John 15:26; 20:21; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Acts 1:8.

¹⁷⁶ Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:10.

34. The State of Man after Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead

1. After death, the bodies of men return to dust and see corruption. Their souls, which have an immortal existence, do not die nor sleep but immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous are then made perfect in holiness and are received into paradise, where they are with Christ and behold the face of God in light and glory. They wait for the full redemption of their bodies. The souls of the wicked are cast into Hades where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved for the judgment of the great day. For souls separated from their bodies, Scripture acknowledges nothing besides these two places.¹⁷⁷

2. On the last day the saints which are found alive will not sleep but will be changed. All the dead will be raised up with physical, human bodies and not another, although with different qualities. These raised bodies will be united again to their souls forever.¹⁷⁸

3. By the power of Christ, the bodies of the unjust will be raised to dishonor. By his Spirit, the bodies of the just will be raised to honor and be conformed to his own glorious body.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Genesis 3:19; Acts 13:36; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6,8; Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:23; Jude 6, 7; 1 Peter 3:19; Luke 16:23, 24

¹⁷⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Job 19:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 15:42, 43

¹⁷⁹ Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29; Philippians 3:21

35. The Last Judgment

1. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, who is given all power and judgment by the Father. On that day, not only will the fallen angels be judged, but also all persons that have lived upon the earth will appear before the tribunal of Christ to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds. They will receive judgment according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.¹⁸⁰

2. The purpose of God appointing this day is to demonstrate the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect. That day also demonstrates his justice in the eternal damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient. On that day, the righteous will go into everlasting life and receive the fullness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards in the presence of the Lord. However, the wicked, who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, will be cast aside into everlasting torments and punished with everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of his power.¹⁸¹

3. Christ desires us to be certain that there will be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater comfort of the godly in their adversity. He also desires to keep the day unknown to men, so that they may shake off all fleshly security and be always watchful, because they do not know at what hour the Lord will come and may ever be prepared to say, “Come Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Amen.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Acts 17:31; John 5:22, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Jude 6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:10, 12; Matthew 25:32-46

¹⁸¹ Romans 9:22, 23; Matthew 25:21, 34; 2 Timothy 4:8; Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:48; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

¹⁸² 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7; Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-40; Revelation 22:20
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