



UNION HILL
BAPTIST CHURCH

Christian Essentials

Exploring the Fundamentals of our Faith



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The Purpose of This Document

At Union Hill Baptist Church, we want every person to clearly understand what we believe and why. This “Christian Essentials” guide is meant to help anyone build a strong foundation rooted in Scripture.

Whether you’re just beginning your walk with Christ or have followed Him for years, this resource walks through the core beliefs and practices that shape our life together at Union Hill. Everything you’ll find inside is grounded in God’s Word—the Bible is our ultimate authority, and we filter everything we do through it.

This document is part of how we live out our mission: to REACH UP to know God, REACH IN to build community, and REACH OUT to love like Jesus.

Our prayer is that this growing series will equip you to live your faith with confidence, clarity, and purpose—so no one ever has to wonder where we stand on the essentials of following Christ.

We will add to this document yearly and look forward to covering our core beliefs as well as practical Christian living. In time it will become a great reference guide, as we strive to unify the church body around sound doctrine while discipling new believers.

It’s important to know what a church believes. Brand-new believers, Christians transferring from another church, unchurched individuals curious about faith in Jesus, and everyone in between can benefit from the following pages about the fundamentals of our faith.

The Doctrine of Scripture

The Baptist Faith & Message

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Inspiration, Inerrancy, Infallibility

What does it mean that the Bible is inspired by God? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God inspired humans to record His Words. The Bible originated in the person of God. It came from His heart. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God informed humans to write it down.

What does it mean that the Bible is inerrant? There are no errors in the Bible. When the Bible says something, it means it and it is 100% true on all accounts. The Bible never contradicts itself. Human authors recorded God's Words without error. The authors themselves were humans who messed up and sinned, but they recorded Scripture without error.

What does it mean that the Bible is infallible? The Bible is incapable of error. Every word in Scripture is reliable and trustworthy, because it cannot be any other way. By faith, we trust that every word, story, concept, saying is true without defect.

The Bible Continued

I. Why is this important?

- Our entire church... Every sermon & Sunday School lesson is centered on the Bible.
- It is the Source for every doctrine that we study.
- It is God's word that gives knowledge for salvation, and the standards for Christian conduct.
- 1 Peter 3:15 - Believers are commanded to be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is within you.

2. Reliability of Holy Scripture

- Goals for all our members:
 1. That you know why only the 66 books of our Bible are considered received from God and accept by faith.
 2. Strengthen your confidence in its reliability.
 3. Increase your confidence for personal study and sanctification.
 4. Give a foundation for a defense for the sufficiency of Scripture/exclusivity.
- Is it just a good book?
 1. It is the only book inspired by God, which reveals the only way of salvation.
 2. We are obligated to obey its commands.
 3. The Bible is the standard by which/through which God revealed to man, His inspired, Holy writings, man received.

Our Role in How We Received the Bible

2 Timothy 3:14-17

- All scripture is inspired or God breathed.
 1. Spoken by God.
 2. Written by man under divine superintendence.
 3. Without waiving the writer's human intelligence, vocabulary, literary style, or personality.

2 Peter 1:19-21

- How can we be sure we hold God's word?
 1. Infallible - incapable of failing or falsehood. Unable to deceive or error because God is infallible
 2. Inerrant - actually is without error, every word (in original manuscripts). No error in doctrine, history or science. No contradictions.

What is meant by Scripture?

All scripture is breathed by God

- Infallible - incapable of failing or falsehood
- Unable to deceive or error
- Inerrant - actually is without error, every word (in original manuscripts)
- No error in doctrine, history or science
- It does not contradict itself

How can we be sure that our Protestant Bible is the inspired Word of God?

OLD TESTAMENT

- When Paul said “All scripture is God-breathed,” he had at least the Old Testament in mind because the New Testament was not complete
- What makes up our 39 Old Testament books had always been considered as divine writings by the Hebrews as all authors were trusted
- All teachings are consistent with each other
- Jesus quoted many Old Testament teachings
- The Old Testament Canon (approved scriptures) was closed by 425 BC
- Accuracy
 1. The scribes periodically counted the number of letters when copying scripture
 2. Later discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls, verify their accuracy
 3. In Paul’s time the Old Testament was established as God’s Word without dispute

NEW TESTAMENT

II Peter 3:15, 16 The Apostle Peter includes Paul’s writings as scripture and places them on the same level as Old Testament scripture

- Clearly the Apostle Paul understood himself through his apostolic authority to be producing inspired scripture
- Galatians 1:11, 12 “That what I preached to you was not from man, but I received it through revelation from Jesus Christ.
- Criteria for other New Testament books:
 1. Written by an apostle or close associate of Jesus, such as Mark, Luke, James and Jude
 2. Church Father Papias legitimized the authors because he was a trusted Church Father (60-130 AD) and knew some apostles personally
 3. Every one of our New Testament books were accepted by the Church as authentic at the time of their writing

The Bible Continued

4. Consistent with the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Old Testament (no falsehood or contradiction)
5. Recognized by the Church Fathers as canonical. Which means they were deemed worthy of being in the Bible
6. 27 books of our New Testament were recognized by Clement of Rome (probably mentioned in Phil. 4:3 and studied under Peter and the apostles) as divine in 96AD. Polycarp, Ignatius (disciple of John), Justin Martyr mentioned the canon quoted for Matthew, Luke, John in 200 AD gospels inspired. The writer was confirmed by miracles, chosen by Christ. Evidence that the book has a divine capacity to transform lives - divine ability to bring the sinner to a saving faith and Paul's epistles, referring to them as scripture - all before 170 AD
7. Many (Matthew, John, Mark - through Peter) were eye witness accounts by men who were tortured, killed and exiled without recanting their testimony.

WHAT ABOUT BOOKS THAT ARE NOT INCLUDED IN OUR BIBLE?

These books are called the Apocrypha.

- Rejected during four church councils: Laodicea, Rome, Hippo, Carthage
- By 398 AD the 66 books we have were confirmed and the apocrypha was branded a fraud
- Written between Malachi and Matthew: 1 & 2 Esdras, Jobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 & 2 Maccabes
- Were never included in the Hebrew canon of Scripture
- Were never quoted by the Lord or any New Testament writers
- Were not written by a prophet
- Contained historical, geographical & chronological errors
- Contained heretical teachings that contradicted scripture
- Some are contained in the Roman Catholic Bible, however they include things like:
 1. Prayer & Offerings for the dead
 2. Indulgencies & purgatory
 3. Atonement and salvation by almsgiving
 4. Praying to saints
- These books officially became part of the Roman Catholic Bible at the Council of Trent in 1546
 1. This same council condemned the reformation tenants of justification that we hold to. These tenants are salvation: -Sola Gratia (by), -Sola Tide (through), -Solas Christus (in), -Sola Deo Gloria (to), -Sola Scriptura (both sufficient & exclusive source of God's word).
 2. The teachings of this council go against our beliefs. The books they affirm allow salvation by other means than Jesus.

Why is Scripture Sufficient for our Lives

- Scripture alone carries God's authority
- Scripture alone is sufficient for knowledge unto salvation
- Scripture alone is the final authority on matters of the Church and Christian conduct
- Scripture was written by apostles who were chosen by our Lord to be the founders and leaders of the Church
 1. He promised the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance Christ's words and teach them all things - John 14:26
 2. No one else has had the qualification of apostle to dispense doctrine directly received from God
- The canon was closed in 96 AD and no writing or traditions afterward were inspired
- The following documents are not scripture but contain sound teaching:
 1. Creeds (apostles, Nicene Athanasian), great statements confirming what scripture teaches but not inspired
 2. Confessions (Westminster, the 1689 Baptist Faith and Message) - Summaries of Doctrine.
 3. Catechisms (Westminster Baptist Heidelberg) useful for teaching doctrine.
 4. Commentary (Luther Calvin, James M. Boice, Matthew Henry, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges) by a trusted theologian is a necessary Bible study tool
 5. Bible Dictionary, Greek Dictionary, Concordance

Closing

Scripture is the only trustworthy, authoritative, inspired word of God. Study it for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. The inspired standards in it are not changed by society. There are no other Holy/Inspired writings. Jesus Christ as taught scripture is the only source for our salvation.

Supporting Scriptures

- Exodus 24:4- ⁴Then Moses carefully wrote down all the Lord's instructions. Early the next morning Moses got up and built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Deuteronomy 4:1-2- ¹"And now, Israel, listen carefully to these decrees and regulations that I am about to teach you. Obey them so that you may live, so you may enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you. Just obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you.
- Deuteronomy 17:19- ¹⁹He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees.
- Joshua 8:34- ³⁴Joshua then read to them all the blessings and curses Moses had written in the Book of Instruction.
- Psalm 19:7-10- ⁷The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living. ⁹Reverence for the Lord is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the Lord are true; each one is fair. ¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.
- Psalm 119:11, 89, 105, 140- ¹¹I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. ⁸⁹Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven. ¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. ¹⁴⁰Your promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much.
- Isaiah 34:16- ¹⁶Search the book of the Lord, and see what he will do. Not one of these birds and animals will be missing, and none will lack a mate, for the Lord has promised this. His Spirit will make it all come true.
- Isaiah 40:8- ⁸The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."
- Jeremiah 15:16- ¹⁶When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies.

The Bible Continued

- Matthew 5:17-18- ¹⁷“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.
- Matthew 22:29- ²⁹ Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.
- Luke 21:33- ³³ Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.
- Luke 24:44-46- ⁴⁴ Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.
- John 5:39- ³⁹ “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!
- John 16:13-15- ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴ He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’
- John 17:17- ¹⁷ Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.
- Acts 17:11- ¹¹ And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.
- Romans 15:4- ⁴ Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.
- Romans 16:25-26- ²⁵ Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. ²⁶ But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him.

The Bible Continued

- 2 Timothy 3:15-17- ¹⁵ You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.
- Hebrews 4:12- ¹² For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.
- 1 Peter 1:24-25- ²⁴ As the Scriptures say, “People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. ²⁵ But the word of the Lord remains forever.”
- 2 Peter 1:19-21- ¹⁹ Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, ²¹ or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

Bible Study Resources

- YouVersion Bible App
- The Bible Recap with Tara Leigh Cobble- App and Podcast
- The Bible Project- bibleproject.com
- Blue Letter Bible Commentary- blueletterbible.org
- Bible Hub Commentary- biblehub.com
- Know your translation

Quick Notes

- The Bible had to close because no more eyewitnesses existed. Canon was closed in 96 AD.
- God revealed. We received.
- All Scripture is God-breathed. Only these 66 Books.
 1. 39 Books in the Old Testament
 2. 27 Books in the New Testament
- 40 different authors over 1500 years across 3 continents
- The Bible is not just nice and happy. It is true and holy.
- Over 63k cross-references in Scripture



The Holy Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is central to Christian theology and essential for understanding the nature of God as revealed in Scripture. The Trinity affirms that God is one in essence but exists eternally in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This doctrine distinguishes Christianity from other world religions and emphasizes the relational nature of God.

The Oneness of God in Scripture unequivocally declares that there is one God. This foundational truth is rooted in the Shema, a central confession of Jewish faith:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” Deuteronomy 6:4

Isaiah 45:5 underscores this unity: “I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.”

Christian theology affirms monotheism while also recognizing the triune nature of this one God.

Unity and Distinction

While each person of the Trinity is distinct, they are not separate. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit share the same divine essence. This unity is seen in passages like Matthew 28:19, which commands baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

The Trinity Continued

The Three Persons of the Trinity

The Bible reveals that God exists as three persons who are fully and equally God, yet distinct from one another.

A. God the Father

The Father is the Creator and Sovereign over all. He is often seen as the initiator of divine action and the source of all blessings (Ephesians 1:3–6).

B. God the Son

Jesus Christ, the Son, is fully God and fully human. John 1:1–3 declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jesus' divinity is affirmed in passages like Colossians 1:15–20 and Hebrews 1:3.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Spirit is the presence of God within believers, empowering and guiding them. Acts 5:3–4 identifies the Holy Spirit as God, equating lying to the Spirit with lying to God.

The Trinity Continued

The Divine Processions within the Trinity

The concept of "processions" describes the relationships and origins of the persons within the Trinity:

A. Eternal Generation of the Son

The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. This means the Son's existence originates from the Father, but not as a created being. Instead, it is an eternal and necessary relationship. John 1:14 speaks of the Son as "the only begotten from the Father," and John 5:26 affirms that the Father has granted the Son life in Himself.

B. Eternal Procession of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. This is seen in John 15:26, where Jesus describes the Spirit as "the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father." In Western theology, this is expanded by the doctrine of the "Filioque" (Latin for "and the Son"), affirming that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son (as seen in passages like Romans 8:9). These processions highlight the internal relationships within the Godhead while maintaining their co-equality and unity.

St. Augustine: "For to have the fruition of God the Trinity, after whose image we are made, is indeed the fullness of our joy, than which there is no greater."

The Trinity Continued

The Divine Missions

A. The Mission of the Father

The Father's mission is to send the Son and the Spirit. He is the source of all divine activity, initiating creation (Genesis 1:1) and the plan of redemption (Ephesians 1:3-6). The Father's sending role highlights His authority and love (John 3:16).

B. The Mission of the Son

The Son's mission is to accomplish redemption. He was sent by the Father to become incarnate, live a sinless life, die for humanity's sins, and rise again (Philippians 2:5-11). Jesus describes His mission in John 6:38: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Through His atonement and resurrection, the Son reconciles humanity to God (2 Corinthians 5:19).

C. The Mission of the Spirit

The Spirit's mission is to apply the work of redemption. Sent by both the Father and the Son (John 15:26; John 16:7), the Spirit regenerates believers (Titus 3:5), empowers them for holy living (Galatians 5:22-23), and equips the church for mission (Acts 1:8). The Spirit's work continues Christ's mission by transforming lives and building up the church.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to the Christian faith, shaping our understanding of God's nature and work. By affirming one God in three persons, Christians embrace the mystery of God's self-revelation, drawing us into deeper worship and fellowship.

Worship

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
John 4:24

This is worship that springs from a sincere heart and lines up with the truth of God’s Word.

To worship in spirit and in truth “is first and foremost a way of saying that we must worship God by means of Christ.” And Jesus is the one who gives the life-giving Spirit, who produces rivers of living water in a believer’s soul. John 7:38-39

It’s the Spirit who brings life to our spirits and enables us to know, love, and worship God the Father through Jesus Christ. In other words, it takes God to worship God.

We begin by acknowledging our inability to worship God unless he draws us by his grace and reveals himself to us through his Word. We come by receiving a gift, not by doing a deed.

We don’t create worship

We respond to what we’ve received in Jesus Christ. Titus 3:4-5

True worship is always a response to God’s Word. His word defines, directs and inspires our worship.

Music is a part of worshiping God,
but it was never meant to be the heart of it.

To Worship God, we must EXALT Him in our Hearts and Actions

WORSHIP: to bow down, cast oneself on the ground. Romans 12:1

EXALT: to lift up. Psalm 34:1-3

To worship God is to humble everything about ourselves and exalt everything about him.

Exalting God In Our HEARTS Through Our...

- THOUGHTS -

At any moment we can simply ask, “Where is God in this picture?”

- LOVE -

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Mark 12:30

- FAITH -

Without faith, it is impossible to please him. Hebrews 11:6

- Exercising faith toward God puts his wisdom, power and faithfulness on display.

- GRATEFULNESS -

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights... James 1:17

- Our gratefulness points people to the source of our blessings.

- LONGING -

How long, O Lord? Psalm 13:1

- In that cry, we’re expressing our confidence in God’s sovereignty, justice, love for his church and creation, and his faithfulness to his promises. We know all our longings will ultimately be fulfilled by God when Jesus returns.

Exalting God in our ACTIONS Through Our...

- OBEDIENCE -

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. John 14:15

- Submitting to God’s commands tells others that we love him and that his laws are good and worthy to be followed.
- Obedience is often fleshed out in specific relationships... Husbands are to love their wives, wives are to submit to and respect their husbands, children are to obey their parents, employers are to be just and fair, etc.

Worship Continued

- SPECIFIC PRAISE -

Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalms 106:1

- Rarely does Scripture exhort us to praise the Lord without spelling out why.
- In the Psalms, we see God praised for his Word, his worthiness and his works.

- GODLY SPEECH -

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Matthew 12:34

- Am I an Encourager or a Discourager? Am I a Praiser or a Complainer?
- When I speak the truth, do I do it out of Love?

- SERVICE -

- God gives us Abilities with which to serve. (1 Peter 4:10)
- God gives us the Desire to serve. (Philippians 2:13)
- God gives us the Strength to serve. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

- WITNESS -

Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. John 4:29

- Telling others the good news of the gospel is simply praising God in front of those who don't know him.

Singing

We are **CREATED** to Sing.

- Every person who can talk, can sing!

We are **COMMANDED** to Sing.

- There are 400 different references to singing in your Bible.
- There are 50 direct commands in the Bible to praise God through singing

Psalm 47:7 - Sing because God is the King of all the earth

Psalm 95:1 - Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation

Colossians 3:16 - Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts through
psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit

Ephesians 5:19 - Address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart

We are **COMPELLED** to Sing

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- Reasons to Give God Praise. Ephesians 1:3-14
- "...He did this so we would praise and glorify him."

Sin

The Doctrine of Sin: Understanding the Depth and Hope of the Gospel

Why Talk About Sin?

“If you do not understand sin, you do not understand salvation.” — R.C. Sproul

We'll look at:

1. What sin is and where it comes from,
2. How sin affects every human being,
3. How the gospel offers real hope,
4. How we respond in our daily lives.

Point 1: Sin Is Rebellion Against a Holy God

- Key Text: Genesis 3:1–7, Romans 3:23
- “Sin is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.” — The Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Article III

Point 2: Sin Affects Every Part of Us

- Key Text: Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:1–3 don't say BABY
- This is the doctrine of total depravity—not that we are as bad as we could be, but that sin touches every aspect of who we are: mind, heart, body, will.
- Imputed guilt: Adam's guilt is legally counted against us (Romans 5).
- Concupiscence: The inward tendency toward sin—we desire what we shouldn't.
- “Man is not only a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner.” — Thomas Schreiner

Point 3: The Gospel Confronts and Conquers Sin

- Key Text: Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 1:9
- Sin brings guilt, shame, judgment, and separation from God.
- But God did not leave us in our condition. The gospel is not self-help—it's divine rescue.
- Jesus took our sin and gave us His righteousness.

Sin Continued

Point 4: How Should We Live in Light of Sin and Grace?

- Key Text: Romans 6:1–4, Galatians 5:16–17
- “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” — John Owen
- The Christian life involves daily repentance and spiritual warfare.
- The presence of sin remains—but its power is broken.
- We must fight by the Spirit, with the Word, in community.

Conclusion: Sin Is Serious, But Grace Is Greater

- “He who understands the seriousness of sin will never treat the cross lightly.” — Charles Spurgeon
- Sin is not just a list of bad behaviors. It is a rebellion rooted in the heart, inherited from Adam, infecting every part of who we are.
- But Christ came for sinners. That’s the good news.

1 John 1:9 (ESV):

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Salvation

Opening:

I. Salvation- God's work in rescuing a sinner (by grace through faith) from condemnation, guilt and the pollution of sin, and restoring a sinner to a right relationship with Him, while making the sinner an adopted heir of eternal life.

II. Saved from what?

1. God's just wrath and judgement against sin. Romans 5:9, 1 Thes 1:10,5:9, Rom 1:18, 6:23, We are justified.
2. Sin- Matt 1:21, 1 John 3:5, We receive forgiveness.
3. Slavery to and dominion of sin Rom 6:1-23, We are redeemed.
4. Uncleaness- Ez 36:29, We are sanctified.
5. Satan- Col 2:15, Heb 2:14,15
6. This present evil world Gal 1:4, We are citizens of heaven.
7. Eternal death John 3:16, 17, We are adopted and inherit eternal life.
8. We are made new creations. 2 Cor 5:17.
9. We are reconciled to God Col 1:18-20
10. We are indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit 1 Cor 6:19-20, Eph 1:13

III. At the heart of the Gospel is Salvation by the atoning substitutionary death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so that sinners could be spared God's just wrath. He did this by drinking the full cup of God's wrath in our place. This satisfied God's justice so God could be both just and the justifier of sinners (Romans 3:26). The cross is proof that God is both just and full of grace.

1. Isa 53:5,6: But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
2. Salvation is not that God overlooks our sin, in fact, it shows how deadly serious He is about sin. Heb 9:22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Salvation Continued

IV. Catalyst of Salvation

1. God's grace Eph 2:8, Titus 2:
2. It was always God's purpose. Gen 3:15, 2 Tim 1:
3. God's love Rom 5:8, 1 John 4:9,10
4. God's mercy Titus 3:5

V. Salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

1. Acts 4:12

Text:

The Order of Salvation by Union with Christ

From: Reformed Systematic Theology



- The Order of Salvation comes from Romans 8:30 and is not to be treated as if each element causes the next, God is the cause of all. Effectual calling, faith, and justification take place at the same moment.
- This is not to show a chronological order, but to show how God's grace fits together in His plan of salvation.

Salvation Continued

I. Effectual Calling

Rom 8:28-30- And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

II. Regeneration

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- Regeneration refers to God's initial act to renew a sinner's heart, resulting in man's conversion when he actively turns to the Lord. A sinner is given a new heart and a new spirit by virtue of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.
- The washing of regeneration is pictured in Christian baptism. Acts 22:16
- Titus 3:5,6 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior
- John 3:6 emphasizes that the totally depraved, spiritually dead sinner is powerless to change his condition. Apart from the miracle of regeneration, all he can do is produce more depravity and more death. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

III. Repentance unto Salvation

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Acts 20:20, 21 ...I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ

2 Cor 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death

Salvation Continued

- Two sides of conversion: Repentance and Faith.
 1. Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley say it like this. “The call of the gospel invites and commands sinners to a twofold response: repentance and faith. Faith and repentance stand in essential unity, as two sides to one saving response to the Word of God. In the Bible conversion is sometimes described simply as repentance (Matt 4:7, Luke 5:32, 24:47, Acts 2:38, 26:20) or as faith in Christ (John 1:12, 3:15-18, Acts 10:43, 16:31). In other Scripture passages, faith and repentance appear together (Mark 1:15, Acts 11:21, 17:30-34, 20:21, Heb 6:1). Repentance from sin and faith in God’s mercy are in an organic relationship.”
- Without repentance there is no salvation.

IV. Saving Faith- Faith Alone in Christ Alone

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Gal 2:16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Eph 2:8,9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- This faith may exist in varying degrees so that it may be either weak or strong. Yet even in its weakest form, it is different in kind or nature (like all other saving graces) from the faith and common grace of temporary believers. Therefore, faith may often be attacked and weakened, but it gains the victory. It matures in many to the point that they attain full assurance through Christ, who is both the founder and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 5:13, 14; Matthew 6:30; Romans 4:19, 20. 122 Peter 1:1. 13 Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 5:4, 5. 14 Hebrews 6:11, 12; Colossians 2:2. 15 Hebrews 12:2.
- Saving Faith is:
 - A. Faith and Trust
 - The Hebrew words often used for faith in the Old Testament are aman (make firm, establish, be faithful, reliable), hiphil (believe), and batakh (trust, take refuge in).
 - The New Testament uses Greek word pisteuo (believe, faith), peitho (persuade, convince, to believe, have confidence in, or trust).
 - Beeke/Smalley- “Therefore, the Biblical words for faith communicate trust in the faithfulness of God, pictured as resting on Him, so that one’s confidence is in the Lord.”
 - So it would be scripturally sound to invite an unsaved person to place his faith and trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word.

Salvation Continued

B. Acknowledgment of Christ as both Lord and Savior.

- Rom 10:9 if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
- Col 2:6,7 Therefore, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, 7rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

C. Good Work Producing

- Martin Luther-“ We are saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is never alone.”
- Eph 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
- Matt 7:16-23 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

D. Is in Christ Alone as Revealed in Scripture

- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.
- Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

• Saving Faith is Not:

A. Mental Belief of the Facts

- James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!
- Acts 26:27 Agrippa believed the prophets but was not a Christian.

Salvation Continued

B. Superficial Emotional Commitment

- Luke 8:11-15 11“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. 14Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

V. Justification-To Declare Righteous- Answers the question “How can God excuse sinners and remain a just Judge?”

Romans 3:21-28 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Westminster Larger Catechisms Q. 70. What is justification?

- Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

1: To understand Justification, a right view of the human condition; totally depraved, guilty, and worthy of death. (Rom 1:18-3:20, 23)

Salvation Continued

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

- The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

- All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

A. Rom 3:10-12 "There is none righteous, no not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together turned unprofitable; There is none who does good, no not one."

B. Rom 5:18 ... Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation

C. Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

D. Eph 2:12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world

E. Romans 3 :20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

2: It's also necessary to understand justification is a right view of God's justice. If we can picture a human judge who has a criminal in front of him. It has been proven beyond any doubt that he is guilty, but yet the judge sets him free with no punishment. That judge would be unjust.

A. Prov 17:15 He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.

B. God requires absolute perfect obedience according to the Law, a standard that no man can attain. 1 Peter 1:16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

C. Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death...

D. God would be an unjust judge if he allowed the guilty to be spared the wages of their sin, and He is never unjust.

E. He requires blood and death to atone for our sins. Heb 9:22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Salvation Continued

3: Justification is a legal/forensic verdict given by grace to guilty ones who have no legal claim of innocence and are “without excuse” before a holy and righteous Judge.

4. With this impassable chasm between our condition and God’s requirement of perfect righteousness, what Martin Luther called an “alien righteousness” becomes necessary. A righteousness from outside of us.

5. This is where the gracious doctrine of Imputation comes in.

- Rom 4:1-6 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.
- Impute- count or reckon.
- The doctrine teaches at the cross all of our guilt was transferred, accounted, imputed to Jesus Christ, and He satisfied (propitiated) God’s just wrath. Likewise His perfect righteousness was imputed to our account. So it is by Christ’s righteousness (a righteousness from outside of us/alien) that the righteous Judge declares us righteous.
- God in His sovereignty chose Faith Alone (faith plus nothing) as the instrument to transfer Christ’s righteousness to us.

6. Beeke/Smalley- “Justification is God’s gracious forensic declaration that guilty sinners are forgiven (and thus worthy of eternal life) both on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ received by faith alone.”

7. Justification is a change of status, from a guilty, condemned, hopelessly depraved sinner, to a forgiven, righteous heir of God.

8. Rom 5:1, 6-11 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Salvation Continued

9. Rom 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

10. 2 Cor 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

VI. Salvation is Permanent

John 6:27-30 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29My Father, who has given them to me,^a is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30I and the Father are one.”

1. This doctrine is called Preservation/Perseverance of the Saints, Eternal Security or maybe once saved always saved.
2. It seems to me that at least in evangelical circles there are two extremes. Those who believe you are saved by faith apart from works, but you have to work to maintain your salvation or you can lose it (The Salvation Army), or those who believe once they are “saved” now they can live however they want without regard to God’s commands and they will still inherit eternal life (Easy believism/antinomians).
3. Scripture teaches that neither of these positions is correct.
4. The question is not will everyone who professes to be a Christian inherit eternal life, this clearly isn’t the case. Our Lord taught us in the Sermon on the Mount: Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ About the last days He says “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. 10And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”
5. John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
6. John 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29My Father, who has given them to me,^a is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30I and the Father are one.”

Salvation Continued

A. Some would object saying” this does not say that a person can’t chose to walk away and remove himself from God’s hand”.

B. Beeke/Smalley- “Any attempt to insert the possibility of damnation into the text contradicts Christ’s promise [they shall never perish]. Second, Christ literally says [no one is able] to take them from the Father, excluding all people and powers, even the person tempted to fall away.

11.Phil 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

12.Jude 24, 25 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

13.1 Peter 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4to an inheritance [b]incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.6In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been [c]grieved by various trials, 7that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8whom having not [d]seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.10Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

14.Another objection may go something like this, “What about the apostates, those who fall way?

- I believe the Apostle John answers that in 1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.
- Those who seem to follow for a time but fall away into final and complete apostasy were never truly in the family of Christ (Judas Iscariot).
- They may have made a profession of faith however it was not genuine.

VII. Adoption

1 John 3:1,2 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2Beloved, now we are children of God;

- After being justified in the court of God's justice, He now takes us into His household as children.
- We can now approach Maker of heaven and earth as a beloved child approaches a benevolent Father. Matt 6:9 Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
- Adoption is both a change of status and a change of relationship through our union with Christ.
- Adoption includes our inheritance as sons and we are co-heirs with Christ.
- Heb 12:5-8 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.
6For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

7It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons

- Other Scriptures: Luke 15:11-32 (the prodigal son), Matt 5:9,16, 43-48, 6:4-6, 7:7-11, 23:9, Luke 12:32-33, John 17:23, 20:17, Gal 3:26-29, 4:1-7, Rom 8:14-16, Eph 1:4-6 5:1-2, 2 Cor 6:16-7:1, 1 Peter 1:14-17, 1 John 3:1-10

Sacraments

Our goal is for all of us to clearly understand what we believe and why. Everything we believe, and every truth we follow is directly founded in Scripture.

The word sacrament literally means holy thing.

Sacrament is a Catholic word that many people use interchangeably with ordinance. We do not use it very often because in the Catholic world, where the term came from, it held a different meaning. Catholics refer to multiple sacraments that each impart divine grace into our lives. In other words, by partaking in the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and a host of other actions they label as holy, a person actually receives God's grace.

Let me say this a different way, because I do not want us to be misguided. Originally, when sacraments were introduced in the Catholic Church, they were means by which a person could inherit God's divine favor. So, by taking the Lord's Supper, by being Baptized, and by performing over three hundred sacramental works, a person could inherit salvation. This is still a Roman Catholic belief today; however, many of our trusted theologians and scholars have broken from that view over the last thousand years.

St. Augustine, in the 5th century described a sacrament as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.' In other words, when we participate in a sacrament, a holy action, we are outwardly displaying God's inward favor in our lives, not receiving God's saving work from the sacrament.

Catholics hold to seven sacraments that provide salvation. They are Baptism, The Lord's Supper, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. The problem with these seven sacraments, these seven holy things, is that Jesus did not command them all, and as Greg said last week, salvation is all about Jesus. The perfect life Jesus lived, the horrendously sacrificial death He died and the defeat of death, sin and the grave, are what allows salvation to be possible. Jesus never said that marriage is a saving act. You can be a Follower of Jesus and still be single. Jesus Himself was not married. You can be sick without being anointed by a priest and still be a Follower of Jesus. Even though the Bible makes it an option for us, it is never commanded by Jesus.

We must build everything we do on the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is The Way, The Truth and The Life, so when we begin to question if an outward action is Christlike or not, we must first see what Jesus said about it. Next, did His closest followers write about it in the Bible? Did the people who knew Him best have any wisdom on the subject? Did the early Church engage in that particular action?

That is why the Baptist Faith and Message does not use the term sacrament, and instead calls The Lord's Supper and Baptism ordinances, meaning that they are symbolic acts of obedience commanded by Christ. Listen to what the Baptist Faith and Message says- Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Jesus never personally said, and He never demanded us as His Church to observe Baptism and the Lord's Supper as a means to salvation. They are simply signs and means which express and strengthen our faith as The Church. We stay in step with Jesus by observing them, because they help us relate to one another as God's Church, and they literally make us more like Jesus, because He participated in both when He walked the Earth. This is a great quote I read this week- When celebrating the sacraments, [we must] be ready to allow the symbol and ritual to shake us, to enliven us, to question us and to recognize the depth of its meaning.

When Jesus died and returned to Heaven, where He sits at this very moment at the right hand of God, the early Church began to observe the Lord's Supper and Baptism in their new community of faith. And that brings up another point, that the sacraments we hold to were not meant to be practiced outside a community of Believers. In the New Testament, after Jesus, they are almost always observed in a local church community, and we need to be very conscious of that.

Now, will someone die and go to Hell who takes communion at their house by themselves? No, because communion did not save them in the first place. Will someone miss Eternal Life in Heaven because they were baptized in a pond without their whole local church present? No, because baptism did not save that person in the first place. However, the sacraments mean more when we observe them with God's Church, because they challenge us to be more like Jesus as we are bound together by our shared experience and bound to Jesus as we trust and obey His actions.

The Lord's Supper

Throughout history, The Lord's Supper has gone by three main titles: The Lord's Supper, Communion and The Eucharist. They all refer to the same bread and juice/wine. The Lord's Supper was first done in remembrance of when Moses led Israel out of Egypt in the times of their enslavement to Pharaoh.

In Exodus chapter 12 we read the specifics. God gave Moses instructions that on the tenth day of the first month of their year, a family was to select a one-year-old male sheep that was without blemish. For a few weeks, that family was to take care of that sheep, until the fourteenth day of the month when they were to slaughter the animal and rub its blood on the doorframes of their homes. This turned the death angel away from their home and they would be rescued/saved.

God then commanded that a festival be observed every year around that time, as a weeklong remembrance of God's deliverance for His Children from Pharaoh and Egypt. He tells them to add unleavened bread into their celebration. So, for hundreds of years, from the time of Moses until the time of Jesus, the Jews recognized Passover in this way. It symbolized when God delivered them from bondage in Egypt.

But when Jesus came on the scene, that all changed and became very personal and much more specific. On the night when Jesus was betrayed by Judas, He and His closest Disciples were observing Passover in what we now call The Upper Room. But instead of reminding His Disciples about Egypt, Jesus speaks the words we read from 1 Corinthians 11:23-25- On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread ²⁴ and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it."

So, Jesus announces Himself as the true Passover Lamb, who will save His People permanently from their sins and eternal death. The bread we eat now represents the body of Jesus that was broken and crucified for our sins, and the juice now represents the blood of Christ that was spilt for our forgiveness. By partaking of the Lord's Supper, we are remembering the death of Jesus the Messiah.

Sacraments Continued

This is a sacrament, a holy remembrance, so there is a warning given when we observe. Here it is from 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. I read these verses every time we take the Lord's Supper, so these words should not be unfamiliar to you.²⁷ So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸ That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup.²⁹ For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.³¹ But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way.

One of the key elements of taking The Lord's Supper is a time of commitment and repentance, and the whole sacrament is a remembrance of what Christ did for us and a celebration of what we receive as a result of His sacrifice. It also turns our attention to His return in the future.

Before we move on, I want to give us a few terms that come up when The Lord's Supper is discussed. First is Real Presence. Real Presence is the belief that the real presence of Jesus' body and blood are really present in the elements of the Lord's Supper- the bread and juice. That somehow, somehow, Jesus' blood is in the wine and Jesus' actual body is in the bread. This is the view of: Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Methodists. Although Methodists are feuding about many beliefs right now.

Inside the concept of Real Presence are two terms that are worthy of mentioning.

Transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and wine are physically transformed into the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus, they just look like bread and wine. The last term is consubstantiation. Proponents of consubstantiation believe that Jesus' body and blood are really present in the bread and wine, but the bread and wine are not totally transformed into Jesus' body and blood. I know it is confusing.

Just know that when Jesus said the words we hear in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29- This is my body and this is my blood, He did not mean that the bread and juice are His physical body. How do we know that? Because Jesus' physical body was one hundred percent human like you and I today. Jesus' body died and the Bible says that He is seated at the right hand of God. I know this sounds gross, but Jesus does not cut off pieces of His flesh and drain drops of His blood every time we take communion. That just does not make sense.

Baptism

The sacrament of Baptism has been a hot topic for hundreds of years. Some believe that the Bible says Baptism is necessary for salvation, while others believe Baptism is not necessary to inherit eternal life. Some religions allow certain followers to be baptized for dead people when they question if they would go to Heaven or not. Some religions will baptize babies or little children as a sort of covenant between the child and God.

Instead of going into every detail that could be true, I want to go to the original source of Baptism, Jesus Himself. The first Baptism mentioned in the Bible was done by John the Baptist, or John the Baptizer. John was preparing the way for Jesus. He understood that and proclaimed that message. You can read that in Matthew 3:5-6- 5 People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. 6 And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. Repentance unto faith in Jesus is a prerequisite of being baptized.

What happened before the people were baptized? They confessed their sins. Baptism is not salvation and salvation is not baptism. Like the Lord's Supper, Baptism does not save anyone. It is an outward show of inward cleansing that has already happened. How do we know that baptism is not required to enter Heaven? I think the best example is the thief on the cross from Luke 23. Do you remember that one thief trashed Jesus while the other proclaimed Him Messiah? When that thief proclaimed Jesus as The Messiah, Jesus told him that if he wanted to inherit eternal life, he would have to jump down off his cross real quick and find a lake. No. Jesus told him that that very day, Jesus and he would meet one another in paradise.

So what does the word baptize mean anyway?

We get our word baptize from the Greek word baptizo. Baptizo literally means to immerse, submerge or overwhelm in water. Something or someone is baptized only when they are made fully wet or soaked in water. King James I was King of England in 1611 when he had the Bible translated into, what was then, contemporary English. But King James was Catholic, and the Catholic Church was big on infant baptism. And because the English Monarchy was considered spiritually divine and able to punish anyone who disagreed, translators hesitated to translate baptizo into a new word or phrase. They simply made up a new word, and it is still the word we use today- baptize. We have to go back to the original Greek to find the meaning of baptizo.

Sacraments Continued

I love Matthew's account of the baptism of Jesus. We literally read the meaning of Baptism in Matthew's text. Here it is from Matthew 3:13-17- 13 Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" 15 But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. 16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

There are a few truths that I want to pull from these verses. First, we see the importance of Baptism. How important is Baptism? Well first of all, Jesus was baptized. Listen, take the whole world and leave me Jesus, and I will be just fine. When I find out that Jesus did something, I am going to make it a part of my life. If I read some obscure Scripture one day that no one else had ever discovered, and that Scripture said that every Thursday afternoon at 2:00 on the dot Jesus had a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on white bread, then you can bet your bottom dollar that every Thursday afternoon at 2:00 on the dot you would find me eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on white bread.

Jesus was baptized, and He was fully God. So, if He was fully God, why did Jesus need to be baptized? Did you hear Jesus' answer when John asked Him why He [Jesus] needed to be baptized? Jesus said that it must happen to fulfill all righteousness or to carry out all that God required of Him. Jesus, God's Son, was baptized because it showed everyone watching that He was righteous. And by displaying that righteousness, He was carrying out what God required of Him, outwardly displaying His inward transformation.

Notice something else, that Baptism was so important that all three members of The Trinity were present. Anytime we see all three members of The Trinity in one place at the same time, we know that whatever is happening is of utmost importance.

We find this in verses 16 and 17. God the Father was the voice from Heaven, God the Holy Spirit was the descending dove, and God the Son was Jesus in the water, who did what? Yes. He came up out of the water. He was baptized, fully immersed, in the water. You cannot come out of something without first going into that something. Jesus was fully immersed and that is the primary reason we fully immerse when we baptize.

Last, there are several Scriptures in the Bible that talk about Baptism. When we read those individually, we can make them say anything we want; but, know that because of Jesus' example, and when all Baptism Scriptures are looked at as a whole, the order is Salvation and then Baptism, which is an outward show of our inward decision to follow Jesus.

Sacraments Continued

Here is a list of key Scriptures on both Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 3:13-17.

Matthew 26:26-30.

Matthew 28:19-20.

Mark 1:9-11.

Mark 14:22-26.

Luke 3:21-22.

Luke 22:7-22.

John 3:23.

Acts 2:38-42.

Acts 8:35-39.

Acts 16:30-33.

Acts 20:7.

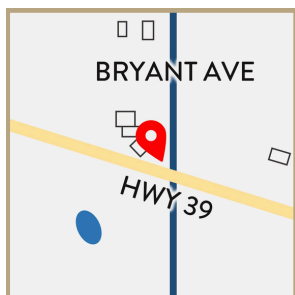
Romans 6:3-5.

1 Corinthians 10:16-21.

1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

Colossians 2:12

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