

*Highland Park Baptist Church
Bartlesville, Oklahoma*

What We Believe About Salvation

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

God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility

We teach that God owes sinners no mercy of any kind, only condemnation, so God's provision of salvation is a matter for endless praise, that He should choose to save any of us; and doubly so when His choice involved the giving of His own Son to suffer as sin-bearer (Romans 8:32). We also teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that the work of salvation as taught in Scripture is based upon the sovereignty of God. (John 1:11-13) We also teach that God's sovereignty in no way contradicts or negates the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord. (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Acts 2:37; Romans 1:18-20; 10:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelations 22:17). From a human viewpoint this truth is a seeming paradox, but it is totally reconciled in the mind of God. Yet even the ability to repent and trust Christ is granted by the grace of God. (John 6:65)

We teach that God, through His sovereignty and before the moment of creation, chose those out of the fallen human race whom He would redeem, bring to faith, justify, sanctify and glorify in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). This divine choice is an expression of free, unconstrained, and sovereign grace.

We teach that the action of God's sovereignty will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8). God has not revealed to the church the identity of those who will be so chosen, but in His sovereignty has made provision to work through the church to call the chosen to

Himself (Matthew 28:19-20). Therefore, we preach, teach and witness to all mankind, trusting that God will accomplish the work of salvation through us according to His will.

We teach that none of this should be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God did not create the universe as a clockwork device that He set in motion and then sat back to watch it unwind. Rather, God's sovereignty reveals to us the greatness of His glory and grace. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9). Acknowledging God's sovereignty moves us to humility, confidence, joy, praise, faithfulness, and holiness in response.

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality (means, agency, tool) of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Justification

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

means God is enabled to “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

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

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God by the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23). In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended until death. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

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

We teach that, out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew

5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

Security

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

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