
WHAT WE TEACH

The Doctrinal Statement of New Community Church

Also included:

Is Baptism Necessary?

Is God Still Speaking?

Is There Such a Thing as a Changeless Conversion



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THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We teach that the Bible is the written revelation of God. The 66 books of the Bible constitute the totality of God's Word to us. Therefore, there is no new revelation (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation, verbally inspired in every word, absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed (1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule for formulating our doctrine and directing the practices of the faith (Acts 20:28-32). We reject any extra-biblical references such as "Sacred Tradition", papal infallibility, professed new revelations or writings such as the Book of Mormon as being an objective authority for the church of Jesus Christ.

We teach that the Word of God is the only spiritual diet of the believer and is sufficient for everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man without error in the whole or in part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, but there is only one intended meaning and true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is found when one diligently applies the literal, grammatical, historical method of biblical interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17, 16:12-15, 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20, 27). It is the responsibility of believers to carefully ascertain the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations.

GOD

We teach that there is only one living and true God (Isaiah 44:6, 8, 45:5-7, 18), an infinite, intelligent Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence but eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – each equally deserving the same worship and obedience (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Acts 17:24-29).

God the Father. God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purposes and grace (Daniel 2:20-23; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Corinthians 8:6).

He is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31). As absolute and higher rule in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and salvation (Job 1:6; Ecclesiastes 8:17; Psalm 103:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). His Fatherhood denotes a

spiritual relationship, first of all as His designation within the Trinity, and secondly, within mankind, creatively in relation to all men, but spiritually only in relation to believers. Therefore, He is the Father of all who are redeemed. He is the creator of all who have ever existed.

We reject the notion of referring to God as a “higher power” because it depersonalizes our God, ignores the tremendous revelation of God’s character and work in the scriptures, and misleads people in their understanding of God.

We teach that God the Father has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass, and continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:10-11; Daniel 4:34-35). This governance is referred to as the providence of God, which is the outworking of God’s sovereignty over His creation.

He has graciously chosen from all eternity those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:3-11). He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ, and He relates to the redeemed as their Father whom He has granted the right to be His children through receiving Jesus as their Savior (John 1:12; Romans 8:12-17).

God the Son. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine attributes and in these He is co-equal, the same in substance, and co-eternal with the Father (Hebrews 1:3, 8-10; John 1:1, 10:30; Titus 2:13).

We teach that in the incarnation, He surrendered only the prerogatives of deity, but nothing of the divine essence, neither in degree or kind. In His incarnation, Christ’s divine nature united with a human nature in an indissoluble union, and so He became the God-Man (Philippians 2:5-11).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:25; Luke 1:26-35), that He was and is God incarnate (John 1:1,3,14,18), and that the purpose of the incarnation was to: 1) reveal God, 2) redeem mankind, and 3) rule over God’s kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Peter 1:18-21, 2:22-24).

We teach that in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of co-existence with God to assume the place of a son and an existence appropriate to a servant; however, He did not divest Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:14-18; Romans 3:25; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2, 4:9-10).

We teach that upon the basis of the efficacy of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the penalty, the power and, one day, the very presence of sin, declared righteous, given eternal life and admitted to the family of God (Romans 5:1, 6:12-14, 8:1; Galatians 2:15-16; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 2:24, 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father where He is ministering as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:36-39, 50-52; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:24-25; Hebrews 7:25-28, 9:11-14, 24).

We teach that, in the resurrection of Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of Christ. God accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross and His bodily resurrection as the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:28-29, 14:19; Romans 1:4, 4:25, 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the Church, which is His body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His Church in glory, will establish His kingdom in its millennial manifestation (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19:11-21).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- The believer (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46)
- Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)

As the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5); as the head of His body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:23; Colossians 1:18); and as the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as the Lord of life and the only Savior (John 3:16-18, 36, 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:10-12).

God the Holy Spirit. We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the divine excellencies, and that in these He is co-equal and the same in substance with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14). **Compare Isaiah 6:8-9 with Acts 28:25-26, and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17.*

We teach that the Holy Spirit possesses the attributes of personality:

- Intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13)
- Emotions (Ephesians 4:30)
- Will (1 Corinthians 12:11)

We teach that the Holy Spirit possesses the attributes of God:

- Eternal (Hebrews 9:14)
- Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10)
- Omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:11)
- Omnipotent (Romans 8:9-11, 15:13)
- Truth (John 16:13)

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to the world of mankind (John 16:8-10). We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7; Titus 3:5).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father, as promised by Christ (John 7:37-39, 14:16-17, 15:26; Acts 1:4-8), to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. He is glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, and transforming believers into Christ-likeness (John 16:7-9, 13-15; Acts 1:5, 2:4; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), in indwelling, sanctifying, instructing, enabling and empowering them for service and sealing them until the day of redemption (John 16:8-11; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13-14, 5:30).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher who guided the apostles into all truth as they submitted to God's revelation in Scripture. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

“The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (what is commonly called “illumination”) does not involve revelation of new truth or the explanation of all difficult passages of Scripture to our satisfaction. Rather, it is the development of the capacity to appreciate and appropriate God’s truth already revealed – making the Bible meaningful in thought and daily living.”

(NIV Study Notes – 1 John 2:27)

We teach that the Holy Spirit alone administers spiritual gifts to the Church, not to glorify Himself or the gifts by ostentatious displays, but to glorify Christ and implement His work of redeeming the lost and edifying the saved in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

In this respect, we teach that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that speaking in tongues (the

miraculous ability to speak in a foreign, intelligible, known language) and the working of sign miracles through certain selected individuals, have gradually ceased, having achieved their divine purpose in a certain timeframe in God's redemptive history and ended with the completion of the canon of scripture. The purpose of sign gifts was to affirm and confirm the person and work of Christ and the divine calling of some as apostles and messengers of God who were proclaiming the Word of God. This was especially needed while the written Word of God was still in the process of being completed (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 13:8-12; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-11; Hebrews 2:1-4).

MAN

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. We reject any and all forms of evolutionary theories, including Theistic evolution (that God used evolution as a method in creation). We accept the Genesis account of mankind's beginning by faith. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:15-27, 9:6; James 3:9; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that he should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this, accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11; Ecclesiastes 12:13).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Therefore, salvation is wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17, 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23, 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that because all mankind were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted (imputed) to all mankind of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All mankind are therefore sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3, 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23, 5:10-12; Ephesians 2:1-3; James 2:10; 1 John 1:8-10).

SALVATION

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, not on the basis of human merit or work. We teach that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in the redemptive work of Christ alone. Salvation then is of the Lord and from the Lord for His glory. Salvation is not a human enterprise (Titus 3:5; John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Acts 4:12, 15:6-11).

Regeneration. We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are communicated to those dead in their sin at the time of the exercise of saving faith (John 3:3-7, 5:24; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). Regeneration, which is a spiritual birth from God causing those who experience it to become the children of God, is manifested by righteous living, which is essentially living in subjection to the will of God (1 John 2:29, 3:7-10).

Good works flow from those who are truly born again, not as a means to secure new birth but rather as evidence of new birth (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). It is important to note that God does a pre-salvational work in the lives of those whom He is drawing to Himself. Where formerly a person dead in their sins has no disposition, inclination, or desire for the things of God (Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 3:9-18), the Lord opens his or her heart to accept the Gospel message (Acts 16:14, 13:48, 5:31, 11:18; 2 Peter 1:1), which culminates in a spiritual rebirth from the Father (John 1:12-13).

Election. We teach that election is the eternal act of God in which He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in those who are His elect, chooses certain persons to be the recipients of His saving grace, manifested in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, and granting His elect eternal salvation (Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Timothy 2:8-9; Romans 8:28-30; Acts 13:48; John 6:37, 44, 65; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

We teach that just as God has chosen some for salvation as an exercise of His sovereignty, He has also chosen the means for bringing His elect into that salvation. This means is the faithful preaching of the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24).

We teach that a biblical view of salvation does not exclude the human responsibility to willfully trust in Jesus for the salvation of your soul (John 3:16; Romans 10:13), or divine sovereignty, but allows both to remain in tension. We resist the attempt to harmonize these two components because Scripture does not. We are content to know that our Lord is a righteous God. Whatever He does always conforms to His perfect, holy, and loving character.

Justification. We teach that justification before God is an act of God by which He declares righteous those who believe in Christ (Romans 5:1, 8:33). We teach that no one can earn justification by good works or law-keeping (Romans 3:21-28; Galatians 2:16,21; Philippians 3:7-9). We teach that the righteousness that is imputed to those who trust in Christ for their salvation involves the imputation of our sins to Jesus (1 Peter 3:18) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (Romans 1:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Repentance and faith are the only nec-

essary conditions to receive the imputation of the merits of Christ. We teach that justification requires a living and real faith, not a mere profession of faith (James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:3-6).

Sanctification. We teach that every believer is “set apart” (sanctified) unto God by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer is therefore declared to be holy and identified as a saint. This is not descriptive of progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer’s standing, not his present state (1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:10-11, 10:10,14, 13:12; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

We teach that there is, by the work of the Holy Spirit, an experiential sanctification, by which the state of the believer is progressively brought closer to the standing the believer enjoys through justification.

Through obedience to the Word of God and 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 the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17; Romans 6:1-22; 1 Peter 1:13-16).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a conflict – the new creation in Christ is set against the flesh – but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in 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; Colossians 3:1-10; 1 John 3:5-10).

Perseverance of the Saints. We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God’s power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24, 6:37-50; 10:24-30; Romans 5:9-10, 8:1, 31-39; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of the indwelling Holy Spirit and God’s Word (Romans 8:16; 1 Peter 1:23). However, the Scriptures forbid the use of Christian liberty as an excuse for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-15).

We teach the eternal security of the genuine believer—while at the same time teaching the insecurity of the “make-believer”—of being in Christ (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Separation. We teach that the doctrine of separation from sin is clearly evident throughout the entire Bible, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that, in the last days, apostasy and worldliness will increase (1 Peter 1:13-16; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We teach that separation does not mean isolation from our fallen world (John 17:15-17). There is a need for the believer to have contact with those who are unsaved for the purpose of giving witness to the saving work of Christ. Believers then must be in the world, but not of the world.

We teach that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord, and that separation from the world system, whose god is Satan, with its life views and standards of morality and ethics in opposition to God and His Word, is mandated by the Lord (Romans 12:1-2; James 4:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 1 John 2:15-17).

THE CHURCH

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22, 4:15; Colossians 1:18), and the Church is His espoused bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8).

We teach that the foundation of this Body began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own in the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:35-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the Church is, therefore, a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ (Matthew 16:18), made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The Church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery being that which was once not revealed, but which now has (Ephesians 3:1-6, 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27, 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1), and that the members of this one spiritual body are instructed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one, supreme authority for the Church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18), and that the order, discipline, and worship are appointed through His sovereignty. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders, also called bishops, pastors, pastor-teachers, (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, all of whom must fit biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:18).

We teach that it is the responsibility of a plurality of elders, raised up by the Holy Spirit in each congregation, to mediate the authority of Christ to that local assembly. The deacons are to serve in such a manner as to assist the elders and liberate them to stay focused on those duties articulated to them in the Word of God (1

Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 5:17-22; James 5:14).

We teach that the Church is best served when the congregation submits to the leadership of the elders (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17). The congregation is to hold those who teach them in high esteem (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17). It is the responsibility of the congregation to support financially those elders who preach and teach the Word of God as their vocation (1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:14).

We teach that individuals in a local church are not to spread or receive any accusations against an elder unless two or three witnesses can substantiate that an elder has violated God's Word (1 Timothy 5:19). If an elder has sinned and refuses to repent of his sin, he is to be rebuked publicly. This is a means of deterring sin in others (1 Timothy 5:20-21).

We teach discipline of sinning members of the congregation according to the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 5:1-42; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; Titus 1: 10-16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government in submission to the Word of God and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). It is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. However, each local church, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation as well as on all matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government (Acts 15:19-31, 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

We teach that the purpose of the Church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15, 3:16-17), by fellowship, by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8, 2:42).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

Spiritual Gifts. We teach the accomplishment of God's purpose in the world. For the accomplishment of that purpose, He has given the Church spiritual gifts. He gave gifted men for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11). At the moment of spiritual birth, every believer receives such a gift or gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-13). These gifts are sovereignly bestowed and cannot

be sought (1 Corinthians 12:11). It is essential that every believer discovers, develops, and employs his or her spiritual gift or gifts for the edification of the Body of Christ and the accomplishment of the work of Christ in the world (Romans 12:3-8; 2 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach that there are two kinds of gifts – temporary confirming gifts and permanent edifying gifts. With the completion of the Word of God and the faith being once for all time delivered to the saints (Jude 3), there is no longer a need for confirming gifts (1 Corinthians 13:8-12).

The temporary confirming gifts were used by the Lord to validate certain individuals as God’s messengers proclaiming God’s message (2 Corinthians 12:12). Permanent edifying gifts are those that have been in existence since the beginning of the Church and continue to this day for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ. Spiritual gifts were never intended for the purpose of self-edification but for the edification of others, especially those in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:4-5, 12, 26).

We teach that the “gift of tongues” is the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language without the normal educative process (Acts 2:1-12). This is to be distinguished from ecstatic utterances which are referred to by some today as the “gift of tongues.” The true “gift of tongues,” as found in the pages of Scripture, is produced by the Holy Spirit, whereas ecstatic utterances are not divine in origin, but rather self-induced and perhaps counterfeited by our enemy.

We teach that the temporary confirming gifts (i.e. healing, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and the working of sign miracles) gradually ceased as the New Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established. We teach that although God still heals people through the vehicle of prayer, He no longer uses certain persons with the “gift of healing” as His human agents to effect healing, because such a gift was primarily a confirming gift of new revelation.

God does hear and answer the prayer of faith on the part of every believer and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-7; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

We teach that it is necessary to establish one’s theology on the basis of God’s Word and not on the basis of one’s experiences. All experiences must be tested by God’s Word. We are to avoid justifying one’s experience with God’s Word (e.g., “slain in the Spirit,” “laughing in the Spirit”). Just because something is perceived to be miraculous, it does not necessarily mean that it was initiated by God (Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 13:11-18).

The Ordinances. We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local Church – **Baptism** and the **Lord’s Supper** (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism (by

immersion) is the external testimony of the internal exercise of repentance and faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ. It is a believer's baptism that implies that one has the mental faculties to acknowledge their sinfulness, their inability to save themselves, and their willingness to trust exclusively in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls. This, therefore, would exclude any form of infant baptism. Believer's baptism also symbolizes the identification and union all true believers have with Christ and His Church (Romans 6:1-11; Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of the unmatched significance of the substitutionary death of Christ. This ordinance is to be observed until the Second Coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:23-32). We teach that participation in this ordinance should always be preceded by solemn self-examination and confession, if necessary.

We do not teach that the elements of communion become literal body and blood of Christ. We do teach that the bread and juice symbolically represent the willful surrender of the body and blood of Christ in dying for our sins.

ANGELS

Holy Angels. We teach that angels are created beings and, therefore, are not to be worshipped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God, to worship Him, and to minister to those who will inherit salvation (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:5-14, 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14, 19:10, 22:9).

Fallen Angels. We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgement of God by rebelling against the Creator, involving numerous angels in his fall (Job 1:6-7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), and tempted Eve to sin and succeeded (Genesis 3:1-15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Matthew 4:1-11, 25:11), the prince of this world who was defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20), and that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Revelation 20:10).

LAST THINGS

Death. We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11; Matthew 10:28), that there is a separation of soul and body (James 2:26), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of the Lord (Philippians 1:21-24; 2 Corinthians 5:7-8; Luke 23:43), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when the spirit, soul, and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men; the saved to eternal life (Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the lost to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:6,13-15).

We teach that the souls of the lost at death descend immediately into Hades where they are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelations 20:1-15), when the soul and the resurrection body are united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Rapture. We teach that the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ will occur before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13). At this time, He will return to receive the Church, who is His body, unto Himself (i.e. the rapture), and returning with His Church in glory, will establish His kingdom in its millennial manifestation (Acts 1:9- 11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19:11-21).

We teach that although all true Bible-believing churches teach that the true Church will be “raptured,” not all agree on when this miraculous event will occur during the end times. This disagreement stems from the fact that interpretations of the timing of the rapture are accepted on the basis of implications from Scripture, but not from explicit statements in God’s Word. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to be tolerant of those reasonable interpretations of the time of the rapture.

The Last Days. We teach that world history as we know it will culminate with a final, literal seven-year period of time, in which will occur many wonderful and/or terrible events, including the rapture of the Church, the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21-22), the Second Coming of Christ (see below), and the outpouring of the wrath of God. This period of time is referred to in Scripture as the 70th week or 70th Seven (Daniel 9:24-27). During this time, the Antichrist will rise to power, deceive many, and ultimately be destroyed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

The righteous judgments of God will be expressed and poured out against sin and upon an unbelieving world in these last days (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; Revelation 6:15-17, 15:5; 16:1-21). We teach that true believers are promised to be kept from the wrath of God to come on the inhabitants of the world (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9; Revelation 3:10). This period of time will climax with the Second Coming of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:14-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 19:11-21).

The Tribulation Period. We teach that God will exercise His righteous wrath for a final time on this earth and that this time is referred to as The Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21-22), a time of distress (Daniel 12:1), the 70th Week of Daniel

(Daniel 9:27), the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) and the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). The wrath of God will be given its full expression near the end of this final period (Revelation 16:1-21).

The Second Coming. We teach that after the Tribulation period, Jesus Christ will come to this earth a second time. He will establish His Millennial Kingdom and occupy the throne of David (Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11, 2:29-30). His Millennial rule on this earth will continue for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-7).

During this time the saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).

We teach that the Kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68, 30:1-10). The result of that disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26), but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness and long life (Isaiah 11:1-16, 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38) and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7-10).

The Judgment of the Lost. We teach that following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city (Jerusalem), at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9).

Following this, Satan will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10), whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne Judgment.

We teach that this resurrection of the lost dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10-13), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

The Eternal State. We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan and the judgment of the lost (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation

20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God. That the elements of this earth are to be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21-22). And that the heavenly city that comes down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) is to be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy fellowship forever with God and one another (John 17:3; Ephesians 2:11-16; Revelation 21:22).

The Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the Kingdom to God the Father (Ephesians 1:18-23; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

SANCTITY OF LIFE

We teach that each person is a unique creation of God, and in upholding that sanctity of life, do oppose the destruction of human life because it is unwanted, imperfect or merely inconvenient, as an atrocity against all mankind and against God. We oppose the wholesale destruction of life by abortion on demand, the direct or indirect infanticide of newborn children for reasons of mental or physical defects and the impending threat of legalized euthanasia directed toward the elderly portion of our society. Senility, infirmity, retardation, insanity and incontinence are not to be recognized as reasons for extermination and the consideration, teaching and support of these practices are inconsistent with God's divine purpose (Jeremiah 1:4-5; Psalm 139:13-16; Exodus 23:7; Luke 1:15; Galatians 1:15-16; Psalm 127:3; Genesis 9:6).

MARRIAGE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

We teach that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. We teach that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:18-25). We teach that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4). We teach that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We teach that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matthew 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

APPENDIX

IS BAPTISM NECESSARY?

There are approximately 39 spiritual results that take place at the point of genuine conversion of the soul. For example, you make the transition from spiritual death to spiritual life. You are legally declared to be right standing before a holy God. Your sins are forgiven, past present and future. You are redeemed from the eternal condemnation of sin. You are placed into the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Spiritual gifts are imparted to you for the sake of serving others. Eternal life is imparted to your soul by the Holy Spirit. You become a new creation in Christ and the things of your old life pass away and the things of your new life in Christ come. You are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Your body becomes the temple of God. If baptism is necessary for your salvation, then it would be at the moment of your baptism that these spiritual blessings would be imparted to you. Does the Word of God support such an idea?

Let's examine when one receives the gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit because the Apostle Paul states unequivocally, that a person who does not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit does not belong to Christ.

Romans 8:9

"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

The presence of the Holy Spirit within indicates that all of the spiritual blessings mentioned above are now a present reality for the newly converted soul. Paul goes on to say that it is the Holy Spirit within the believer who testifies to their spirit that they are truly the children of God (Romans 8:16). It is the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit who assures us of our familial status in God's household and all the other spiritual blessings that accompany such a privileged position.

If baptism is necessary for salvation, then you would expect to find a passage that describes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit taking place at the point of a person's baptism. Instead, you find that the Scriptures state indicatively that we receive the Holy Spirit at the point of exercising faith in the Gospel message.

Ephesians 1:13-14

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

This truth is illustrated for us in Acts 10:44-48. While Peter was still proclaiming the Gospel message to Cornelius and his household, their prepared souls were saved as indicated by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit before they were baptized.

Acts 10:44-48

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?” And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.”

Peter’s question in verse 47 clearly indicates that Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized. In retelling the story of what happened to Cornelius and his household to the Jewish believers in the city of Jerusalem, Peter stated once again, that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit when they believed, not when they were baptized (Acts 11:15-18).

What we have learned thus far from the passages that we have referenced is that you must possess the Holy Spirit before you can be a truly converted disciple of Christ. In addition, you receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when you believe. That is very clear. It is not ambiguous.

The Scriptures also contain other examples of people who have been saved without being baptized such as the repentant tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). He went home justified without ever getting wet (18:14). Others who were saved without being baptized include the penitent woman (Luke 7:37-50), and the paralytic man (Matthew 9:1-2).

In Acts 15, we have a record of the very first church council centering on the subject of whether the external rite of circumcision was necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). There were some who were teaching that faith in Christ for salvation was necessary but not entirely sufficient to save you. You needed to be circumcised in order for the transaction of salvation to be complete. Peter, referencing what happened when he proclaimed the Gospel message to the household of Cornelius, made it clear that it was not an external rite that cleansed the heart of these Gentiles, it was faith alone that resulted in their salvation (Acts 15:7-11). If baptism was necessary for salvation, surely that would have been specifically stated in this important council. Instead the matter of faith in the Gospel as the means of salvation is what was stressed. The conclusions of the council indicate clearly that no external ceremony can in any sense contribute to what Christ’s substitutionary death and His victorious resurrection has done for us.

Implicit in making baptism necessary for salvation is the idea that faith in the redemptive work of Christ is necessary but not sufficient to save; a premise that could only find acceptance with those who believe in a cooperative formula of

salvation such as the Roman Catholic Church.

The central passage that is referenced by those who teach that baptism is necessary for salvation is 1 Peter 3:21. For the sake of contextual clarity, I have quoted 1 Peter 3:18-22.

1 Peter 3:18-22

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”

The greater context informs us that Peter is addressing the issue of suffering unjustly and the blessing of suffering for righteousness sake. Peter tells us that if we are called to suffer for what is right, we must look to Jesus, who suffered for our sins and through that suffering has come to a place of supreme authority, raised over all the powers of evil that seem so overwhelming to the persecuted Asian Christians.¹

In this context, Peter mentions that Noah and his family were the only ones on earth that were brought safely through the water which refers to the flood waters of God’s judgment. In the entire world, only eight people were spared the universal judgment of the flood as they floated on the water in the Ark that God mandated Noah to build.

Then Peter states; “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you.” The word “corresponding,” is a translation of the Greek word, *antitupos*. This adjective refers to that which corresponds to that which has gone before it or something that is foreshadowed by a type or symbol. The word refers to one that is foreshadowed by or identified with an earlier symbol or type, such as a figure in the New Testament who has a counterpart in the Old Testament, an antitype (Cf. Hebrews 9:24).

Dr. Wuest points out, “The question as to whether the word “corresponding” refers back to the word “ark” or the word “water,” is easily settled by the Greek grammar involved in this expression, for the relative pronoun *ho (ó)* is neuter, the word “Ark” is feminine and the word “water” neuter. The relative pronoun agrees with its antecedent in gender.” Therefore the word “corresponding” which is neuter and construed grammatically with the pronoun *ho (ó)* goes back to the word “water.”²²

Wuest states further, “While it is true that it was the ark that saved them, yet Peter is not teaching that here. He says the waters of the flood saved them. They buoyed up the ark above their own death-dealing powers and saved those inside the ark. The very waters that were death to the rest of the human race were life to the inmates of the ark.”²³

Baptism, (Christian Baptism) is a symbol or a type of the flood waters that buoyed up the ark, thus delivering them from its death-dealing powers that destroy the rest of humanity. But Peter is quick to point out in this verse that it is not the act itself that saves but what it symbolizes, which is an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, a good conscience being one that has been cleansed from sin by faith in that which conquered over sin and death, and that is the resurrection of the Lord.

Water baptism is the outward testimony of the believer’s inward faith. The person is saved the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus. This faith was given to him as a gift from God (2 Peter 1:1). Water baptism is his visible testimony to his faith and the salvation he was given in answer to that faith. In referencing back to what was stated previously, it was not water baptism that saved Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48). It was their faith in the Gospel message preached by the Apostle Peter that resulted in the gift of the Holy Spirit being imparted to them (Acts 11:17). If Baptism is necessary for salvation based on an interpretation of 1 Peter 3:21, we wouldn’t have an apparent contradiction, we would have a bone-a-fide contradiction.

To illustrate what is being said here, suppose I were to say that based upon Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, marriage now saves you from immorality and all the calamities that such lawless behavior brings to your life.

Would I be referring to the marriage ceremony, or the substance and nature of the love commitment that the ceremony represents? Obviously, the external wedding ceremony does not save you from immorality.

It is the love commitment between a man and woman in marriage that prompts them to remain faithful to each other and the marriage covenant that can save them from immorality. The ceremony is a public witness to the fact that such a love commitment has been established by the couple and they intend to remain sexually faithful to each other by satisfying their sexual appetites within the context of their marital union. It is the intentional commitment to remain faithful to their mate in marriage that will serve to protect them from the ravages of immorality, not the ceremony that signifies that commitment. The same can be said about water baptism. What rescues us from the wrath of God to come is our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not the external rite that symbolizes that reality.

An additional passage that is frequently referenced to support the premise that baptism is necessary for salvation is Acts 2:38.

Acts 2:38

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

A great way to clarify the meaning of this passage is to take note of the results of following Peter’s exhortation to repent and to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The first is the forgiveness of sins and the second is receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have already seen from our examination of Acts 10 that Cornelius and His household received the gift of the Holy Spirit before they were baptized (Acts 10:44-48). Peter states in the 11th chapter that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 11:17). Paul teaches that this is true of all who placed their faith in glorious gospel message (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Dr Luke records the words of Peter’s second sermon after Pentecost. Please note what he states as being required for having one’s sins blotted out (i.e. forgiven).

Acts 3:19

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”

Although the need for repentance is mentioned again, baptism is not. It should be mentioned that repentance refers to the changing of one’s mind or perspective that is proven by the changes it makes in one’s life. It should also be mentioned that repentance is a gift from God. We must be gifted by God with repentance because spiritual death keeps us from undergoing a radical “U-turn” in our thinking regarding the matter of personal sins (2 Timothy 2:24-25; Acts 11:15-18).

According to Dr. Luke, when Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his household, he stated the following:

Acts 10:43

“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Forgiveness of sins comes by way of repentance and faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul affirmed this to the Ephesian believers.

Ephesians 1:7

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace”

Baptism then would be an outward act that symbolizes that one has repented of their sins and has placed their faith in the redemptive work of Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. However, baptism is not the means for obtaining the forgiveness of sins or salvation.

We must accept the truth that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has sufficiently paid sins death and open the door to salvation for all who will repent of their sins and place their trust solely in the saving work of Jesus Christ. We must reject the notion that there is even one contribution we can make to what Christ has done once for all time.

It should be understood that the model portrayed in the NT (especially the book of Acts), is that newly saved individuals were baptized very soon after their profession of faith. In some cases, they were baptized the same day, and even the same hour of their profession of faith. There is no example of people waiting for months or years before they obeyed God in this important ordinance (cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12,36-38; 9:17-18; 10:44-48; 16:30-33; 18:8; 19:1-5; 22:16).

¹ Elwell, Walter A.: *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1996, c1989 (Baker Reference Library 3, S. 1 Pe 4:1

² Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Pe 3:21

³ (ibid)

IS GOD STILL SPEAKING?

It is right to say that God continues to speak by means of natural revelation which sometimes is referred to as general revelation. According to Psalm 19:1-6, this form of God's self-disclosure comes to all of mankind day after day and night after night, (Psalm 19:2). The revelation of God in creation goes out to the entire world, (Psalm 19:4) yet this proclamation is without a literal voice (Psalm 19:3).

Romans 1:18-23 states that general revelation is sufficient to reveal certain truths about the invisible attributes of God, His omnipotence and His divine nature and that all people, no matter when they lived or where they lived have received natural or general revelation and are accountable for their response to this divine disclosure. Natural revelation declares to us that the order, symmetry, purpose and design of creation come from the Designer of all that exists.

There is a sense in which God reveals some things about Himself in the outworking of His divine providence especially as He continues to provide and sustain all whom He has created whether they are members of His church or not (Matthew 5:43-45; Acts 14:16-17). Providence teaches us that the creator of all things is the provider of all the good things that come to us in this life.

In addition to the revelation of God in creation and in the outworking of his divine providence, God has revealed Himself through conscience. Romans 2:14–15 indicates God has placed intuitional knowledge concerning Himself within the heart of man. “Man intuitively knows not only that God values goodness and abhors evil but also that he is ultimately accountable to such a righteous Power.” While the Jews will be judged according to the written law, Gentiles, who do not have the written Law, will be judged according to an unwritten law, the law of conscience written on their hearts. Moreover, Paul says the conscience acts as a legal prosecutor (v. 15). “Conscience may be regarded as an inner monitor, or the voice of God in the soul, that passes judgment on man's response to the moral law within.”¹

Someone has said that there are three great preachers who have been preaching since the beginning of time and will continue to preach until the last day of all that exist, they are creation, the blessings of God and the conscience. The central theme of their proclamation is that there is a personal God who is the source of all that exists and the standard of all that is right and the judge of all who do wrong. Unfortunately, because of the fall of mankind, their message has been muffled, muted and misunderstood. This unfortunate response to natural revelation is the product of being in the condition of spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Such a spiritual state has left us without the ears to hear what God has revealed by what He has created, what He continues to provide and by what He has imbued into the hearts of mankind. While natural revelation enables mankind to attain

some knowledge of God as the ultimate cause of all things, it does not provide for the knowledge of such things as the nature of the Trinity, the incarnation and God's plan of redemption.

This knowledge is supplied by special revelation, sometimes referred to as supernatural revelation. The ultimate expression of God's special revelation would be the Word made flesh who dwelt among us, (John 1:14). He has revealed to us grace and truth as well as the true nature of our invisible God (John 1:14-18). The writer of the book of Hebrews describes our incarnate Lord as superior to all other special revelation ever given and recorded in the OT (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The Bible is also a very important part of God's special revelation. It is from the pages of God's written Word that we know of all the other categories of revelation and all that we need to know regarding salvation, doctrinal instruction, correction and training for righteous living (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

It is the written word regarding the Law of God that Jesus came to fulfill (Matthew 5:17-19). It is the written word that Christ turned to as His authority when facing Satan's temptations (Matthew 4:1-11). It is the written word that Christ turned to when instructing His disciples about the need of the Messiah to suffer and die and to be raised to life on the third day and for the Gospel to be proclaimed to the entire world (Luke 24:44-49). It is the written Word that Christ declared to be even greater than someone coming back from the dead to warn of the sufferings of hell (Luke 16:19-31).

Both Paul and Apollos used the written Word of God to prove that Jesus was the long anticipated Messiah (Acts 17:1-3; 18:27-28).

It is the written Word that is exclusively declared to be the very breath of God (2 Timothy 3:16). This divine inspiration is the activity of the Holy Spirit whereby He enabled certain people to receive God's special revelation and to speak it or write it in their own language and style, without error or omission, as the very words of God (2 Peter 1:20-21). It is not the human authors were "inspired" but what was written was "inspired."

It is in the pages of the written Word that we are informed about how all things began and how all things will end. It is in the written Word of God that we see the call of Abraham, the birth of Israel, the promise of a coming seed in whom all the world will be blessed, the birth of the Messiah, His sacrificial death, His victorious resurrection and His ascension to back to heaven. It is in the written Word of God that we have all the doctrines of the Christian faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

The written Word of God is the completion of God's revelation to us and yet the Scriptures, nature, divine providence and the conscience continue to speak. The

written word speaks with the greatest clarity to those who have the ears to hear (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The written Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). The written Word of God has out lived all of its attackers and will endure forever (1 Peter 1:23-24). The written Word of God is the primary diet for the people of God and the primary instrument for our spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:1-2). The written Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit which is able to defend us against the schemes of the Devil and his demonic host (Ephesians 6:17).

The leadership of NCC uncompromisingly adheres to the primary declaration of the reformation which is Sola Scriptura. This principle asserts the supreme sufficiency of God's written Word. No other words are adequate and no other words are divine. Popes, creeds, councils, traditions, visions and prophecy of men today have no authority for our church or any true church of the living God. Only the head of the church has the right to speak to His Bride and He does so today through the Scriptures. The Bible is complete and the cannon is closed. No further revelation is needed. We have some very strong warnings about attempting to add to God's revealed Word.

Proverbs 30:5-6

"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."

Deuteronomy 4:2

"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you."

Revelation 22:18

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book."

The revealed Word of God is characteristically direct, purposeful and with new life in Christ, it is understandable. However, it is never mystical. "Mysticism is the belief that spiritual reality is perceived apart from the human intellect and natural senses. It looks for truth internally, subjectively, weighing feelings, intuition, and other internal sensations more heavily than objective, observable external data." The subjective conclusions of the mystic are self-authenticated as coming from God when in fact they have their origin in mind of man.

A type of Christian mysticism is found in the context of many bible studies when one or more of the participants assign meanings to biblical passages rather than working to extract the intended meaning. Although there are many applications of

God's Word, there is only one intended meaning and it is our duty to extract that meaning in order to teach it and live it.

God's revelation to us, whether it is found in the voice of creation, the conscience or the written word has inspired people throughout the centuries to compose songs, write poems and to paint pictures. But the inspiration to do these things is not of the same quality or nature as the sovereign movement of the Holy Spirit carrying the Apostle Paul along so that the book of Romans for example, can be rightly described as the written Word of God. An individual may have their mind and emotions aroused to compose a song as a result of seeing the revelation of God in nature or studying the Word of God in Scriptures. But their song can not be rightly described as the very breath of God (2 Timothy 3:16). However, it can be described as the result of meditating upon the Word of God revealed.

In conclusion, the question of whether God is speaking today is both yes and no. Yes, He is speaking through His creation, through His providence in providing for all His creatures, through the conscience and through His written Word. However, He is not giving new revelation through certain individuals as He did when the written Word of God was in the process of being conveyed to us. The written Word is complete and sufficient. We must study it, memorize it, reference it and most importantly, we must apply it.

Who are those who believe that God is still speaking new revelation? They include the Pope, the president of the Mormons, the Christian Scientist, many Charismatics and the liberal wing of the United Methodist church whose new PR slogan is, "God is still speaking." By this they mean that new revelation is coming to us by our subjective experiences and even the ever changing morals of our culture that now find homosexuality, abortion and "living together" as acceptable behavior which is not subject to moral assessment in the name of love and tolerance.

All of the above illustrate the danger of moving beyond the authority and sufficiency of God's written Word. The clarion call of the reformation must be declared once again with a renewed certitude, *Sola Scriptura!*

¹ Enns, P. P. (1997, c1989). *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A CHANGELESS CONVERSION?

These forty happenings substantiate the truth that there is no such thing as a changeless conversion. How can all of these spiritual realities take place in your life and leave you in the same way you were when you were dead in your trespasses and sin?

1. By the grace, mercy and love of God, you are made alive in Christ Jesus at the point of your conversion (Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 2:13).
2. You are “Born Again,” or born from above at the point of your conversion (1 Peter 1:3; James 1:18).
3. You pass from spiritual death to spiritual life when you are converted. (John 5:24).
4. The Holy Spirit takes up residence within you at the point of your conversion (Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22).
5. Your destiny is made certain because of the down payment of the indwelling Holy Spirit when you are converted (Ephesians 1:13-14).
6. You are placed into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit when you are converted (1 Corinthians 12:13).
7. The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to you for the building up of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Spiritual gifts are never given to us for personal edification. They are Spirit given abilities granted to us in order that we might serve others as we serve the Lord (Galatians 5:13).
8. You are set free from the eternal condemnation of sin when you are converted (Romans 8:1).
9. You are made right standing with a Holy God, (Justified) when you are converted (Romans 5:1 Galatians 2:16).
10. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to you when we are converted (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 1:16-17). Self-righteousness is unacceptable to a holy God because it is always marred by our sinfulness.
11. Your past, present and future sins are forgiven when you are truly converted (Acts 10:43; Colossians 1:14; 2:13; 1 Peter 2:24).
12. You are made a new creation when you are converted. Those thoughts, practices and values of your old life pass away, and those that are indicative of new

life in Christ come (2 Corinthians 5:17).

13. You are redeemed when you are converted (1 Peter 1:18-19).
14. You are adopted into the family of God when you are converted (Romans 8:15; Ephesians 2:11-22).
15. You are now in the world but not of it because you have been converted (John 17:14-16; Romans 12:2; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).
16. Your sin debt is fully satisfied by the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ when you are truly converted (1 John 4:9-10).
17. You are now alive to righteousness and dead to sin when you are truly converted (1 Peter 2:24).
18. You practice righteousness and not sin when you are truly converted (1 John 2:29; 3:4-10).
19. You are children of God and no longer the children of the Devil when you are converted (1 John 3:10).
20. Your heart is made morally pure when you are converted (Acts 15:7-9).
21. You are liberated from the condemnation of the Law when you are converted (Romans 8:1-4).
22. Your mind-set (worldview) is shaped by the Holy Spirit through the vehicle of God's Word and not by the desires of the flesh when you are truly converted (Romans 8:5-8).
23. Sin no longer is your master when you are truly converted (Romans 6:14).
24. You have switched masters when you are truly converted (Romans 6:20-23).
25. You presently possess eternal life and will one day enter into the fullness of eternal life in the presence of the Lord when you are truly converted (John 3:16; 3:36; 20:31; Romans 6:23).
26. Your old-self is crucified with Christ in order that you might be freed from sin and enabled to walk in newness of life when you are truly converted (Romans 6:6-7; Galatians 5:24).
27. You are "In Christ" because you are converted (Ephesians 1:7, 13).

28. You are “Complete in Christ” because you are converted (Colossians 2:10).
29. You have been chosen by God for salvation and that is why you have been converted (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).
30. You set aside your former manner of life and you put on the new self when you are converted (Ephesians 4:17-24; 1 Peter 1:13-16).
31. You love your fellow brothers and sister in Christ when you are truly converted (1 John 3:14).
32. You have been reconciled to a holy God when you are converted (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Colossians 1:22).
33. You have been rescued from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of God’s beloved Son when you are converted (Colossians 1:13).
34. You overcome the world with your faith when you are converted (1 John 5:4-5).
35. You have been set apart to God and from this fallen world. That is why you are described as “Saints.” A saint is not someone who has been canonized by the church. A saint is one who has been miraculously converted and set apart by God (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7).
36. You are glorified in Christ and will enter into that glory in the eternal state because of your conversion (Romans 8:28-30).
37. You are able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ because you are converted (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1–22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,4; 5:23).
38. You have a guaranteed spiritual inheritance that is reserved in heaven for you because you are converted (1 Peter 1:3-4).
39. You have been made eternally secure because of you are converted to Christ (John 5:24; 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 5:9,10; 8:1,31–39; 1 Corinthians 1:4–9; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:4,5; Jude 24).
40. You experience conflict with the flesh when you are converted (Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 7:14-25).

