

# What Do Baptists Believe?

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# PRELUDE

Beginning on the first Sunday of 2014, our church conducted a sermon series titled "What Do Baptists Believe?" For a period lasting just over 6 months, we examined the 18 doctrinal statements found in the Southern Baptist Convention's Confession of Faith - covering one or more each week. The contents of this book were written as the series progressed, with each chapter representing a specific sermon summary. At the conclusion of the series they were all compiled resulting in this completed work. Each is dated on the Sunday it was delivered and includes a focal Bible passage that was read by the congregation. As you read, you will notice that some statements look forward or backward referring to other sermons past or upcoming. You will also note that some details are particular to our specific church. However, the principles taught can be applied universally and the commentary is therefore valid for all readers. It is my prayer that this collection will be a blessing to you.

## What Do Baptists Believe? - An Introduction

01/05/2014

*For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. - 2 Timothy 1:12-14*

The apostle Paul wrote these words to Timothy exhorting him to "guard... the treasure" which had been entrusted to him. In other words, he was to remain faithfully committed to the teachings that he'd received. This appeal is still applicable to believers today, but how can we protect and preserve the Christian faith if we don't know the fundamental beliefs of Christianity? Simply put, we can't...

Knowing what we believe is extremely important, and it reaps many benefits as well. When a Christian is grounded in their faith, it helps them to live above their worldly circumstances. Less fear, less anxiety, more confidence, more peace. It also helps them make better, more Christ-like decisions. Being guided by His word, believers can more successfully resist temptation and avoid the pitfalls of sin. And those who hold firm convictions are more likely to talk about their faith, share it, and successfully defend it from those who would attempt to lead them astray.

When a body of believers - such as a local church - know and understand their core beliefs, they become more strongly unified as a like-minded people. Unfortunately, many within the church have no idea what they believe, which often leads to disagreement, division, and discord among

the body. A church that stands strong for what they believe in is attractive, because this world is searching desperately for absolute truth. People want to be a part of a group that actually stands for something. In short, a church that knows what it believes and acts upon those beliefs grows and thrives.

So... as Baptists, what do we believe? What differentiates us from other Christian denominations? "The Baptist Faith and Message" is the confession of faith for the Southern Baptist Convention. It is intended to summarize the fundamental beliefs of SBC churches. "The Baptist Faith and Message" is not a creed to be recited, nor is it intended to replace or supersede Scripture in any way. Rather, it simply serves as a guide to help define and distinguish the Baptist faith.

Over the next several weeks we will thoroughly review the 18 position statements contained in "The Baptist Faith and Message" as we explore in depth the foundational doctrines of the Baptist faith. What we believe is important, so it seems wise that we would take the time to discuss it. It is my prayer that through these sermons God will strengthen our faith, deepen our fellowship, and empower our ministry to reach "the least of these".

# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Scriptures

01/12/2014

*The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. - Psalm 19:7-10*

Almost everything we know about God we have learned from the Bible. Therefore, what we as Baptists believe about it determines our doctrinal positions on every other issue. So, let's begin by taking a look at how The Baptist Faith and Message summarizes our beliefs about the Scriptures. It reads...

**“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.”**

Based upon this statement, I would briefly point out and emphasize six central truths.

First, the Bible is DIVINELY INSPIRED. The word "inspiration" in the original language means "God breathed". This is to say, the Bible contains the very words or "breath" of God. Through the Person of the Holy Spirit, God used men as instruments to physically write down the words, while ensuring that each was written exactly as He desired. God alone was and is fully responsible for the content of the Bible. He is its Author, and He reveals Himself to us through its text.

Second, the Bible is TOTALLY TRUE. Stated another way, it is inerrant - without any error. There are no contradictions, misstatements, falsehoods, half-truths, or mistakes of any kind. Every word is absolutely true. Any perceived errors or misunderstandings of the Scriptures that we may recognize are the result of our own limited knowledge and improper interpretation. When understood correctly, there is no discrepancy or conflict.

Third, the Bible is SOLELY AUTHORITATIVE. This means that it is the only source of divine instruction - there are no other books, testaments, documents, decrees, creeds, or any other

writings or religious opinions that are accepted as God's Word. It stands alone as the supreme authority by which all other ideas, thoughts, principles, traditions, and the like are measured. Nothing supersedes or even equals the authority of the Bible.

Fourth, the Bible is COMPLETELY SUFFICIENT. There is nothing left out of it that needs to be added, nor is there anything included in it that does not belong. The Bible's content is perfectly complete just as it is, and is sufficient in its revelation so that mankind may know and live for God just as He desires.

Fifth, the Bible is RELEVANT AND TIMELESS. The principles and teachings contained in the Bible are eternal, and therefore have application to people of all generations. The Word of God is "living" - meaning that it is always current and fresh. It endures forever, never fading or becoming obsolete. It is as relevant today as it was when it was written, and will remain relevant for all eternity. The Bible is not what God said, it is what He is saying...

Sixth, the Bible is ALL ABOUT JESUS. The writings of the Old Testament prophecy the coming of Christ, the Gospels tell of His life & ministry on earth, the New Testament describes the growth of the Church after the death & resurrection of Christ, and they also point to His triumphant return at the end of this age. The entire Bible is a testimony of Jesus Christ and in Him alone we discover its ultimate meaning and purpose.

It is my prayer that this short overview has helped you to clarify and more fully understand what Baptists believe regarding the Bible. In next week's message, we will explore our doctrinal position on God. Do we believe in one God or three gods? What are some of His characteristics? We'll answer these questions and more next Sunday morning. Have a blessed week.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - God (Part 1)

01/19/2014

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. - Ephesians 4:4-6*

It is impossible to adequately or fully describe the incomprehensible glory of God Almighty. Nevertheless, we should seek (to the extent that we are humanly able) to know Him - the One to whom we ascribe our worship and reverence. So, let's review The Baptist Faith & Message's doctrinal position on God.

**“There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.”**

We are going to examine this statement in two parts - the first dealing with the manner of God's existence (today) and the second dealing with God's character/attributes (next week). Concerning His existence (see the underlined statements), when we examine the Bible we are confronted with a perplexing reality - there is one God who exists in three Persons. This doctrine is known as the Trinity, and is foundational to the Christian faith.

The Bible states explicitly in numerous passages found in both the Old and New Testaments that there is only one true and living God. Although the Scriptures frequently mention the recognition of other false gods, they are emphatic that these are all fake and powerless. There is only one true God - the One who created man, but there are countless false gods - the ones created by man.

The one true God - Jehovah, the God of the Bible - reveals Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each is a distinct Person of the divine Godhead. That is, they are not the same as each other and are distinguished from one another. There are several passages in Scripture where we see the Persons of the Trinity present simultaneously. One example is at the baptism of Jesus. After coming up out of the water, the voice of the Father spoke from heaven as the Spirit descended like a dove onto the Son of God.

The Bible teaches that each Person of the Trinity is fully God without division of nature, essence, or being. This is to say that the Father is fully God, the Son is fully God, and the Holy Spirit is

fully God - they are not merely parts of God, different forms of God, or various roles played by God. On the contrary, they are co-equal Persons, distinct from each other and yet somehow undivided.

The Bible frequently uses the Hebrew word "Elohim" as a name for God. The word "elohim" is actually the plural form of the word "el", and it literally means gods. Yet, in Scripture it is used with singular verbs to express clearly that it refers to one God. It would be like one of us saying, "There is only one Gods". It is a linguistic expression woven through the pages of the Bible that reminds us of the miraculous plurality of God.

There have been many examples put forward in attempts to explain the Trinity, but ultimately all of them are flawed in one or more ways. The truth is this - the existence of one God in three Persons is beyond the scope of the human mind. It is a truth that is paradoxical to our limited understanding. Yet despite my ignorance, I find great comfort in serving a God who is greater than my feeble mind can conceive. After all, why would I need a god that I could figure out? We as Christians serve the one true God, and He is much bigger than us!!!

Next week we will study some of the characteristics and attributes of our triune God. What is He like? What does He do? How should we as humans relate to Him? Please join us next Sunday as we tackle these questions together, and until then may the Lord richly bless you.

## What Do Baptists Believe? - God (Part 2)

01/26/2014

*The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, The floods have lifted up their voice, The floods lift up their pounding waves. More than the sounds of many waters, than the mighty breakers of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty. Your testimonies are fully confirmed; holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore. - Psalm 93:1-5*

When we sit and consider the wonders of God - not only what He has done for us, but who He is - the thoughts that we have should make us marvel. It is extremely discouraging to me that so many professing Christians have such a small view of God. This week, we continue with part two of our sermon about the LORD. We began by discussing His existence as one God in three Persons (The Trinity) and we'll conclude by looking at some of His attributes, as stated in the underlined sentences below. The Baptist Faith & Message summarizes the Baptist's beliefs about God as follows -

**“There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.”**

God is intelligent. He acts thoughtfully, doing the things that He does with purpose and intentionality. He is not sporadic, disorderly, or random. On the contrary, God is wise. He knows what He is doing - He's the expert - and He doesn't make mistakes. As such, we can trust in Him completely.

God is spiritual. He is not material or physical like we are. Therefore, He is not limited by time or space. However, the Bible often describes God as having human features, such as hands and feet. Therefore, although God is spirit, He can and does manifest Himself physically and visibly at times.

God is personal. He desires to have a personal relationship with mankind. He is not distant or inaccessible to us, but rather is very close and longs to commune with us. He understands the heart of man, He feels our sorrows, and lovingly desires to comfort us. He made us that He might have fellowship with us.



God is holy and perfect in every way. He is completely without spot or blemish. He is sinless and perfectly righteous. His holiness separates Him from creation, because it is corrupt and stained by the consequences of sin. People, no matter how "good" they might seem, are unholy and in desperate need of a Savior.

God created everything that is. He preserves and sustains it by His great power. Every heartbeat, every gentle breeze, every drop of rain, every sunrise - everything functions in its proper order by the preserving power of God. He reigns over His creation, exercising complete sovereignty and authority over it. God is in control, and nothing happens that He does not permit. He is also our Redeemer, rescuing and delivering nature and His people for the corruption of their sin.

God is all-powerful. He can do anything that can be done - so long as it is consistent with His divine nature. He has the almighty strength to accomplish His will. God is all-knowing - past, present, and future. His foreknowledge allows Him to know what choices we will make before we even make them, but He does not impede upon our free will. In other words, He doesn't decide for us, but He does know what we will decide in advance. God is also everywhere-present. His locality is not limited to a particular place. He is always there, even when we don't sense His presence or He hides it from us.

How marvelous is our GOD! To Him we owe the highest love and affection. He is worthy of our reverence and praise. He deserves first place in our lives, the greatest priority in everything we say and do. He is our Lord, and we should obey His commands joyfully as we demonstrate our great love for Him. Praise the LORD!!!

Next week we will begin looking at the three Persons of the Trinity separately, starting with God the Father. How is the Father distinct within the Godhead? What does He do? What is He like? Come and join us as we explore this topic. Until then, I love you all and have a great week.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Father

02/09/2014

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. - 1 John 3:1-3*

Having already discussed the doctrine of the Trinity, now we will begin our consideration each Member of the Godhead individually, starting with God the Father. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT - Though we will discuss them separately over the next few weeks, remember that they are not separate gods. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God in three Persons. This is the Baptists' doctrinal statement regarding God the Father -

**“God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.”**

God the Father is the Person of the Trinity who wills, plans, and purposes. He is the decision-maker. He issues the decrees and sets forth morality and law. God the Father speaks, thereby initiating the activities of the Godhead. God the Son and God the Holy Spirit both work in differing ways to carry out the divine intentions of the Father. As we examine the above position statement, I notice 3 manners in which God as Father reigns over His creation. These form the fundamental basis of our understanding of God the Father as presented in the Bible. He reigns providentially, perfectly, and paternally.

First, the Father reigns providentially. As you can easily see, the root word of “providence” is “provide”. This gives us some insight into how God cares for us. But “providence” carries a deeper meaning than simply provision. It also is defined as “with foreknowledge” or “known in advance”. When we combine the meanings, we discover that the Father exercises His foreknowledge of all things in order to provide for the needs of His creation in advance.

Our Father's providential care applies to His entire creation – to things both living and nonliving. He directs the course of time and history according to His purposes, drawing it toward its predetermined end. When we consider how God's providence affects us as individuals, we realize that He anticipates our every need and carefully prepares to meet each of them before they even become known to us. Amazing!

Second, the Father reigns perfectly. His rule is absolute in that He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise. He always knows exactly what to do and is completely able to do anything which will bring about His divine will. He is also all-loving, which gives us clear understanding of how He rules. His purpose is to bestow love. This great love for His creation is the reason or motivation that undergirds everything that God does. The measure of the Father's love for us is limitless, and He reigns for our benefit, not to our detriment.

Third, the Father reigns paternally. The word "paternal" is related to or associated with the father. God is the Father of all of those who place their faith in Jesus Christ. Those who have been born again become the "children of God", so it stands to reason that He would rightfully be called their Father. However, those who reject the offer of salvation and remain unrepentant are not included in "the children of God". For these, although He is certainly their Creator, God is not their Father. Even still, He acts fatherly toward all persons – whether they are saved or unsaved.

As Father, He provides for His family. As Father, He protects His family. As Father, He leads and directs His family. As Father, He establishes and enforces boundaries for His family. As Father, He is present with His family. If you are a Christian, then God is your Father in truth. He is the One to whom you direct your prayers and is the source of all good things. Hallelujah!

In our next message, we will briefly overview what Baptists' believe about the second Person of the Trinity – God the Son. How is He distinct among the Godhead? Who is the Son and what did He do on behalf of mankind? I hope you will be able to join us next week as we continue our journey through this exciting series.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Son

02/23/2014

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. - Philippians 2:5-11*

The past few sermons have dealt exclusively with our fundamental beliefs about God. We have examined the doctrine of the Trinity which states that the one true and living God exists in three distinct Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Though different from one another, They are without division of nature, essence, or being. Last week we looked at God the Father specifically. This week we will summarize what Baptists believe about God the Son, the second Person of the Godhead.

**“Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.”**

God the Son is the Person of the Trinity who reveals, proclaims, executes, and carries-out the divine will of God the Father. He does not act on His own accord or according to His own agenda, but rather in perfect obedience to the plans and purposes of the Father. God accomplished His ultimate mission - the redemption of mankind from their sin - through the sacrificial work of the Son.

The position statement above begins with "Christ is the eternal Son of God". Many people don't understand the significance of the word "Christ". They believe it to be merely a name. They compare the name Jesus Christ to their own, reasoning that it is simply His first and last name.

Let's be very clear, Christ is not just a name - it is a title of distinction. Let me give you some examples - King David, Prince Caspian, President Obama, Officer Krumpke... and Christ Jesus. So what title does "Christ" ascribe to the Son?

The word "Christ" is from the Greek, and it is the translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah". Both words mean "anointed". Therefore Jesus, the Son of God, is the "Anointed One" sent by the Father as the promised Messiah. Anointing is the act of setting something or someone apart or consecrating them for a holy or sacred use. In the Bible we discover that prophets, priests, and kings were all anointed.

Elijah, the great Old Testament prophet of God, was instructed to select and anoint his replacement - Elisha. This provides a fitting example that prophets are anointed. A prophet is one who delivers the message of God, who teaches the oracles of God, who reveals the will of God, and declares His decrees. Christ most certainly did these things, and is still doing them today.

Moses was instructed by God to anoint Aaron and his sons as priests. This indicates that priests are anointed also. A priest serves as a "middle-man" between the holy God and fallen man. The Jews would go to the priest in order to make acceptable sacrifices to God. As our High Priest, the Anointed Christ serves as the one and only Mediator between God and man. All believers have direct access to the Father through the Son, and the use of a human priest or other mediator is unnecessary.

Samuel was directed by God to anoint the young shepherd boy David to be the king of Israel. Here we see that kings are anointed, too. A king exercises authority as he rules over his kingdom. Those who violate or ignore his commands do so at their own risk. As our Anointed King, Christ reigns over the heavens and the earth. Currently He sits at God's right hand, but will soon return to consummate His kingdom and judge the world.

Jesus Christ is our Anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. As Prophet He is our messenger, as Priest He is our Mediator, and as King He is our monarch. As such, we should be honored to be called "Christians", knowing that as the redeemed children of God we too have been anointed and set apart for His service. Come join us next week as we study about the third and final Person of the Trinity - God the Holy Spirit.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Holy Spirit

03/02/2014

*I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. – John 14:16-17*

Today's message will conclude the portion of this sermon series dealing with the character and nature of God. We have studied the doctrine of the Trinity and considered some of the attributes of God. We have talked about God the Father and God the Son. This morning we will spend a few minutes discussing the third Person of the Godhead - God the Holy Spirit.

**“The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.”**

The Holy Spirit is distinct among the Trinity in that, while certainly omnipresent, His primary dwelling place is among men here on the Earth. He acts in many varied ways, but His primary works include affecting salvation in the hearts of man and unveiling the truth of God to men. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us a keen consciousness or awareness of God, and apart from His presence we could not recognize or understand God properly.

The Holy Spirit is a person, just like the Father and the Son. He is not some mystic force, but rather has a personality that thinks, feels, speaks, acts, and so on. We can get to know the Holy Spirit more deeply and intimately as we develop a relationship with Him. While He has several names ascribed to Him, Jesus' favorite seemed to be the "Helper". The Holy Spirit helps people in a number of ways as our Counselor, Comforter, and Advocate.

Since the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and in present times, the Holy Spirit resides within the hearts and lives of all born again believers. However, prior to Pentecost the Holy Spirit did not dwell within believers, but rather would come upon them from without. As far as nonbelievers are concerned, the Holy Spirit works to convict them of sin and to woo them toward repentance, but does not indwell those who are not born again.

There are several activities of the Holy Spirit that we read about in the Bible. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment thereby drawing the lost to salvation. He affects regeneration and applies it to the hearts of men. He baptizes or places believers in to the "body of Christ" - the church - and gives each of them one or more spiritual gifts. He illuminates the truths of God, allowing us to perceive and understand spiritual things which the world cannot. He cultivates Christian character producing fruit within our lives. He enables and empowers Christians to worship, to serve, and to witness effectively. And when needed, He comforts believers and intercedes on our behalf.

The Holy Spirit, though a person, is often described to be like the wind. He is blowing within the lives of all who've truly accepted Christ. We can ignore His presence and drift aimlessly through our existence, we can disregard Him and row the boats of our lives in our own direction and by our own strength, or we can hoist the sails of our lives and allow them to be filled with the Spirit wind. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He will propel us forward in His strength and in the proper direction.

Individuals and churches today, by and large, have neglected and squelched the Holy Spirit. As a result, many are simply going through the motions - weak, powerless, and misguided. It is my prayer for you individually, for us at Calvary, and for believers everywhere that we come to know and appreciate our "Helper" - the Holy Spirit - anew and afresh, and that we will "hoist our sails" allowing Him to fill us up so that we might become the people that God desires for us to be.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Man

03/09/2014

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, - Psalm 8:3-6*

This morning we continue our series dealing with "What Do Baptists Believe?" by examining our doctrinal beliefs about man. We have just concluded several weeks of study about the nature and character of God (feel free to review the prior posts), and so today we will compare that with the nature and character of humanity. The Baptist Faith and Message addresses this topic with the following statement -

**"Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love."**

The Bible clearly teaches that God created man in His own image. The word "image" means "in His own likeness". In other words, we were not created exactly like God but rather were made to resemble God. Unlike all other creatures, man was created with many of the attributes of God. We are like Him mentally, morally, and socially. Man is the crowning work of God's creation.

Man was created with a body, soul, and spirit. The body of flesh is the vessel in which the soul and spirit reside. It is the material body that gives physical ability to the soul and spirit within. The soul is the whole personality of the person - it is who the person actually is. It includes their intellect and emotions. The soul is immaterial in and of itself, and it enables a person to be conscious of this world and lively. The spirit is also immaterial, and it enables the man to be consciously aware of spiritual things which are outside the physical realm - such as the presence and reality of God.



Mankind was created by God as male and female. While each represent God in unique ways, both are co-equal before God. As a general rule, men typically demonstrate certain attributes such as a desire to lead, to protect, and to provide. Women, on the other hand, often are more loving and tender-hearted, merciful, nurturing, and submissive. While certainly different, all of these characteristics reflect the nature of God.

Because all people are created in the image of God, He loves and values them all equally. Therefore, all persons, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, position, family, wealth, or any other reason, possess full dignity and are worthy of respect and Christian love. It is on this basis that the Scripture teaches us not to judge one another, but rather to lovingly accept one another with the love of Christ.

Mankind was made not only to be loved by God, by also to love Him in return. Genuine love is not compelled, but is voluntarily given. As such, man was created with a free will so that he might truly demonstrate love for God. Unfortunately, the first man and woman - Adam and Eve - chose to sin against God. As the sole representatives of the entire human race, their sin separated all of humanity from God. Ever since the first sin was committed, all people have been born with a sinful nature which is now inherent to humanity.

This innate inclination to sin leads all people to commit sin as soon as they are morally able. Therefore all people, by their own free will, are sinners and are under God's condemnation. The Bible teaches that each person is held individually accountable for their own sins. This means that, although we've all inherited a sinful nature as the result of the actions of those who lived before us, we are not held responsible for their sins. We will be judged on the basis of our own sins, which are plentiful no matter how righteous we profess to be.

So... God created man to love, worship, and revere Him. But man chose to forsake the goodness of God by sinning against Him. God is completely holy and perfectly righteous. Man is desperately unholy and fully unrighteous. The contrast could not be more stark or drastic. Only the miraculous grace of God can remedy this great disparity. But how? Join us next week as we discuss God's magnificent solution to this vexing problem.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Salvation (Part 1)

03/17/2014

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. - Romans 1:16*

Salvation is the central truth of the Christian faith. It is the point of intersection between our holy God and His fallen creation mankind, both of which we've discussed in previous messages. The plan of salvation, which relies completely upon the grace of God coupled with personal faith in Jesus Christ, defines and distinguishes Christianity from all other world religions. This week we will look at the first portion of the doctrinal statement regarding salvation found in The Baptist Faith and Message and define what it means and how it can be obtained.

**“Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.”**

"Salvation" means to be saved, delivered, or rescued. But from what? As we discussed earlier, the Bible teaches that all men are sinners and are therefore under God's condemnation. Apart from salvation, they will be sentenced to Hell – a place of eternal torment and sorrow, where they shall remain separated from God forever. It is an unimaginably terrible place where Satan and all those who've rejected Christ will suffer the wrath of Almighty God. In order to truly appreciate the significance of one's salvation, the Christian must realize the unspeakable horror of that from which they've been saved. Far too many believers casually undervalue salvation.

Salvation involves "redemption". The word redemption means to purchase back something that was lost, by payment of ransom. It pictures a transaction in which a redeemer buys back something or someone, thereby redeeming them. Jesus Christ is our great Redeemer. Because of our sinfulness, all people are lost - which simply means that we are slaves to sin and estranged from God. But while we were yet captives of Satan, Jesus Christ came and paid the price of ransom on our behalf so that we might be redeemed - set free both physically and spiritually. It is only through Jesus that a person can be forgiven of their sin and receive salvation.

But how did Jesus redeem us and make salvation available? Scripture teaches that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. In other words, God does not forgive sin unless a blood sacrifice is made. It is the blood that covers or washes the sin away. The Bible plainly equates life with the blood, and therefore the blood sacrifice actually means to give a life. The Old Testament sacrificial system was designed to demonstrate this, but animal sacrifices

simply pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ who gave His own life on the cross of Calvary to attain eternal redemption for all believers.

This then is the message of salvation - the gospel or "good news". All people are sinners and are under the condemnation of God for their guilt. The result of sin is spiritual death, a sentence to spend eternity in Hell. But because God loved us so much - though we were sinners - He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us, taking upon Himself our sin and punishment. Through His atoning sacrifice, our debt of sin has been forgiven and the price for our redemption paid in full. Therefore all people who accept Christ as their personal Savior and confess Him as the Lord of their life as demonstrated through a genuine, daily commitment to Him will be saved.

If you are lost and in need of salvation, please contact me or a local pastor immediately. We can help you in making this urgent decision and answer any questions you might have about redemption. This is the most important decision you will ever make, so don't put it off.

Next week we will continue this discussion of salvation, as we examine what happens to a person after they are initially saved. We will discover that salvation is not just an event, but a process that continues to unfold throughout the life of a Christian.

## What Do Baptists Believe? - Salvation (Part 2)

03/22/2014

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. - John 3:16-18*

Last week we defined salvation as meaning “to be saved, delivered, or rescued from the consequences of sin”. When we repent of our sins and are saved our eternal redemption is immediately secured, but we still struggle with the consequences of sin in this life. This reality indicates that salvation is not fully completed or manifested at the moment of conversion. As such, salvation is not limited to an event or single decision. Instead, it can be rightly said that a believer has been saved (past), is being saved (present), and will be saved (future) as the process of salvation unfolds. This process is characterized by regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification which are defined by The Baptist Faith and Message like this -

**“A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.**

**B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.**

**C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.**

**D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.”**

We also concluded in the first part of this discussion that salvation involves the redemption of the whole man - that is the spirit, the soul, and the body. The spirit is that immaterial part of the person that is conscious of God. The soul is also immaterial, and is the mind, thoughts, will,

emotions, and desires of the person. It is who the person is - his personality. The body is the physical vessel through which the soul is animated and able to act.

Regeneration is the quickening of the spirit within a person. In its natural state the human spirit is dead due to sin. It is inherently sinful, exercising great influence over the will and emotions of the man (the soul). But when the Holy Spirit comes into a person's life at the moment of salvation their spirit is made alive. This change results in a new spiritual condition or nature, in which the spirit is made righteous. Thus, the living spirit encourages the soul of the man to live righteously.

Justification is the work of God in which the righteousness of Jesus Christ is reckoned to the sinner, and they are therefore declared righteous by God. His imputed righteousness serves as the justification for God to drop all charges of guilt against the sinner, and free him from the penalty of sin and death. Justification restores the relationship between God and man, because the man has been acquitted from their sin and judged by God to be "not guilty".

Despite the urgings of our regenerated spirit (as directed by the Holy Spirit), the soul of a believer will still struggle with sin. This dual nature - the battle between the soul and the spirit - creates conflict between the "old man" and the "new man" within the life of the believer. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit makes us more like Christ in all that we think, do, and desire. As we learn to submit our will to the leadership of God, our soul conforms increasingly into the image of Christ. This is the process of sanctification - continually growing into the likeness of the Lord, finally realizing complete sanctification when we meet Jesus face to face.

Glorification is the future and final work of God upon Christians, where he transforms our mortal physical bodies to the eternal incorruptible bodies in which we will dwell forever. It has not yet occurred, but rather will take place when Christ returns.

As you can see, the work of salvation involves all parts of the man and is completed over time - not all at once. Next week we will study God's grace, election, and eternal security. Please join us. Until then, may the LORD richly bless you.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - God's Purpose of Grace

03/30/2014

*In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; - Romans 11:5-7*

Over the past several weeks we have talked at length about the holiness of God, the depravity of man, and the LORD's plan of salvation to reconcile the broken relationship between them. For what purpose does God rescue men from their sin? What are the implications of His deliverance? Let's take a look at the Baptist Faith and Message's statement regarding God's Purpose of Grace...

**“Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.**

**All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”**

When we look at the paragraphs above, there are three concepts that are readily apparent and form the structure of today's message. These are grace, election, and eternal security.

It has been said that "Justice is getting what you deserve, mercy is not getting what you deserve, and grace is getting what you don't deserve." The simple theological definition of grace is "God's unmerited favor". The LORD graciously favors mankind, not because we are worthy of His grace nor have we earned it, but because of His great love for us.

The grace of God is sufficient to help us endure the hardships and persecutions of this life. It helps us to face loss and grief, to carry on even in the midst of suffering, and to face each day with a calm assurance and long suffering spirit. This same grace gives us strength to overcome the obstacles that are set before us and elevates us to victorious living.

Because God favors believers (grace), He chooses them to be His own. This choice is called election. The Lord has chosen Christians to be the recipients of salvation, to be the partakers of His blessed goodness, and to be His ambassadors on earth. Those who have been born again are called the "elect" - a people chosen by God to receive the benefits offered due to His grace.

Perhaps the greatest of all of God's gifts is that of salvation, which we discussed the past two weeks. In Christ we can have forgiveness for our sins and the promise of eternal life. This great salvation is given to us by God's grace, through our faith, and is secured by Him alone. Scriptures teach that those who are born again can never be lost, because the assurance of salvation is not dependent upon man but rather upheld by Almighty God. This is the doctrine of eternal security.

"Once saved, always saved" is the clear and plentiful truth found in Scripture. Yet, it can be and has been misleading over the centuries. There are many who've walked an aisle some time ago and made an insincere, half-hearted commitment to God, but they do not live for the Lord and show no evidence of ever having been changed. This is not the Biblical model of salvation, and Jesus himself said that there are many who think they will get into heaven that won't. The truth is that if you are saved, your life will reflect that salvation, and the fruit you bear will provide the evidence that you are eternally secure in Christ.

God, in His infinite knowledge, chooses those whom He foreknows will sincerely chose Him. He graciously favors them, calls them His elect, and secures their salvation by the strength of His almighty hand. As such, you can go through life confidently knowing that you've been saved. Praise the Lord!

# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Church

04/06/2014

*He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." - Matthew 16:15-19*

Today we embark on the second half of our series. We have dealt primarily with theological teachings thus far, but in the coming messages we will talk more about practical application. In other words, how do we take the theology we've learned and incorporate it into daily living? What is the Christian life supposed to look like? During these next several messages we will discuss topics such as the church and its ordinances, Christian education and evangelism, what we believe about the end times, and the Christian worldview - among other things. We will begin this morning with an overview of the church, as detailed in the Baptist Faith and Message.

**"A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."**

We will deal with the church ordinances specifically next week, and so for the sake of today's sermon we will not discuss them in detail. Having reserved that for later, in the remaining text of this statement I see three broad areas - the church's make-up, mission, and management.

The word church is used in two different ways in Scripture. On some occasions it refers to all born-again believers everywhere and of every age. This is the universal church - all Christians across the globe and from every generation. However, the overwhelming majority of the time the word church refers to a specific group of people at a confined geographic location.



There are 6 descriptors of the make-up of the New Testament church. First, it is local. It is found at a particular place consisting of a people living in that area. Second, it is autonomous. It is self-governing, and not bound by any other human authority or religious hierarchy. Third, it is a congregation. It is a group or gathering of people who constitute the church - not a building! Fourth and fifth, it consists of baptized believers. A person must have accepted Christ and been saved in order to be a true member of the church. In addition, as the first step of obedience in their Christian walk the new believer must be baptized - not for the obtaining of salvation - but for church membership. And sixth, the church is associated by a covenant relationship. It is more than a loose organization where membership is meaningless - rather, the church consists of those solemnly pledged to Christ and to each other.

The mission of the church is multi-faceted, but generally it is to foster and promote worship, discipleship, fellowship, ministry/service, and evangelism/missions. A church worships God by expressing love to Him - through singing, giving, praying, preaching, and so on. They practice discipleship by teaching, learning, studying the Bible, and growing in the likeness of Christ through spiritual maturity. Through fellowship, the people of the church develop and deepen personal relationships to support and encourage one another. Through ministry/service, the church endeavors to serve others and to meet their physical needs. And through evangelism/missions, the church carries the gospel message to the ends of the earth.

The management of the church boils down to three steps. The head of the church - the sole authority over it - is none other than Jesus Christ. He directs the church and the pastor, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, seeks to discern this direction and communicate it to the congregation that has been entrusted to Him by God. Deacons assist the pastor and church by ministering to the numerous needs of the members. The congregation, also led by the Spirit, and by consensus, either affirms or renounces the pastor's understanding of Jesus' leadership of the church. Following this method and in one accord, the church moves forward operating as a theocracy which employs a democratic process.

Much of what we've touched on today - but not all - is specific to the Southern Baptist denomination and our interpretation of the Bible. This will also be the case next week when we discuss the church ordinances. Until then, I pray that God will use you mightily to bless those around you in His name.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Church Ordinances

04/13/2014

*So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. - Acts 2:41-42*

We are just over halfway through our sermon series called "What Do Baptists Believe?". Last week we talked about the church. We discussed its makeup, its mission, and its management. This morning we will continue our discussion regarding the church as we examine the church ordinances. As Baptists, we recognize only two church ordinances - namely, Baptism and The Lord's Supper. Jesus expressly commanded these two observances, and we find ample evidence of the early church practicing both. The Baptist Faith and Message presents our beliefs as follows...

**"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 Savior, 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."**

What is an ordinance? The dictionary defines it as an "authoritative rule or decree". It is something that, despite not rising to the same level as a law, nonetheless has binding authority. Typically an ordinance is written or given in order to clarify and help enforce the overall principles of a law to which it relates. When it comes to the church ordinances, Jesus himself commanded that we observe them and both point to something much larger than the ordinance itself.

Baptists believe that the two church ordinances are symbolic. That is to say, that there is nothing supernatural about them - rather they are simply representations that picture outwardly that which is an unseen spiritual reality. There are some denominations that view them as sacraments, believing that the grace of God actually is invoked and falls in extra measure upon the participants of Baptism and The Lord's Supper as they are administered. This view, however, lacks Biblical support. Again, Baptists believe the ordinances are symbolic.

Baptism is commanded by Christ in The Great Commission and elsewhere in Scripture. It is not necessary for salvation, but rather is a visible and public declaration that one has been saved. Therefore, those who have not been born again should not be baptized as such would be "false advertising" and misleading. Baptism not only reminds us of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, but it also points to the new believer's death to the old sinful man and resurrection of the new man clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. The only proper, logical, and Biblical mode to represent this transformation is immersion.

Baptists believe that baptism is a necessary requirement of church membership. Jesus was baptized as the first act of His earthly ministry, and when we seek to become members of a church (through which we are called to live out *our ministry*) we should follow His example. If a person is unwilling to publicly declare their allegiance to Christ by exercising this first step of obedience, their resistance should give the church pause. Those who love the church and want to be involved in it will be baptized gladly and then acclimated into the body.

During the Passover meal on the night of Jesus' arrest, our Lord instituted The Lord's Supper and commanded that it be kept perpetually by the church. The Lord's Supper was practiced repeatedly in the New Testament - and always by the members of the local church. Therefore, Baptists believe that in order to partake of it one must first be born again and also be a church member (which requires baptism).

The Lord's Supper symbolizes the body of Christ being broken and the blood of Christ being shed in order to purchase the redemption of mankind. It is a memorial to His great sacrifice for us, a recognition of our participation in the Body of Christ, and an anticipation of His coming again. The Bible is silent as to how often we should observe this ordinance, but when we do it should be a solemn time of reflection and remembrance. The Bible warns that those who practice the Lord's Supper casually or flippantly do so at their own peril.

Both Baptism and The Lord's Supper point to the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ. They symbolize the depths of His great love for us, in that He was willing to be broken and smitten that we might be forgiven. And though He died and was buried, death could not hold him and He rose from the grave. This is the message of the ordinances and is indeed the message of Christianity itself - that Jesus saves!

# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Lord's Day & The Kingdom

04/27/2014

*Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. - Hebrews 12:28-29*

This week we resume our sermon series "What Do Baptists Believe?". We have been briefly reviewing the 18 doctrinal statements found in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000). Together these statements represent the foundational beliefs of the Southern Baptist denomination. The aim of this series is to remind and teach us specifically what Baptists believe, in hopes that we can be further unified around our core values and strengthened to serve Christ more effectively. Today we will look at 2 statements - The Lord's Day followed by The Kingdom.

**"The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ."**

As Christians, we recognize the Lord's Day as the first day of the week. On our calendars this is, of course, Sunday. But for centuries the people of God worshiped on Saturday, and many religions still do today - most notably the Jews. What accounts for the change, and does Sunday worship violate the law of the Sabbath found in the 10 Commandments?

The reason that Christians recognize Sunday - the first day of the week - as their day of worship is to memorialize the resurrection of Jesus Christ. All four gospel writers clearly state that Jesus arose from the grave in the early morning hours of the "first day of the week". As such, Sunday worship shows a special remembrance of and pays a tribute to the bodily resurrection of our Lord.

The New Testament church met on "the first day of the week" for corporate worship and fellowship. This practice, among others, distinguished them from the Jews who rejected the notion that Christ was the risen Messiah. As such, Jewish people continued to worship on the seventh day of the week - the Sabbath day in accordance with Mosaic Law.

The 4th Commandment states "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." The key to understanding this command is to know that the word "Sabbath" derives from the Hebrew word "sabat" which means to rest or cease from work. The command is not directed at a particular

day of the week, but rather that one day out of every week should be set aside to rest from one's labor and to worship God. Whether that day be Saturday or Sunday is not issue - rather, honoring God by observing a weekly day of rest and worship is what we are commanded to do.

And so, as Christians we honor this commandment in both letter and spirit, we remember the resurrection of Jesus, and we continue the practice of the early church by meeting together for corporate worship and fellowship on the first day of the week, Sunday, the Lord's Day.

**“The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.”**

God is creator of the whole universe - both the heavens and the earth. His reigns over everything, and all of creation is under His authority. However, when the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God it most often refers to only those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Born again believers make up the citizenry of God's glorious and enduring kingdom.

The kingdom of God was instituted when the Son - Jesus Christ - came to earth. His herald, John the Baptist, often alerted the people that the kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus himself stated to his critics that by His presence "the kingdom is in your midst". Where Christ is, there also is His kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom, characterized by salvation, and it stands in stark contrast to the kingdom of this world.

Satan has been granted a season to rule over the earth, and has established his own kingdom of darkness and sinfulness. Therefore, at the present time there are two diametrically opposed kingdoms - the earthly Satanic kingdom and the spiritual Godly kingdom - engaged in an epic confrontation. This all out warfare takes place in the spiritual realm and can be seen manifested in the wreckage of the physical realm. The battles being fought are all too real and the battlefields are the very hearts of men.

The kingdom of God will be consummated - or brought to its full completion - when Christ returns at His second coming. At this time, Satan and his forces will be crushed, his kingdom will be utterly destroyed, and he along with all of those who've stood with him will be eternally damned. As Christians on this fallen earth, while the battle rages on, we are in a real sense "trapped behind enemy lines". But praise be to God, at the return of Christ our Lord will be victorious and His kingdom will be established unshakable and eternal.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Last Things

05/04/2014

*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. - James 5:7-8*

Today's message is the 15th in our series "What Do Baptists Believe?". This morning we will do a brief overview of our denominational beliefs regarding the end times. Some people (both believers and nonbelievers alike) are fascinated with "end of the world" prophecies, while others don't care to know anything about it. We should not take either extreme - that is we should not be so concerned about the coming apocalypse that we miss or neglect the weightier parts of the Bible, yet we should know enough about it to draw out hope for ourselves and motivation to tell others about Jesus. The Baptist Faith and Message includes the following statement -

**"God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord."**

This position is quite general, leaving a wide range of latitude for various viewpoints regarding the end times. And, as you know, there are many different theories as to how the last days will play out. Baptists are not dogmatic about the exact details or sequence of end time events. But we do agree as a denomination that Christ will return to earth personally and visibly, the dead will be resurrected, and Christ will judge mankind. These will be the 3 points of today's message - the return, the resurrection, and the judgment.

The return of Christ will likely consist of two separate events, the "rapture of the church" and the "second coming". These two occurrences are separated by a 7-year span of time known as the tribulation. The rapture will take place first, and Scripture is clear that it could happen at any moment. Jesus will appear in the air, and all born again Christians - both living and dead - will rise to meet Him there. This catching up of all believers will take place in the twinkling of an eye. Jesus will come in the air, for His church, as a bridegroom for his bride.

The second coming will occur at the conclusion of the tribulation period. The Bible describes it somewhat differently than the rapture. Jesus will return to the earth, actually setting foot on Mt. Zion. He will come as a conquering king, leading the army of the Lord - which includes the believers who had been raptured previously (that's us). He will defeat Satan and his cohorts,

bind them for 1000 years, and set up His kingdom on earth. Jesus will come to the earth, with His church, as a conquering king.

The physical resurrection of men will also take place as two differing events. The first resurrection will be of the righteous or the redeemed. This includes all people who have been born again by placing their faith in Jesus Christ. This resurrection will likely take place in phases, the first being Christ's bodily resurrection from the grave. The church-age believers will be resurrected at the rapture, and the Old Testament saints and tribulation martyrs at the Lord's second coming.

The second resurrection will be for those who have rejected Christ - the unrighteous. It will take place following a period of 1,000 years known as the millennium. During the millennium, those who have been redeemed and raised during the first resurrection will reign with Christ over the earth. During the millennial kingdom, nonbelievers will remain in Hades, awaiting the second resurrection which follows.

The judgment will also consist of two parts. The first will be the judgment of the righteous, which is known as the "judgment seat of Christ" or the "bema seat judgment". The phrase bema seat refers to the ancient Olympic games, where a judge would sit on an elevated platform in the bema seat at the finish line of a race. He would watch to determine what place the runners finished in as they crossed the finish line. He would then distribute their awards accordingly. Likewise, the bema seat judgment of the redeemed will not be to determine whether one goes to Heaven or Hell - this will have already been settled by the blood of Christ shed at Calvary. Rather, the purpose of this judgment is to determine what rewards believers will receive based upon their good works. I believe it will take place prior to the millennium. Following the millennium, believers will dwell with Christ forever in the new heavens and new earth.

The second judgment will be for the unrighteous - the lost. It is known as the "Great White Throne Judgment" and it takes place after the millennium in conjunction with the second resurrection. All non-believers will be judged solely on the basis of their sinful works, because they have rejected the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This judgment will not be to determine rewards, but rather will be the final condemnation of all who've refused to accept Christ. These people, along with the devil and his demons, will be cast into eternal hell.

Again, there are hundreds of interpretations regarding the particulars surrounding the end times. I have presented an incomplete snapshot of mine, but you are certainly free to believe differently. Where we agree as Baptists are on these three main points - Christ will return, all will be resurrected, and He will judge humanity. We will spend all of eternity either in Heaven with Him or in Hell separated from Him. Are you ready if He comes today?

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Evangelism & Missions

05/11/2014

*Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. - 2 Corinthians 5:18-21*

As we continue our systematic study of fundamental Baptist doctrine, today we will consider evangelism and missions. A few months ago, toward the beginning of this series, we spent two weeks discussing the Biblical teachings on salvation. We looked at both the plan and the process of salvation. We talked about the necessity of the gospel and how it is the only means by which a person can be saved.

Having come to know this truth personally, it then becomes imperative that we share the message of salvation with others who may not have ever heard it, may not truly understand it, or have ignorantly rejected it. The Baptist Faith and Message states -

**“It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.”**

Evangelism is the announcement, proclamation, and/or preaching of the gospel, the good news of and about Jesus Christ. Therefore, the gospel is a communicated message—communicated in verbal and/or written form. The English word “evangelism” comes from the Greek word euangelion. Most literally translated in the noun form, euangelion means: “gospel” or “good news.”

Missions is the divine activity of sending intermediaries, whether supernatural or human, to speak or do God's will so that his purposes for judgment or redemption are furthered. Therefore, evangelism is the purpose and activity of missions. People are sent to all the world (missions) in order to share the gospel message (evangelism). We too have been sent by God to be witnesses of and for Him.



In today's message we will briefly study the mandate of evangelism and missions, the motivation and means for evangelism and missions, and some methods of evangelism and missions.

There are dozens of verses and passages that command us to be evangelistic. Perhaps the most often repeated is the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20. As Jesus is about to ascend into heaven He tells His followers to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. This is a directive to both the individual believer and the church body as a collection of believers. Sharing the gospel message through evangelism and missions is the foremost purpose and perhaps the most important service ministry of the church (I believe that prayer is the most important). It is our mandate.

A debate has raged in religious circles for years, and is increasingly becoming applicable to the Southern Baptist Convention. It surrounds the doctrinal perspectives of Calvinism and Arminianism, both of which are present in larger numbers within the Baptist denomination. These viewpoints differ in their understanding of God's and man's roles in salvation - yet both groups, contrary to what you might have heard, are evangelical. Whichever of these vantage points that a person takes, the imperative remains evangelism. We need to spend less time as Christians trying to persuade one another about who is right, and more time trying to persuade the lost and dying to accept Jesus Christ.

The motivation for evangelism is love. If a person is not saved, they will lack to "agape" love necessary for evangelism and missions. They will not feel a burden for the lost, and therefore will lack the zeal needed to do the work of evangelism and missions. But those who have been born again will be filled with God's love for others. For if a Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (which they are!), and God is love (which He is!), then all believers are endowed from within with God's love and compassion for others. This internal affection should compel us as Christians to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the world.

There are numerous methods of evangelism. Proclamational evangelism involves proclaiming or teaching the Word through messages or sermons to large groups. This is the approach used by pastors and evangelists in our pulpits, at conferences, revivals, and so on. Confrontational evangelism is more intimate and direct, such as one-on-one or small group interactions. Door to door evangelism, speaking to friends or co-workers, and so on are examples of this method. Incarnational evangelism is slower and more indirect, and includes testimonial, relational, friendship, apologetic, servant, and lifestyle evangelism. While this approach is more about modeling Christ through one's lifestyle, at some point it must also include verbal witness.

As you can see, the methods used in evangelism are varied. Each can be used effectively in the proper setting, and many approaches can be used simultaneously. In the end, the method is not as important as the message. The bottom line is that we must share the gospel by any righteous means possible so that the lost might come to know Jesus.

Do you feel a burden for the unsaved? Do I? Do we grieve and weep over the lostness of this dark world? If not, why not? And if so, what are we doing about it? May God give us all a heart for the lost and a burning passion to practice and support evangelism and missions. Somebody's got to tell them... may that somebody be me.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Education

05/18/2014

*Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you... See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it... Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons... The Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it. - Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14*

Over the past several weeks, we have been discussing what Baptists believe about the church - how it is made-up, how it operates, what ordinance it practices, and so on. Last week we considered evangelism and missions, which is one of the highest callings of the church - both for its individual members and the collective body. But preaching the message of salvation is not the entire purpose of the church...

Once a person accepts Christ, their walk with the Lord is only just beginning. At this point, teaching and training for the new believer must become the focus. Therefore, education or discipleship is another key activity of the church. Southern Baptists have a rich heritage of Christian education, and our doctrinal statement reads as follows...

**“Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.**

**In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.”**

This morning we will summarize our beliefs regarding Christian education by looking at its foundation, its forms, and its freedom.

Christianity is not a blind or unreasonable faith. As a matter of fact, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Those whom claim to be wise and of superior intelligence are themselves deceived apart from Christ. In Him alone lie all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. As creator and sustainer of this world and universe, God has established all natural law and well as spiritual law. Therefore, He is the source of all true knowledge - both religious and non-religious. From science to literature, mathematics to the arts, everything there is to be known - all wisdom and knowledge - finds its origin and foundation in God.

One of our primary tasks as believers is to "make disciples" by teaching others to follow the commands and example of Jesus. Christian education is critical to the survival of the church, and we must be deliberate about passing our beliefs down to the next generation so that our faith is preserved and enduring. As such, we must support and be advocates of Christian education.

Discipleship comes in various forms. At the denominational level, we as Southern Baptists provide support for six theological seminaries across the country that train our churches leaders. As state conventions, we provide funding for Baptist colleges and universities that help equip people to serve and lead in ministry. At the local church level, we provide numerous educational programs including Sunday School, Bible Study, Discipleship Classes, VBS, and countless other teaching ministries designed to help believers grow in Christ. As parents, we are ultimately responsible for teaching our own children the truths of God through the use of family devotionals and by numerous other means.

As students of God, we are responsible for our own personal level of Christian maturity. Along with the freedom that we have as Christians to study or neglect the teachings of God comes tremendous accountability. Knowing this, we should actively and continually be learning more and more about God, putting that knowledge into practice, and growing in our faith and Christlikeness.

Finally, as teachers of the things of God, we may use our freedom to vary our style and teaching methods or approaches. Some strategies are more affective than others, depending upon the learners involved. But we must maintain strict adherence to the Word of God, careful not to teach anything contrary to Scripture. We must preserve the doctrinal integrity which we profess, and never digress into "false teaching" that would lead listeners astray.

It is easy to understand why teaching and Christian education are so important to the faith. Clearly, discipleship is one of the most purposes of the church. The very continuance of Christianity depends on it. Please join us again next week as we continue this series by exploring what Baptists believe about stewardship. Until then, blessings.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Stewardship

05/25/2014

*And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' - Acts 20:32-35*

Over the past few weeks, our sermons have focused upon the activities of the church. We've discussed the imperative nature of evangelism and missions - that we have received the commission to share the gospel with the entire world. We've also been charged with education and discipleship - teaching people to grow in their walk with the Lord into more mature Christians. These, among others, are important responsibilities of the church and of God's people.

In order to accomplish these objectives, we are going to need resources. God is not only the source of the salvation we preach and the wisdom we teach, but is also the maker and giver of all things. When we practice Godly stewardship, the church is equipped with the tools it needs to do the work for which it is called! The Baptist Faith and Message says it like this...

**"God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth."**

The Bible clearly identifies God as the source of all blessings, whether spiritual or temporal. Spiritual blessings include election, adoption, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, enlightenment, inheritance, and assurance. Temporal blessings include every good thing you have - your time, your talents, your family, your friends, your possessions, your money... Here is the bottom line - everything we have is given to us by God. As such, we owe Him for it all.

The Bible describes us as debtors, trustees, and stewards. We are all equally indebted to God - none of us owe Him any less than another. However, some of us don't perceive the extent of our debt, and are less thankful than others who "get it". Despite our depravity God entrusts us with numerous blessings, and expects us to use them to produce increase for His kingdom's sake.

He gives over to us the management of His household and affairs, relying on us as His faithful and wise stewards to administer them righteously.

Stewardship includes more than just money, although money certainly is a vital part. We are to be good stewards of our time, our talents, and our material possessions. Life is fleeting - every moment is precious. We should redeem the time, using every second of our lives to honor God. We have all been created with and/or developed certain talents. These are not given solely for our benefit, but rather to be used for the advancement of God's purposes. Of course, we are to give of our money and other possessions as well.

Have you ever wondered, how do I give to God? After all, I can't just walk up to a counter and hand Him some money. Here is the answer - by giving to the purposes of God, you are giving to the person of God. Therefore, we should strive to give to those organizations that God endorses - i.e., Christian ministries. The foremost of these is the local church, where the bulk of your giving should be directed. But there are other ministries that serve others in Jesus' name as well. Just remember, people don't just need stuff - they need Jesus - so give to those ministries that promote Christ in conjunction with providing for physical needs.

How should I give? The Bible explains that we should give cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally. Instead of spending all of our money in search of cheerfulness, we should try giving. In this, we will find the cheerfulness we seek. We should give routinely and in accordance with a plan. By figuring it into our budget first, we can become more consistent and develop the habit of generous giving. Don't be mistaken - the amount we give is important; not as compared to the giving of others, but rather as it relates to the amount we have. We should never be stingy with God's blessing or withhold a gift that we are able to give.

In order to accomplish the will of God, we must learn to practice righteous stewardship. If we as believers would get a hold of this concept, we could change the world. God has given us everything in overwhelming abundance, and yet the world around us is suffering from great lack. His bounty is not ours to hoard for ourselves - it was never intended for that - and so don't you think it's time for us to begin giving His goodness away?

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Cooperation

06/08/2014

*Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart. - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*

We have been systematically studying the doctrinal positions of the Southern Baptist denomination. We are nearing the end of this series, with only 5 sermons to go... Today we will look at how our churches work together in cooperation with each other to accomplish tasks that individual churches can't do alone. Then we will spend a few weeks discussing our responsibilities as citizens to our communities and country, including what should be our political worldview. Then we will talk about the family, marriage, and our beliefs regarding the home. Finally, we will close the series by reviewing the specific Baptist Distinctives that we've touched on during the past several months. For now, here is our doctrinal statement on cooperation -

**“Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.”**

We will break this paragraph down into 5 points - the aim of cooperation, the allies in cooperation, the authority of cooperations, the advantages of cooperation, and the approach to cooperation.

The aim or goal of cooperation is to accomplish the "great objects of the Kingdom of God". The Lord has left us with tasks that are much larger than any of us can handle alone. He did this intentionally, that we might realize our dependence upon Him and our interdependence upon one another. Some of these great responsibilities include missions and evangelism, education and discipleship, and benevolent ministry. As Christians, we are commanded to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, to teach and train our future leaders which Biblical learning, and to meet

a multitude of various needs. These are monumental assignments - a load that no church could or should try to carry by itself.

We are to be allies in cooperation. That is to say that we are friends, not foes. Jesus said in Mark 9:40 referring to Christians working in the Lord's name but in separate groups or congregations, "He who is not against us is for us." Translation - we may not be members of the same assembly, clique, or even denomination, but as born again believers we are all on the same team. Yes there are some differences in the specifics, but generally as Christians we are all brothers and sisters within the family of God. As such, we should work together both within and without our denomination, partnering with all Christians to advance the Kingdom of God.

As churches begin to join with each other in the cooperative spirit, all authority remains held by the local church and each is fully autonomous. There is no hierarchical structure within the South Baptist denomination. No organization or body holds any authority or rank over any other. While representatives of the group may provide advice or counsel to its members, there is no compulsion or coercion. Membership in such organizations is purely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. Members are free to agree or disagree with the opinions and/or decisions of the majority and to run their own congregations in the manner they see fit. This is known as congregational freedom or liberty and it is a Baptist distinctive. While Baptist churches are autonomous, they should voluntarily cooperate with each other and foster a submissive spirit. Our independence should not result in isolation! We should work together not because we have to, but because we want to.

The advantages of cooperation are rather obvious. By working together we can elicit, or "to draw out of" people, skills and gifts that can be used in ways that might not be opportune in our local church. We can provide diverse and numerous avenues for the redeemed to answer their particular calling. By pooling our resources together - such as our finances - we are able to accomplish much more, and to do so more efficiently. Together we can direct our energies and maintain a particular focus, which will help our work to be more effective. Also, within the activity of cooperation we discover unity. As we work together toward common ends, we are drawn closer and function properly as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12).

The approach that we use is to organize various associations and conventions of churches. At the local level, there is the Ministerial Alliance. In Seymour (like in most towns) various Christian churches in the city work together to sponsor various community ministry events, such as the recent National Day of Prayer observance at the court house. At the regional level, our church is a member of the Bi-Fork Association which consists of several churches in the surrounding counties and we send teams on mission trips, we support the Baptist Student Ministry at Vernon College, and much more. At the state level, we are members of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. We work together with 5700 plus churches to accomplish various ministry tasks in Texas. At the national level, our church voluntarily associates with the Southern Baptist Convention. Through it we (and approximately 47,000 other congregations) send missionaries



all over the world, fund our theological seminaries, and engage in countless other ministries that touch the entire globe.

In closing, we can do more together than we can do separately. The Christian life is meant to be lived in cooperation with one another, working together to accomplish the great objects of the Kingdom of God. I hope you will take some time this week to learn a little bit about our various cooperations, associations, and conventions. I think you'll be amazed at the impact we have by working together.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Social Order

06/15/2014

*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. - Colossians 3:12-17*

Over the past several weeks we have talked about how Christians should work to advance the causes of Christ within the context of the church. We have looked at the great objects of the Kingdom of God - things such as evangelism and education - and discussed how we as the redeemed should work together in cooperation and as good stewards to accomplish them most effectively.

For the next few weeks we will turn our attention to the world, and how we as Christians should work with and engage our secular culture. We will move outside of the confines of church life and church relationships. We'll ask... how do we as believers relate to the lost? How do we work within a hostile society to better it and make it more like Christ? How do we stand against the sin of our fallen civilization while demonstrating God's grace and love toward sinners? The Baptist Faith & Message includes the following doctrinal statement...

**"All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth."**

This morning we will briefly consider our inclination toward society, our influence on society, and our involvement in society.

As Christians we should maintain a certain inclination, or position, toward society. First, we must acknowledge the fallen nature of the world around us. Our society is evil, it is sinful, it is wicked, it is corrupt. All of mankind and the institutions of men are tainted by sin. Sin is pervasive, and evidence of its disastrous effects abound. Any honest reading of Scripture reveals clearly that God hates sin. The world tries to sugar coat it, but the just and holy nature of God declares and demands that He insist on moral purity. As Christians, we too should oppose sin and stand up for the cause of Christ even in the midst of a hostile environment.

But what sins should we oppose? Many modern churches seem to select some sins to rally against while barely mentioning others. The two that garner the most attention from today's pulpits are homosexuality and abortion. Now, please don't take me wrong because I agree that the Bible clearly reveals that both of these are acts of sin, but what about adultery, gossip, idolatry, deceit, bitterness, slander, and so on? All sin - not just a few "pet" sins - are an affront to God and we must be extremely careful when we begin comparing them one with another. All people are sin-sick, infected by the spiritual disease of sin - and it is eternally terminal. True, we must stand up for those who are victims of sin, but from a heavenly perspective this includes us all - the abused *and the abuser*, the persecuted *and the persecutor*, the despised *and the despiser*. Yes, it is easier to love the victim than the criminal - but we must love them both. We must oppose all sin, yet loving contend for all sinners.

As we strive to have a Godly influence on society, we must begin by making His will our own. It is God's written will that no one perish, but that all come to repentance. Therefore we should make this our primary objective - to lead all people to Jesus. The only way to truly improve society is to win it to Christ. Trying to influence people to act morally and righteously, apart from knowing Jesus, is futile. We might make temporary strides, but they will not last. Ultimately this world does not need behavior modification, it needs the LORD! If we try to change someone's behavior without changing their beliefs, they will resent us and resist us. But if we influence someone and they change their beliefs, then they will voluntarily, willingly, and eagerly change their behavior. We must quit trying to force morality on society, and instead seek to show them Christ in us.

It is God's desire that we as Christians be "in the world" - He leaves us here for a reason. To be in the world means that we should be involved in the activities of the world and associated with the people of the world (while maintaining our faithfulness to Christ). We are not called to withdraw from the world, but rather to engage it with the gospel! As we work with people - both righteous and unrighteous - in the various institutions of society we must "let our light shine". When people see us living and loving like Jesus did, they will be attracted to it. We must remember that our purpose isn't merely to "clean up the culture" - this is not the reason Christ came, and it is not the commission of the church. Our ultimate goal must always be to lead people to Jesus.

And so yes... absolutely, we as believers should work to make the world a better place - it is a noble and worthy endeavor. We should oppose sin while loving sinners. But the improvement of society for society's sake is a fool's game - after all, this world is passing away. The only way to bring about meaningful change is to lead the world to salvation. Working to rectify the moral decay around us is merely a treating of the symptoms - this world needs the cure. This world needs Jesus!

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Peace and War

06/22/2014

*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. - James 4:12*

Last Sunday we discussed the Christian and Social Order. We summarized how followers of Christ should be inclined toward society, exact influence on society, and be actively involved in society. We talked about our role as “the salt of the earth” and how we should oppose sin while simultaneously loving all of humanity. We considered the dangers of the “social gospel” and emphasized that our purpose as Christians is not limited to merely “cleaning up the culture”. As we seek to improve our society, the most important responsibility we have is to point it to Jesus.

Today we pick up where we left off, moving from social issues to foreign affairs. If we as believers truly love all people, even our fiercest enemies, then what should be our perspective regarding war with other nations or forces? Are we justified in fighting war, and if so when and on what grounds? Does our calling to spread the cause of Christ give us grounds to advance “goodness” and “democracy” through force? What does the Bible say on this issue? Let’s begin by reading the Baptist Faith and Message’s statement regarding Peace and War, to find a launching point for today’s sermon.

**"It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace. "**

The message today has 3 points - The Agents of War, The Alternative to War, and Some Attitudes about War.

People expect from the civil government protection from enemies, both foreign and domestic. This is one of the primary motivations for establishing government. The first “inalienable right” listed in our Declaration is life - and people form governments to provide security for it. God has ordained earthly governments to punish evildoers as a primary part of its “ministry”. This purpose has application domestically through the various police forces and judicial systems, but also internationally. God uses warfare - nations rising against nations, armies against armies, as a means of judgment, discipline, and sometimes as call to repentance.

God is not a pacifist, and His agent of warfare is civil government. The Bible is full of stories detailing war, and it never directly condemns war. Any honest reading of Scripture leads us to conclude that God, on occasion, supports and even sanctions war. He uses militaries or para-military forces, sometimes with religious leanings, to these ends.

On the other hand, the Bible plainly teaches that God's children should, to the extent possible, live at peace with all men. It is not the function of the church to wage war, but to pursue peace. Christians should not seek violence on their adversaries, but rather love and pray for them. Christians should endure suffering lovingly, seeking the greater purpose of showing Christ over the demand for personal justice. Jesus warns us that violence begets violence. True and lasting peace cannot be reached through the use of force, just as love can't be spread by practicing hatred. The enemies of the church are not of this world and our battles should be focused on these unseen spiritual enemies, not on other men or nations.

Based upon the opposing positions presented in Scripture, there exists a duality in our responsibility regarding peace and war. It is clear that God uses men waging war to accomplish His purposes, yet it is also evident that He instructs His children to pursue peace and resist conflict if at all possible. This truth seems to create a continuum, upon which our sovereign God places different people in different places in accordance with His divine will. Because of our strong heritage of liberty of conscience, Baptists have generally recognized the validity of all attitudes regarding war. As your pastor, I am not going to condemn any Christian for their service in or refusal to serve in any war based on conscientious grounds. Both arguments have Scriptural support and merit.

However, I am compelled to say that as I observe the actions of our nation over the past century I am very concerned. America has been at war somewhere against someone since the beginning of World War II. Our country seems zealous for war, seemingly seeking to involve itself in every conflict it can find. As a self-professing "Christian" nation, our foreign policy over the past several decades has proven to be extremely hypocritical. We claim to be a peaceful people, yet we are constantly and often aggressively at war. The damage caused by our actions, and our apparent unwillingness to try peace, is the cause of numerous problems here in the United States and around the globe.

As Christians, the most important thing we can be doing in a time of war is to be praying for Godly wisdom for our leaders, praying for the safety of our military, praying for quick resolution to conflicts, and praying for a minimum of casualties among civilians and combatants on both sides. Just as salvation through Jesus Christ is the only real solution to this world's social problems, so also it is the only way to appease the spirit of war and bring about lasting genuine peace.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - Religious Liberty

06/29/2014

*Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. And He \*said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They \*said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He \*said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away. - Matthew 22:15-22*

This morning we will do an overview of "religious liberty". This has been called by many the hallmark of the Baptist faith, as it undergirds so much of what we believe and hold dear. We will discuss our liberty and Christ and how that relates to the church and the state. I may get a little political this morning, and might say some things that will surprise you. Promise that you'll still love me? Okay, lets begin with the Baptist Faith and Message's statement.

**"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power."**

There is a lot packed into this paragraph, but we are going to boil it down to three basic points as it concerns religious liberty - the obligation of the individual, the obligation of the state, and the obligation of the church.

It should go without saying, but I will say it anyway... God expects us as individuals to be fully obedient to Him. He alone is our LORD and thereby exercises supreme authority over all of humanity. Scripture teaches that civil governments are ordained by God, and therefore made authoritative by Him. As such, we should be obedient to the commands and laws of our

government as administrators of His authority. The Bible is clear - the power of the state *and the church* is only legitimate when it is consistent with the commands of God. While we should render careful obedience to both on most occasions, if either the church's or the state's laws or decrees violate those of God we are obligated to follow those of the Higher Authority (God Almighty) - regardless of the temporal consequences.

The state should establish an environment that protects religious freedom. It should not regulate or legislate in the arena of religion, as that is the function of the church. It should favor no ecclesiastical group over another - treating them all equally - and should remain neutral on religious issues. The state should not impose any penalties, taxes, or any other form of coercion on religion or religious expression of any kind - so long as they do not impede on the inalienable rights of others. The government should not involve itself in the sphere of religion, but rather should adhere strictly to issues such as life, liberty, and property.

It is the church's responsibility to feed the hungry, to provide for the needy, to comfort the sick, to tend to the widows, to care for the hurting, to educate their children, and so on. The church should not relegate its responsibilities to the state. But because it has, the state has grown increasingly larger and more powerful, while the church has become smaller and less influential. Also, as we can easily attest, the efforts of the state to do the work of the church are generally unsuccessful and grossly inefficient. This is spiritual work and the labor must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit - ie, by spiritual means. Otherwise, failure is certain.

Church and state should be separate. By separation of church and state, Baptists do not mean the separation of God and government. Christians should be knowledgeable of and involved in politics in order to insure that conscientious, moral, ethical, and upright people are serving as our leaders and decision-makers. It should not be the goal, however, for politicians to impose any particular religious view, faith, or doctrine upon the people. Rather, our public servants should strive to lead with honesty, integrity, humility, and other virtues in those limited areas expressly granted to the state.

The atoning work of Jesus Christ has freed believers from the burden of man's law - regardless of whether its source is the church or the state. We live in the freedom of God's magnificent grace, no longer slaves to sin but rather to righteousness. Our allegiance is to God first and supremely, as unhindered obedience to Him and His commands is the true meaning of religious liberty.



# What Do Baptists Believe? - The Family

07/06/2014

*Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. - Joshua 24:14-15*

Over the past 6 months we have carefully reviewed basic Southern Baptist doctrine in a variety of areas. We have looked at our core theological beliefs, as well as our role as Christians within the church and within society. This morning we will discuss the final statement in the Baptist Faith and Message. It deals specifically with the family.

**“God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.**

**Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.**

**The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.**

**Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.”**

This morning we will consider what Scripture says about the family in general, about marriage, and about parenthood. While this is an extremely extensive topic, and we could spend weeks on it, today we will simply hit the high points as we summarize what the Scripture teaches.

The Bible distinguishes the family from the nation, explaining that nations are made up of families. Likewise, churches are made up of families. As a matter of fact, the family is the foundational institution of society. Like cells within a human body, the healthiness of its individual families will determine the health of the nation/church as a whole. In order for a family to be and remain spiritually healthy, it must fear the Lord. By knowing Him, loving Him, and exalting Him, families demonstrate Godly wisdom upon which they are strengthened and firmly established.

God ordained the marriage relationship as the first and foundational human relationship. It is an institution created and established by God alone. Man has no legitimate right to define or redefine marriage, as God has already done so. Scripture is abundantly clear - God's original design for marriage is the union of one man and one woman. Marriage is a covenant relationship between God, the husband, and the wife. It is a binding commitment, cemented by God himself. Marriage is a mystery in that two individuals become "one flesh", inseparable from one another. While divorce is an unfortunate consequence of fallen humanity, it is not God's desire or original design. The Bible is clear that God hates divorce. (Malachi 2:16)

God created both male and female in His image. As such, both are equal in worth to God. Neither is to elevate themselves as more valued or favored by God, particularly in the context of a marriage relationship. Marriage is a union of equals, mutually pledged to one another. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. They are to give of themselves completely and sacrificially for the sanctification of their wives, by providing for her, protecting her, and leading her. Husbands are to love their wives as their own body, for indeed they are one flesh. Wives are to lovingly submit to the Godly leadership of their husbands. They are to respect him and be a helper to him, particularly in the management of the household.

Parents are to teach their children the truths and ways of God, thereby passing Christianity from one generation to the next. This is the primary means of evangelism, and God's design for the continuance of His kingdom. They are to train their kids as directed by Scripture. Training involves modeling. Parents are not just to tell their children about God, but to model Christian living. In order to adequately prepare children for adulthood, parents are to lovingly disciple their children, just as our Father at times disciplines His children. Such correction is critical for raising God-fearing children. In turn, children are to honor their parents. This means that they are to hold them in highest esteem, revere and respect them. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord.

For most of my life, I have been told that half of all marriages in the U.S. fail, and that this is roughly the same figure both in and outside the church. However, I read research this week that declares this information to be false. Rather, only about 30% of marriages end in divorce, and that rate is cut in half among evangelical Christians who attend church regularly. While still not

perfect, it does reveal that God makes a difference. The best thing you can do for your marriage - for your family - is to know, love, and serve the Lord.

# What Do Baptists Believe? - A Conclusion (Baptist Distinctives)

07/20/2014

*Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, **with one mind** striving together for the faith of the gospel; - Philippians 1:27*

This morning we conclude our extended series on "What Do Baptists Believe?". Most of the teaching we've heard during these sermons has had application to all Christian denominations, but there has been some that has been specific to Southern Baptists.

In today's closing message, we will briefly review these "Baptists Distinctives". As we do so, we will answer the question "What beliefs distinguish a Southern Baptist from other Christians?" We will use an acrostic to help us remember these doctrinal distinctions. *Most of the text used in this blog entry is found at <http://www.allaboutbaptists.com/distinctives.html>.*

**Biblical Authority** - The Bible is the final authority in all matters of belief and practice because the Bible is inspired by God and bears the absolute authority of God Himself. Whatever the Bible affirms, Baptists accept as true. No human opinion or decree of any church group can override the Bible. Even creeds and confessions of faith, which attempt to articulate the theology of Scripture, do not carry Scripture's inherent authority.

**Autonomy of the Local Church** - The local church is an independent body accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church. All human authority for governing the local church resides within the local church itself. Thus the church is autonomous, or self-governing. No religious hierarchy outside the local church may dictate a church's beliefs or practices. Autonomy does not mean isolation. A Baptist church may fellowship with other churches around mutual interests and in an associational tie, but a Baptist church cannot be a "member" of any other body.

**Priesthood of the Believer** - Every born again believer has direct access to the throne of God. Therefore, since every child of God shares in the priesthood of the believers, all have the same right as ordained ministers to communicate with God, interpret Scripture, and minister in Christ's name. This is first and foremost a matter of responsibility and servanthood, not privilege and license.

**Two Offices of the Church and Congregational Governance** - The Bible mandates only two offices in the church - pastor and deacon. The three terms "pastor," "elder," and "bishop," or "overseer" all refer to the same office. The two offices of pastor and deacon exist within the local church, not as a hierarchy outside or over the local church. The church operates under the Lordship of Christ through the practice of congregational governance.

**Individual Soul Liberty & Security** - Every individual Christian has the liberty to believe, right or wrong, as his/her own conscience dictates. While we seek to persuade men to choose the right, a person must not be forced to into compliance, realizing that it is not always the larger group who holds the truth when, in fact, our heritage as Baptists has demonstrated the worth of every individual believer.

The salvation of every individual who has been born again in Christ Jesus is eternally secure. A saved person cannot be re-lost, as their salvation is secured by God himself and sealed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their life. Once a person is truly saved, they will always be saved. This is not a license to sin, but rather all the more reason to practice righteousness and endure suffering out of a hopeful confidence.

**Saved and Baptized Church Membership** - Local church membership is restricted to individuals who give a believable testimony of personal faith in Christ and have publicly identified themselves with Him in believer's baptism. When the members of a local church are believers, a oneness in Christ exists, and the members can endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Two Church Ordinances** - We practice only believer's baptism by immersion, which is the only acceptable mode for baptism because it alone preserves the picture of saving truth. No other form pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:15). We believe that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic ordinance, picturing Christ's body broken for our sins and His blood shed for our redemption. It is not a saving ordinance, but helps us remember His death, and inspires us while looking forward to His coming. It is to be observed by regenerate, obedient believers.

**Separation of Church and State** - God established both the church and the civil government, and He gave each its own distinct sphere of operation. The government's purposes are outlined in Romans 13:17 and the church's purposes in Matthew 28:19 and 20. Neither should control the other, nor should there be an alliance between the two. Christians in a free society can properly influence government toward righteousness, which is not the same as a denomination or group of churches controlling the government.

The doctrines listed above provide a partial list of the distinguishing beliefs of Southern Baptists. Many other Christian denominations take different stances on these issues and have every right to do so. They are just as sincere in their beliefs as we are in ours.

I've heard it said that "the path to a unified church is not found in tearing down the denominational fences that divide us, but rather in opening the denominational gates that are between us." As Christians we need to strive for unity, not uniformity. While we are never to compromise on the weightier doctrines (Matthew 23:23) that make us Christians, we must learn to disagree agreeably on the other matters.

Perhaps this series has confirmed that you are a Baptist by reinforcing your belief in these core doctrines we share. If so, I am encouraged that it has strengthened your faith. Or perhaps it has revealed to you that you are not a Baptist because you disagree with these doctrines. If that is the case, while we love you as a Christian brother we'd politely ask you to go elsewhere and join a church where you can be in agreement with the congregation. You'll be happier, and so will we.

One final thought - what we believe matters, because we are to be a unified people operating with one mind so that we can more effectively do the work of Christ. This is our calling as the children of God. So know what you believe, find a like-minded church, and put your beliefs into practice.

# Scripture References

## I. The Scriptures

*Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.*

## II. God

### A. God the Father

*Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.*

### B. God the Son

*Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.*

### C. God the Holy Spirit

*Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.*

## III. Man

*Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.*

## IV. Salvation

*Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.*

## **V. God's Purpose of Grace**

*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39–12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.*

## **VI. The Church**

*Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.*

## **VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

*Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.*

## **VIII. The Lord's Day**

*Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.*

## **IX. The Kingdom**

*Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.*

## **X. Last Things**

*Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians*



1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

### **XI. Evangelism and Missions**

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

### **XII. Education**

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

### **XIII. Stewardship**

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

### **XIV. Cooperation**

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

### **XV. The Christian and the Social Order**

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

### **XVI. Peace and War**

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

## **XVII. Religious Liberty**

*Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.*

## **XVIII. The Family**

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