

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT
of
GRACE CHURCH OF TALLAHASSEE

What We Teach

Section 1. The Bible

The Bible, which consists of sixty-six books, is literally the Word of God, written down by men of God, who were moved by the Holy Spirit and spoke from God (2 Samuel 23:1-3; 2 Peter 1:20-21). We believe in verbal plenary inspiration which means that all of the Bible, in its original documents, both in part and in whole, is inerrant, infallible, the very Word of God (Psalm 119:160). The Scriptures are the only authoritative and sufficient standard for all matters of godliness, faith, practice, and doctrine through all generations (Psalm 19:7-11; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 24:35-36; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4, 19). The Bible is also the only source of objective truth from God (John 5:39; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 1:1; Jude 3; Revelation 1:19). God's Word stands in authority over all creation, men, and the church and is what all men will be judged by on the last day (John 12:48; Romans 2:16; 1 Timothy 3:15). Because the Bible is the Word of God we are under obligation before God to handle it accurately when we interpret it (2 Timothy 2:15). We believe in the literal-historical-grammatical method of interpretation, which means the Bible is to be interpreted literally, taking into account the historical context in which it was written, and by submitting to the original languages and proper rules of grammar and sentence structure. We believe the interpretation of any given text of the Bible is one, although the principles and applications taken from the one interpretation may be one or many.

Section 2. God

There is but one God (Deuteronomy 4:35, 6:4; Isaiah 44:5-8), perfect and infinite in all of His attributes, who has chosen to reveal Himself in three distinct persons, i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three persons have existed from eternity and are separate in their identity and function but one in purpose and substance, all three together being the one eternal God, worthy of worship, praise, and obedience (Genesis 1:26, 3:22; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Titus 3:4-7). God created everything in heaven and on earth, out of nothing, in six literal twenty-four hour periods or days, by His spoken Word (Genesis 1:1-31; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 148:1-5; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 11:3).

a. God the Father

God the Father is the initiator, planner, and organizer of all things, being sovereign over all of His creation (Job 38-41); Isaiah 14:24, 27; 37:26; Acts 4:27-28; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5, 11; 2:10).

b. God the Son

Jesus Christ is God incarnate, which means that He is God become man in the flesh, fully God and fully man (Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:23; John 1:1, 14, 18; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 1:8). He was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) and conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). He is the one and only Mediator between God and man and lives as an advocate for the saints (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1). He is the Redeemer (Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 3:18-19), Judge (John 5:22-23; Acts 17:31), Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:10; 7:1, 3, 15, 21), Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; John 6:14; Acts 3:22-26; 7:37), King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16), and the channel of creation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2). He lived a perfect life here on earth (1 Peter 1:19; Hebrews 2:10; 4:15; 5:9; 7:28), died a vicarious or substitutionary death for the sins of men (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3), and was the perfect Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). He was buried and rose again bodily on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4), conquering death (Colossians 2:13-14), and having ascended He is now seated at the right hand of God (Acts 1:9-11); Romans 8:34; Hebrews 10:12), having received all power, authority and dominion in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). He lives as an advocate for the saints (1 John 2:1) and He will come again to set up an earthly kingdom (Luke 22:28-30); Revelation 20:1-6), followed by an eternal kingdom where He will rule and reign forever (2 Peter 1:10-11; Revelation 21-22).

c. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of the godhead being fully God in every way (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:11, 18; 2 Corinthians 3:18). The Holy Spirit assisted in creation (Genesis 1:2), was the agent of the virgin birth (Luke 1:35), and is the divine agent of the inspired revelation of God (Zechariah 7:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit is active in convicting the world of sin and judgment (John 16:8), and regenerating and empowering those who are saved (Ezekiel 36:27; John 3:5-8; 2 Corinthians 12:1-7; Galatians 5:16; Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit enables men, through His illuminating work, to understand the written revelation of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 John 2:20, 27). The Holy Spirit permanently indwells, and enables believers in the process of sanctification (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:13-14; Ephesians 1:15-18; 3:14-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). He is the pledge and guarantee of our future inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). The Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts upon each believer and fills those who are yielded to Him. Each one has received one or more spiritual gifts so that he might exercise them for the strengthening and outreach of the body of Christ. However, we teach that apostleship, prophecy and tongues are foundational sign gifts, therefore temporary, and are not being given today (1 Cor 13:8-11; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4).

Section 3. Man

Man was created to give glory to God (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16-18). Man was created perfect and without sin on the sixth day of creation. Man was formed by God out of the dust of the ground and God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7). Man is unlike the animals being created in the image of God to rule over the earth and all living creatures (Genesis 1:24-31; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 1 Corinthians 15:39). Shortly after man was created Eve was fashioned by God from man (Gen 2:22; 1 Cor 11:8), she was deceived by Satan into eating the forbidden fruit (2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14) and Adam ate the forbidden fruit willingly (Genesis 3:17; Hosea 6:7). As a result of their sin both died spiritually (Ephesians 2:1-2; Colossians 2:13) and later physically because the wages of sin is death (Genesis 5:5; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27). Adam was the representative head of the human race and when he sinned the entire human race fell in him. Adam's sin is imputed to all of his

descendants (Romans 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:22), hence all men are totally corrupt being conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), born sinners (Genesis 8:21; Psalm 58:3), and sin because they are sinners (Jeremiah 17:9); Mark 7:21-23; Romans 3:10-18, 23; Ephesians 2:1-3). All men suppress the truth in unrighteousness and are sinners by nature and choice (Genesis 6:5; Romans 1:18-25; Titus 1:15). The consequences of sin have made man unable to understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14), unable to please God (Romans 8:5-8), and unwilling to seek Him (John 3:19-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

a. The Need of Salvation

Unrepentant sinners have God's wrath abiding on them and hence all men are in need of salvation from sin and its consequences (John 3:36; Romans 3:23-24; 6:23; Ephesians 2:3). The ultimate consequence of sin is to suffer the holy wrath of God's justice for eternity in the lake of fire (Nahum 1:3; Revelation 20:14-15).

(1) Election

God elects those who are saved from before the foundation of the world (Romans 8:29-30). This does not remove the responsibility for all men to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 17:30).

b. Provision of Salvation

God's only provision for salvation is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the promised Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), the Redeemer (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19), and Savior of all those who believe in Him for eternal life (John 3:16). The Lord Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one can come to the Father but through Him, and there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved (Matthew 11:27; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

c. The Gospel of Salvation

The only way to be delivered from the wrath of God is by hearing and believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God for all who believe (Romans 1:16; 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24). The essence of the gospel is that Jesus Christ, out of love for us, died for our sins on the cross as our substitute, was buried, and rose again on the third day conquering death (Acts 2:22-32; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Peter 3:18). The gospel message is a call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; 11:20; Acts 2:38; 3:19-21; 17:30-31; 20:21; 26:19-20; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

d. Appropriation of Salvation

Salvation is not a result of works but it is an undeserved, unearned gift received by God's grace and mercy, through the faith which God supplies to the elect (Galatians 5:4; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5). Saving faith is not only an intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel (James 2:19) but a volitional heart commitment to trust in the gospel (Luke 9:23; Luke 14:26) and results in a willingness to submit and obey the Lord of the gospel who is Jesus Christ (John 3:36; 1 John 2:3-5). Salvation is only appropriated through the ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby God draws the elect to His Son (John 3:5-8; 6:44). Men, apart from the grace of God, do not seek Him (Romans 3:10; John 3:19). God seeks men (Luke 5:31-32; 19:10) and men respond to the grace of God that draws them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:27; 13:11; John 6:37; Acts 13:48; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:25; 1 Corinthians 1:18).

e. The Call to Salvation

God calls all men everywhere to repent and believe in the gospel (Acts 17:30-31). God is not willing for any to perish (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) and He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11). Men are without excuse before God because creation, conscience, and the law of God written in men's hearts is enough to show them that God exists, yet all men suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18-20, 25; 2:14-16). Because all men suppress the natural revelation of God, the only way a person can be saved is by hearing and believing in special revelation, which is the Word of God, the gospel (Matthew 24:14; Romans 1:16-17; 10:8-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18).

f. Atonement of Sins

Christ's sacrificial atonement is sufficient for all mankind but applied only to the elect who place their faith in the message of the gospel (Romans 5:6, 8; 1 John 2:2). The Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Christ (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus shed His blood to redeem those who would be saved (Leviticus 17:11, 14; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19). He came to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), died for the world of men (John 3:16-17; 1 John 4:14), is the Savior of all men (1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:11), tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9), and is the sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God (propitiation) not only for our sins but the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2)

g. Results of Salvation

Salvation includes total forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13-14), adoption into the family of God (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5-6), reconciliation to God (Romans 5:10-11; 11:15), declared righteousness through justification by God (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16); propitiation before God (1 John 2:2; Hebrews 2:17-18); eternal life with God (John 3:16, 36; 10:27-28); redemption from the curse of the law and slavery to sin and Satan (Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 2:1-9; Titus 2:14); sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:2-3); deliverance from the lake of fire (John 5:24; Romans 5:9), and glorification (Romans 8:29-30).

h. The Manifestation of Salvation

Salvation is the supernatural work of God in a person that manifests itself in a transformed life (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). All true believers will bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance and will be known by their fruit (Matthew 3:8-10; 7:16-23; 12:33-35; Luke 6:43-45). The kinds of fruit which salvation produces in the life of every believer is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25), a hunger for God's Word (1 Peter 2:2), a pursuit of righteousness (Proverbs 4:18), increased godliness and Christ-likeness (Philippians 1:6; 2 Corinthians 3:18), a desire to be with the saints (Hebrews 10:24-27; 1 John 2:19), and a desire to obey God (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 2:12).

i. Assurance of Salvation

We can know we are saved by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16-17; 1 John 3:24; 4:12-13) and by the righteousness which true saving faith produces in the life of every believer who receives the truth of the gospel (John 17:17; Colossians 1:3-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 2:3-4). A person who practices sin and rebellion against God has no assurance of salvation (James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:29; 3:4-10; 5:2). Everyone should examine themselves to see whether they be in the faith (Psalm 139:23-24); Lamentations 3:40; 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

j. The Perseverance of the Saints

God saves men while they are enemies (Romans 5:8) and once a person is saved, their salvation can never be lost or rejected (John 6:37, 39); Romans 8:38-39). God seals all believers with the Holy Spirit who is given as a pledge of our future inheritance until the day of Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). God enables every believer to persevere unto the end (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24), and God loses none who He has called (John 6:37, 39; 10:27-30). The saints persevere in their salvation not because of what they do but because of what God does for them (John 6:44, 65; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 Peter 5:10; Jude 1).

Section 4. The Church

a. The Purpose of the Church

The ultimate purpose of the church is to give glory to God (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). The Church can only give glory to God by submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ out of love and by obeying His Word (John 14:15, 23-24; 1 John 5:3). The Church gives glory to God by worshiping Him (John 4:21-24; Romans 12:1-2), by evangelizing the lost (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Colossians 1:23), and by equipping the saints for work of service both now and in the age to come (Matthew 24:45-47; 25:21-23; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:7-8; Titus 2:11-14).

b. The Church's Head, and Leaders

Jesus Christ is the Head, King, and Lord of the Church (Acts 2:36; Ephesians 4:15-16; 5:23; Colossians 1:18) and believers are members of His spiritual body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Jesus guides the body of believers through the Bible and under-shepherds who submit to the Bible. God's under-shepherds are the elders, pastors, or overseers who must possess certain spiritual qualifications (Acts 20:28); 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Leaders must be examples to the flock as those who will give an account (2 Timothy 2:24; Hebrews 13:17), showing others how to live as humble servants of the King (1 Peter 5:3). The church must also appoint faithful men who meet the qualification of deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-10; 12-13). Deacons are appointed to help meet the physical needs of the church and to assist the elders so the elders can focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 4:6; 10-13, 15-16).

c. The Universal Church

There is a Universal Church comprised of all true believers everywhere, baptized by the Holy Spirit into the one body of Christ through faith upon conversion (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:11-16; 4:4-6). The Universal Church age started at Pentecost and will end at the Rapture of the Church (Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 5:13-18).

d. The Local Church

We believe in the existence and autonomy of the Local Church which is comprised of all those who profess faith in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). In every Local Church there may be those who profess to be believers but are not true believers (Matthew 7:21-22; Titus 1:15-16; Jude 1:4).

e. Church Discipline

The threefold purpose of church discipline is glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1). See article XI.9 in the bylaws section of this document for the steps of carrying out the process.

f. The Ordinances of the Church

The church has two ordinances: water baptism (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 8:38) and communion, or the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-26; Matthew 26:26-29). Both water baptism and communion should be observed today in the local church by believers.

(1) Water Baptism

Water baptism is for believers who have placed their faith in Christ. It is not a means of salvation or grace but is an act of obedience whereby a believer makes a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38, 41). Baptism symbolizes the inward reality of being united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-6). Baptism is to be by immersion (Mark 1:10; John 3:23; Acts 8:39).

(2) Lord's Supper or Communion

Communion is an act of obedience whereby a Christian remembers the sacrifice of Christ, proclaims the death of Christ, and anticipates the glories of Christ's kingdom to come (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). Communion is not a means of salvation or grace. Communion is only for believers who are not living in unrepentant sin (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

Section 5. Angels

Angels are created spirit beings (Exodus 20:11; Job 38:4-7; Colossians 1:16). Angels were created to worship God and minister to believers (Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 7:11-12). All angels were at one time holy but when Satan rebelled, a third of the angels fell with him (Revelation 12:3-4). Fallen angels are called demons or evil spirits and will be judged along with Satan and thrown into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Section 6. Doctrine of Last Things

a. The Promises to Israel

Israel has a distinct and special future in God's redemptive plan and the unconditional promises God made to the nation of Israel have not been nullified nor have they been transferred solely to the Church. The Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants will be fulfilled as promised to Israel (Genesis 15:1-21; 17:4-8, 13, 19; 22:18; 1 Chronicles 17:1-15; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 11).

b. The Kingdom

The Scriptures teach that there has always existed a universal kingdom of God, (Psalm 29:10; 74:12; 145:13), that there will be a literal, earthly, kingdom of Christ (Isaiah 2:2-4; 24:23; Daniel 2:44; Zechariah 14:9), and that believers are kingdom saints who now serve Christ, their King, as aliens, strangers, and ambassadors on this earth (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 5:20; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:11).

c. The Church Age

We are living in the Church age, a time where God is offering the kingdom primarily to the Gentiles (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:25-29). The Church age began at Pentecost (Acts 2) and will end at the rapture of the Church.

d. The Rapture

The rapture will occur unexpectedly, immediately preceding the seven-year tribulation (pre-tribulation rapture). The rapture of the Church will occur at the end of the church age and all the saints, both dead and alive, will be caught up in the air to be forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Christ's coming to take His Church away at the rapture is imminent and will come like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2; Titus 2:13).

e. The Tribulation

Before Christ comes to earth there will be a seven year period of tribulation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24; Revelation 6-19) when God will primarily focus His attention on the ethnic nation of Israel, bringing many to faith in their previously rejected Messiah (Romans 11:25-27); Hosea 3:5). The tribulation period will close when Christ bodily returns to earth (Zechariah 14:4, 9; Acts 1:11), separating the Sheep from the Goats

(Matthew 25:31-34), binding Satan (Revelation 20:1-2), and setting up His literal earthly kingdom.

f. The Second Coming

We believe in a pre-millennial view of the kingdom that teaches that Jesus Christ will come back bodily to earth to set up a literal thousand-year kingdom where He will rule from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 14:3-4; Acts 1:9-12; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-7).

g. The Thousand Year Reign of Christ

During the millennial reign of Christ, the saints will rule and reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12), the curse will be partially lifted (Isaiah 11), and men will live extended lives as before the flood (Isaiah 65:20). At the end of the thousand years Satan will be loosed (Revelation 20:3), deceiving the nations, bringing God's final Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:7-9).

h. Heaven and Hell

All mankind will end up in one of two eternal destinies – heaven or the lake of fire (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29). It is appointed for all men to die once and be judged (Hebrews 9:27). All unbelievers will appear before the Great White Throne to be judged according to their deeds (Revelation 20:11-15). Those who have repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus Christ will enjoy perfect happiness in heaven forever and receive rewards in accordance with their faithful service on earth (Matthew 24:45-47; 25:21-23; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Revelation 22:5). Those who reject Christ will suffer conscious torment away from the presence of Christ in the lake of fire forever (Matthew 13:42; Mark 9:47-48; Luke 16:24; 12:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; Revelation 14:11; 20:10, 15)