

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT
of
GRACE CHURCH OF TALLAHASSEE

What We Teach

Revised 8/10/2017

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 teach 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 teach 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.

God

There is but one God (Deuteronomy 4:35, 6:4; Isaiah 44:5-8), perfect and infinite in all of His attributes. The one true God has eternally existed in three distinct persons - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is distinct 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 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).

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 conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) and born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). 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 by Him all things were created (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 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).

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.

We teach that sign gifts (apostle, prophet, healing, miracles, and tongues) authenticated the ministry and message of the apostles (Ephesians 2:20; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12) and served in the establishment of the church (Acts 2:41-47; 9:31-42). We teach that God continues to demonstrate His miraculous power and ability to heal; but the sign gifts, as given to the early church, are not in effect today.

Origins

We teach that God spoke the heavens, the earth and all living things into existence in six literal twenty-four hour days. God directly created the original kinds of plants and animals and ordered them to reproduce after their kind. In its original form, the creation was very good and untouched by sin. Man is unique, created in the image of God, and did not originate from any other living thing (Genesis 1 & 2; 5:1-2; 9:6; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:6-9; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17).

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; 1Cor 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).

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).

Salvation

God elects those who are saved from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29). This does not remove the responsibility for all men to repent and believe in Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:15; Jn. 3:16). Jesus is the promised Seed of the woman, the Redeemer, and Savior of all those who believe in Him for eternal life (Gal. 4:4-5). He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6), 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 (Acts 4:12).

Salvation is not a result of works but an undeserved, unearned gift received by God's grace and mercy, through the faith which God supplies to the elect (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6).

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the elect become partakers of the divine nature and are given new life (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 1:4). Regeneration is instantaneous and accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God, when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation.

We teach that justification is an instantaneous act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and believe in the gospel (Acts 17:30-31).

This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the placing of our sins on Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (Romans 4:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means, God is both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the believer grows to become more like Christ (Rom. 8:29; Rom. 12:1-2). All true believers will bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance and will be known by their fruit (Mt. 3:8-10). The kinds of fruit which salvation produces in the life of every believer is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24), a hunger for God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2), a pursuit of righteousness, increased godliness and Christlikeness (Titus 2:11-14), a desire to be with and love other believers (Heb. 10:24-25); 1 Jn. 4:7-8), and a love for God evidenced in a desire to obey Him (Jn. 14:21). It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16) and by the actual righteousness which true saving faith produces in the life of every believer (Eph. 2:10).

We teach that God seals all believers with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:14) who is given as a pledge of our future inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14) until the day of Christ Jesus (glorification). God preserves every believer unto the end, and God loses none whom He has called (John 10:28-29). The saints persevere in salvation not because of what they do but because of what God does for them (1 Thess. 5:22-24; Jude 24-25).

Family

We teach that God ordained the family as the foundation of human society (Gen. 2:2). He created man and woman to complement one another and to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28; 2:18). Accordingly, He ordained the sacred institution of marriage, which is and can only be a union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:20-24; Matt. 19:3-6). Marriage is designed by God to display the union between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:25), to provide intimate companionship (1 Cor. 7:3-5), and to provide the means for procreation (Gen. 1:28). (For additional treatment of this subject, see the Grace Church position papers entitled; Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage and Marriage and Human Sexuality).

We teach that children are a gift from God and are fully human from conception (Ps. 139:13). Parents are to train their children by modeling a godly life, teaching them the Scriptures, disciplining them in love, and providing them a resource of wisdom and counsel (Eph. 6:4). Parents are to care for the needs of their children. Children are to obey their parents with respect and honor, caring for them in the time of their dependency and old age (Mk. 7:9-13).

The Church

We teach that 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).

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 are men that 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 Bible also refers to the role of deacon. Deacons must meet the character qualifications outlined in Scripture and are appointed to meet the physical needs of the church (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

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).

We teach the existence of the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated in worship, service, and fellowship (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).

We teach that the threefold purpose of church discipline is to 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 V.I.2 in the Constitution and Bylaws for the steps of carrying out the process.

We teach that 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.

Water baptism is for believers who have placed their faith in Christ. It is not a means of salvation 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).

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. Communion is only for believers who are not living in unrepentant sin (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

Civil Government

We teach that Civil Government is of Divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society. Our government officials are to be prayed for, honored, and obeyed, except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed in Scripture (Acts 5:29; Rom. 13:1-7).

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).

Last Things

We teach that 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).

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).

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.

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).

Before Christ comes to earth at the Second Coming 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.

We teach the pre-millennial view of the kingdom, i.e. 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).

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).

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 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). 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).