

God's Good News

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Introduction

God's good news - the "gospel" - is the best and most important news you will ever hear. It can be found permanently recorded in the Bible.

However the Bible is a big book, and without some introduction to it many people will give up reading it through before they understand its magnificent message. So maybe a short explanation will be valuable to you. The Bible, God's own unfailing word of truth, is the final authority when it comes to God's good news for us - and this is where you should go to check up on what anybody says about God and His relationship to man. This booklet is but a short summary.

Of course, there are many ways in which we might summarize the gospel. Paul tells us of man's problem and God's way of solving it: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). John tells us in Christ's own words how this gift of salvation comes to be enjoyed: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). In one sense, this short account tells us the story. It is simple enough for any child to understand.

On the other hand, some further detail will prove beneficial in elaborating on this brief account of God's good news. In the following booklet such detail is offered in terms of a seven point summary which you might want to get into your mind from the outset. It goes like this:

1. A Loving Creator Continually Blesses Us.
2. As Ungrateful Creatures, We Rebel Against Him.
3. So Righteous Judgment Awaits Us All.
4. But God Has Made A Covenant of Grace.
5. Christ Accomplished Undeserved Salvation for Sinners.
6. To Be Saved We Must Repent and Believe, Enabled by the Holy Spirit.

7. Those Who Are Saved Lead New Lives.

This news is not only good, it is also urgent. Your response to it is a matter of eternal life and death. So please read through the booklet carefully and seriously - and then consider how you stand before God. Those who spurn or ignore God's good news only further alienate themselves from God. Those who receive it gladly and trust in Christ will find it the best thing that has ever - or could ever - happen to them.

1. A Loving Creator Continually Blesses Us

The living and true God created all things by His powerful word, and everything was very good. Man was made to know, enjoy, and serve God in loving dependence. Originally man was morally upright, submitting to God's will.

CREATION

"By faith we understand that the universe was formed by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

"For by Him all things are created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. . . : all things were created by Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

MAN

"So God created man as His own image" (Genesis 1:27).

"and put on the new man, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

"You guide me with Your counsel and afterward will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven besides You? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. . . . God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. . . . It is good for me to draw near to God" (Psalm 73: 24-28).

"God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes" (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

Even after man turned away from the Creator, God continues to bless men with good gifts - such as sunshine, crops, families, growth in knowledge, etc. He gave man His law for man's good, so that he might know how to worship God properly, to bring love and justice between men, and to overcome personal fear, frustration, and failure.

GOD'S GOODNESS TO MAN

"He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. . . . For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (Genesis 8:22).

"Every good and perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

"He has not left Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:17).

"Do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

GOODNESS OF GOD'S LAW

"and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good" (Deuteronomy 10:13).

"In my inner self I delight in God's law" (Romans 7:22).

"And His commands are not burdensome" (I John 5:3).

"Graciously grant me your law" (Psalm 119:29).

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"

(Romans 7:12).

"This is love, that we walk after His commandments" (2 John 6).

Finally God even sent His own Son into the world so that men might enjoy new, abundant, and eternal life through Him.

LIFE

"If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10).

"I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life" (John 6:47).

2. As Ungrateful Creatures, We Rebel Against Him

In self-assertive disobedience to God's will, man originally followed his own ways and pretended to be his own god. We too ignore God's word for our own wisdom, being dominated by the wrong master. We have a bad heart controlling our attitude toward God and man - leading to hatred, unfairness, frustration, alienation, meaninglessness, and moral defeat.

MAN'S FALL

"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. . . . Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners" (Romans 5:12,19).

WAYWARDNESS

"All we like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away" (Romans 3:10-12).

BAD MASTER

"Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin'"

(John 8:34).

"You followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the children of disobedience, among whom we also all once lived, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath"

(Ephesians 2:3-4).

BAD HEART

"The heart is deceitful above all things and exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean"

(Mark 7:21-23).

INABILITY

"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God"

(Romans 8:7-8).

We have lived in an unthankful manner toward God. In our own individual ways, throughout our lives, whether by passive indifference or active defiance to God's will, we have each broken God's commandments. We do not conform to what He requires, and we do what He forbids.

INGRATITUDE

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21).

DISOBEDIENCE

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8).

"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10).

"Everyone who sins breaks the law, for sin is lawlessness" (I John 3:4).

Far from having a perfect or even comparatively perfect record, we are all found guilty before God. What we consider our best performance is still polluted in God's sight. Far from having spiritual life within us, we are all dead in our sins.

BAD RECORD

"O God, You know my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from You"

(Psalm 69:5).

"If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3).

"So that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held guilty before God" (Romans 3:19).

SPIRITUAL DEATH

"All of us have become like one, who is unclean; and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:7).

"You were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

"He who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (I John 5:12).

3. So Righteous Judgment Awaits Us All

To be true to His own holy character, God cannot tolerate unholy people in His presence. To be true to His word and to respect our personal choices, He cannot arbitrarily pretend that we have not ignored and spurned His law.

GOD'S PURITY

"God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5).

"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; You cannot tolerate wrong"

(Habakkuk 1:13).

"You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with You the wicked cannot dwell" (Psalm 5:4).

GOD'S JUSTICE

"The Lord. . . does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Exodus 34:7).

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

"It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

"Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. . . . Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. . . . For, those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. . . . God does not show favoritism" (Romans 2:2, 5-6, 8, 11).

Because God hates all wrongdoing, our sins separate us from our Creator.

REPUGNANT

"You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight" (Luke 16:15).

"The arrogant cannot stand in Your presence; You hate all who do wrong"

(Psalm 5:5).

"The Lord detests the way of the wicked" (Proverbs 15:9).

REPUDIATION

"The way of the wicked will perish" (Psalm 1:6).

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you" (Isaiah 59:2).

God's wrath and curse will certainly be expressed against all sinners in this life and the next. They will be eternally separated from Him and suffer unending punishment - the final death.

PRESENT GRIEF

"In sorrow you will bring forth children. . . . Cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:16-17).

"The wicked are brought down by their own wickedness" (Proverbs 11:5).

"The wicked have their fill of trouble" (Proverbs 12:12).

"But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked'"

(Isaiah 57:20-21).

DEATH

"The soul that sins will die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

"He who sins wrongs himself; all who hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:36).

SEPARATION

"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power"

(2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

"Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matthew 25:41).

FINAL PUNISHMENT

"They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. . . . The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10, 14-15).

4. But God Has Made A Covenant Of Grace

In mercy toward undeserving sinners God established a bond between Himself and those who would trust and submit to Him as His people - a covenant of grace. This was a sovereignly imposed, one-sided, yet thoroughly gracious transaction entered into by God for the undeserved benefit of sinful men. It stemmed from His lovingkindness. Its aim was that He would be their God, and they would be His people.

COVENANT-KEEPING GOD

Repeatedly in the Bible we find statements like "I will establish My covenant with you" (Genesis 6:18), and "God remembered His covenant" (Exodus 2:24).

BASIS

"The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people. . .but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to our forefathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you. . . .Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and lovingkindness with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:7-9).

PURPOSE

"Hear the words of this covenant. . . . So shall you be My people, and I will be your God" (Jeremiah 11:2-4).

In the covenant of grace God made a promise of eternal salvation to sinners. By taking an oath to support, God bound Himself to this saving word of promise. Those who trust in God's promise are called upon to keep the covenant by obeying its stipulations.

THE PROMISE

"He is the mediator of a New Covenant in order that. . .they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

GOD BOUND

"When God made a promise to Abraham, since He could swear an oath by none greater, He swore by Himself. . . .The oath is final for confirmation"

(Hebrews 6:13-19).

COVENANT OF PROMISE

"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. . . .The law does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in His grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. . . .Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not!" (Galatians 3:15-22).

SUBMISSION

"Now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you will be my own possession from among all peoples. . . : you will be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

The provisions of God's promise were progressively made known in various covenants through Biblical history. Every provision pointed to Jesus Christ, the coming Savior.

SINGLE PROMISE WITH MANY COVENANTS

"You were at that time separate from Christ . . ., strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

PROVISIONS

God's covenant promise to Adam was that one of his descendants would be the Savior who utterly destroys the Tempter (Genesis 3:15); to Noah that earth would be preserved while God accomplished salvation for His people (Genesis 8:21-9:17); to Abraham that God's people would multiply, and that his seed would be granted a kingdom in which all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3; 17:1-8); to Moses that righteousness must prevail in men's affairs, and that the blood of a sacrificial substitute would atone for unrighteousness (Exodus 19-24); to David that the Savior would be an everlasting King with a blessed and widespread rule (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89). The New Covenant promised full forgiveness of sin, empowering to keep God's commandments, and a widespread knowledge of the Lord (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

CHRIST CENTRAL

"For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the Yes; wherefore also through Him is the Amen unto the glory of God through us"

(2 Corinthians 1:20).

"And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets He [Christ] interpreted for them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27).

"You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; yet these scriptures testify about Me" (John 5:39).

CHRIST FULFILLS EVERY COVENANT

Jesus Christ is the one who destroys Satan (John 12:31-32; I John 3:8) and preserves creation (Hebrews 1:3; Romans 8:19-25; Revelation 3:221; 4:3). He gained the Abrahamic inheritance (Hebrews 11:8-10; Galatians 3:16; Ephesians 1:14; I Peter 1:4), and all nations are blessed in Him (Luke 2:32; Matthew 12:21; Acts 13:47-48; Galatians 3:14). He was the model of righteousness (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 4:15; I John 2:5-6) and thus qualified to offer Himself up as the perfect atoning sacrifice for sinners (Hebrews 9). Jesus Christ is the long awaited King (Luke 1:32-33; Acts 5:31; I Timothy 6:15; I Corinthians 115:25). Establishing the New Covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 13:20; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:14-18), Christ grants forgiveness of sins (Matthew 1:21; Acts 13:38), empowers obedience to the law by His Spirit (Romans 8:4), and spreads the knowledge of the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20).

In accord with the developing anticipation of the Old Testament, it was God Himself who came to save His people. Jesus was the divine Messiah [the Christ], God's eternal Son. Being of one substance and equal with the Father, He became man by taking on our nature, so that the divine and human natures were inseparably united in one single person. As the God-man, Jesus Christ was the perfect Mediator between God and men, fulfilling the covenant promise of salvation.

DIVINE MESSIAH

- According to the Old Testament, God was the Savior and source of salvation (Exodus 15:2; Deuteronomy 32:15; Psalm 3:8; 19:14; 27:1; 37:39; 62:1; 65:5; 68:19; 74:12; 88:1; Isaiah 12:2; 45:21; 60:16; John 2:9).

- The prophet promised that God Himself would come and save (Isaiah 35:4; 44:22; 45:17; 46:12; 52:9; Jeremiah 3:23; Zechariah 9:16; Hosea 1:7; Luke 1:68-70).

- The promised Messiah would be the Lord the Mighty God who was from everlasting, Jehovah (Psalm 110:1; Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2; Isaiah 40:3; Jeremiah 23:5-6). The New Testament applies these passages to Jesus the Christ (Matthew 22:44-45; Acts 2:34-36; Luke 2:11; Matthew 2:6; Mark 1:2-3; Matthew 3:3; I Corinthians 1:30; Matthew 11:10).

- "The woman said, 'I know that Messiah [called Christ] is coming'. . . Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am He'" (John 4:25-26, 42).

"Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'"

(Matthew 16:16). See also texts such as Acts 17:2-3; I John 2:22.

So Scripture speaks of "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ"

(Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1).

DIVINE PREROGATIVES AND TITLES

- Jesus Christ did things which were appropriate only for God - such as forgiving sins (Luke 5:20-21) and receiving worship (Matthew 4:10; 28:17).

- In a completely unique sense He could be called the "Son of God" (John 1:14; 20:17; Matthew 11:27) - a sense which indicated that He was equal with God Himself (see John 5:18; 10:30-33, 36; 19:7), even though Scripture uniformly teaches that there is only one God (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; I Corinthians 8:4; James 2:19)

- Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

- They are equal in eternality (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-18; Hebrews 1:8-10; 13:8; Revelation 1:17-18), in sovereignty over all (John 16:15), in honor (John 5:23), and in eternal glory (John 17:5) - so that they can be placed on a par regarding their name (Matthew 28:19), and Christ need not grasp after "being equal with God" (Philippians 2:6).

- The most sacred name for God in the Old Testament ("Jehovah" or "I AM," Exodus 3:14) was claimed by Jesus (John 8:24, 28, 58). Repeatedly the New Testament applies to Jesus passages which referred to Jehovah in the Old Testament (for instance: Isaiah 44:6 and Revelation 1:7; 22:13, Psalm 102:25-27 and Hebrews 1:10-12; Isaiah 8:13-14; and I Peter 2:8; Joel 2:32 and Romans 10:13).

- Another designation for God in the Old Testament was "Lord" it was commonly substituted for the name of "Jehovah" (notably in the Greek translation of the Old Testament). The thrust of the New Testament witness is that "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:9; I Corinthians 8:6; 12:3; 16:22). Peter called Him "Lord over all" (Acts 10:36). John called Him the "Lord of lords" (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). Paul and James called Him the "Lord of glory" (I Corinthians 2:8; James 2:1).

"Thomas said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:28).

JESUS IS GOD

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

"About the Son He said, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'"

(Hebrews 1:8, from Psalm 45:6).

"Christ. . . is over all, God blessed forever" (Romans 9:5).

"His Son, Jesus Christ. . . is the true God and eternal life" (I John 5:20).

"His Son. . . who is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation [impress] of His substance" (Hebrews 1:3).

"Who being in the form of God did not regard equality with God something to be grasped" (Philippians 2:6).

REMAINING FULLY GOD, THE SON BECAME A MAN

- Before Jesus Christ appeared in history as a man, He already existed as the eternal and glorious Creator (John 8:58; 17:5; Colossians 1:16-18; Hebrews 1:2, 8-10; John 1:1-3). Being sent by the Father, the eternal Son came down from heaven to do the work of the Messiah (John 3:13, 17; 6:38, 57; 13:3, 16:28), being born of a woman (Galatians 4:4).

- "She shall give birth to a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. . . . Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall give birth to a son and they will call Him Immanuel - which means 'God-with-us'" (Matthew 1:21-23).

"Who being in the form of God. . . humbled Himself, taking on the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6-7).

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Thus the expression "God's own blood" is understandable (Acts 20:28).

"And admittedly, great is the mystery of godliness: Who was manifested in the flesh" (I Timothy 3:16).

"Who is the visible likeness [image] of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).

"For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of Deity bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

THE GOD-MAN, OUR MEDIATOR

The separation between God and man produced by sin calls for a Mediator who is fully divine - thus perfect and successful (Hebrews 7:11-28) - and who is fully human - thus appropriate and sympathetic (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16). As God and man, Jesus Christ is the one satisfactory Mediator between God and men (I Timothy 2:5).

Christ came to fulfill the promise of the covenant of grace for His people - those He had been given by the Father according to His eternal plan. Christ kept the whole law for His people and fully satisfied divine justice by His substitutionary suffering of the punishment due to their sins. For those whom Christ particularly died, eternal redemption was definitely - rather than partially or potentially - obtained; since sin's penalty had been completely paid and God reconciled, not one of them for whom He died can now perish.

CHRIST GIVEN A PEOPLE

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me. . . . This is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose none of all that He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day" (John 6:37-40).

"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29).

GOD'S PLAN

"For He chose us in Him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestinated us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ. . . . In Him we were also chosen, having been predestinated according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will" (Ephesians 1:4-5, 11).

SALVATION DEFINITELY SECURED

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).

"God loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation [atoning sacrifice to turn away wrath] for our sins" (I John 4:10).

"He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12).

"When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Nothing "in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

(Also see verses above, under "Christ Given a People")

CHRIST DIED PARTICULARLY FOR HIS PEOPLE, THE SHEEP, THE CHURCH

"For You granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those You have given Him. . . .I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given Me, for they are Yours" (John 17:2,9).

"You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

"Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own" (Titus 2:14).

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory. . . , He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats"

(Matt. 25:31-32).

"I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep. . .and I lay down My life for the sheep. . . .My sheep listen to My voice; I know them; and they follow Me, I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (John 10:14-15, 27-28).

"Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

"Be shepherds of the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

By His covenant of grace, God has always shown a corporate concern in saving men from sin. His promise is made with families (even though not all members are automatically saved). His gracious call of salvation creates "a people" or a community to be His own. Through the ages the redeemed of the Lord constitute one unified people of God.

FAMILIES

"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:7).

"The promise is for you and your children. . ." (Acts 2:39).

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

". . .your children are holy" (I Corinthians 7:14).

COVENANT COMMUNITY

". . .to purify for Himself a people that are His very own" (Titus 2:14).

"God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body. . . .You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. . . .Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit" (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19; 3:3-4).

"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God" (I Peter 2:9-10).

UNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church are both part of one olive tree of faith (Romans 11:17-24); followers of Moses and of Christ are both part of one household of God (Hebrews 3:1-6). Those who have faith in Christ are the sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:7,29), "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). The church is described as the Old Testament assembly at Mount Sinai (I Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:6); those in the church have been incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12-13). The church is the restored house of David (Acts 15:13-18). It is Judah and Israel, with whom God made His New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31; I Corinthians 11:25). There is no middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile in the church (Ephesians 2:14-18). To be a Jew today - part of God's chosen people - is an inward matter of the heart (Romans 2:29). The consummation of all things will bring the City of God to completion, incorporating the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Church (Revelation 12:1-14). So there is but one flock of God and one Shepherd over it (John 10:16).

5. Christ Accomplished Undeserved Salvation for Sinners

God has loved those who deserve only His wrath. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to live a perfect life and to die as a sacrificial substitute for His people, taking their condemnation upon Himself.

LOVE FOR THE UNLOVELY

"God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we're still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

CHRIST SINLESS

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

CHRIST A SUBSTITUTE

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 5:13).

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. . . The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).

"Christ died for sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (I Peter 3:18).

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ's death was a work of obedience which perfectly atones for the sins of His people. He actively obeyed the law's precepts and passively suffered the law's penalty. In so doing Christ offered a sacrifice which expiates (or covers) sin and cleanses from guilt. Thereby He was a propitiation which pacified the wrath of God. Thus the enmity God has for sinners is taken away, achieving reconciliation. Likewise, Christ's death accomplished redemption; His blood was the ransom-price of release from bondage, forgiving our sins and purifying our defilement.

OBEDIENCE

"Through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

CLEANSING SACRIFICE

"The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished unto God, will cleanse our consciences from dead works, so that we may serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14).

PACIFIES WRATH

"He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10).

REMOVES ALIENATION

"When we were enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

OBTAINS REDEMPTION BY PAYING THE RANSOM-PRICE

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7).

"Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people of His very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14).

"The Son of Man. . .[came] to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 20:45).

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (I Peter 1:18-19).

By His death and resurrection Christ makes His people right before God. He removes their guilt by replacing their bad record with His good one. He breaks their bondage to sin, becoming their Lord in the place of their bad master. He grants new life by giving them a new heart for their bad one.

RESURRECTION JUSTIFIES

"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

FORGIVENESS AND A GOOD RECORD

"When you were dead in your sins. . .God made you alive with Christ, having forgiven us all of our trespasses" (Colossians 2:13).

"It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption"

(I Corinthians 1:30).

NEW MASTER

"For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. . . .Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to

God in Christ Jesus. . . .But now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God" (Romans 6:6, 11:22).

"If you will confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and will believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

NEW LIFE AND A NEW HEART

"Jesus said unto her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die'" (John 11:25).

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Christ accomplished a thorough salvation - delivering His people from the effects of sin in every aspect of their lives. Because they are ignorant, He is a prophet declaring the will of God. Because they are guilty, He is a priest interceding to God for them. Because they are undisciplined and helpless, He is a king ruling over all and defending them. Christ offers deliverance, reconciliation, and redemption in a way which is inclusive of sin in all of its aspects, consequences, and expressions.

PROPHET

"Moses indeed said, 'A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you. . . ; to Him you shall hearken in all things that He speaks to you.' . . .Indeed all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken have foretold these days. . . .When God raised up His servant, He sent Him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:22-36).

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

"In whom [Christ] are deposited all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

PRIEST

"So that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).

"Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He ever lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

"For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).

KING

"God has highly exalted Him to His right hand to be a Prince and Savior that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

"And the government shall be upon His shoulder. . . Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom, to order and establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

"And the lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14).

"For He must reign until He has put every enemy under His feet"

(I Corinthians 15:25).

COMPREHENSIVE SALVATION

- Redemption secures such a complete and final deliverance from the evil that the word "redemption" can be used for the consummation order when all things will have been renewed (for instance, Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14; 4:30).

- "The Lord Jesus Christ. . .gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4).

"For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. . . For God was well pleased. . .through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross. . . Now He has reconciled you by Christ's body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (Colossians 1:13; 19-20,22).

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ. . . God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

The salvation secured by Jesus Christ is completely by God's mercy and grace. Not one of us could earn it by anything we do. God gives it to us as a gift - an undeserved favor - and never on the basis of our imagined good works.

GOD'S GIFT

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

"The tax collector stood at a distance. . .and beat his breast, saying 'God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God" (Luke 18:13-14).

NOT BY MAN'S EFFORTS

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no one be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20).

"Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5).

"And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace" (Romans 11:6).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. . . .For if righteousness could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing" (Galatians 2:16,21).

"And be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

Because God has clearly revealed Himself through nature and conscience to all men, they are without any excuse for violating His standards and are justly condemned by Him. The only satisfaction of His justice which can be acceptable in His sight is that way of salvation provided by God Himself through His Son in the covenant of grace. Thus the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ is the one and only way by which any person can be made right with God.

ALL MEN WITHOUT EXCUSE

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20).

SALVATION ON GOD'S TERMS

"Have I not the right to do what I will with what is mine?" (Matthew 20:15).

"What shall we say then? Is God unjust? Not at all! For He says to Moses: 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Romans 9:14-16).

"God presented Him [Christ] as a propitiation through faith in His blood. . .so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus"

(Romans 3:25-26).

"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

CHRIST THE ONLY WAY

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

"Nothing impure will ever enter it [the New Jerusalem]. . .but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27).

6. To Be Saved We Must Repent and Believe, Enabled by the Holy Spirit

Being fully divine, the Holy Spirit powerfully applies Christ's redemptive work to His people by making the gospel summons effective, inwardly testifying to its truth, and producing within them new spiritual life. Because sinners are unable to do what God requires without help of the Holy Spirit, it is by the grace of the Spirit that their hearts are changed (regenerated) and made fit for fellowship with God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT DIVINE

"Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? . . . You have not lied unto men but unto God (Acts 5:3,4).

- What is spoken by the Lord according to Isaiah 6:8-10 is reported as the statement of "the Holy Spirit through Isaiah, the prophet, unto your fathers" in Acts 28:25-27.

- The Holy Spirit is mentioned on a par with the Father and Son in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) and in the Apostolic Benediction

(2 Corinthians 13:14).

HOLY SPIRIT APPLIES THE SON'S REDEMPTION

"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. . . Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Romans 8:9,14).

"God our Savior. . . saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5-6).

EFFECTIVE SUMMONS

"We preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called - both Jews and Greeks - Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:23-24).

"You also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. . . who have been called according to His purpose" (Romans 1:6; 8:28).

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44).

CONVINCING TESTIMONY

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power. . . . We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit. . . . The man without

the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:4,12-14).

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction" (I Thessalonians 1:5).

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. . . .His anointing teaches you about all things" (I John 2:20,27).

REBIRTH AND RENEWAL (REGENERATION)

"I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . .I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. . . .The wind blows wherever it pleases. . . .So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:3-8).

"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

BY GOD'S GRACE AND POWER

"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. . . .through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit"

(Titus 3:5).

"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed on His name, He gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13).

God's free gift of salvation is received when the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ by producing faith and repentance within us. Those who would be saved are commanded by God's word to repent of sin and believe in Christ. Repentance is turning in sorrow from your sins, hating and forsaking them because they are displeasing to God. Having faith in Christ is to entrust yourself to Him alone, accepting His claims and promises, and resting on His work for forgiveness, cleansing, and eternal life with God.

UNION WITH CHRIST

"God who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (I Corinthians 1:9).

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:5-6).

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. . . .For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

"We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (I John 4:23).

"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17).

REPENTANCE

"I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21).

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

FAITH

"He asked, 'Men, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved'" (Acts 16:30-31).

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. . . ., for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:9,13).

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life" (John 6:47).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Christ has secured wonderful benefits for those who trust in Him for salvation. In this life believers are justified by being declared righteous in Christ (thus forgiven of sin and treated as if they had never sinned), are adopted as God's children, are sanctified in all aspects of their persons (made holy in heart and conduct), are assured of final acceptance with God, and are strengthened to persevere in the faith. So believers now enjoy God's love, peace, joy and hope. Then at death believers are made perfect in holiness, and they spiritually live to enjoy the very presence of God.

At the general resurrection of all men, when Christ returns in glory for the Final Judgment of the world, believers are resurrected in redeemed bodies, glorified like unto the Savior, acknowledged and acquitted by Him, and enter into the holy, happy and eternal life of God's consummated kingdom.

JUSTIFICATION

". . .are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:24).

"To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

ADOPTION

"He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ"

(Ephesians 1:5).

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15).

SANCTIFICATION

"God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Thessalonians 2:13).

"For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin"

(Romans 6:6).

ASSURANCE

"I write these things to you who believe on the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (I John 5:13).

"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. . . .For I am convinced that" nothing in all creation "can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:16, 38-39).

PERSEVERANCE

"Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11).

"Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Peter 1:5).

LOVE, PEACE, JOY AND HOPE

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. . . .And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the holy Spirit, whom He has given us" (Romans 5:1-2,5).

"For the kingdom of God is. . .righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

PERFECTING AT DEATH AND GOD'S PRESENCE

"You have come to God, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect. . .whose names are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23).

"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

CHRIST'S RETURN FOR FINAL JUDGMENT AT THE GENERAL RESURRECTION

"For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (I Thessalonians 4:16).

"And have hope toward God. . .that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15).

"The hour is coming when all who are in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth: those who have done good unto the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

"Because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained." (Acts 17:31).

"For the Father. . .has committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:31-32).

RESURRECTION IN REDEEMED BODIES

"We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit. . .wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23).

"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown. . .is raised imperishable. . .in glory. . .in power. . .a Spiritual body"

(I Corinthians 15:42-44).

GLORIFICATION AND ACQUITTAL

"The Lord Jesus Christ, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21).

"And he shall set the sheep on His right hand" (Matthew 25:33).

"Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

ETERNAL LIFE IN GOD'S KINGDOM

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, in the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world'" (Matthew 25:34).

"And this is the will of Him who sent me, that every one who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40).

"That He might present it to Himself a glorious church. . .that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . I saw the holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a voice from the throne saying. . . 'They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" (Revelation 21:1-5).

7. Those Who Are Saved Lead New Lives

By the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, believers determine to live according to God's will; as redeemed and renewed, they seek to give their lives new direction. The Spirit-empowered change which characterizes them affects all areas of their lives.

NEW PATTERN

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"Just as He who called you is holy, so you be holy in all you do" (I Peter 1:15).

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. . .Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1-2).

Believers renounce self-centered sin, strive to live in love toward God and men, determine to obey the Lord's commandments and to demonstrate the attitudes becoming a Spirit-filled life.

BREAK WITH SIN

"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?. . .Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:2,4).

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourself of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:5-10).

RID OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS

"He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

"Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others"

(I Corinthians 10:24).

LOVE

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances

you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them together in perfect unity" (Colossians 3:12-14).

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

"We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And He has given us this command; whoever loves God must also love his brother" (I John 4:19-21).

OBEDIENCE

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

"We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commandments. The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in him" (I John 2:3-5).

SPIRIT GIVEN ATTITUDES

"Those who live by the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. . . .The sinful mind. . . does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. . . .You, however, are controlled, not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you" (Romans 8:5-9).

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Followers of Jesus Christ desire to witness about His saving mercy to others who are lost in sin. They are also willing to endure suffering for their commitment to the Savior.

TESTIMONY

"You will be my witness. . .to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. . . We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God"

(2 Corinthians 5:11,20).

"Always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (I Peter 3:15).

PERSECUTION

"Even if you suffer for what is right, you are blessed" (I Peter 3:14).

"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12).

By making other disciples of Christ and witnessing to the will of God, Christians pray that the Kingdom of God might more and more come to expression in the world and - to the greatest degree possible - reform all areas of life for God's glory.

OVERALL REFORM UNDER THE KING

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, having gone, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"This is how you should pray: . . . Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

"You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13).

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (I Corinthians 10:31).

"For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever and ever" (Romans 11:36).

"All things have been created by Him and for Him. . . . And he is the head of the body. . . in order that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it was God's good pleasure. . . to reconcile all things unto Himself through Him" (Colossians 1:16-20).

"And He put all things in subjection under His feet and made Him head over all things for the sake of the church" (Ephesians 1:22).

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

"Be holy in all that you do" (I Peter 1:15).

Christians cultivate their new life by means of Bible reading, prayer, and the fellowship of God's people. They are united to one another in the church, in which they worship God, observe the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and grow by the preaching of the Word of God.

THE BIBLE

"Like newborn babies, crave the pure milk of the word so that you may grow up in your salvation" (I Peter 2:2).

"Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

"If you live in My word, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

PRAYER

"Pray continually" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

"In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).

"Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

THE CHURCH'S FELLOWSHIP, PREACHING, AND WORSHIP

"In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. . . .Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (Romans 12:5,13).

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit. . . .But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:3-13).

"They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer" (Acts 2:42).

"We proclaim Him [Christ], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction" (2Timothy 4:2).

"Let us not forsake meeting together. . . , but let us encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25).

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:15-16).

"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer" (I Timothy 2:8).

"Through Him let us offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually, which is the fruit of lips that confess His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

THE SACRAMENTS

- The sacraments instituted by Christ for His church are observed as signs and seals (Romans 4:11; I Corinthians 10:16) - symbols and confirmations - of the benefits of the Savior; their observation strengthens faith and the Christian walk (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4), distinguishing God's people from the world (I Corinthians 10:21). Their effectiveness rests on a proper heart and response to the truth signified by the sacrament.

- Baptism signifies and confirms union with Christ and cleansing from sin by His blood (Acts 2:38; Romans 4:11; Colossians 2:11-12). It is received by those who are under and undertake God's covenant - believers and their children (Acts 2:38-39; Colossians 2:11-12; Acts 16:30-33; I Corinthians 7:14).

- The Lord's Supper signifies and confirms the atoning sacrifice of Christ's body and blood for the remission of sins (I Corinthians 11:23-26). It is received by professing members of Christ's church who can examine themselves in the faith (I Corinthians 10:16-17; 12:3; 12:13 with 11:29-30).

Conclusion

Your response to God's good news is indeed an urgent matter for you. It is, in fact, more important than any other decision you can make in life. It is a choice between life and death itself.

Let us review what God's good news has said:

1. A Loving Creator Continually Blesses Us.
2. As Ungrateful Creatures, We Rebel Against Him.
3. So Righteous Judgment Awaits Us All.

4. But God Has Made A Covenant of Grace.
5. Christ Accomplished Undeserved Salvation for Sinners.
6. To Be Saved We Must Repent and Believe, Enabled by the Holy Spirit.
7. Those Who Are Saved Lead New Lives.

Christ invites you to belong to Him by faith, promising to receive you. "He who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). God commands your submission to Christ: "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus' (Acts 20:21). While these things are still heavy on your heart, before secondary cares distract you, you should seek God's forgiveness in prayer.

You may be unaccustomed to speaking with God, but He welcomes your prayer. (1) Confess your sinfulness and your sorrow for it. (2) Call upon the name of Jesus Christ as the only one you trust to save you in God's sight. (3) Ask for new life by the Holy Spirit and commit yourself to following Christ in everything you do hereafter. And then enjoy the privilege of being adopted as a child of God, one who can call Him "Father" and be assured of His love.

To strengthen and grow in your faith, find a Bible-believing fellowship of Christians where you can worship God and learn more from His word. You are warmly welcome to make our congregation your church home.