

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED SERIES
GOSPELGRACE101

week #6

UNDERSTANDING OUR MESSAGE

Our Statement of Faith

Cited verses are available for reading in the appendix, p. 115.

The Bible

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments (2 Pet. 1:20-21), is the only, authoritative, sufficient, infallible Word of God, verbally inspired and without error in the original manuscripts. (2 Tim. 3:16) We hold to a normal, literal interpretation of Scripture.

God

We believe in one God (Deut. 6:4; Is. 45:5-7), existing in a unity of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who are coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial (2 Cor. 13:14). He is the Creator of all things, (Gen. 1:1-31; Eph. 3:9) holy (Rev. 4:8), sovereign (Psalm 103:19), loving, and infinitely perfect in every way.

The Father

We believe that God the Father is the first person of the Trinity, who is the only absolute, omnipotent ruler in the universe (Rom. 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator, He is the Father of all men (Eph. 4:6), but He is Spiritual Father only to believers (Rom. 8:14). God the Father elects (Eph. 1:4-6), calls, justifies (Rom. 8:30), adopts (Rom. 8:15), and ultimately glorifies His own.

Jesus Christ

We believe in the eternal deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His becoming a man without ceasing to be God (Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 2:9), in His virgin birth (Is. 7:14), in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His substitutionary and atoning death through His shed blood on the cross (John 10:15; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:24), in His bodily resurrection (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:20,23), and in His ascension to the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33). We believe He ever lives to make intercession for His saints (Heb. 7:25) and that He is coming again to rule and reign in power and glory (Is. 9:6-7; Luke 1:31-33).

Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-9). He regenerates sinners (Titus 3:5) and places them into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). He also seals (Eph. 1:13), comforts (John 15:26), indwells (Rom. 8:9-11), illuminates (1 Cor. 2:12), guides (Rom. 8:14), and equips and empowers (Gal. 5:22-23) believers for Christ-like living and service. He gives gifts for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 12:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Every Christian is gifted by the Spirit of God for the purpose of edifying the church and doing the work of the ministry (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:6-8).

Mankind

We believe that man was created sinless in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 2:7; James 3:9) and that through transgression he incurred physical and spiritual death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). As a result, all human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God and under His wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). Apart from God's gracious intervention, man is without help or hope and completely depraved (Rom. 5:12).

Salvation

We believe that the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life is a miraculous work of God by grace alone, through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9), in Christ alone (John 14:6; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). It is the unmerited demonstration of God's love, available to all those who repent (turn from their sin) and trust in Jesus' atoning death and victorious resurrection (2 Cor. 7:10; Luke 13:3; Heb. 9:28; John 1:12). It is only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ that man can be justified, sanctified, and ultimately glorified (1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 8:30).

Christian Living

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. This should result in a life that is separate from sin and set apart to God (Rom 6:1-2; 1 Thess. 4:7). He commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially (Matt. 22:37-39; John 15:12-13) and to live out our faith in growing obedience to the Word and Holy Spirit such that we are progressively changed into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Growing Christians use their God-given gifts for the purpose of edifying the church (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:10), doing the work of the ministry, and obeying our Lord's command to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20).

Things to Come

We believe in the imminent return of Christ and the gathering up of his church known as the blessed hope (1 Thess. 4:16; Titus 2:13). We believe in the tribulation (2 Thess. 2:7-12; Rev. 16), the personal and physical second coming of Christ to establish His millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1-7), and the eternal state wherein the unsaved are judged and condemned to a literal hell (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15) and the saved are glorified to enjoy everlasting blessing in the presence of God (2 Pet 3:10; John 17:3; Rev. 21:2).

The Church

We believe that the Church is the body and bride of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7-8) into which all true believers of the present age are placed and that the members of this spiritual body should assemble themselves together in local churches (1 Cor. 11:18-20; Heb. 10:25), which consist of committed, baptized believers. We believe that the New Testament describes congregational church government as being pastor/elder led and deacon served (1 Tim 3:1-13 ; Titus 1:5-9). We believe that the commission of the church is to make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey Christ's commands (Matt 28:19-20). The fulfillment of this commission eventuates in the perpetual, intentional establishment of new local churches (Acts 13; Acts 14:23,27; 2 Tim. 2:2). We believe that the church must maintain its purity by practicing biblical discipline (Matt. 18:15-19) and separation from false teaching (Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Timothy 3:14; Titus 3:10).

The Ordinances

We recognize believer's baptism by immersion (Matt. 3:13-17; Acts 8:36-39; Rom. 6:3-4) and the Lord's Supper (Communion) (Acts 2:38-42) as the Scriptural ordinances for the church in this age. Both of them visibly and tangibly express the gospel, and though they are not a means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in faith-filled obedience, these ordinances spiritually nourish the believer and bear witness to the work of our Savior (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Historic Baptist Distinctives

We identify with a rich heritage of those who have held to the following scripturally derived principles: biblical authority, autonomy of the local church, priesthood of the believer, two ordinances, individual soul liberty, saved and baptized church membership, two church offices, and separation of church and state. (See *Week #3 – Understanding Our Identity* for a thorough explanation and definition of the historic Baptist distinctives.)