

Doctrinal Statement

By Nathaniel Pringle

Personal Testimony

The Lord saw fit to place me in a family who feared Him for multiple generations. At the age of nine God drew me to Himself in a Sunday evening service. I repented for my rebellion against Him, accepted Christ's sacrifice as the payment for my sins, and received forgiveness. I followed the Lord in believers' baptism by immersion my junior year of high school. God emphasized the completeness of Christ's work on my behalf during my final year of undergraduate training. Due to a variety of personal failures, my assurance waned. Through chastening, conviction, and repentance the Word of God and the Holy Spirit ministered sweet assurance that my standing before God as a justified sinner rested fully on the completed righteousness of Jesus Christ. I rest daily in this reality while pursuing to worship and serve the Lord by presenting myself "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."

Call to the ministry

God began working in my heart regarding full-time ministry during my junior year of high school. The encouragement of my pastor and family, opportunities to preach, and a growing personal desire confirmed this direction. I enrolled at BJU with the single purpose of preparing for vocational ministry. In the years of undergraduate and graduate training, God preserved and strengthened the desire to serve Him in a pastoral role.

Revelation: God's self-disclosure of Himself and His purposes

General Revelation

God reveals His existence, sovereignty, and goodness through creation (Psalm 19:1-4), conscience (Romans 2:14-15), and providence (Acts 14:17). All men may recognize the existence of God through these means of general revelation, but in their wickedness choose to suppress such knowledge (Romans 1:18-20). Thus, all become culpable before God for rejecting Him. Although general revelation reveals God, general revelation does not communicate God's redemptive plan. In order for men to be reconciled to God, God graciously communicated directly to man.

Special Revelation

God also reveals Himself through specific communication. In the past, God spoke through theophanies, dreams, visions, and direct verbal communication to address individuals and declare specific truth concerning Himself and His purposes (Hebrews 1:1). Jesus Christ became the ultimate communication from God of Himself (Hebrews 1:2). Before returning to the Father, Christ promised the coming Holy Spirit would accomplish two things for the disciples. First, the Holy Spirit would remind them what

Christ taught them (John 14:26). Second, He would teach them new things that are the truth (John 14:26; 16:12-15). These words would come directly from the Father and the Son. Peter summarizes the fulfillment of this promise when describing the inspiration of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21). Scripture provides the complete, written revelation of God (Revelation 22:19)

Inspiration

God placed all that mankind needs for eternal life and godly living (2 Peter 1:3) in His Word, the Bible. The Bible (thirty-nine Old Testament and twenty-seven New Testament books) consists of God's words breathed out through the instrumentality of human authors (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Each word present in the original autographs comes directly from the mind of God to instruct His people (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2:13). This includes the record of words spoken by others (Romans 15:4). God miraculously recorded His words through the personalities, experiences, and vocabularies of the individual authors carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). The Bible self-authenticates through direct statement (Lev. 1:1; Josh. 1:7-9; 2 Sam. 7:5), internal testimony (Matthew 5:17-19; Luke 24:44-45; 2 Peter 3:15-17; 1 Thess. 4:15), harmonization (Acts 2:14-26; 7:1-53; 13:16-47), and self-declared characteristics (Jer. 23:29; Romans 10:8; 1 Thess. 2:13; Hebrews 4:12). Scripture is inerrant in its statements regarding historical accounts, scientific premises, or theological truth. The basis for inerrancy rests in the character of the Author, God Himself. He only speaks according to the truth (Numbers 23:19; John 3:33; Hebrews 6:18; Psalm 12:6; 19:7-9).

Preservation

Jesus specifies that Scripture will stand as long as heaven and earth exist (Matthew 5:18). God providentially preserves His Word from generation to generation through the multiplicity of copies and translations accurately reflecting the original autographs. Text families closer in time to the original autographs enable the greatest accuracy for reliable translations. Reliable English translations include the KJV, NKJV, NASB, and ESV.

Interpretation

The inspiration of Scripture calls for a literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic. This methodology allows for consistency in understanding the meaning of God's Word. Because God designed His Word to be understandable, a literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic enables all readers to readily grasp the meaning without searching for subjective, "deeper" meanings. At the same time, interpreting Scripture requires humble dependence on the Holy Spirit to understand truth from the infinite God (Deut. 29:29; 1 John 2:27). A prime example of the Holy Spirit's enablement comes from the apostles progressive understanding of Christ's resurrection in conjunction with the OT Scriptures (John 20:8-9; Luke 24:45-49). This interpretation model leads to identifying Israel and the Church as two distinct entities. Israelites (Jews) may become a part of the Church (Ephesians 2:11-22), but God still intends the future fulfillment of land promises for national Israel.

Theme

The doctrines in this statement develop the following theme of Scripture: *For His own glory, God faithfully delivers His people to engage in worship and service to Himself.*

(The development of the theme is noted at the end of the paper.)

Theology Proper: The Object of worship and service

Worship and service justly belong to God alone. No other being exists holding the absolute worthiness of God. The perfection of His existence makes Him entirely “other” from all things and above all things forever.

God’s Existence

The Bible assumes the existence of God (Genesis 1:1). Creation assumes the Creator and speech assumes the Speaker. God self-reveals through creation and Scripture. Accepting God’s existence requires faith (Hebrews 11:6). Logical arguments assist to demonstrate the possibility of God’s existence, but by themselves remain impotent in convincing the willful blindness of those choosing to reject God. These include the cosmological, teleological, ontological (transcendent), and moral arguments. Accepting God’s existence requires accepting the self-revelation of God by faith. The ultimate disclosure of God came through the Person of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:2-3).

God’s Nature

I believe that God is spirit (John 4:24) and is one (Galatians 3:20), but eternally exists in three distinct persons. Scripture delineates these as the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The three distinct persons share entire equality (2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2). Yet, the distinction of individual members is apparent as both the Son (Galatians 4:4) and the Spirit (John 15:26) were sent by the Father. Being sent from God, both members are also fully God (John 1:1; 14:9; Colossians 2:9; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16).

God’s Attributes

The attributes of God demonstrate both His greatness and goodness. God’s greatness sets Him completely above creation. His goodness provides the means through which He draws men to Himself. All in all, God exists in complete holiness. He is entirely untainted by sin and completely separate from all other created beings (Psalm 5:4; Isaiah 40:25).

Attributes of Greatness

God exists as an **infinite** (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 147:5), **invisible** Spirit (John 4:24). He is **self-existent** (Exodus 3:14; John 5:26), **eternal** (Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:17; 2 Peter 3:8), and **immutable** (Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17; Malachi 3:6). God is **omniscient**, knowing the deep thoughts of the heart (Psalm 139) as well as future events (Isaiah 44:7-8, 25-28); entirely **faithful** (Revelation 19:11; Hebrews 10:23); and **all-wise** selecting the ends that harmonize perfectly with His will (Romans 16:27; Ephesians 3:10). God is **free**, being

bound only by those things that are contrary to His nature. He is also **omnipotent**, having the ability to do absolutely all things in keeping with His nature (Mark 14:36; Luke 1:37; Acts 4:24-28). God is **omnipresent**, existing everywhere all the time (Psalm 137:7; Jer. 23:23-24).

Attributes of Goodness

God exists in perfect **righteousness** (Isaiah 65:17; Psalm 72:12-14), and **love** (1 John 4:8; Deuteronomy 7:7; John 3:16). He **hates evil** (Nahum 1:3, 6), but is **patient** (Genesis 15:16; Exodus 34:6) and **compassionate** (Lamentations 3:22; Micah 7:19; Luke 7:13). God acts according to perfect **justice** (Revelation 16:4-7; 1 John 1:9) while simultaneously demonstrating **mercy** (Psalm 145:9; Romans 9:15-18) and **grace** (Ephesians 2:4-8).

God's Work

Creating

Creation is the act of God whereby He brought all things, spiritual and physical, eternal and temporal, into existence (Genesis. 1:1). God accomplished creation through the word of His mouth (Psalm 33:6, 9). The Father was the primary agent, but the Son and the Holy Spirit were also active. Scripture refers to the Son as the One “through” whom creation came into being (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16). He is seen as carrying out the plans of the Father. The Spirit is viewed as giving life, completing and filling creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). God made all *ex nihilo* (Genesis 1:1; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11; Hebrews 11:3; Romans 4:7).

The following views of earth's origin I firmly reject:

- Any form of “intelligent design” theory which compromises the literal, six day approach including theistic evolution, progressive creationism, and the gap theory.
- The theory of evolution which states that through random selection higher forms of life came into being

Sustaining

God directly preserves His creation. Scripture clearly teaches He preserves creation as a whole (Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). Everything from animate creation (Psalm 104:21-29) to the rise and fall of nations (Daniel 2:21; Isaiah 10:5-12; Acts 17:26) is included in this constant preservation. This superintendence involves the lives of individuals (1 Samuel 2:6-7; Luke 1:52; Galatians 1:15-16; Romans 12:3-6) even in those occurrences considered “accidental” (Proverbs 16:33; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:23-26). The means of God's preservation are as follows: The word of His power (Nehemiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:3), regular operations of nature (Psalm 104; 148), and His sustaining power (Psalm 36:6; Acts 17:28; 1 Timothy 6:13a). I believe that God has performed and can still perform supernatural miracles. Because of His omnipotence, He is capable of altering the laws of nature to accomplish His purpose (Daniel 2:20-21). However, the physical manifestations of miracles normally accompany transitional points in progressive

revelation (deliverance from Egypt, initial work of the prophets, coming of Christ, establishment of the Church, and the coming Day of the Lord).

Ruling

God perfectly orders the events of the universe for all time according to His chosen purposes and plan. The acts of mankind occur within the scope of God's complete sovereignty and control. God providentially controls human actions preventatively (Genesis 20:6), permissively (2 Chronicles 2:31; Ps. 81:12-13; Romans 1:24), directly (Genesis 50:20; Acts 2:36), and determinatively (Job 1:12; Ps. 124:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Anthropology: The subjects devoted to worship and service

God created man to enjoy unbroken fellowship with Himself. Man's single purpose is to be rightly related to God. Because of sin, no man seeks this end, but God faithfully delivers those He chose into fellowship with Himself.

Creation of Man

God created man independently out of material already existing. Man is made from the dust of the earth and in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, man shares a commonality with nature, yet is uniquely separated from it by not being spoken into existence as the rest of creation and the creatures. The creation of man was an act of God apart from any other natural process. Not only did God create man a physical being, but He also made him a spiritual being. Man's life was given directly by the breath of God (Genesis 2:7). This gave man a unique standing compared to the other creatures. Because of this breath of life, man is able to have spiritual comprehension of God and His moral law (Job 32:8). He also possesses a conscience which no other creature boasts (Proverbs 20:27). God created the first man (Adam) and woman (Eve) in a state of complete innocence. In this state, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect fellowship with God (Genesis 3:8) and open, shameless fellowship with each other (Genesis 2:25; 3:7). God created Eve to be compatible with Adam as a helper fit for him (Genesis 2:20). In so doing, God established the institution of marriage and defined that institution to consist of the lifelong commitment of one man to one woman (Genesis 2:24).

Implications

- Man bears the image of God. Therefore, defacing human beings in any manner dishonors the very entity God created as a reflection of Himself. Murder (including abortion) constitutes a high-handed offense against the Creator. The biblical perspective of man provides a necessary lens through which to view the increasing acceptability of violence in society.
- Divorce directly violates God's intention for marriage. Christ appeals to the account of creation when answering the scribes regarding divorce and clearly states that God never intended divorce to be an option (Matthew 19:3-12).

- Homosexuality violates God's design for humanity. Romans 1 specifically states that the desires exercised are unnatural and the mark of a society that rejects God.

Constitution of Man

Man's present constitution is that of a physical body and eternal spirit. The physical body houses the eternal spirit, but is not eternally united to it. At death the physical part of man will return to its origin as dust (Genesis 3:19). However, man's spirit is eternal and will never die. This does not mean man will be without a body, but he will be clothed in a glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:42-49).

Regarding the debate of tri- and dichotomy, an exegetical approach to the Scripture seems to substantiate a dichotomist view. First Corinthians 15:44, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and Hebrews 4:12 all mention soul and spirit, but not in such a way to be dichotomized as two separate entities. Passages such as Genesis 2:7, Ecclesiastes 12:7, and Matthew 10:28 seem to be clear that there are only two parts to a man.

Fall of Man

Although created perfect and sinless, man fell into sin when tempted by Satan. Satan questioned the goodness of God by inferring God's prohibition withheld good from Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:3-4). Having been deceived by the serpent, Eve ate the forbidden fruit and Adam willfully participated in the sinful act (Genesis 3:6). Adam's sin brought all mankind under condemnation due to his representational role (Romans 5:12-20).

Hamartiology: The disruption of worship and service

The entrance of sin distorted man's purpose to worship and serve His Creator. Sin removes the ability of any person to render righteous worship and service to God apart from God's intervention.

Definition

Sin is any lack of conformity to the moral law of God in act, thought, attitude, or disposition. Throughout the Scriptures, God clearly describes sin as more than simple actions breaking His law (Exodus 20:17; Matthew 5:22, 28; Galatians 5:20). Scripture also clarifies that our very nature is sinful (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:3).

Origination

God is in no way sinful or the originator of sin (Deuteronomy 32:4; James 1:13), but sin is something that He permitted to enter through the devil (universal) and Adam (human race). This by no means implies that God delights in sin (Hosea 1:13).

Effects

The entire human race was affected by Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-21).

- Because of Adam's sin, we are all guilty before God from the time of our conception (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:9-10, 23).
- Because of Adam's sin we are born into the world with a sin nature (Psalm 51:5). This prohibits our possessing any spiritual good before God (Romans 7:18) or having the ability to do any spiritual good before God (Romans 8:8; John 15:5; Hebrews 11:6).

Once we come to Christ we are freed from the absolute dominion of sin and its consequences (1 John 1:9; Romans 10:13). However, sin still affects the believer as he struggles with his flesh. His sins do not change his legal standing before God (Romans 8:1; 1 John 3:2), but will affect his fellowship with God (Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19).

God's righteousness requires that sin receive full and just punishment (Jeremiah 9:24), but that this punishment has been poured out upon Christ on behalf of all those who come to believe in Him as their Savior (Romans 3:25).

Christology: The Deliverer from sin and self to worship and service

Christ's coming provided the basis of restoration. His unjust death as an innocent man established the foundation for God to righteously forgive man for sin and restore fellowship between God and man.

The Person of Christ

He is God

I believe in the complete deity of Jesus Christ based on the claims He made of His oneness with the Father (John 10:30), His acceptance of the charge to be the Son of God (John 19:7), the prerogatives He claimed (Mark 2:27-28; Matthew 21:31-46; Mark 2:5), evidence from other Scripture writers (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9), use of the term "Lord" in the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Isaiah 6:1; John 12:41), and the evidence of the resurrection.

He is Man

At His incarnation, Christ also became entirely human. Evidence of His humanity is found in the human experiences in which He shared. These included: Growth (Luke 2:40), temptation (Matthew 4:11), exhaustion, thirst, hunger, pain, suffering (John 4:6, 7; Luke 4:2; Hebrews 5:8), emotions (John 15:11; Mark 10:21; Matthew 9:36; 27:38), and limitation of knowledge (Mark 13:32). He also constantly depended upon His Father. His entire humanity was needed so He could identify with us, a basis for the saving work, yet in perfect sinlessness (Hebrews 2:9-18).

He is One

I believe that the reality of the two natures is united in the reality of the one person of Christ. Two persons are not represented, nor does one nature override the other to make a single person. Two complete, distinct natures are united in the one person of Christ (Romans 1:3-4; 9:5). As such, each nature is capable of certain experiences of the other nature without mixture of the natures (John 2:19-21; Luke 5:24; Matthew 24:36; 1 Corinthians 2:8; Hebrews 2:14; 5:8). This state of Christ is current and will continue as such for all eternity (Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 4:14-15; 7:24). This union was necessary so that Christ could be our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) and could accomplish our redemption.

The Work of Christ

Christ's specific work includes that of being our prophet, priest and king. The incarnation was the height of Christ's revelatory work (Hebrews 1:2-3). His priestly work includes both the sacrifice for our sin (Hebrews 9:24-28) and His continual work as our intercessor (Romans 8:34). As King, He currently sits on the throne of David (Acts 2:30-35) and has spiritually inaugurated His kingdom through the New Covenant (1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:-12). Those believing on Christ are "transferred" into His kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Upon Christ's return His rule will be public and world-wide (Philippians 2:9-11) and the remaining promises of the New Covenant will be fulfilled regarding national Israel (Jeremiah 31:34-40; Romans 11:25-32).

Life

Christ lived a perfect, sinless life in order to fulfill all righteousness. He successfully withstood direct assaults by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11) and perfectly fulfilled the will of the Father (John 17:4). As a result, those placing their trust in Christ do not fear condemnation because Christ's righteousness belongs to them through faith (Romans 8:1-4).

Death

Christ **atoned** for the sins of mankind through the shedding of His blood upon the cross (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 2:10, 17). In doing so, Christ **propitiated** God's anger against sin (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10), **expiated** man's penalty for sin (Isaiah 53:10; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:26), satisfied God's **justice** (Romans 3:26), and **reconciled** man to God (2 Corinthians 5:18). The atonement of Christ for sinners was sufficient for all mankind and could be applied to all if they were elected by God to believe. The fact that all men are sinners (Romans 3:23) allows for this (Romans 5:18; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Colossians 1:19-20). Scripture clearly teaches that Christ did die for the sins of all that all could come to Him and that He desires none to perish (1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 2:9). Although the atonement is universal in its provision, it is limited in its application to those who are elected by God to have saving faith and are drawn by the Father to Himself (Romans 5:17).

Resurrection

Christ rose from the dead on the third day as the Scriptures foretold (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). He appeared to His disciples individually (John 20:14-17) and corporately (John 20:26). Christ's resurrection establishes assurance for believers that we also will be

changed from corruptible to incorruptible by the power of God (1 Corinthians 15:12-14, 49)!

Ascension and Return

Following His resurrection, Christ bodily returned to heaven in the sight of His disciples (Acts 1:9-10). He dwells in heaven, seated at the right hand of God, and will return to bring believers to the place that He prepared for them (John 14:3). What a day that will be!

Soteriology: Deliverance from self worship and service and its penalty

Actual deliverance occurs through the grand work of salvation. God established salvation through His eternal decrees and carries out salvation at the point in time when a person repents of sin and places full confidence in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for sin.

Change in position

Election carried out

God elects to salvation based solely on His special favor toward an individual, without any basis on the merit of the individual. Scripture teaches that **election** is based on God's **foreknowledge** (Romans 8:29). Biblically defined foreknowledge is a relational decision made about an individual, not based on the actions of an individual (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20). In the case of salvation, foreknowledge unto salvation flows from the love of God (2 Thessalonians 2:13). This is a function of God's sovereign will and is entirely efficacious, having been determined from eternity. Such election is by no means conditional upon the foreseen response of the individual, and the choice of God is entirely unchangeable (Ephesians 1:4-5; John 15:16; 6:37, 44; Romans 9:15-16, cf. Exodus 33:19). Election to salvation saves us from the condemnation everyone justly deserves (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 1:18-32; John 15:19; Romans 11:5, 7). This salvation is because of the grace (2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 11:5-6) and love (Deuteronomy 4:37; Hosea 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; Ephesians 1:4b-5a) of God. Those God elects, He effectually **calls** (Romans 8:30). The effectual calling of God brings **regeneration** (new life – Titus 3:5) and **reconciliation** (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Reconciliation restores the severed relationship with God through the cross work of Jesus Christ.

Faith and Repentance

The terms "repentance" and "faith" or "believe" often stand to represent the entirety of salvation. However, both **faith** (Acts 15:7; Romans 1:16) and **repentance** (Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:5; Acts 20:21; Hebrews 6:1) are necessary in salvation. Both come from God as gifts (Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 2:25), but manifest as responses from man to God. True **conversion** does not happen apart from faith and repentance (Acts 15:3). Typically, faith is defined by knowing the facts, accepting the validity, and transferring trust. Repentance involves the knowledge of one's sin, sorrow for offending the holy

God, and a volitional turning from sin to God. Ultimately, faith and repentance come as the result of hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Justification

God justifies those believing in Christ. The need for this **justification** is the sinfulness of man (Romans 3:21-23), the irrevocable moral law of God's holiness (Romans 2:12-13; cf. Exodus 23:7), and the holy character of God (Habakkuk 1:13), the latter two being offended by the first. The basis of justification has nothing to do with man's character (Psalm 130:3; 143:2; Ecclesiastes 7:20), his works (Romans 4:5), his observance of the law (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:11-12), or observance of religious rites (Romans 4:9-11). It is simply based upon the **imputed righteousness** of Jesus Christ, which He accomplished by satisfying the moral law through active and passive obedience (Romans 3:20-26; 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 1:30). The results of this standing before God are **pardon** and **forgiveness**, being treated as though we never sinned, and peace with God (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:1; 8:33-34).

Perseverance

A saved individual is in no danger of losing that salvation. God protects and keeps all who come to Him by His sovereign work (John 6:39; 10:27-30; Romans 8:31-39; Philippians 1:6). True salvation is evidenced by persevering in faith (John 8:31; 1 John 5:1; Hebrews 6:11), sound doctrine (John 7:17; Colossians 1:22-23), and good works (Ephesians 2:10). Scripture defines believers as characterized by consistent growth toward Christ-likeness (1 Corinthians 3:18) and lives free from the intentional, consistent practice of sin (1 John 3:6). The Lord gives specific directions for those who profess to be believers, yet refuse to repent from sinful conduct (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5). Such cases demonstrate an individual is one of the following: a brother overtaken by the devil (2 Timothy 2:24-26), a disobedient brother (2 Thessalonians 3:6), or an unbeliever (1 John 2:19). In each situation, God instructs measures to either restore a brother or unveil the unbeliever. Scripture leaves no room for stagnant carnality in a professing believer.

Assurance

In the midst of the facts of salvation, it is possible for a believer to be assured of his salvation. This assurance is based in Christ's finished work on the cross. The actual state of being assured is accomplished through the reality of the Holy Spirit's seal (Ephesians 1:13), the Holy Spirit filling and controlling the believer (Romans 8:9-17) and through the believer's own transformed lifestyle (1 John 3:3; 4:7-8).

Salvation brings with it a new standing for the believer before God. The transition takes place simultaneously with conversion, regeneration, and justification. Believers are declared to be God's children because of Christ's finished work (Galatians 4:4-5). As a result, the believer is forgiven (Ephesians 4:32), reconciled to God (Romans 5:10), and liberated from the condemning authority of the law (Romans 8:1-4, 14-16).

Christ-like progression

At salvation a positional sanctification occurs (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30) and the ongoing process of sanctification begins. This is the process whereby we are conformed more and

more to the likeness of Christ. Sanctification includes separation from that which is unholy or unspiritual (Exodus 13:2; 1 Peter 2:9). Sanctification is accomplished through choosing to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25; Ephesians 5:18), attention to the Word of God (John 17:17; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:18), grace-enabled self-control and sobriety (Titus 2) and a dependent prayer life (Philippians 4:6). While the goal of sanctification is complete conformity to the likeness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13), a complete sinless perfection is impossible (1 John 1:8-10). Living in such a way that our lives conform to Christ requires constant abiding in Him (John 15:1-7). The standard for our Christian life is summarized in these two statements, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength” and, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). This also includes separating oneself from the world (James 1:27; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18) and from disobedient brethren (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Permanent Realization

The final aspect of salvation is glorification. This is guaranteed through our preservation (Romans 8:29-30). In glorification the believer will be perfect morally and spiritually (Colossians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 1:8). The believer will also have a fullness of knowledge, unknown during his lifetime (1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2). And finally, the believer will receive a completely glorified body which will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:38-50).

Pneumatology: Enlightening and enabling worship and service

The Holy Spirit works eternally as a member of the Godhead. For the NT believer, His primary work involves teaching the mind to understand the Word of God and empowering the believer to obey God. He indwells and seals the believer at salvation.

His Person

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity, fully God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). He is distinct in His personality, yet one in His essence with the Father and the Son (Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jude 20-21; 1 Peter 1:2). His existence is from eternity to eternity (Hebrews 9:14). He operates in full cooperation with the God the Father and God the Son.

His Work

The primary ministries of the Holy Spirit include conviction (John 16:8-10), baptism (Mark 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:13) sealing (Ephesians 1:13-14), and empowering (John 14:12, 16:7). Christ baptizes the believer in the Holy Spirit at conversion as a one time event (Mark 1:8; cf. Acts 19:5-6). From that point forward, believers remain indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). As an initial sign of Christ’s promise to send the Holy Spirit, God ordained that outward demonstrations of speaking in tongues should occur (Acts 2:4; 10:46). Being indwelt by the Holy Spirit and filled (controlled) by the

Holy Spirit are two distinct ministries. Living a Spirit-controlled life is a repetitive choice believers make in contrast to following fleshly desires (Gal. 5:16-23; Ephesians 5:18-20).

Spiritual Gifts

God gifts believers through the Holy Spirit to accomplish His purposes. The two main categories of these gifts are speaking and service (1 Peter 4:10-11). Paul provides some direction regarding gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, but warns against excessive focus on gifts without love in chapter 13. The four passages that list various gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11) do so to stress the importance of the body of Christ operating in a dependent unity.

Spirit Filling

God instructs all believers to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Obedience to this command manifests in mutual edification of believers, reverent exaltation of God, divinely enabled thanksgiving, and fulfilling God-ordained roles (Ephesians 5:19-6:9). This obedience flows from a Spirit-enabled internal disposition (Galatians 5:22-23) and capably seeks to restore other believers to spiritual usefulness when overtaken by the flesh (Galatians 6:1-10).

Charismatic Gifting

Acts 2, 10, and 19 record the outward manifestation of Spirit baptism through the means of speaking in tongues. Paul also discusses the phenomenon as a spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 14, giving very specific guidelines. Undoubtedly, God ordained speaking in tongues to demonstrate the internal reality of the Holy Spirit's work. The accounts in Acts demonstrate a pattern in keeping with the outline of the book in Acts 1:8. The arrival of the promised Holy Spirit to the Jews came with tongues of fire and the speaking in tongues (real languages not previously learned by the speakers – Acts 2:3-4). As the gospel spread to the Gentiles, God miraculously demonstrated that they received the same Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-46). Furthermore, those who received John's baptism with water then received the greater baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6). Paul's treatment of tongues as a spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 14 lays down very specific ground rules for the exercise of that gift: one at a time, with an interpreter. His primary point in the passage is to demonstrate that God supplies gifts to edify others.

Given the pattern of accounts in Acts, the clear instructions laid out in 1 Corinthians 14, and the complete absence of instruction in later epistles, Scripture indicates the gift of tongues does not continue. Furthermore, the historical record of the church, the closed canon, and the unique role of apostles in the early church to lay the foundation all indicate that tongues existed for the express purpose of establishing the inauguration of the Church and the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell in believers. The gift on tongues no longer exists in the Church today.

Ecclesiology: The corporate expression of worship and service

Christ established the Church to hold up the truth. He promised that it would solidly stand even the onslaughts of hell. The Church provides a haven for believers to gather, lifting the name of the Lord, encouraging one another, and warning one another.

Terminology

The term *ekklesia* as used in secular Greek literature refers to any kind of congregated group. From the OT, we find the word *qahal* used to denote a secular gathering, but is also employed to describe Israel's religious gatherings. We find such usage in Deuteronomy in connection with the covenant. Coming to the NT, the *ekklesia* is used 109 of 114 times to describe "the community of God's people." It is used in connection with both the local assembly and the universal church (Acts 8:3; 9:31; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 15:9). This term also designates God's congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1).

Images

Scripture uses several images to describe and illustrate the church. The first is simply the designation of the "**people of God**" (Acts 15:14; 2 Corinthians 6:6). In Ephesians 5:25-27, we see the church as the **body of Christ**. Other passages pick up on this theme and expand it in various ways (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:7-16). This shows the unity of the church along with its diversity. While describing the "third race" made of Jews and Gentiles united in Christ, Paul pictures the resulting entity as the **building of God** (Ephesians 2:19-22). Peter picks up on this metaphor and states that the building consists of **living stones** (1 Peter 2:5).

Distinctions

The visible church consists of those who profess to believe Christ. The invisible church consists of those true believers that are currently living on the earth. The universal church consists of all true believers from Pentecost to the rapture. It is distinct from Israel. The local church is part of the visible church and denotes a body of believers who unite in a certain geographical area to exalt the Lord, edify the saints, and evangelize the lost (Acts 2:40-47). It is a gathering where the Word is preached, ordinances are observed, and discipline is practiced. The Biblical pattern of government is congregational (1 Peter 2:5; 1 John 2:20; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Acts 15:22; Matthew 18:17). God has ordained apostles and prophets (as the foundation) and gifted evangelists and pastor-teachers to lead each assembly (Ephesians 4:8-11). The leadership in the church consists of two offices, elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6-8).

Ordinances

Ordinances symbolize spiritual realities in the life of a believer. The two ordinances Christ commanded represent the initial commitment of the believer to Christ and the continuing fellowship believers enjoy as the body of Christ because of Christ's sacrifice. Neither ordinance holds any salvific value, but both constitute an essential aspect of obedience.

Baptism

Baptism symbolizes the believer's unification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 22:16). It is expressly commanded in Scripture and is one of the first steps of obedience in the new life of a new believer. By so doing, he identifies himself with the church. Thus, only those who have made a true profession of faith in Christ are qualified subjects for baptism. This would exclude, therefore, infants and those who have not consciously and of their own initiative (because of the drawing of the Father) professed Christ. From the Biblical evidence, the mode to be followed in believer's baptism is immersion. This is clear from the verb used (*baptizo*), which literally means "to immerse," and from the contexts in which baptism scenes occur in Scripture (Acts 8:36-39). Baptism should be a prerequisite to official church membership.

The Lord's Table

The Lord's Table was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25) and practiced by the early church (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23). It is done first of all as an act of remembrance in commemorating the vicarious, redemptive death of Christ as our Passover Lamb and in anticipation of Christ's return (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; 1 Corinthians 11:26). Second, it serves as an identification with the body of Christ, symbolizing the unity of believers in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Thus, to take it unworthily is divisive and brings severe judgment (1 Corinthians 11:27-33). Participating in the ordinance requires that a person be genuinely converted and is not harboring any known sin. The ordinance itself contains no saving merit.

Purity

The reality of the visible church includes the presence of "tares." Only the invisible, universal church remains entirely pure. However, as Christ builds His church, He commands certain measures to deal with those who taint the body of Christ with sinful lifestyles. Maintaining a God-honoring church includes being willing to confront sin personally and among brothers and sisters in Christ. Although not pleasant or desirable, the result, when handled biblically, yields peaceable fruit. The following represent three areas of necessary separation. First, believers must separate from the world and its system of values (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 5:11). Second, we are to separate from false teachers (Matthew 7:15-20; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 1:3-7). Third, we must separate from disobedient brethren (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; 2 John 9-11). The last category carries with it the specific purpose of restoration. God's method for dealing with a stubborn brother, following repeated attempts toward reconciliation, calls for leaving him to the ravages of sin. By so doing, God will often graciously draw that brother back into fellowship through conviction, repentance, and restoration. Therefore, the church must be faithful in this matter.

Angelology: The unseen ministers, audience, and adversaries of worship and service

God created marvelous beings for His own glory. In His infinite wisdom, He allows them to view the Church that they might grasp more fully the breadth of His wisdom. He appoints them for service and those that followed Satan oppose the people of God.

Created Beings

The angelic hosts comprise multitudes of uniquely created beings (Neh. 9:6; Colossians 1:16). Angels do not constitute a race or reproduce. Each being is an eternal spirit. Angelic titles seem to indicate a hierarchy, but Scripture contains little detail regarding the exact structure (Jude 9; Daniel 10:13; Daniel 8:15-26; 9:20-27; Luke 1:8-20; 26-38; Revelation 4, 5, 7, 19; Isaiah 6:1-6; Ezekiel 1; Revelation 4, 5, 7, 19). As created beings, angels do not constitute objects of worship (Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10). God created angels as moral beings (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) with high intelligence (Acts 12:6-11; Revelation 4:11; 5:11). Angels are limited in time and space (Luke 1:26; Daniel 10:12-14). They are not omnipresent beings.

Ministry of Angels

Angels in relation to God

Angels offer continuous praise and worship (Psalm 148:2; 29:1-2; Isaiah 6:1-3; Luke 2:14) Angels serve God (Psalm 103:20-21; Hebrews 1:7). They serve God as agents of revelation (Galatians 3:19; Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2). And they appear in God's presence (Job 1:6; 2:1; Psalm 89:5).

Angels in relation to Christ

Angels announced Christ's coming (Luke 1:27-28; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:18-25). Angels protected Christ early in life (Matthew 2:13). They strengthened Him following His confrontation with Satan and in preparation for His death (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43) Angels announced the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 28:1). They announced that He will return to earth (Acts 1:1) They will be in attendance at that return (Matthew 25:31). Right now, angels worship Christ (Hebrews 1:6) rejoice in His work (Luke 15:10) and have a desire to understand His atonement (1 Peter 1:12).

Angels in relation to believers

Scripture defines angels as "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:6). Exact roles of ministry are not disclosed and believers should not petition angels. God chooses to use angels according to His plan and purpose. Early in the NT, God left us with a record of deliverance accomplished through an angelic agent (Acts 12:5-7). God allows angels to observe the worship of His people as a disclosure of His wisdom (Ephesians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; 1 Tim. 5:21).

Fallen Angels

Satan

Satan is the chief of fallen angels (Ephesians 6:11-12). His fall took place between the completion of creation and the fall of mankind (Genesis 1:31; 3:1). While delivering prophecy regarding two pagan kings, Scripture identifies the energy behind their wickedness as Satan while describing his pre-fall state of privilege (Isaiah 14:13-14; Ezekiel 28:13-19). He currently is the ruler of the realm of this world (Ephesians 2:1-4) and exercises influence over all the unredeemed. He blinds men from beholding the light of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). He is the enemy of God and of God's people (Revelation 12), seeking to destroy what he can (1 Peter 5:8). God's power supersedes Satan's ability and protects those belonging to God (1 John 5:18).

Fallen Angels

Scripture reveals the activity of demons and identifies spiritual beings as those who carry out the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:12). These hosts, along with Satan, will ultimately be confined to hell for eternity (Matthew 25:41). The observable activity of these demonic beings increases at critical points in redemption history. For example, when Christ came to earth, He dealt with demonic forces repeatedly. Revelation contains four times the references to angelic beings than any other book. This fits the pattern of intensified warfare at critical junctures.

Spiritual Warfare

Paul reveals the spiritual warfare believers face in 2 Corinthians 10 and Ephesians 6. Spiritual warfare takes place as the ruler of this world and his henchmen seek to dismantle the Christian's ability to think according to the realities of the gospel. The battlefield is the mind and effective defense requires constant application of Bible truth and gospel realities (Ephesians 6:13-17). God may permit the devil to instigate suffering in order to affect a believer's thinking about God (Job 1), but the point of conflict remains the manner in which a believer thinks about God. The weapons God supplies enable the overthrow of thinking that sets itself up against God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Eschatology: The culmination and endless participation of worship and service

A day is coming when God will exact ultimate justice from all adversaries and bring His people to forever live in His presence. No longer will sin hinder God-honoring worship and service! God's people will spend eternity doing what God created them to do.

Rapture and Tribulation

The imminent return of Christ to gather those who believe on Him with Him in the air will mark the start of the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Following the rapture, there will be a severe, seven-year tribulation from which those raptured will be spared. Daniel identifies this tribulation period as the seventieth week (Dan. 9:27). This time will be characterized by the Antichrist that will deceive many and seek to persecute those who would believe in God (Revelation 13:1-3, 2 Thess. 2:3-4, 9).

Millennium and Final Judgment

Following the tribulation, Christ will establish His kingdom on earth for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3). At the end of this reign, there will be a final battle (Revelation 20:7-10) followed by the White Throne judgment in which Satan and all unbelievers will be condemned to the lake of fire for eternity (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 20:10-15).

Eternal State

Believers will forever dwell with Christ in the new heaven and new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4). All those unredeemed by the blood of Christ will face unalterable eternal misery in a literal place called “hell” (Revelation 20:10-15). Scripture graphically describes the suffering as “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). By contrast, the new heaven and new earth will be void of death, crying, and pain (Revelation 21:4). It is the dwelling place of the “throne of God and of the Lamb” (Revelation 22:3). Those redeemed by the blood of Christ will worship and serve the Lord in absolute perfection, free from the very presence of sin.

Lord, quickly come!

Extra

Theme of Scripture

Attempting to distill the message of the Bible carries the risk of leaving out significant emphases. At the same time, it is the under-shepherd’s responsibility to communicate truth in an understandable manner. The sheer volume of the Bible overwhelms many. A theme provides the mind a framework for organizing thoughts and concepts while delving into the riches of Scripture.

Criteria

Several criteria must be present for a theme to be legitimate:

1. The theme should arise from the study of Scripture, not be imposed over it.
2. The theme should appear in critical passages as revelation progresses.
3. The theme should be consistent with and carried by foundational doctrines.
4. The validity of the theme should be easily recognized when set alongside individual texts.

Investigation

The Bible consistently reveals two broad activities. First, God consistently initiates a relationship with chosen people. Second, God desires those chosen people to respond in a prescribed manner.

God’s initiation toward a relationship normally involves deliverance. This truth appears at critical points in Scripture. Genesis 3:15 gives the first promise of deliverance in the immediate context of statements of curse and punishment following the fall. As God initiates His covenant with Abraham, He promises to deliver Israel from Egypt (Genesis

15:13-14). Exodus 3:12 records God's promise to Moses that the people will be delivered and would serve God. Stephen combines both accounts as he recounts God's faithful deliverance of Israel (Acts 7:7). Paul demonstrates God's faithful deliverance of sinners through justification by faith (Romans 1-11). Consistently, God reveals Himself as the faithful Deliverer.

As the faithful Deliverer for His people, God reveals the only appropriate response: Worship and service. Once again, this theme appears in critical texts throughout Scripture. Service marks the fulfillment of promised deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 3:12). Following deliverance Israel's constant struggle centered on departing from worshiping and serving God alone by integrating idolatrous practices to the point of abandoning God. God evaluates the kings based their relationship to God's law. The prophets call people back to worshiping and serving God on God's terms. Arriving at the NT, the exhortations to those justified in Christ call for committing oneself entirely to worship and service (Romans 12:1-2). Ultimately, God's people will spend eternity worshiping and serving the One Who faithfully delivered them (Revelation 22:3). The cross of Christ is the means through which God justly delivers His people and the basis of worship and service to God. God intends worship and service to be the outflow of trust and obedience. Finally, although God graciously works for the good of believers, the ultimate end of deliverance for worship and service is God's own glory. He states that, "if we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). God is the ultimate end of God's work.

Statement

The following statement represents a framework that seems to rise from and be substantiated by Scripture: *For His own glory, God faithfully delivers His people to engage in worship and service to Himself.*