

## INTRODUCTION TO CHRIST THE REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# SESSION 2 CELEBRATING CHRIST

## HIS GRACE IN COMMUNITY--JOYOUS KNOWLEDGE

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### Knowing the Redeemer within His Church

- ❑ Celebration flows out of joyous knowledge of Christ's grace to us

### Our Catholic Beliefs

- ❑ Three basic convictions
- ❑ Three marks of a true church

### Our Evangelical Beliefs

- ❑ Gospel-people
- ❑ Three specific convictions

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- ❑ The Sacraments

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## KNOWING THE REDEEMER WITHIN HIS CHURCH

Last session we introduced *Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church* by emphasizing that we exist in order to worship the Redeemer, not only at church on Sunday morning, but in *all of our lives*. But in order for us to properly worship the Redeemer, we must be properly connected to the Redeemer. Our worship of Him flows out of our understanding of Him. There are things about Him that we must know, a joyous knowledge of who He is that is essential to our celebration of this great God whom we worship.

**We see corporate worship as the high point of the week.** It both feeds and builds upon our affections for Christ throughout the whole week. In order for us to engage our whole person in worship, we must know Him as He reveals Himself. That is why we gave you the homework assignment at the end of session one. It is imperative that we know what it means to enter into a relationship with God and that we not only agree with that information, but that we act upon it with faith and repentance. Should you wish to discuss this with someone, please contact Doug at the church office (878-1211). He would love to visit further with you about what it means to know God in a real way.

Once a person is connected to the Redeemer, he begins to grow in his knowledge of Him—and the church becomes a central arena in which this growth takes place. It's critical, therefore, that you understand what we at Christ the Redeemer believe.

Before we launch into our beliefs, we like to emphasize that while we hold our beliefs with enormous conviction, we seek to do so with great love. Therefore, we believe a true Christian church must be built upon a serious commitment to the deep truths of the historic Christian faith found in the Bible—but we also believe that those truths must be embraced in an affectionate manner that demonstrates that Christ's compassion and mercy has deeply affected us.

## Introduction to Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church

We summarize our beliefs as catholic, evangelical and reformed. Let me explain:

### OUR CATHOLIC BELIEFS

**F**irst of all, Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church unashamedly embraces the *catholic* faith. Since we're a Presbyterian church, you've already realized that this is not a reference to the Roman Catholic church; rather, we're using the term in its original sense, which means "according to the whole" or "universal." It is another way of saying what the true Christian church has always believed.<sup>1</sup>

By stating that we are committed to the catholic faith, we are stating that we wholeheartedly embrace those basic convictions which have been believed by the church throughout history and which are confessed in the ecumenical creeds of the early church, especially the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.<sup>2</sup> These are the **three basic convictions** of the catholic tradition:

1. **The Trinity.**<sup>3</sup> There is one God, who eternally exists in a communion of three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
2. **The Incarnation.**<sup>4</sup> The Second Person of the Holy Trinity—God the Son—became man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is both fully God and fully human.
3. **The Atonement.**<sup>5</sup> Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and was raised from the dead for the salvation of His people.

No theologian or organization that denies these teachings can make any valid claim to the term "Christian" with any view to the historic biblical understanding of the term. Another way of understanding this is through the use of **biblical marks of a true church**. Historically these have been understood as the necessary elements for any congregation to consider themselves a legitimate Christian church.<sup>6</sup>

1. **Preaching of the Word.**<sup>7</sup> God's Word must be present and applied to the people in order for a church to be legitimate.
2. **Celebration of the Sacraments.**<sup>8</sup> Baptism<sup>9</sup> and Communion<sup>10</sup> are the signs and seals of God's covenant community, the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> First Corinthians 1:2 and 12:12-13 speak of the Corinthian church as a part of the one body which is the church universal.

<sup>2</sup> See handouts for the text of these historic confessions of faith.

<sup>3</sup> First John 5:7 and Matthew 28:19 are the most clear. This is difficult for us to understand and not spelled forth in the Bible as we might like it, but it is none-the-less what the whole Scripture teaches and has been one of the primary teachings of the Christian Church throughout her history.

<sup>4</sup> John 1:1-18; Galatians 4:4; First John 5:20

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:17; Philippians 2:8; First Corinthians 15:3-5; Acts 13:37; Romans 6:9

<sup>6</sup> In the Protestant Reformation these were the marks set forth for recognizing a faithful church using much the same argument as had been made against the Aaronic priesthood after its apostasy from true faith in God.

<sup>7</sup> Proclaiming the gospel and teaching all that Christ had commanded was Christ's last charge before He returned to the Father, Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 6:2 describes how deacons were selected so that the apostles would not be distracted from the preaching of the Word; Second Timothy 4:1-5 presents preaching as the primary ministry of Timothy; Galatians 6:6 assumes that in all churches the word will be preached; these are also built on the foundation of the Old Testament, see Psalms 12:6; 119; Proverbs 29:18; and Isaiah 5:24.

<sup>8</sup> First Corinthians 12:13 refers to both baptism and communion as foundational to our unity.

## Introduction to Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church

### 3. Church Discipline.<sup>11</sup> The purity of the Church as Christ's body must be maintained.

There are many groups and even some denominations who teach that theirs is the only true church of Jesus Christ. We believe that this is not only unbiblical, but necessarily dangerous. The true church is not limited to any given sect, but is rather seen in all those who hold to these basic convictions and evidence these marks. At the same time it is equally dangerous to see all religions as equal. We must not add limitations that God does not give, nor neglect to limit what God clearly has limited. His church contains *all* those with these convictions and marks, but *none* other.

## OUR EVANGELICAL BELIEFS

**C**hrist the Redeemer Presbyterian Church is also an unabashedly *evangelical* church. We revel in the term, which, quite literally, means that we are “gospel people.” As evangelicals, we embrace the wonder of the gospel and all the ramifications it has on our lives. We see Christ and His work of redemption as central to the Bible as well as all history and for that matter our very existence. This is in contrast to churches which hold other things as central (i.e. a belief system, an ethic, religious experience, etc.).

In the past few decades, the term evangelical has also come to refer to churches and ministries that continue to proclaim the historic faith. We are an evangelical church in that we embrace those basic Christian doctrines that have been downplayed and rejected by many “modern” critics of the faith, especially since the 19th century. Here are some of our specifically evangelical convictions:

1. **The Authority of Scripture.** We believe that the Holy Scriptures are completely trustworthy, our ultimate authority for our beliefs and our lifestyles. We believe that the Scriptures are *inspired*,<sup>12</sup> which in Christian theology means that God oversaw the writing of the Bible in such a way that He speaks to us in and through its very words. Therefore, we believe that the Scriptures are *infallible* and *inerrant*—that the Bible is without error and hence, when properly interpreted, will not lead us astray. As Augustine of Hippo said: “What the Bible says, God says.”
2. **Saved through Faith Alone.** We believe that salvation is only by God's grace, and is received solely by faith in Christ. Our good works do not contribute to our salvation, but are evidence of a transformed life. We confess that this understanding is the clearest way to articulate the biblical gospel, and that the church's health is seriously impaired when this teaching is obscured.
3. **The Truth of Christianity.** We believe that the faith revealed in the Scriptures and confessed in the Creeds is “true truth,”<sup>13</sup> not simply a collection of religious platitudes.

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 2:11-12; Genesis 17:7-8; Galatians 3:9-14; Acts 2:38-39

<sup>10</sup> First Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:26-27

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 5:24-30; Acts 5:1-11; First John 2:19

<sup>12</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>13</sup> This is from the late Francis Schaeffer a pastor and scholar in our denomination.

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Therefore we believe, for example, in the historicity of the biblical miracles, of the virgin birth, of the resurrection, and we look forward to Christ's Second Coming.

While in some circles evangelical simply means "Protestant" and in others it may (wrongly) be used to refer to a particular political slant, we do not use it in that way. We joyfully apply the term to ourselves meaning that the good news of the gospel has radically transformed our lives. Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church is unashamedly evangelical; we are a gospel-centered church.

### OUR REFORMED BELIEFS

**L**ast of all, Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church is a congregation in the historic *Reformed* tradition. This term locates us within the tradition recovered during the Reformation of the Sixteenth century. Specifically, as a church of Reformed convictions, we are committed to those doctrinal views associated with the Presbyterian and continental Reformed churches and with the names of John Calvin, John Knox, Martin Bucer, and others. Our official doctrinal statement is found in the *Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (copies are available at our book table), documents drafted by Reformed churchmen in Great Britain in the 1640s. In addition, we are committed to a Presbyterian system of church government, which is seen in our participation in and accountability to the Presbyterian Church in America.

### The Sovereignty of God in Salvation

- In the Reformed tradition, we hold to (what we believe to be) a *balanced* understanding of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, not falling off on the one side into the view that our performance contributes to our salvation<sup>14</sup> or on the other side into a view which denies the importance of evangelism and personal commitment.<sup>15</sup>
- We believe that the work of salvation—from start to finish—is *God's* work.<sup>16</sup> We believe that sinful humans are both unable and unwilling to come to Christ apart from the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, God must take the initiative to save his beloved people. Our salvation follows a Trinitarian pattern: The Father chooses His people from eternity past, the Son dies on the cross for those whom the Father has given to Him, and the Spirit gives them—at the time of conversion and then throughout their lives—faith in Jesus Christ.
- C.S. Lewis<sup>17</sup> summarized this balance well in his allegory, *The Great Divorce*<sup>18</sup>: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and

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<sup>14</sup> Historically called Pelagianism and seen, more mildly, in Arminianism.

<sup>15</sup> Sometimes called hyper-Calvinism, this is an unbiblical form of determinism.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 2:7-8 speaks to this, "In order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Jesus Christ. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as the result of works, that no one should boast." See also Acts 10:44; Romans 8:28-30; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9; First Peter 1:2.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis was a professor of English at Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the twentieth century.

<sup>18</sup> Macmillan, 1946.

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those to whom God says, in the end, ‘*Thy will be done.*’” In other words, those who spend eternity with God must give Him all the glory and take none of the credit; those who spend eternity without God must take all the blame and place none of it on God.

- The *mission* of the church is central in the Reformed tradition. We believe that evangelism is God’s ordained way of proclaiming the gospel to all humankind. We proclaim Christ in confidence, for we do not trust in our efforts but in the Spirit’s power, and we are confident that “those appointed to eternal life” will believe!<sup>19</sup>

## The Sacraments

- Again, our tradition seeks to maintain a biblical balance between those who see the sacraments as *merely* symbolic and those who tend to view them as *merely* realistic. We believe that the sacraments—Holy Baptism and Holy Communion—are symbols *through* which God works in reality in our hearts (as seals).
- We believe that baptism signifies what happens when a person becomes a Christian, that baptism makes one a part of the visible community of God’s people, and that God actually blesses those who are rightly baptized. In keeping with the church’s historic practice, we also believe that, since the children of believers have always been included in the number of God’s people, that baptism is rightly given to the infant children of believers. Baptism, however, does not ‘save’ a child.
- We believe that the Holy Communion (the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper) signifies our union with Christ in His sacrificial death and resurrection life, that Christ is truly and really present<sup>20</sup> to believers in every celebration of the Eucharist, and that those who receive communion in faith actually grow deeper in their union with Christ.
- In summary, we believe that in the holy sacraments, we receive in reality what is signified in the symbols. The sacraments are symbolic, but not *merely* symbolic.

## ON BEING PRESBYTERIAN

*Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church* is part of the Presbyterian Church in America. We are one of the fastest growing denominations in the United States. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was founded in 1973 by a group of evangelical churches leaving the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), commonly called the Southern Presbyterian Church, out of concern that the PCUS was abandoning the very convictions we have been talking about in this class. While the PCA is strongest in the South, it has spread all over the US and into Canada. In 1982, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES) joined the PCA. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), a mostly Northern body with identical

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<sup>19</sup> See Acts 13:48

<sup>20</sup> This is in contrast with the two other extremes that see Christ as not present in any real sense or those who see Him physically present. We meet with Christ at His table and are nourished by His grace.

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doctrinal views, is our closest sister denomination. We work with other evangelical denominations wherever possible through the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF). We also enjoy fellowship with other Reformed denominations through the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

### Presbyterian Church Government

Again, in this area we must maintain a biblical balance. On the one hand, we must remember that the church is a living *organism*, full of supernatural life and energy. On the other hand, we must never forget that the church is also an *organization*, with structure, order, and leadership. When either side of this balance is neglected, the church's effectiveness is weakened, either by a shallow sentimentalism or a hollow institutionalism. The Presbyterian tradition has sought to articulate and follow a few basic principles of church government.

1. Church government is *conciliar*; in other words, the church is to be governed by multiple officers, not just one person.<sup>21</sup>
2. Presbyterian churches seek to follow the pattern of church government seen in the New Testament, which was itself based on the pattern of the synagogues (though, of course, there have been developments over the years). In Presbyterian churches, we have the following classification of officers:
  - *Elders*, who shepherd the flock of God's Church. There are two types:
    - A. *Teaching elders*, whom we normally refer to as ministers or pastors, men specially charged to preach and teach the Word and celebrate the sacraments;
    - B. *Ruling elders*, who guide and govern the church.
  - *Deacons*, who lead in ministries of mercy and in other supportive areas.
3. Following the biblical **pattern**, officers are men chosen by the people, though their election only recognizes the gifts for office that are given by Christ. The people elect, but they elect the ones with wisdom for the job of leadership.<sup>22</sup>
4. The historic Christian rite of ordination is done by the ministers and elders. There is a sense in which they have "veto power"; they set apart, but they do not elect.<sup>23</sup>
5. The Scriptures also teach a *connectional* principle of church government. In the Presbyterian system, assemblies of ministers and elders serve as councils with real authority over all the churches represented.<sup>24</sup> In the Presbyterian Church in America, there are three such councils, often called "church courts," because they can function as courts of appeal in church disputes:

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<sup>21</sup> Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 21:17-18

<sup>22</sup> Acts 6

<sup>23</sup> 1 Timothy 4:14; Acts 13:1-3; Acts 6

<sup>24</sup> Acts 15

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- The *Session* is the governing body of the local church, and consists of the senior pastor, any associate pastor(s), and the ruling elders
- The *Presbytery* is the governing body of the regional church. Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church is a part of the Northern New England Presbytery.<sup>25</sup>
- The *General Assembly* is the governing body of the entire Presbyterian Church in America, and serves to coordinate our joint ministries and to settle issues that arise. The Assembly meets annually.

### An Important Note

While you're pondering some of these Presbyterian beliefs, it's important that you remember one more hallmark of Presbyterianism: *You don't have to be a Presbyterian to be a Presbyterian!* In other words, while Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church is clearly a Presbyterian church—and therefore our members need to understand our commitments and be able to work with and support those who hold them—adherence to Presbyterian distinctives is not necessary for church membership.<sup>26</sup> All that is required for membership in Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church is a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ, completion of this course, approval by the elders (session) and taking of membership vows.

**S**o, what does Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church believe? When all is said and done, we are in the broad mainstream of the historical church. *We are a church that is broadly catholic, passionately evangelical, and distinctively Reformed.* If you're considering membership in Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church, the question is, "What do you believe?" Have you embraced the historic catholic faith? Are you trusting in Christ *alone* for your salvation? Are you (at least) willing to swim in the waters of the Reformed tradition? If so, then you will find Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church a community well suited to meet your spiritual needs.

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<sup>25</sup> This is comprised of all the PCA churches in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

<sup>26</sup> Affirming Reformed beliefs is necessary for those who wish to serve as pastors, elders, deacons, teachers, and Ministry Team Leaders in Christ the Redeemer.

**Introduction to Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church**

# **Handouts**

**To help you dig deeper into what we believe at  
CHRIST THE REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

## MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONS

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

## THE APOSTLES' CREED<sup>27</sup>

I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord;  
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
He descended into hell;  
the third day He arose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;  
the holy catholic church;  
the communion of saints;  
the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body;  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

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<sup>27</sup> Although not written by the apostles, the Apostles' Creed is a concise summary of their teachings. It originated as a baptismal confession, probably in the second century, and developed into its present form by the sixth or seventh century.

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# NICENE CREED<sup>28</sup>

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth,  
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,  
begotten of the Father before all worlds,  
God of God, Light of Light,  
very God of very God,  
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;  
by Whom all things were made;  
Who for us men and for our salvation  
came down from heaven,  
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,  
and was made man;  
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;  
He suffered and was buried;  
and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures,  
And ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;  
and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead;  
Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life,  
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son;  
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;  
Who spoke by the prophets;

And one holy catholic and apostolic church;  
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;  
and I look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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<sup>28</sup> The Nicene Creed originated at the Council of Nicea (325), and an expanded version was adopted by the Council of Chalcedon (451). It was formulated to answer heresies that denied the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity and of the dual nature of Christ.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PREDESTINATION

The Sovereignty of God is often taught through a simple mnemonic device<sup>29</sup> called “TULIP”, each letter representing one of the Five Points of Calvinism.

### 1. *Total Depravity (Spiritual Inability)*

Definition: Human beings are dead in sin and unable to come to Christ in and of themselves. In addition, every part of our being has been affected by sin.

Explanation: We have *free agency*, in that we are free to do whatever we *desire*; however, no one naturally desires to love or obey God (Romans 3:23; 8:7; I Corinthians 2:14). To put it differently, we are free to choose according to our nature. We are not free to choose our nature. Just as a dog is free to bark or run or sleep, he is not free to be a cat. So, if we are “in Adam” (thus “outside of Christ”) we are free to do many things, but not free to choose to be a Christian. The reason: we are not *sick* with sin - we are *dead* in it! (Ephesians 2:1-2) Our only hope is for Christ to make us alive (*regeneration*), for Him to draw us to Himself (John 6:44). Just as God created the world out of nothing by calling it into being - “*Let there be light*” - so he *calls* us into life out of death (II Corinthians 4:5-6). The ability to repent and place our faith in Christ is a *gift* (II Timothy 2:25; Ephesians 2:8-9).

### 2. *Unconditional Election*

Definition: God chooses those who are saved, not because of their desirability or good works, but merely out of His own unconditional love and good pleasure.

Explanation: God chooses *whom* He will save. His decision is not based on *anything we have done* good or bad (Romans 9:11-13). He doesn’t “foresee the good guys” - there are no good guys (we are all guilty). If election were based on *merit* no one would ever be elect! (Deuteronomy 6:9; I Corinthians 1:27; Romans 9:23) God shows mercy to people who neither want nor deserve it. Why did God choose you and me? The answer is a *mystery*. It was for his own *glory* and because in His mercy He was pleased to do so (Ephesians 1:1-14; Romans 9). Does this seem unfair? God would be justified in condemning everyone (Romans 5:12 ff). The miracle of grace is that he shows mercy to anyone!

### 3. *Limited Atonement (Personal Atonement or Particular Redemption)*

Definition: Christ died, not just to make salvation possible, but to actually save all those for whom He died.

Explanation: Christ’s atonement is *personal*. He died for His church (Ephesians 5:25-27). He “*laid down his life for his sheep*” (John 10:15, 26-29). He came to give his life

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<sup>29</sup> This comes from the Reformed Churches in 17th Century Holland.

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for “*all the Father had given him*” (John 6:39; 10:29; 17:2, 24), and promised to raise all of them up on the last day (John 6:39-40). It is for the true descendents of Abraham (Heb. 2:16-17) that He died and yet they are people of every nation (Rev. 5:9-10).

### 4. *Irresistible Grace (Effectual Calling)*

Definition: If God has chosen to save someone, He will overcome his<sup>30</sup> sinful resistance and pride and change his heart so that he will eagerly come to Christ for salvation.

Explanation: God acts first in our salvation - He is its author (Hebrews 2:10; 12:2). *Regeneration* (God’s action) precedes *faith* (our response). We must be *born again* to see the kingdom (John 3:3), and that new birth comes from God (John 1:12-13). The only reason one person is a Christian and another is not a Christian is because of God’s grace. “*For what makes you different that anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?*” (I Corinthians 4:7)

### 5. *Perseverance of the Saints (God’s preserving of the true believer)*

Definition: Though never free from all remaining sin in this life, all those who truly come to Christ will persevere in the Christian life. Salvation cannot be utterly lost.

Explanation: God begins our salvation and promises to carry it through to completion, i.e., complete restoration to the image of Christ (Philippians 1:6; John 10:27-30). God is the ultimate *source* of our growth (I Thessalonians 5:23-24; Ephesians 2:9; Philippians 2:12-13) and we work with the full knowledge and assurance that He is already at work in us. The one who abandons Christ demonstrates that he was never genuinely converted (I John 2:19).

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<sup>30</sup> We are using the masculine pronoun here generically.

## INFANT BAPTISM

In trying to understand baptism we look to Scripture to see how it is to be administered. Part of the difficulty in this regard is that it seems that every Scripture regarding baptism can be interpreted differently depending on the presuppositions you bring to the text. It is especially helpful to learn from other godly saints who have gone before us and wrestled with this issue. The Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 94 puts it this way:

*What is baptism?*

*Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, does signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.*

### I. SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

#### A. Acts 2:38

**And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."**

1. NOT JUST AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL RITUAL, BUT AN ESCHATOLOGICAL REALITY; THE NEW AGE HAS BEGUN
2. BAPTISM SIGNIFIES REPENTANCE AND ENTRY INTO THE CHURCH
3. BAPTISM WITH WATER NOT AN OPTION, BUT A COMMAND (MAT 28).
4. NOT ONLY UNDER AUTHORITY OF CHRIST, BUT ALSO UNDER AUTHORITY OF A LOCAL BODY.

#### B. 1Pet 3:20,21

**who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,**

1. SAVES US FROM THE COMING OF GOD
2. WATER SEPARATES THE UNGODLY FROM THE GODLY
3. WATER BAPTISM IS A CONDITION OF OBEDIENCE, NOT SALVATION
4. 1PET 1:9; EPH 2:8, LK 23:43; 1COR 1:43

#### C. Rom 6:1-4

**What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

1. NOT JUST RITUAL, BUT RELATIONSHIP
2. IDENTIFIED WITH JESUS IN HIS CRUCIFIXION, HIS BURIAL, HIS RESURRECTION

#### D. Titus 3:5

**But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by**

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**works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,**

1. INWARD CLEANSING
2. AUGUSTINE: SACRAMENT=OUTWARD SIGN OF AN INWARD GRACE

### II. BASIS OF BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

#### A. POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

1. IN NT, BAPTISM SEEMS TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH CONSCIOUS FAITH AND REPENTANCE
  - a) Mt 3:1
  - b) Acts 2:38
  - c) Acts 8:34-38
  - d) Acts 8:13
  - e) Acts 9:18, 10:44,47, 16:14-15, 31-33
  - f) Acts 18:8, 19:1-7
2. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST AND PARTICIPATION IN SPIRITUAL BENEFITS
  - a) Acts 2:38
  - b) Rom 6:1-11 "united with Christ"
  - c) Eph 4:5, One Lord, one faith, one Baptism
  - d) Col 2:12, buried with Him
  - e) 1Pet 3:21
3. PERSONAL DECISION, NOT PHYSICAL DESCENT, (I.E. *CHANGE* FROM OLD COVENANT)
  - a) Matt 3:9
  - b) Lk 12:49-53
  - c) John 1:13
  - d) Rom 2:28-29
  - e) Gal 3:9
4. Logical argument
  - a) Years of mental development precedes understanding.
    - (1) Understanding precedes repentance and faith.
    - (2) Repentance and faith precedes baptism.
    - (3) Therefore, understanding precedes baptism.
  - b) Therefore, years of mental development precede baptism.

#### B. NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

1. NO SPECIFIC COMMAND TO BAPTIZE INFANT IN NT
2. NO UNAMBIGUOUS EVIDENCE OF INFANT BAPTISM
3. "JEWISH DISTORTION" FROM OT (I.E. HERE SHOULD BE A *DISCONTINUITY*)
4. INFANT BAPTISM REPRESENTS "ALIEN, MAGICAL INFLUENCES" OF RITUALS
5. NO MEANING FOR INFANTS; THEY CAN'T UNDERSTAND

### III. BASIS OF INFANT BAPTISM

#### A. COVENANT BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

1. Covenant of Redemption (Rom 5:12-21; Joh 17:4,12; 1Jo 4:9-10; Ps 2:8...)
  - a) Between Father and Son
  - b) Works/Obedience

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2. Covenant of Works
    - a) God established with Adam, and in Adam, with all his descendants by ordinary generation
    - b) Mosaic Covenant
  3. Covenant of Grace
    - a) God established with the elect
    - b) Covenant with Adam; Gen 3:15
    - c) Covenant with Abraham; Gen 12:1-3
    - d) New Covenant, fully revealed, and fully fulfilled, in Christ (cf. Hebrews)
- B. PREMISES REGARDING THE CHURCH
1. Visible Church is a divine institution
  2. Visible Church does not consist exclusively of the regenerate.
  3. Commonwealth of Israel was the Church (Acts 7:38; c.f. also Rom 9:6)
  4. The Church is the same Church under the various dispensations of grace.
    - a) "INVISIBLE CHURCH" CONSISTS OF ALL GOD'S ELECT (WHICH NOW ONLY HE TRULY KNOWS)
    - b) "VISIBLE CHURCH" CONSISTS OF ALL WHO HAVE PROFESSED FAITH AND, BY REPRESENTATION, THEIR CHILDREN
  5. Terms for admission into the Church before the Advent were the same as those after.
  6. Infants were members of the Church under the OT.
  7. NT does not exclude children of believers from membership in Church.
- C. CIRCUMCISION WAS A SIGN AND SEAL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH
1. TO ABRAHAM ROM 4:11
  2. TO HIS DESCENDANTS, INCL INFANTS GEN 17:10-12
  3. WAS SPIRITUAL GEN 17:7
  4. WAS PRE-MOSAIC: NOT TIED TO THE LAW GENESIS
  5. WAS INTERNATIONAL IN SCOPE GEN 17:12,13
  6. SIGN OF WHAT WAS TO COME DEUT 30:6; JER 31:33
- D. ABRAHAMIC COVENANT *CONFIRMED* IN CHRIST, NOT ABOLISHED
1. ABRAHAMIC COVENANT PROVIDES BASIS OF SALVATION TODAY; BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH
    - a) Gal 3:14, 16
  2. *CONTINUITY*, NOT *DISCONTINUITY* IN THIS MATTER
    - a) Matt 5:17-19
- E. BAPTISM REPLACES CIRCUMCISION
1. COL 2:11,12
  2. BOTH REPRESENT SEPARATION FROM OLD SIN NATURE
  3. CUTTING OFF FROM OLD, IDENTIFICATION WITH A NEW LIFE



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Statement incorporated into child's baptism, according to PCA Directory of Worship:

“For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. (Acts 2:39; Gen 17:7; Acts 16:31)

1. Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?
2. Do you claim God's covenant promises in (his) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his) salvation, as you do for your own?
3. Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before (him) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him), that you will teach (him) the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?