

FORTY PROCLAMATIONS

THE THEOLOGY OF GRACE DOCTRINE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Various churches, denominations, and religions in Christendom differ in their explanations of God's will, plan, and purpose for the human race. Referencing the same corpus of divinely inspired writings of the Bible, these various factions have created considerable confusion both internal and external to Christianity by disparities in their biblical interpretation of God's infallible truth. This confusion is further aggravated by changes in scriptural hermeneutics in an attempt to adapt to the human standards and customs of contemporary society. However, despite efforts to interpret God's Word to conform to human belief systems, God is not confused and the veracity of His Word as revealed in Scripture never changes with the passage of time. An accurate literal-grammatical-historical analysis of the Bible's Hebrew and Greek manuscripts eliminates all such confusion.

How may such confusion be avoided?

Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (Eph 5:17).

The first mandate in this verse, "do not be foolish," literally means in the Greek, "not to be without reason"; however, this phrase later came to mean, "do not be ignorant of that which is true." Therefore, ignorance of God's truth characterizes the believer who lives his life without access to biblical norms and standards in his soul, resulting in a lifestyle of confusion, frustration, and uncertainty.

The second mandate in this verse, "understand what the Lord's will is," commands the believer to have knowledge of the Lord's plan as revealed in Scripture in order to faithfully execute God's will and purpose for his life in the devil's world. The believer who obeys this mandate glorifies Jesus Christ and magnifies His Word, and, as a result, receives His blessings and rewards in time and eternity. Conversely, the believer who does not obey this mandate suffers a confused, frustrated, and evil existence in *cosmos diabolicus* under the authority of Satan and the discipline of God.

Where do we find God's plan?

All Scripture is inspired by God [God-breathed] and is profitable [useful] for teaching [Bible doctrine], for reproof, for correction, and training [instruction] in righteousness, so that the man of God [believer] may be adequate [thoroughly equipped] for every good work [become spiritually mature]. (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Consequently, God's grace plan for mankind is found in the inspired writings of "All Scripture," wherein the believer is: taught the absolute reality of doctrine; rebuked for erroneous thoughts, decisions, and actions; counseled on how to think from the divine perspective; and instructed in God's perfect righteousness — all of which enables his advance to spiritual maturity.

How do we comprehend God's plan?

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My [Christ's] name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)

Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately [imparting it without deviation]. (2 Tim 2:15, NET)

Therefore, God's will and purpose for mankind, as revealed in His plan, requires the believer to persist in his study of Scripture under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, his study must correctly interpret Scripture from the manuscripts of its divinely inspired, original languages:

We have not received the world's spirit, but the Holy Spirit from the source of God, in order that we might have a permanent knowledge of things that have been graciously given to us by God, which things we teach, not by teaching from the source of man's wisdom, but from the source of the Holy Spirit, explaining spiritual concepts to a spiritual system. The soulish man [unbeliever] does not receive these things of the Holy Spirit for to him they are foolishness. Furthermore, he is not able to understand them because they are discerned from the source of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 2:12-14, a corrected translation)

The Bible characterizes the thinking of human beings without Christ and doctrine as "darkness" and the thinking of believers with doctrine as "light," two conditions of fellowship that are diametrically opposed to one another:

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another. (1 John 1:5-7)

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial [religion], or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God and idols? For we [believers] are the temple of the living God. (2 Cor 6:14-16)

How do we transform our thinking?

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing [renovation] of your mind [thoughts], so that you may prove what God's will is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:2)

Only by the consistent assimilation of doctrine into the soul is the believer able to comprehend and apply God's will and purpose in his life. God desires that every believer renovate their minds by replacing human with divine viewpoint in order to glorify Him by faithfully pursuing the objective of spiritual maturity. Jesus Christ Himself referred to the importance of doctrine in several passages:

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed in Him, "If you continue in My word, than you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31-32)

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

Jesus answered and said to them, "You are in mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God." (Matt 22:29)

What is the mission of Grace Doctrine Church?

Our mission is to contribute to the believer's comprehension of God's Word in order that he might advance in his knowledge and application of God's will, "bearing fruit in every good work," resulting in maximum glorification of Him in a state of spiritual maturity:

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work [divine good] and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col 1:9-10)

For those who are interested in the doctrinal perspective of Grace Doctrine Church, these forty proclamations will briefly summarize, all too superficially, a few of our fundamental, biblically-based beliefs. Additional information in the exegesis and presentation of these principles and doctrines is reserved for the churches regular Bible classes, and may be accessed on the Web site of Joe Griffin Media Ministries (www.joegriffin.org).

1) Teaching Method:

The presentation of divinely inspired Scriptures by a pastor must be as precise and understandable as is possible. However, the attempt by finite minds to comprehend the thinking of the infinite God is an ambitious undertaking. In order to accomplish this objective, Grace Doctrine Church utilizes a system of lesson preparation identified by the acrostic “**ICE**,” representing **I**sagogics, **C**ategories and **E**xegesis. **I**sagogics take into account the literary and external history of the Bible so that a book’s cultural, social, political, and religious setting so that its content may be interpreted in view of the time in which it was written. **C**ategories result from the integration of all the verses of the Bible on a given subject and their classification as a doctrinal statement. **E**xegesis is the grammatical, syntactical, etymological, and contextual analysis of a scriptural passage on a word-by-word basis, thus revealing the nuances of the original languages — primarily Hebrew in the Old Testament and Koine Greek in the New Testament. Such an approach to biblical teaching was used in the development of the biblical doctrines we are about to summarize (Isa 28:10).

2) Orthodoxy:

Grace Doctrine Church defines its theology as Conservative, Orthodox, Protestant:

Conservative since we do not subscribe to any humanistic system of philosophy or metaphysics (Col 2:8).

Orthodox since the only accepted standard for life is found in the Bible (Rev 22:18-19).

Protestant because we reject any hierarchical system of church authority beyond the pastor and board of deacons of the local church (Heb 13:17).

Therefore, we submit to no hierarchical creeds, we honor no human traditions, nor do we recognize extra-biblical experiences. Since the Bible is the only source for determining divine policy, there is no need for membership in any denomination or Christian organization.

3) Trinity:

We believe in the co-equal, co-eternal, and co-infinite existence of a triune Godhead that is one in essence and three in personality. The one essence is deity while the three personalities are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor 13:14)

4) Creation:

We believe that the entire universe – its matter, energy, and space – was created in a microsecond of time in eternity past by divine decree. In Genesis 1:1, the Hebrew word for creation is בָּרָא (*bara'*) and means, "to create something from nothing." Thus, without use of preexisting matter or energy, the universe was created instantly by the command of God (Heb 11:3). The Latin equivalent of *bara'* is *creatio ex nihilo*. The person of the Trinity who was the agent of creation was Jesus Christ. (John 1:3; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:3)

5) Bible:

We believe the Bible in its original autographs is God's complete and coherent message to mankind and its contents are inerrant and infallible. Apart from the Bible, there is no other communication between God and the human race. Without waiving their human intelligence, vocabulary, personal feelings, or literary style, we believe God used the human writers of Scripture to permanently record with perfect accuracy His message to mankind in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship. (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:21)

6) Man's Condition:

We believe humanity's original parents were perfect in body, soul, and spirit, created by Jesus Christ in the perfect environment of the garden of Eden. However, due to personal sin, they lost their perfection; their souls suffered spiritual death, and their bodies acquired a sin nature. Since Adam was aware of his sin, his sinful nature was transmitted genetically through him to the entire human race. As a result, everyone is born in sin, separated from God, and in need of a Savior. (Rom 3:23; 5:12; 6:12-14)

7) Person of Christ:

We believe Jesus Christ is coequal, coeternal, and coinfinite with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In order to become a substitute for sinful man, He agreed to lower Himself to the form of a man and to live life facing the same pressures and trials, yet to do so without sin. Consequently, Jesus Christ is both undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. This union of God and man in one person is defined in theology as the hypostatic union whereby Christ is at once both eternal God and impeccable Man. (Phil 2:5-11)

8) Birth of Christ:

We believe Jesus Christ entered human history in the fullness of time by means of the virgin birth. We believe His biological life was the product of a virgin pregnancy, initiated by a miracle of the Holy Spirit and delivered by Mary in Bethlehem. Further, we believe His soul life and human spirit were imputed to Him by the sovereignty of God at the virgin birth, at which point His undiminished deity was united with His true humanity forming the hypostatic union. (Gal 4:4; Isa 7:14; Matt 1:20-24; Ps 22:10; Heb 10:5)

9) Life of Christ:

We believe Jesus Christ in His humanity was never guilty of any type of personal sin. He experienced all the trials and pressures typical of the human experience, yet without sin. When He arrived at the cross, He did so in a state of complete perfection and impeccability. Because of the perfection of His deity, He was not able to sin: "*non posse peccare*"; because of the perfection of His humanity, He was able not to sin: "*posse non peccare*." (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 1:19)

10) Work of Christ:

When on the cross, Jesus Christ received the divine imputation of all the sins of human history—past, present, and future—and the justice of God judged those sins in Him. Because God was satisfied with Christ's sacrifice, man is redeemed from his slavery to sin and is reconciled to God through faith alone in Christ alone. (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 5:20-6:14)

11) Status of Christ:

Jesus Christ is presently seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven. His true humanity exists in a resurrection body inseparably united with His undiminished deity in hypostatic union forever. He serves as the head of the Church wherein, as our Advocate in heaven, He offers intercessory prayers to the Father on behalf of all believers. (Luke 24:44-51; Heb 12:2; Eph 5:23; 1 John 2:1; Heb 7:25)

12) Return of Christ:

We believe Jesus Christ will physically return to earth at the Second Advent, specifically to the Mount of Olives, where He will establish His millennial kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem. As prophesied, He will reign on King David's throne for 1,000 years. (Acts 1:9-12; Rev 19:11-16, 20:6; Zech 14:4; 2 Sam 7:16)

13) Gospel and Salvation.

The *gospel* is designed to present Jesus of Nazareth as Savior. Any number of details can be presented to describe His person and His work: He is both perfect God and sinless Man, who was sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the entire human race, after which He died, was buried, and, three days later, was resurrected from the dead. Regardless of how many details are given, the free will of the unbeliever must be left to consider whether

to accept or reject Jesus as his personal Savior.

Salvation occurs when the unbeliever responds with nonmeritorious faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8–9). This faith response has both purpose and result: The *purpose* is deliverance from punishment in the lake of fire. The *result* is the imputation of eternal life. Taken together, salvation means that believers go to heaven when they die (John 3:16). (Also see: John 3:15–16,18,36; 6:47; 11:25; 20:31; Acts 16:31; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

14) Security:

We believe once a person expresses personal faith in Jesus Christ, he becomes a son of God, receives the imputation of God's perfect righteousness, and is adopted into His royal family – once a son, always a son. Further, the grammar of Ephesians 2:8-9 reveals through exegesis that the believer's salvation is eternally secure. An expanded translation of that verse reads: For by grace you have been saved in the past with the result that you stand saved forever through faith, and this [*salvation*] is not from yourselves; it is a gift from God, not by works, lest any man should boast. (Also see: Gal 3:26; Rom 3:22; Acts 16:31; Rom 8:16-17; Gal 4:7; Eph 2:8).

15) Holy Spirit:

We believe God the Holy Spirit is a coequal, coeternal, and coinfinite member of the Trinity who indwells those who believe in Jesus Christ and fills those who confess their sins to God the Father. Through His filling ministry, the Holy Spirit is able to teach the believer all things and enables him to execute the Christian way of life. (John 7:37-39, 14:16-17, 26; Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 2:12, 6:19; 2 Cor 5:5; Eph 5:18)

16) Spirituality:

We believe spirituality and carnality are absolutes whereby neither is a condition of degree, but rather one of status. The believer is either filled with the Holy Spirit (spirituality) or under the control of his sinful nature (carnality). Therefore, spirituality is the status of the filling of the Holy Spirit and carnality is the status of the person with unconfessed sin in his life. (1 Cor 3:1-3; Gal 5:16-26; 1 John 1:9)

17) Spiritual Maturity:

Spiritual maturity is that status attained by the believer who, through maximum knowledge of Bible doctrine, understands his place, purpose, and function in God's Plan. However, dependent upon his attitude toward the teachings of the Bible, a believer's spiritual status is either advancing or retrogressing: *qui non proficit deficit* (he who does not advance, falls behind). (Eph 4:11-15; Col 3:1-5)

18) Rewards:

The believer who continuously and faithfully advances in his knowledge of God's Word will eventually achieve spiritual maturity. All proper function in life is based on proper thinking; and all proper thinking is based on Bible doctrine in the believer's soul. God has decreed that each believer who acquires maximum knowledge of His plan will be rewarded in time and eternity (Eph 1:3). Paul utilized military and athletic rewards as metaphors: Heb 12:1, Eph 6:10-17 (military); Acts 20:24, Phil 3:12-14, 1 Cor 9:24-27, 1 Thess 2:19, 1 Tim 6:12, 2 Tim 2:5 and 4:7-8 (athletic). Also note Jas 1:12 and 2 John 9. John describes the recipient of rewards in eternity with the phrase, "To him who overcomes" (Rev 2 and 3). The word "overcome" in the Greek is νικῶ (*nikē*), which means victory — thus, the believer who is victorious is a winner of one or more Nike Awards (Rev 2:7,17,26,28; 3:5,12,21).

19) Dispensations:

Dispensations are distinct periods of human history that, when considered collectively, represent the progression and interpretation of the history of the human race based on God's will and purpose. In all dispensations the only way of salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone; however, for each dispensation, God has designed a different plan for believers and graciously provides the means of executing those plans. For example, Jews were expected to adhere to the Law of Moses. Today, Church Age believers are expected to emulate the prototype example of Christ during the Incarnation. Therefore, failure to distinguish between Israel and the Church as separate dispensations creates apparent contradictions between certain passages of Scripture since different rules apply for

a believers' daily conduct in each (Eph 2:11-3:7). For this reason, a believer must orient to the spiritual life designed for his dispensation if he is to acquire an accurate understanding of God's plan and purpose for his life.

As noted in Scripture, God organized human history into six dispensations:

- 1) **Gentiles:** Began with the creation of mankind and continued to the Exodus (Gen 2:7–Exod 14).
- 2) **Israel:** Began following the Exodus and continued to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ (Exod 14 –Matt 1).
- 3) **Incarnation:** Began with the virgin birth of Christ and continued to His resurrection, and ascension (Matt 1 - Acts 1).
- 4) **Church:** Began on the day of Pentecost ca. 29 A.D. and will continue until the Rapture or exit resurrection of the Church at a time yet future and unknown to all but God (Acts 2 – Rev 3).
- 5) **Tribulation:** Begins post-Rapture when the “prince” (Dan 9:27) or “beast (Rev 11:7) enters into a covenant with Israel and ends seven years later with the Second Advent of Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:7-12; Rev 6-19).
- 6) **Millennium:** Begins with the Second Advent of Christ and continues for 1,000 years to the end of human history. It will be a time of perfect environment and world peace under the benevolent dictatorship of Jesus Christ. (Isa 11:1-9; 65:18-25; Zech 14:9; Rev 19:11-20:6)

20) Royal Priesthood:

Priests are members of the human race who represent man before God. Whereas in the dispensation of Israel a specialized priesthood within the tribe of Levi performed this function, all believers in the Church Age, as members of a universal priesthood, individually represent themselves before God. Because the Holy Spirit places believers into an eternal union with Christ at salvation, they are considered members of the royal family of God. Therefore, since Christ is the High Priest, believers are members of His royal priesthood. The unique prerogative of this priesthood is the option of personal acknowledgment of sins to God the Father directly and privately in confessional prayer. As his own private priest, the believer has the obligation to learn the Scriptures through Bible study. If circumstances dictate, he may observe and conduct his own private Eucharist. (Heb 4:14-15; 1 Pet 2:5,9; Rev 1:6)

21) Church:

The Church may be defined either as an organism or organization. As an organism, the universal church consists of all who have believed in Jesus Christ for their salvation. In any generation of the Church Age, these believers are called the "body of Christ" or the "royal family of God." The organization is any physical facility established by a local group of believers as a place for it to assemble and worship God. (Eph 5:25-27; Heb 10:25)

22) Marriage.

A divine institution that unites for life two people—one man and one woman. The *Christian* marriage is a spiritual as well as a divine institution that unites for life a man and a woman who have each expressed personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life. United as one, they become a corporate testimony to the world of the Church's eternal relationship with Christ: reciprocal love and enduring respect for Christ expressed through the testimony of the wife, and Christ's unconditional love and enduring devotion to the Church expressed through the testimony of the husband. God Himself united the first members of the human family which fact alone should abolish all light, frivolous, and unorthodox views of marriage. Therefore, Grace Doctrine Church only solemnizes marriages of Christian couples of which at least one party—the woman or the man—must be a member of the local congregation. The Board of Deacons has delegated complete discretion to the pastor regarding who the church will unite in Christian marriage. (Ecclesiastes 9:9; Matthew 19:4–6; Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Corinthians 7:1–4; 2 Corinthians 6:14–16a; Genesis 2:20–24)

23) Eucharist:

Also called the Lord's Supper or Communion, the Eucharist is the lone ritual of the Church Age. The Lord commanded believers to formally observe this ceremony until His return. Instructions for performing the Eucharist are found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: the bread is representative of the person of our Lord, His

perfection, and impeccability; the cup is emblematic of His work on the cross upon which He received God's imputation of all human sins and their subsequent judgment by the justice of God. The Bible does not indicate how often the Eucharist should be observed, only that its observance should be consistently observed.

24) Tithing:

Tithing was not a spiritual function in the Old Testament, but rather a system of income taxation as a civic obligation. In fact, as part of the Mosaic Law, tithing was directed only to the nation Israel. The Israelites were to contribute two annual tithes: 10% for the maintenance of the Levitical priesthood (Num 18:21,24) and another 10% for the Levitical sacrifices (Deut 14:22-24). Every third year, Israel collected a charity tithe of 10% for those in need of legitimate assistance (Deut 14:28-29; Mal 3:8-10). Since the priesthood and sacrifices were unique to the dispensation of Israel, these tithes are not applicable today. During the dispensation of the Church, giving should be based solely on the believer's personal motivation and as God has prospered him. The gift may amount to whatever percentage the believer wishes; however, gifts should not be donated if, by doing so, the believer's family is deprived of necessities. Local churches are authorized by Scripture to permit a public offering of gifts on Sundays. Fifteen principles on giving can be studied in 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9. (Also note 1 Cor 16:2 and 1 Tim 5:8.)

25) Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

The omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit immerses every believer at salvation into an eternal union with Jesus Christ, representing a real and literal baptism. It is an actual event that places the believer into union with Christ eternally identifying him with the Lord. This action by the Holy Spirit is identified by the Greek word, "*baptizo*," which means to immerse one object permanently into another object, thus changing the first object. This change results in two categories of positional truth:

- 1) ***Retroactive Positional truth:*** At the moment of salvation, the believer is supernaturally immersed by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual death, physical death, and burial of our Lord. Spiritual death is a technical term that speaks of the three-hour period on the cross when God judged all human sins in Christ. Thus, retroactive positional truth separates the believer from good and evil so that the rulership of Satan and the sovereignty of the sin nature are broken.
- 2) ***Current Positional truth:*** The believer is supernaturally immersed by the Holy Spirit into the resurrection, ascension, and session of our Lord, allowing the believer to share His eternal life, thus guaranteeing him eternal security and a resurrection body. When studied from the original Greek, Romans 6:1-13 clearly defines these doctrines. (Also note: John 14:20; Acts 1:5; 1 Cor 12:13.)

26) Water Baptism:

Water baptism was a visual aid practiced by the apostles in the first century before the canon of Scripture was completed. The ritual was designed to visually demonstrate to new believers the reality of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurs at the moment of salvation. Being immersed into water is a picture of retroactive positional truth by which the believer is identified with Christ in His spiritual death, physical death, and burial, dramatizing the principle that the power of the sinful nature is broken. Emersion out from the water is a picture of current positional truth by which the believer is identified with our Lord's resurrection, ascension, and session, dramatizing the future reality of the resurrection body. Once the canon of Scripture was completed, believers could learn these doctrines without dependence upon the ritual. When a believer understands the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the ritual of water baptism can be meaningful; however, without this knowledge, it becomes a ritual without reality.

27) Spiritual Gifts:

By the power of the Holy Spirit, every believer in the Church Age at the moment of salvation is distributed at least one spiritual gift. The purpose of these gifts is to officially coordinate the activities of believers in the functioning of God's plan (Eph 4:11-15). Some eighteen or more spiritual gifts were originally assigned to believers, many of which functioned in spectacular ways. These spectacular gifts were temporary and had three objectives: (1) to identify the apostles as the founding fathers of the New Testament church; (2) to serve as teaching aids until the Scripture could be completed; and (3) to alert Israel that its dispensation would be

temporarily halted. Of the eighteen spiritual gifts mentioned in Scripture, eleven were temporary: apostle, prophet, miracles, healing, knowledge, wisdom, faith, discerning of spirits, exhortation, languages, and interpretation of languages. Grace Doctrine Church does not recognize as valid any claim or assertion that any of these spiritual gifts are currently active. The seven permanent gifts that are still functional today are: pastor-teacher, evangelist, administrative leadership, service, helps, showing mercy, and financial giving. (1 Cor 12:1-28; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:6-8)

28) Rapture:

The Rapture is the resurrection of all Church Age believers into heaven, thereby terminating the Church Age and signaling the beginning of the Tribulation. The Rapture is an instantaneous event that occurs in two stages. First, the omnipotence of God the Father raises the dead in Christ by replacing their former bodies of corruption with resurrection bodies of incorruption. Second, the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit provides a resurrection body for believers who are alive at the Rapture, replacing their bodies of mortality with resurrection bodies of immortality. Since there is no prophecy that must be fulfilled before the Rapture may occur, it remains imminent and thus may occur at any moment. However, no man knows the year, day, or hour. (1 Cor 1:7-8; 15:53-54; 1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 John 3:2-3;)

29) Heaven:

Heaven is the command center for the eternal state and is defined in Scripture as the dwelling place of God. Acts 1:11 tells us that Christ ascended into heaven, while 1 Peter 3:22 says that He is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. When a person believes in Christ, his citizenship changes from the devil's world to heaven (Phil 3:20). Believers are issued resurrection bodies in eternity and their origin is in heaven (2 Cor 5:1-5); and their rewards and blessings are reserved in heaven (1 Pet 1:4). At the Second Advent, Jesus Christ will return from heaven to the earth (1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7). When the believer dies, his soul and human spirit go to heaven (2 Cor 5:8; 12:2-4; Phil 1:23). Prior to the resurrection of Christ, the souls and spirits of departed believers resided in the Paradise division of Hades, known to the Jews as Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). At His ascension, Jesus Christ escorted these saints into heaven (Eph 4:8-10). He has assured all believers that He has prepared a place for them in heaven. (John 14:2-3)

30) Hades:

Hades is a temporary complex consisting of four divisions with each division serving as a place of detention for specific groups of men and angels. As each group is processed over time, they are ultimately transferred to a permanent location for all eternity:

- 1) **Paradise or Abraham's Bosom:** Division of Hades into which all Old Testament believers were transferred following physical death. Once departed from the body, their souls and human spirits went to Paradise (Luke 16:22; 23:43). No believer resided in heaven until Christ was judged for man's sins, buried and resurrected. The resurrection of Christ resulted in the permanent transfer of all believers in Paradise to heaven. (Eph 4:8-10)
- 2) **Torments:** Residence of all unbelievers since the beginning of human history. The unbeliever is condemned to Torments, later to be judged and transferred to the lake of fire because of his rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior. (Luke 16:23; Rev 20:11-15)
- 3) **Tartarus:** The imprisonment of certain fallen angels who became involved in an assault on the genetic line of Jesus Christ (Gen 6; 2 Pet 2:4). This special category of fallen angels, called **בְּנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים** (*bene-ha-Elohim*) in the Hebrew, translated "sons of God," are not operational at the present time.
- 4) **Abyss:** The place of incarceration for the demon assault army under the command of a demon general named Abaddon (**אַבְדּוֹן** 'avaddon) or Apollyōn (Ἀπολλύων). This demon army will invade the earth during the Tribulation (Rev 9:1-12). They are released from their prison to administer punishment to unbelievers. These events indicate a radical change in God's plan following the Rapture of the Church.

31) Lake of Fire:

The final destination for both fallen angels and unbelieving mankind, being both literal and eternal, was prepared

originally for Satan and his angels (Matt 25:41). Revelation 20:11-15 is the key passage on the Great White Throne judgment and documents the final judgment of all unbelievers. They are removed from the Torments division of Hades, judged for their works, and cast into the lake of fire for all eternity.

32) Satan:

Satan is a fallen angel who led the revolt against the rulership of God in eternity past. His given name is Lucifer and he presently has authority over those angels who joined him in his revolt. He is now called the devil and those fallen angels who followed him are called demons. His domain is the earth and encompasses within its jurisdiction all humans who have not accepted Christ as Savior. Consequently, those who are not believers in Jesus Christ are emissaries for Satan. (Isa 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4; 11:13-15; Eph 2:2; 1 Tim 4:1; 1 John 5:19; Rev 13:2)

33) Anti-Semitism:

Anti-Semitism is defined as intolerance, hatred, prejudice, opposition, and persecution of the Jewish people; and represents a satanic plot to eliminate the Jews from history. God has promised the Jews a reigning Messiah who will rule them in their own land called Israel. In order for Christ to fulfill these divine promises to Israel, Jews must survive until His Second Advent. Thus, anti-Semitism becomes a part of Satan's desperate plan to circumvent Messiah's return. Every member of the human race is warned by God Himself to avoid any form of anti-Semitism: "I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you" (Gen 12:3). Consequently, Grace Doctrine Church stands in righteous opposition to any vestige of anti-Semitic thought, comment, or action. Further, anyone associated with this church that engages in anti-Semitic actions will be expelled from the fellowship. (Zech 2:8-9; Rev 12).

34) Human Good and Evil:

Human good and evil defines the insidious plan and policy of Satan as ruler of this world who aspires to "be like the Most High" (Isa 14:14). He attempts to accomplish this prodigious undertaking by promoting human works as a catalyst for social, political, and economic reform apart from the integrity of God. Such efforts only serve to intensify problems and result in evil that is characterized by its total denunciation of God's grace. The only way to solve problems in life is through the application of Bible doctrine within the framework of God's plan for mankind; all other efforts are destined for failure. Christ Himself constantly attacked human good and evil. (Matt 7:21-23, 23:1-36; 1 Cor 3:11-15 compared with Rev 20:11-15)

35) Old Sin Nature:

The old sin nature is the source of all personal sin and the production of human good and evil. The old sin nature genetically resides in the cell structure of the human body (Rom 6:6; 7:14-23) and originated in Adam at his fall in the garden of Eden. As a result, the sinful nature is genetically transmitted through procreation to all mankind. Therefore, man is physically alive at birth but spiritually dead (Rom 3:23; 5:12). Personal sin is a manifestation of the sin nature (1 John 1:8-10) and consists of both known and unknown sins.

36) Confession:

As royal priests, believers possess the unique prerogative of identifying their personal sins to God in prayer: by simply naming our sins to God, "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all wrongdoing" (1 John 1:9). The word for confess in this verse is *ὁμολογέω* (*homologeō*), a legal term which means, "to state a fact in a court of law." Therefore, recovery from sin simply requires citing the sin to God in prayer. We are not required to name our sins to any religious official, fellow believer, or the congregation at large — only to God. We are not required to: pay penance; seek restitution; make a conciliatory offering; feel guilt, shame, or sorrow; or any other thought or action that is designed to placate or appease God. Confession alone to God alone cleanses the believer of his sins, re-establishes his fellowship with Him, and reinstates the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. (Jer 3:13; Rom 6:13; 12:1; 1 Cor 11:31-32; Eph 4:22; 5:13-14; Heb 12:1,12-13; Jms 1:21)

37) Filling of the Holy Spirit:

The filling of the Holy Spirit places the believer into the absolute status of spirituality. In this environment the

Holy Spirit empowers the believer to comprehend the supernatural content of the Bible resulting in spiritual growth. The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God enable the believer to use this knowledge to perform acts of divine good. Thus, the filling of the Holy Spirit becomes the link between salvation and maturity and the execution of the Christian way of life. (Eph 3:16; 5:18; 1 Cor 2:9-16)

38) Grace:

Grace is the title of God's plan, will, and purpose for the believer, and describes all that God is free to do for the believer based on the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Grace, to be grace, must never include human works. Grace is unmerited favor that functions in harmony with the essence of God. The source of grace must always be from God, never man. We are saved through grace (Eph 2:8-9), we are provided all our necessities through grace (Matt 6:33; Phil 4:19), and our spiritual growth is by means of grace (2 Pet 3:18).

39) Christian Way of Life:

Scripture commands believers to execute the Christian way of life. Although phrased differently, these commands have the same objective: Romans 6:4 speaks of the privilege of "walking in newness of life;" Galatians 5:16 commands us to "walk in the Holy Spirit;" Ephesians 5:2 mandates us to "walk in love;" Ephesians 5:8 orders us to "walk as children of light;" Colossians 2:6 is a directive to "walk in Christ;" and 2 John 6 exhorts us to "walk in obedience to His commandments." The believer belongs to a spiritual family founded by Jesus Christ and our standards of conduct for the Christian way of life find their precedence in those established by Him during the Incarnation:

- 1) Filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18).
- 2) Utilization of the basic problem-solving devices of Scripture (1 John 1:9; Heb 4:1-3).
- 3) Enforced and genuine humility so that the believer may be teachable, unhindered by arrogance and over-emphasis on self (Rom 12:3).
- 4) Habitual study of the Scriptures so that the believer might cleanse his soul of human viewpoint and replace it with divine viewpoint (Acts 17:11; Rom 12:2; 2 Tim 2:15).
- 5) Reliance upon the motivational virtue of personal love for God and development of spiritual self-esteem (2 Cor 3:4-5; 1 John 5:3).
- 6) From the motivation of personal love for God, the development of the functional virtue of unconditional love for all mankind – the ability to accept all people as they are (John 15:17; Gal 5:14; Luke 6:27).
- 7) Development of the mental attitude necessary to face the trials and problems of life with poise, grace, and stability. These tests are allowed by God and designed to accelerate the spiritual growth of the believer through the application of biblical problem-solving devices (1 Pet 1:6-7).
- 8) Attainment of spiritual maturity and sharing the happiness of God (John 15:9-11; Jas 1:12).

40) Infralapsarianism:

The word "lapse" in English is derived from the Latin *lapsus* and means "to fall." Theologically, this word refers to the fall of Adam from his initial perfection to total depravity due to sin. Lapsarians, then, are those who believe that Adam is a fallen being and, consequently, all of mankind. However, a theological debate occurred as to the logical order of God's elective decrees: specifically, how did God resolve the sin problem of His fallen creation by His election of those who will have eternal life and those who will not?

Infralapsarianism means "under the lapse" whereby the prefix "infra" means "under" or "below." Since the sovereignty of God must co-exist with the free will of man, the logical way of listing the elective decrees places the decree to elect *after*, *under*, or *below* the decree to permit the fall of Adam:

1. ***The decree to create mankind.***
Principle: Man cannot be elected if he does not exist. For God to elect anyone, they must first of all be created.
2. ***The decree to permit the fall of Man.***
Principle: Condemnation must precede salvation. If man is in need of salvation then he is obviously in a fallen condition.
3. ***The decree to provide salvation for all mankind.***

Principle: The doctrine of unlimited atonement whereby Christ died as a substitute for all mankind, not just a predetermined few.

4. ***The decree to elect those who believe in Jesus Christ and leave in just condemnation all who do not believe.***

Principle: God provides all men free will to accept or reject His grace offer of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone.

5. ***The decree to apply salvation to those who believe in Christ.***

Principle: Each individual must first choose God's plan of salvation, after which God decrees to save that person's soul and impute eternal life to his human spirit.

NOTE: God decreed that those who believe in Christ from their own free will would be the elect. To *know* a person is going to believe in Christ and decreeing it so is different from *decreeing* who will believe in Christ.

Acts 16:30-31 presents the infralapsarian sequence of the elective decrees:

After he [the Philippian jailer] brought them [Paul and Silas] out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They [Paul and Silas] replied, "[You] believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31a, NASB).

In Acts 16:31 the subject "You" is understood and refers specifically to the Philippian jailer but generally to all who ask the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Since *you* must exist in order to ask the question and to hear the response, then the "decree to create mankind" must come first.

It is obvious that the Philippian jailer is not saved and therefore, must be fallen. Elective decree number 2: to permit the fall of man.

That Paul and Silas have an answer to the question indicates that a way of salvation has been provided for everyone, Jew and Gentile alike. Elective decree number 3: to provide salvation to all mankind.

The requirement is a simple volitional decision to "believe in the Lord Jesus." The verb "believe" is in the imperative mood which is a challenge to human free will. The jailer is free to accept or reject Jesus as Savior. This illustrates the fourth elective decree: to elect those who believe in Jesus Christ and to leave in just condemnation all who do not believe.

Finally, it is clear that those who do believe will be saved. This is the fifth elective decree: to apply salvation to those who believe in Christ.

Thus, the infralapsarian order of the elective decrees clearly reveals that salvation is available to everyone and may be appropriated by means of faith alone in Christ alone.

Epilogue

We trust this brief presentation of the theology of Grace Doctrine Church will serve as an inspiration to pursue a comprehensive understanding of Jesus Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). We also trust these forty statements of our beliefs will at least engender recognition of the unlimited depth of biblical revelation. May a few be challenged to place knowledge of the Word of God as the top priority in their lives. Why? Because there is no problem in life that doctrine cannot solve: *vincit omnia veritas* (doctrine conquers all). Finally, and most importantly, may these lessons serve to define, illuminate, and magnify our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"This is the way God loved the world: He gave His uniquely-born Son, for the purpose that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but, as a result, have eternal life" (John 3:16).