

Graham Bible Church
Membership Covenant (Feb 2009)

As a born-again child of God and member of the Body of Christ, I, by the grace of God, covenant with the GBC family...

- † ...to pursue the Lord Jesus through regular devotions in the Scriptures, prayer, fellowship, and spiritual disciplines.
- † ...to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final word on all issues. (Psalm 119; 2 Tim 3:14-17)
- † ...to regularly participate in the life of GBC by attending and engaging in weekly worship. (Heb 10:23-25)
- † ...to work and pray for the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace with other believers. (Eph 4:1-3)
- † ...to joyfully and reverently steward the time, talents, and treasures God has entrusted to me. (Mt 25:14-30; 1 Pt 4:10-11)
- † ...to to serve those within and outside the church in word, action, and generosity. (Jn 13:12-17)
- † ...to hold all convictions and Christian freedoms in humility. (Rom 14; 1 Cor 8-9)
- † ...to use my tongue to build up others and glorify God rather than speaking lies, deceit, slander, or gossip. (Eph 4:29)
- † ...to follow the guidance of Scriptures regarding the covenant of marriage, raising of children, or singleness.
(Deut 6; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Cor 7)
- † ...to openly submit to the loving discipline of other believers as commanded in the Scriptures.
(Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:9-13; Heb 12:5-11)
- † ...to willingly work under the guidance and authority of the elders of the church as commanded in the Scriptures.
(Heb 13:17; 1 Pt 5:5)
- † ...to pray for and proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth in whatever means the Lord enables me.
(Matt 28:18-20; 2 Cor 5:16-21)

I, by the grace of God, hereby commit to fulfilling this covenant to the best of my ability

(Print Name) _____ (Signed) _____ (Date)

A membership covenant is not intended to be a legalistic binding on a believer. Rather a covenant simply fleshes out specifically how we are committing to love God and love our neighbor in this local church. The spirit of the covenant is one of love, freedom, encouragement, and grace. It is by committing to the aforementioned statements that we are able to specifically encourage, rebuke, and discipline one another as the scriptures call us to. It is through doing these things that we grow in maturity and most purely reflect the glory of Christ.

Personal Testimony

Name _____

For the following questions, please model your answers after Paul's conversion story to King Agrippa. This can be found in Acts 26:4–23. In this section you will see that Paul's story includes; *who he was before he was Christian, how he met Jesus, and how his life has changed after becoming a Christian*. If you are a Christian, please give an account of how you came to faith using no more than three quarters of a page:

Please finish the following statement using no more than a quarter–page: I know I am a Christian because...

If you were baptized since you became a believer in Jesus Christ, please explain when/where this occurred:

Appendix 1 – GBC View of Baptism

What is Water Baptism?

The word baptism literally means “to dip or immerse.” Many times the word “baptism” refers to water baptism.

† Commanded by Jesus for all His disciples. (Matt. 28:19-20)

- † Sinners were water baptized as a symbol of repentance. (Lk. 3:12)
- † Jesus was water baptized as an example of what a righteous person should do. (Lk. 3:21)
- † People were baptized after conversion as a public testimony to their devotion to Jesus. (Acts 9:18, 16:15)
- Water baptism is the normal & expected act of obedience for all followers of Jesus.

What About Other Baptisms?

The word “baptism” does not always refer to water baptism. Many times it paints a picture of identification.

- † Baptism refers to the death of Jesus and our identification with Him. (Lk. 12:50; Mk. 10:38; Rom. 6:1-11)
- † Baptism of the Spirit refers to receiving the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:13)
- † Baptism refers to being grafted into the Body of Christ through the Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:13)
- † Baptism into Moses refers to being associated with Moses during the Exodus. (1 Cor. 10:2)
- The word baptism carries with it the idea of identification.

Does Baptism Save a Person from Sin?

Salvation is only given to those who are born again by God’s grace. This does not include water baptism.

- † Baptism is not part of the Gospel. (1 Cor. 1:17, 15:1-4)
- † Jesus was baptized, but He was not sinful. (Lk. 3:21)
- † Sinners are saved by grace through faith, not by any religious ritual. (Eph. 2:8-9)
- † Sinners are not saved by righteous deeds but by the mercy of God. (Titus 3:5-7)
- If we ever point to anything other than Jesus for salvation, we are not trusting in God’s grace.

What About the Tough Passages?

Acts 2:38 “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

In this passage Peter is giving a summary of what is expected of the listeners. If this were the only verse we had concerning salvation, we would have to conclude that salvation is a works based system in which we must “repent” and “be baptized” in order to receive salvation. Fortunately, this is not the only verse we have. An important principle in Bible interpretation is that *Scripture interprets other Scripture*. Let’s say there are 100 verses about salvation in the Bible.¹ If 95 of them say we are saved

¹ The numbers used are for the sake of illustration, not accuracy.

by “grace” alone and that all we can do is “believe,” but there are 5 verses which include other ideas like baptism or verbal confession, what must we conclude? We must conclude that the additional statements are characteristics which closely accompany salvation. In this context, baptism is closely connected with salvation because it is an expected act of obedience by a follower of Christ. Baptism does not save. The grace of God saves us. We receive God’s grace by faith, not by baptism. Baptism is an act of obedience which symbolizes what happens during salvation.

1 Peter 3:21 *“Corresponding to that baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”*

Understanding the context of 1 Peter 3 is very important. We must ask the question “corresponding to” what? In 3:18, Peter tells us that Christ died and rose from the dead to forgive our sins. In 3:19 he describes a peculiar event during the burial or resurrection in which Jesus went to “proclaim” (*probably announcing His defeat over sin and Satan*) “to the spirits” (*disobedient angels – Jude 6*) who are in “prison” (*likely Hades, the place of the dead*). In 3:20 Peter further explains that these angels were disobedient “in the days of Noah.” 3:20 helps us to understand 3:21. God kept waiting for the ark to be completed before He judged the world. When it was completed, eight people entered into it and were brought safely through the water. By having faith in God’s provision of grace through Noah, the people were brought through the waters of judgment.

In 3:21 “corresponding to that” is speaking about having faith in God’s provision of mercy to deliver us from judgment, “baptism now saves you.” How? “Not the removal of dirt from the flesh.” (i.e. not simply being immersed in water). Peter rules out the idea of water baptism and says, but rather “an appeal to God for a good conscience.” What saves us from judgment is faith in God’s grace. Here baptism is referring to identification with Jesus through humbly receiving what He has done.

John 3:5 *“Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.’”*

In the context, Jesus is speaking to a leading Pharisee - Nicodemus. When Jesus spoke about being “born of water and the Spirit” He was surprised Nicodemus didn’t know what He was talking about (3:7, 10). Pharisees were the theologians of the day and should have known the Scriptures well. Why should Jesus’ statement been familiar to Nicodemus? Because Jesus was referring to the New Covenant (NC).

The NC (Jer.31:31-34, Ezek. 36:22-32) is the hope of Israel and should have been on the forefront of every Pharisee's mind. In Ezekiel 36:25-27 God promised Israel that "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit with in you..." Water was a symbol of cleansing and the Spirit was a picture of rebirth. God promised Israel that He would wash them of their sins and give them new life (see the result in Ezek. 37).

Jesus told Nicodemus that to enter the Kingdom of heaven one must be a partaker of the NC. To do this they must have their sins washed away (symbolically) and receive the Holy Spirit. This is not a discussion of water baptism, but rather a discussion about the NC promise to Israel.

Appendix 2 – Divorce, Separation, and Remarriage Policy

What is Marriage?

1. Marriage is a life-long covenant relationship designed and instituted by God. (Mal 2:14; Matt 19:6; 1 Cor 7:39). The covenant is declared with vows and consummated through sexual union. (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:22-33; negatively 1 Cor 6:16)
2. Marriage is designed to exist between one man and one woman. (Gen 1:27-28, 2:18, 23-24)
3. The marriage union begins a new family in which the children leave the authority of their parents and the husband becomes the head of the family. (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7, 8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:22-31)
4. The primary purpose of marriage is to glorify God through sacrifice, sanctification, and worship. (1 Cor 10:31) Because of this, believers should never marry unbelievers. (1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-15)

5. The secondary purposes of marriage include bearing children (Gen 1:27-28), reflecting the nature of God's relationship with His people (Eph 5:22-33), sexual pleasure (Prov 5:18-19; 1 Cor 7:2-5), and mutual companionship. (Gen 2:18)
6. The command of Scripture is for believers to only marry other believers. (1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-15) The church will honor all existing marriages as acceptable before God. A believing spouse should not leave or force their non-believing spouse to leave. In the same way, a believer who is married to an "unequally yoked" believer must also honor their covenant before God and are not permitted to divorce based on their spouse's spiritual condition.

(1Cor 7:12-27; 1 Pt 3:1-2)
7. Death breaks the covenant of marriage and frees the widow or widower to remarry a believer. (Rom 7:1-4; 1 Cor 7:39)
8. Not all people are called to enter into the covenant of marriage and are free to serve the Lord in singleness.

(Matt 19:10-12; 1 Cor 7:1, 7, 11, 17, 32-35)

When is Divorce Permitted?

1. Divorce is a never God's desired action. All possible steps toward reconciliation should be made before a divorce is pursued. (Mal 2:14, 16; Matt 19:6) Just because the Bible allows an offended spouse to seek a divorce for certain reasons does not mean that divorce is automatic or required. Though the offended party may have rights to divorce, laying aside one's rights for the glory of God is always the desired action. (Hosea 2:14-3:1; Matt 18:21-22; Philp 2:1-11)
2. *Adultery* is abhorrent in the eyes of God (Ex 20:14; Lev 20:10; Deut 5:18; Prov 2:16-18; Mal 2:14-16, 3:5; Heb 13:4). In the case of adultery, the offended spouse does have Biblical grounds to seek a divorce, but is not required to (Matt 5:32, 19:9).
3. *Desertion* is abhorrent in the eyes of God. (Mal 2:14-15) In the case of desertion, the deserted spouse should counsel with the elders about pursuing marital reconciliation before considering a divorce (Heb 13:17, 1 Cor 7:15).
4. *Abuse* is abhorrent in the eyes of God. (Eph 5:25, 28-29; 1 Pt 3:7) In the case of *physical abuse*, the offended spouse / children should immediately be removed from the situation for the purposes of protection. The offended should seek counsel with the elders who will help to determine what legal and scriptural action should be taken (Heb 13:17, Mt 18:15-17).
5. In cases of "*falling out of love*," "*incompatibility*," or "*things not working out*" the Bible does not permit one to leave the covenant they made before God. The idea that God wants us to be happy and would not make us stay in an unhappy marriage is not wholly correct. It is true that God desires to bless our lives and for us to experience much joy. Our happiness cannot come at the cost of glorifying God by disobeying His commands. Sometimes due to our sinful choices, other's sinful choices, or simply the difficulties of life; the emotion of love can wear thin. God is able to do anything and can restore any marriage if the spouses are willing to obey God and walk the challenging road of reconciliation. (Matt 17:20, 19:26; Mk 10:27; Lk 1:37, 18:27). Couples who are

struggling are encouraged to seek the counsel of the elders who will prayerfully guide them into steps of healing and reconciliation.

6. The consequences of divorce are detrimental to children. In view of God's great love for children and the repercussions He promises against those who harm them, all steps toward reconciliation should be made before a divorce is pursued. (Deut 6:1-9; Ps 127:3; Prov 14:26; Matt 18:1-10; Mk 9:42-48; Lk 17:-2)
7. Forgiveness for divorce is always available through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Heb 4:14-16; 1 John 1:9) This grace must not be abused however and should lead us to repentance, not further sin. (Rom 2:4; 6:1-14)
8. The role in which one plays in the Body of Christ may be limited as a result of divorce. (1 Tim 3:1-10, 12; Ti 1:6-9)

What About Separation?

1. Separation is not formally discussed in the Bible. The church leadership or a Biblical counselor may recommend separation for a period of time. The purpose of separation would be to allow both spouses to receive intense Biblical counseling. The time of separation would be intentional and examined on a case-by-case basis.
2. Any sexual activity with someone other than his or her spouse during this time is considered adulterous.

When is Remarriage Permitted?

1. Death breaks the covenant of marriage and frees the widow or widower to remarry another believer. (Rom 7:1-4; 1 Cor 7:39)
2. If a divorce occurs because of adultery or desertion, remarriage *may be an option* once all legal proceedings are completed for the divorce. It is normally recommended that reflection and healing be sought before remarriage is pursued.
3. Remarriage which occurs for reasons other than death, adultery, or the above-mentioned circumstances is considered adultery as long as the other spouse is living. (Mt 19:9; Mk 10:11; Lk 16:18) Anyone who abandons a spouse or is divorced as a result of committing adultery is not permitted to remarry while the other spouse is living. (1 Cor 7:10-11; Rom 7:2-3)
4. If a 2nd marriage ends in death or divorce, the widowed is not permitted to return to their first spouse in marriage. (Dt 24:1-4)
5. Questions regarding eligibility for remarriage should be brought to the elders who will examine each situation independently. (Heb. 13:17)

When Must the Church Be Involved? (Explanation of Matthew 18:15-18)

1. If divorce is being considered, the husband and wife should privately discuss the matter in attempts to reconcile their differences (Matt 18:15). They should also seek assistance from the elders or qualified biblical counselors.

2. If the offending spouse is unrepentant and will not be reconciled to the marriage, the husband or wife should contact the church pastors / elders so they can evaluate the situation (Matt 18:16-17a).
3. If refusal persists, the church must regard the unrepentant man or woman as a non-believer since they show disregard for their marriage vow and contempt for the church (Matt 18:17b; 1 Cor 5). This process may take some time and will be evaluated by the elders on a case-by-case basis.
4. After reasonable attempts to reconcile someone to the church and to the marriage, the believer who has been unjustly abandoned must be regarded as “not under bondage” to the unrepentant spouse, since this offending spouse is now regarded as a non-believer who has deserted the marriage. (1 Cor 7:15)
5. If during this desertion and time of intervention the offending person responds, showing evidence of repentance and faith, the church and the spouse are obligated to forgive and work to fully restore the marriage. (2 Cor 2:5-11) In the case of adultery, divorce is permitted and possibly even advised, but never required. During the time of reconciliation the couple is strongly advised to seek intense biblical counseling and discipleship.

Appendix 3 - God’s Sovereignty & Man’s Responsibility: A Study of Salvation

Finding a harmony between what the Scriptures reveal about God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility is one of the most challenging theological undertakings the church has faced. Some see this issue as very black and white while others see a gray area that must be humbly accepted (Deut. 29:29). No matter what side of the discussion we feel the Scriptures most strongly affirm, the one thing that remains clear is the response that should come from us: worship. After a lengthy discussion of God’s sovereignty in salvation history (Rom. 8-11) Paul concludes by saying “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!... For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” (11:33, 36) God’s provision of salvation deserves nothing less than a response of humility and worship from us. As we pursue this study, let us pray God will keep us humble and allow our conclusions to worship Him more faithfully.²

Outline of Exploration

² This study is intended to be a starting point for this study. It is not by any means exhaustive and is not able to fairly reflect all the various views held concerning this issue. For further study you may consider works such as:

1. Theological Presuppositions: Truths We Believe About God (pg. 1)
2. Defining our Terms: Understanding the Vocabulary (pg. 1)
3. Turning to the Scriptures: God's Sovereignty (pg. 2)
4. Turning to the Scriptures: Man's Responsibility (pg. 3)
5. A Comparison of Arminian and Calvinist Theology (pg. 4)
6. Exploring Three Options About Predestination (pg. 4)

1. Theological Presuppositions: Truths We Believe About God³

1. God is the eternal Creator and Sustainer of all things. Nothing was before Him, and nothing exists or persists apart from Him.
2. God knows all things (omniscient). He knows the beginning to the end with all possibilities and probabilities in between.
3. God can do all things (omnipotent). His power is unlimited and He is able to bring to pass whatever He purposes and promises.⁴
4. God has ultimate authority (sovereign). He is in control of all situations at all times without any threat of inability or failure.

2. Defining our Terms: Understanding the Vocabulary

1. God's Sovereignty: God has ultimate authority over everything that happens and nothing has influence on Him apart from His will.
2. Man's Responsibility: Man has full responsibility to obey God in all things He commands and is held fully accountable for every thought, action, and motivation he has.
3. Predestination: God pre-determines the events of history and the destinies people. (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11) The Scriptures clearly teach the fact of predestination. The issue rests more on *why* God predestines.
4. Election / Choosing: God chooses certain people to receive certain blessings, including salvation. (Matt. 24:22-31; Lk 18:7; Jn 15:16, 19; Rom 8:33; Eph. 1:4) Once again Scripture clearly teaches the fact of election/choosing. The issue again is *why*.
5. Foreknowledge: The truth that God knows things before hand. God's foreknowledge is seen in Acts 2:23 (of the crucifixion), Rom. 8:29 & 1 Pt. 1:2 (of believers), Rom 11:2 (of Israel), and 1 Pt 1:20 (of Jesus).

3. Turning to the Scriptures: God's Sovereignty⁵

³ For Scriptural references not included, see Graham Bible Church's Foundations class notebook, chapter 2.

⁴ The only thing God cannot do is change His character. (1 Sam. 15:29, Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18)

⁵ For the sake of brevity, we will examine only NT Scriptures. The OT is also filled with verses that speak to God's sovereignty.

- The Scriptures are filled with verses that describe God’s sovereignty.
- The following are a selection of verses that reflect God’s solitary work in providing and securing salvation for His people.

Luke 10:22 “All things have been handed over to me by my Father and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

John 1:12-13 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” (6:65)

John 15:16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit...”

Acts 2:22-23 “...Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst...this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

Acts 4:27-28 “...in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

Acts 13:48 “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

Acts 16:14 “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”

Romans 8:29-30 “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

Romans 9:11-18 “for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated...For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy...So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.” (cf. 11:7)

Galatians 1:15-16 “But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...”

Ephesians 1:4-5, 11 “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will...In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will”

2 Thessalonians 2:13 “...we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.” (c.f. 1 Th 1:4, 2 Tim 2:10, Titus 1:1)

1 Peter 1:1-2 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens...who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood...”

Revelation 13:8 "All who dwell on the earth will worship him (the satanic beast), everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain." (cf. Rev. 17:8)

4. Turning to the Scriptures: Man's Responsibility

- The Scriptures are filled with both explicit and implicit commands. Man's responsibility to obey God is undeniable.
- The following are a selection of verses that reflect a responsibility of man to respond to God's call to believe in Jesus.

Ezekiel 33:11 "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"

Matthew 9:22 "But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." (Mt. 9:2, 29, 15:28; Mk. 2:5, 5:34, 10:52; Lk. 7:52, 8:48, 17:19, 18:42)

Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Mark 1:15 "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

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

John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 8:24)

John 5:40 "...and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." (John 12:46-48)

John 7:37 "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me..."

John 20:31 "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life..."

Acts 10:43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Acts 16:31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Acts 17:30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent."

Romans 1:18-23 "...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them...even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened...they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image..."

Romans 10:11-13 "For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

Romans 10:21 "But as for Israel He says, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

1 Timothy 2:3 "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

1 John 2:2 "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

1 John 3:23 “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.” (1 Jn 5:13)

Revelation 22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”

5. A Comparison of Arminian and Calvinist Theology

- The following expression of views is only meant to familiarize you with the two views of the issue.

Arminian Theology (Methodists, Nazarene Church, Pentecostals, Assembly of God, Calvary Churches, Free-Will Baptists)

1. **Free Will**: God in His grace has enabled all people to freely choose to either accept or reject His salvation.
2. **Conditional Election**: God’s election is based on God’s foreknowledge of people’s response to the Gospel.
3. **Universal Atonement**: Jesus’ death on the cross was for all sinners.
4. **Resistible Grace**: Although God might desire for someone to be saved, that person can reject God’s grace.
5. **Potential Falling Away**: It is possible for genuine believers to turn away from Christ and thus forsake their salvation.

Calvinist Theology (Puritans, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, John Piper, Presbyterians, some Reformed Baptists)

1. **Total Depravity**: Every aspect of man is affected by sin which means that he will not in himself respond rightly to God’s call.
2. **Unconditional Election**: God’s election is based not on His knowledge of people’s response, but only on his merciful choosing.
3. **Limited Atonement**: Jesus died only for the elect whom He chose before the foundation of the earth.⁶
4. **Irresistible Grace**: If God wants to save someone, ultimately that person cannot resist Him.
5. **Perseverance of the Saints**: Saints will sin and stray, but they will continue in faith in Jesus and ultimately be saved.

⁶ This is the most debated point of Calvinism. Some suggest this assumption is based more on logic rather than the Scriptures. Without fully explaining all the arguments, I prefer to say that Christ’s death was *sufficient* for all, but is only *applied* to those who believe.

6. Exploring Three Options About Predestination: Free-Will, Single-Predestination, & Double-Predestination

- Predestination is a clearly stated biblical reality. The following are three options as to why certain people are predestined to believe in the Gospel and others are not.

1. Free-Will⁷: God looks into history and sees who will respond to His invitation, and He in turn chooses them as his elect. In this view, God responds to our choice by predestining those who by their own free-will responded to His Gospel.

2. Single-Predestination: God chooses those whom He wills and calls them away from the path of destruction they would have freely chosen apart from His intervention. In this view, everyone chooses to rebel against God, thus earning eternal condemnation, and God in His mercy, chooses to save some from that destiny.

3. Double-Predestination: God, in His justice and mercy, creates some people specifically for the purpose of being saved and others specifically for the purpose of being condemned. (John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards) In this view, God ordains both who will inherit eternal life and who will inherit eternal damnation. This view differs from single-predestination in that God not simply passes over some as they pursue the path of death, but He actually ordains their rebellion.

GBC Conclusions: We hold to the single-predestination view.

- We believe that people are spiritually rebellious and will not choose God on their own. (Rom. 3:10-18)
- We believe that a person believes because God first opens their hearts to do so. (Acts 16:14)
- We believe that a person's positive response to the Gospel is credited only to God's foreknown intervention (Acts 13:48; Eph. 2:4-9; Rev. 13:8, 17:8), not because of their intellectual ability, spiritual sensitivity, or enlivened free-will.

⁷ The phrase "free-will" in the NT (4) is never used in regards to salvation. (Jn 10:18; 2 Cor 8:3, 17; Philem 14)

Appendix 4 – Church Discipline

It is important to understand when beginning this study that church discipline is only enforced when a believer is unrepentantly and unashamedly persisting in sin. All believers sin, but the Scriptures clearly distinguish between people who struggle with sin, and those who embrace it purposefully and persistently.

Goal of Church Discipline

- To protect the reputation of Jesus, His gospel, and His church within the congregation and community at large.
- To bring repentance to a sinful believer & reconcile them to fellowship with Jesus & His church. (Mt 18:12f; Gal 6:1-2)
- To produce holiness in a sinful believer, discourage others from sinning, and distinguish the church from the world.
- If applicable, to bring recompense to a person or people sinned against. (ie. Repay, repair, or replace property)

Guiding Principles of Church Discipline

- Church leadership must be bold and courageous in dealing with sin. Neglect in protecting the reputation of Jesus, His Gospel, and His church from the deadly consequences of unaddressed sin is a serious charge. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 5)
- Church leadership must also ensure they do not abuse their authority and inflict unnecessary punishment on those offended. (2 Cor 2:5-11, Cf. 1 Pet 5:2-3 for the general attitude of an elder in all situations)
- It is essential to hear all sides of a situation before making a decision of how to proceed with the reconciliation process. (Prov. 18:17) All people see things through a distorted lens and hearing all sides helps those involved get the most truthful view of a situation.
- It is preferred to have multiple witnesses testify to the church leadership regarding a person's sin. (Dt. 17:6) To bring a charge against an elder, more than one witness is required. (1 Tim. 5:19)
- Favoritism and partiality should be set aside to ensure that the sinful believer is properly guided to repentance and reconciliation. A popular person's sin should not be overlooked and an unpopular person should not be overburdened. (Dt. 16:19; Prov. 24:23, 28:21; 1 Tim. 5:21; James 2:1, 9)

- The process of bringing a person to repentance and reconciliation must be done as gently and compassionately as possible. (Gal. 6:1-2) Righteous anger toward sin is a good attribute, but it should never translate into sinful actions (i.e. violence) or words (i.e. slander, gossip). (Eph. 4:26)
- The process should be orderly. (1 Cor. 14:40) Dealing with issues in a timely fashion is critical to keeping proper focus and ensuring that the wayward sinner does not inflict more pain on himself or the church. Both slothful and hasty decisions should be avoided.

Biblical Texts Regarding Various Sin and the Church's Response

Matthew 18:15-18 Here Jesus explains how to reach out to a brother who is in sin. He prescribes four basic steps:

1. Private: We have the responsibility to reach out to fellow believers if they are in sin. Call them to repent.
 2. Partner: If a person resists an initial confrontation, 2 or 3 others should be brought in to call them to repentance. The additional people who come do not have to be witnesses to the sin. They should be mature believers who can offer scriptural challenges and sober-minded judgments. (Gal. 6:1-2)
 3. Public: If a person resists the small group of loving believers, they should be brought before the church. Depending upon the severity and publicity of the sin, "the church" could be the elders and person's small group or possibly the entire congregation. The elders of the church must prayerfully make this decision.
 4. Purge: If the person resists a call to repentance from the whole body, they should be removed from fellowship. If this step is reached, it should be guided by the oversight of the elders.
- Matthew 18 highlights the goal of bringing the sinful person to repentance and reconciliation.
 - The context of the passage (v21-35) deals with the need to extend forgiveness. We must always forgive others.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

- In this passage a person who is unrepentant and unremorseful is being removed from the fellowship at Corinth.
- Though it is difficult to distinguish exactly how the church views the person in sin, Paul rebukes them for ignoring, tolerating, or promoting the sin. The church should not be passive in dealing with unrepentant sinners.
- If someone claims to be a Christian, they should be treated as one. Unrepentant Christians lose the privilege of fellowship, the privilege of communion, and the protection of the Christian community.
- Paul highlighted the danger of leaving unrepented sin to fester in a congregation. Sin always spreads and if one person gets away with sin, others will expect to do the same. A reverence and love for God's holiness will quickly be lost in an environment that is passive toward dealing with sin.

Galatians 6:1-2

- If a brother or sister in Christ is ensnared by a sin, mature Christians (people who walk by the Spirit) are called to “restore them.” The word *restore* is used to describe putting a joint back into place. If a brother or sister is trapped in sin, we should put them back into a place of holiness.
- The attitude of the restoration process must be one of gentleness. It is easy to become angered, frustrated, or harsh with wayward brothers or sisters. We must always remain loving in the process of restoring a sinner.
- It is also important to notice the exhortation to “look to yourself” in the process “so that you will not be tempted.” This command highlights two important cautions in the restoration process: 1) don’t get tempted to become prideful about your spiritual maturity; and 2) don’t get trapped in the sin the person you are helping has.

1 Timothy 1:18-21

- Hymenaeus and Alexander were former associates of Paul who he removed from fellowship for repeated and unrepentant blasphemy of God.
- What this sin entails is uncertain, but their lives and doctrine most likely did not glorify God or His Son Jesus. This unrepentant attitude drove Paul to disassociate himself from these men.

1 Timothy 5:19-21

- This passage deals with how to handle an elder who sins without repentance.
- An accusation against an elder must be made by more than one person. Accusing an elder of sin is a serious ordeal and must be handled as such. This command is a safeguard to protect from malicious rumors.
- If an elder persists in unrepentant sin he should be rebuked (presumably by the other elders) in the presence of the entire congregation. The reason for this drastic measure is to ensure that the congregation understands the severity of sin and the need for leadership to be held to a higher standard.
- We are not told in this passage (or any other) what happens to an elder who sins but is repentant. It is to be presumed that the other elders should examine him and prayerfully decide his eligibility for further leadership.

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15

- A believer who shows continual resistance to the teachings of the Apostles (and other Scriptures) should be brought under close examination. This examination should result in some type of break in fellowship (most likely communion and possibly public worship).
- Though this person will be “shamed” by the distancing community, they should still be loved and treated as a believer. This balance is obviously difficult to understand, but should be followed with prayerful and humility.
- It should be assumed that many opportunities for repentance were pursued prior to this “shaming.” (c.f. Matt. 18)

- A similar situation is found in Titus 3:10-11 where believers are commanded to avoid divisive people after a second warning. This type of divisiveness is uncertain, but it is likely doctrinal in nature. Someone who has little desire to obey the Scriptures, but much desire to argue about them does not foster unity, but rather problems.

1 Tim 1:3-7, 4:1-8; Acts 20:28-31

- There is little tolerance for false teachers in God's church.
- Each congregation must define what beliefs they hold to be essential based upon the revelation of Scriptures. Any person who intentionally and unrepentantly teaches false doctrine must be removed immediately from leadership and fellowship.