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## The Ark Fellowship, Kuwait

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*“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” 1Tim 4:16*

# DOCTRINES & BELIEFS

A summary of the doctrines & beliefs of the Ark Fellowship, Kuwait.

## DOCTRINES & BELIEFS OF THE ARK FELLOWSHIP

*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.*

*All things were created through Him and for Him’.*

– Colossians 1:16

As of 2012 there are about 7 billion people alive on planet earth, about 20 major world religions, subdivided into 270 large religious groups, 34,000 separate Christian groups, over half of them being independent groups not linked with the big denominations. We can pause and ask ourselves, are these all different roads to the same god? Are there different gods? Or is religion just another path to man’s elusive search for happiness? Blaise Pascal said ‘All men seek happiness’. This is without exception whatever means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war and others avoiding it, is the same, just attended with different views. This is the motive of every action of man, and God purposefully designed man to ‘pursue’ happiness.

The intention of this document is not to compare world religions and eventually state the already obvious fact that of the plethora of religions, the Christian faith is the right path. But since man’s ultimate goal is to pursue happiness, we want to vehemently state that *‘the outer condition of a person’s life will always reflect their inner beliefs’*. What ‘spiritual path’ you follow is not as important as ‘what you really believe’. A doctrine by definition is a ‘set of beliefs’. Just as we believe that our attitude determines our altitude, we have to understand that our ‘doctrines’ (what we believe), will determine our destiny (the outcome of our life).

This document briefly lists the Biblical doctrines that we believe. Biblical doctrines are not built on any single verse, but are based on reviewing, the Word of God and how God has used His word through the ages, in both the New and Old Testament. Our beliefs define our core purpose, our values and explain the reason for our existence, both individually and as the Ark fellowship.

*God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.*

*When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see  
it....*

*He that testifies his idea of God's glory [does not] glorify God  
so much as he testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it.*

*- Jonathan Edwards*

## Categories

1. The infallibility of the Word of God (The Bible)
2. The Sovereignty of God
3. Jesus Christ – the ‘only’ way
4. Salvation – by ‘grace’ through ‘faith’
5. Holy Spirit – the ‘unseen Guest’
6. Suffering – fact or fiction
7. Sickness & Healing
8. Water Baptism
9. The Lords Supper (Holy Communion)

*“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be full.”*

- *John 15:11*

## **1. The infallibility of the Word of God (The Bible)**

We believe the Bible(66 books) to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life. We believe this to be verbal, complete, infallible, and inerrant throughout.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Men of God were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the very words of Scripture. The original manuscripts were divinely inspired and that extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings whether it is historical, poetical, doctrinal or prophetic.

The Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read, or understood, until it leads to Him. All Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction.

**a. Why do we have the particular 66 books listed?** - The collection of the 66 books which we know as the Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The collection of the Old Testament books is known as the Canon of the Old Testament and the collection of the New Testament books is known as the Canon of the New Testament. The word 'canon' means standard or rule, and as applied to the scripture means that those particular books which are 'canonized' have been granted authority as a rule of faith. Naturally the question arises by whom? The answer is by God, Himself.

*"When the Word of God was written it became Scripture and, inasmuch as it had been spoken by God, possessed absolute authority. Since it was the Word of God, it was canonical. That which determines the canonicity of a book, therefore, is the fact that the book is inspired of God." - Edward J. Young*

### **b. The Bible proclaims its own authority -**

- Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:14-17)
- Belief in Scripture is necessary and commanded (Joh 5:46-47)
- God has promised to preserve His word for His people in all generations (Mat 5:17-18)
- The New Testament writers all referred to the Old Testament as authoritative
- The New Testament claims the same authority for itself as the Old Testament (2 Pet 3:14-16)
- "As Christians we receive the Bible as the Word of God which cannot be judged by any higher standard. The Word of God speaks for itself; it is not verified by any other than the self-verifying Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

*But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:14-17*

## 2. Sovereignty of God

We believe that God upholds and governs all things—from galaxies to subatomic particles, from the forces of nature to the movements of nations, and from the public plans of politicians to the secret acts of solitary persons—all in accord with His eternal, all-wise purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins, nor ever condemns a person unjustly; but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in His image.

**a. God is in control** - The natural world as we see is not under the control of two equally strong, heavenly forces, God and Satan. Based on the book of Job 1:6-12 we can understand several things;

1. God is supreme. We see in v6, ‘there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came among them’. Satan went to God. We don’t read about God going to Satan. It is God who begins the conversation about Job in v8 by asking ‘Have you considered my servant Job..?’

2. Satan knows God that holds the power to life, death and even our protection – In v10, Satan says ‘have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?’

3. God ordains every step of His children, even when the circumstances seem less favorable – The Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’ In our finite understanding of things, we see and perceive life based on our circumstances. What we don’t like we term bad and when circumstances are favorable for us based on our understanding we term it as good. In Genesis 50:20 Joseph tells his brothers, ‘*But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.*’ God is more concerned about our character, molding us to become the person He wants us to be. He allows situations and circumstances that will motivate us to depend on Him. Jeremiah in Lamentations 3:32-38 says, ‘*Though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love. . . . Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?*’ So regardless of our circumstances, ‘*we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*’ Romans 8:28.

**b. The good news of God substituting his Son for us on the cross is based on His sovereignty** – In the gospel of John 10:15, 18 Jesus says, ‘*... I lay down my life for the sheep... My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay down Myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again.*’ Redemption was the sovereign plan of God. John 3:16 writes, ‘*for God so loved the world that He sent.... His Son.*’ In Revelation 13:8 and 17:8, John mentions of the ‘*Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.*’ The construction of the words strongly denotes of a redemption plan that was eternal, and was not an act of time.

**c. The perseverance and perfecting of the saints in the fear of God depends on it.** – Jeremiah 3:20 says, ‘*I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.*’ Paul’s letter to the Philippians 2:13 says, ‘*for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*’ This verse must not be used as an excuse to be ‘lukewarm’, rather must propel us to earnestly seek in prayer the desire and grace to carry on the work of the Kingdom.

**d. The assurance of God's final triumph over all natural and supernatural evil depends on it.** - 'I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.' (Isaiah 46:9–10)

**e. Boldness in the face of seeming hopeless defeat depends on it.** - 'Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to him.' (2 Samuel 10:12)

'Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him.' (2 Chronicles 32:7)

**f. Praise that glorifies the fullness of God's power, wisdom, and grace depends on it.** - 'Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. . . . We will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.' (Psalm 115:3, 18)

***Conclusion** - The doctrine of God's sovereignty is an anchor for the troubled soul, a hope for the praying heart, a stability for fragile faith, a confidence in pursuing the lost, a guarantee of Christ's atonement, a high mystery to keep us humble, and a solid ground for all praise and so much more.*

### **3. Jesus Christ – the 'only' way**

Jesus often surprised people with teachings that cut across the grain of human nature: *Lose your life to save it; The first will be last; The meek will inherit the earth; Rejoice in persecution; Pray for your enemies; It is better to give than receive; Turn the other cheek.* But, by far, the most shocking statement Jesus ever made and indeed His most politically incorrect claim of them all was;

***'I am the way, the truth, and the life.***

***No one comes to the Father except through Me'. - John 14:6***

This claim rattles people like no other. It has been called arrogant, narrow-minded, and condescending. But the fact remains, that Jesus was telling the truth when He said it. And He probably said it out of great compassion. When we look closer at it this statement, it makes ultimate sense. In fact, this single sentence is one of the most important bits of information on the planet.

So why is this claim so contentious? One reason is that it strikes at the core of three great myths about religion. Maybe these are myths you have heard — or maybe they are myths you believe right now.

**a. MYTH 1 - When you get right down to it, all religions are the same!** - You have probably heard people say that although there are surface-level distinctions between the various world religions, if you strip them all down to their essentials, all religions fundamentally teach the same thing (love); so it does not really matter which one you follow. In other words, all spiritual paths lead up the same mountain because all religions teach the brotherhood and sisterhood of men and women and the universal fatherhood of God. Now, there is some common ground between many of the world's religions, particularly concerning certain basic values and morality. But there are significant differences too. In fact with this one amazing claim Jesus boldly puts Christianity in a separate class all by itself. If the path to God is only through Jesus then Christianity cannot be reconciled with any other religion. This uniqueness of Christianity is rooted in the uniqueness of Jesus Himself.

Many religious leaders say, 'Follow Me, and I'll show you how to find truth,' but Jesus says, 'I am the truth.' Other religious leaders say, 'Follow me and I'll show you the way to salvation,' but Jesus says, 'I am eternal life.' Other religious leaders say, 'Follow me and I'll show you how to become enlightened,' but Jesus says, 'I am the light of the world.' Other religious leaders say, 'Follow me and I'll show you a door that leads to God,' but Jesus says, 'I am that door.'

For a long time people have tried to harmonize the various world religions, but there are drastic differences between Christianity and all other belief systems.

Almost every other religion is based on people doing something to somehow earn the favor of God. They say people have to use a Tibetan prayer wheel, go on a pilgrimage, give alms to the poor, avoid eating certain foods, pray in a specified manner, or go through a series of reincarnations. ***They are all attempts of people trying to reach out to God. But Jesus Christ is God reaching out to us.*** Jesus taught the opposite of what other religions teach. He said nobody is good enough for heaven no matter how hard they try, so stop trying!

God is a righteous judge and our sin has to be paid for. So out of His love, Jesus voluntarily offered Himself as our substitute to pay the penalty that we owed for our sin, which is death. And when we receive His sacrifice on our behalf, we become reunited with God for all eternity. *So we can say other religions are spelled 'D-O.'* But Christianity is spelled 'D-O-N-E' because Christ has done it all on the cross — all we have to do is believe it!

**b. MYTH 2 - Even though Christianity might be different, it is still just one viewpoint among many, and that it is only as valid as any other religion.** - In other words, even if there are differences between religions they all have equal claim on the truth. You have your truth and I have mine. This myth has a certain amount of appeal because we want to be tolerant of other views. The Bible tells us we should be, loving, accepting, and respectful toward all people regardless of their faith.

People can believe whatever they want. But some people jump to the wrong conclusion that because different religions are equally protected they must therefore be equally valid. And that is just not the case. Of course, that means everybody is free to make the claim, as Jesus did, that they are the way, the truth, and the life, and that nobody can come to God except through them. I could say it, or you could say it, but that would not make it true.

***The question is how do we know Jesus was telling the truth?*** Well, Jesus backed up His claim with unique credentials that make Him uniquely trustworthy. For instance, Jesus validated His claim of being God by ***fulfilling many old prophecies*** against every mathematical probability. These prophecies were like a thumbprint that only the Messiah would be able to fit – and, in all of history, it only fits Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Unlike other religious leaders, Jesus ***performed great miracles*** that further proved His claim of being God. And in the most spectacular and most important demonstration of His deity, Jesus fulfilled His own prediction by being ***resurrected from the dead*** in an historical event that was witnessed by more than 500 people, and which sparked a spiritual revolution without equal. Jesus did not just claim He was the one and only Son of God, He validated His claim like nobody else in history.

**c. MYTH 3 - says Christians are narrow-minded or conceited when they say Jesus is the only way to heaven.** - First, Christians did not make this claim – Christ did. And His credentials absolutely support this claim. No one can be compared to Him. Nobody! While we have to agree that Christians would be acting in a narrow-minded way if there really were lots of paths to God, and all they were really saying is that their way was the best. But they are not saying that. They are saying that the truth of the matter is that someone has got to pay the penalty for our sin

that keeps us from God. And Jesus, by virtue of His sinless and holiness, is the only one qualified to be our substitute. That is just the reality of the situation. And it is not narrow-minded to act upon the evidence and pursue that truth.

**Conclusion** - We all have a terminal illness called sin, and the reason we cling to Christ is because He is the Great Physician who has the only cure. We can try to scrub away our sin with good deeds, but it will not work. We can ignore it and hope it goes away, but it will not. We can sincerely think there is another way of dealing with it, but we would be sincerely wrong. The truth is that only the Great Physician offers a treatment that will eradicate our stain of sin. When we turn to Him we are not being narrow-minded, we are acting rationally in accordance with the evidence. As one Christian said, 'We're just beggars telling other beggars where to find food.'

#### **4. Salvation – by 'grace' through 'faith'**

Salvation is man's most pressing need. Romans 3:23 says, 'All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory'. The just reward for our sin is death and damnation (Rom. 6:23). We dare not ask for justice. We desperately need mercy. The Bible teaches that man is incapable of saving himself from sin's ruin. If we expect to become righteous by our own achievement we are reminded, 'there is none righteous, no, not one' (Rom. 3:10). If we attempt to earn salvation by good works of morality and religion, we learn that it is 'not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves...' that man is saved (Tit. 3:5). Would we justify ourselves by an attempt to keep God's law perfectly, we will learn that 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight...' (Rom. 3:20). Should we by human wisdom set out to find right-standing before God, we are told that 'the world through its wisdom knew not God' (I Cor. 1:21). Without Christ, a sinner is alienated from God's people, a stranger to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope (Eph. 2:12). In this pitiful plight, we cry out, 'Wretched man that I am ! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?' And the answer comes ringing across the ages, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 7:24-25a).

**a. We Can Be Saved By Grace** - The good news of the gospel can be summed up in the words of Paul to the Ephesians, 'for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God...' (Eph. 2:8). ***Grace means a free and unmerited gift or favor.*** The New Testament writers use '**charis**' preeminently of that kindness by which God bestows favor even upon the ill-deserving and grants to sinners pardon of their offences and bids them accept of eternal salvation through Christ.

***Grace is God's part in our salvation. Faith is our response to God's grace.***

**b. God Is Love** - God's grace springs from his loving nature (I John 4:8). The God of love sent his son to save us from punishment (John 3:16). When the grace of God appeared (i.e., Jesus) bringing salvation to all men, he instructed us as to God's will for our lives (Tit. 2:11-12). The grace of our Lord has prepared for us an infallible record (the Bible) on which to base our faith and by which to order our lives. This Word is able to build us and give us the inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Acts 20:32). God's grace offers salvation to all people regardless of their race or record. The Lord ..., 'does not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Pet. 3:9). All earthlings can rejoice that 'the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men' (Tit. 2:11).

**c. Salvation By Grace Is Conditional** - God saves us by grace, but we do not read of salvation by grace alone. Numerous teachers have warped this vital point. Scripture makes it clear that ***God's offer of grace is conditioned on our faithful response*** to his will. Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:8 says, 'For by grace have ye been saved through faith'. If salvation were by grace alone, since grace is extended to all, literally all would be saved: even those who did not wish to be. Sinners and rebels would populate heaven along with God's faithful servants. God has determined that we play a part in our salvation. Peter exhorted the men of Jerusalem to 'save yourselves' (Acts 2:40). In the words of Paul, man's part is to have faith or to believe on the Lord (Eph. 2:8). We are 'justified freely by his grace...through faith in his blood...' (Rom. 3:25).

**d. 'Saving Faith?'** - A common mistake in the religious world is misunderstanding the Biblical meaning of faith. This does more than cause inconvenience; it can be fatal. It is not the amount of our faith, rather the object of our faith. It is not the amount of our faith to get what we desire, rather our faith directed by His will. We must always look to God's word for the proper understanding. Saving faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Religious convictions based on human opinions, traditions and doctrines do not qualify. Biblical 'faith' is living and is obedient. Salvation by grace is received by obedient faith! James says, 'faith only' is dead and worthless (Jas. 2:24, 26). We see a Biblical demonstration of saving faith in Hebrews 11. The author in numerous examples vividly portrays faith as a trusting heart gladly obeying God's will. Noah and his family were saved from destruction because he, 'moved with godly fear, prepared an ark...and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith' (Heb. 11:7). The same kind of faith saves us today. Obedient faith does not attempt to earn or merit salvation.

**e. We Are Not Saved By Works Done In Our Own Righteousness** - Our salvation is not of ourselves, not of works, lest any one should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). In every age there have been people who thought they could achieve salvation by their own efforts. Scripture presents two classic cases for our learning. The ***proud Pharisaic Jews*** sought to be justified by the works of the Law of Moses. While acknowledging their zeal for God, Paul wrote of them: 'For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God' (Rom. 10:3). The ***sophisticated Gentile philosophers*** thought that they could attain salvation by human reasoning. The same apostle comments that they, 'professing themselves to be wise...became fools' and fell into gross idolatry, 'wherefore God gave them up...' (Rom. 1:22-24). The greatest minds 'in their wisdom knew not God.' They became foolish in the attempt (I Cor. 1:20-21).

Tragically, men are yet trying to save themselves but meet with no success. Every attempt of man to establish a new kind of church or to introduce a new doctrine or demand in religion is a vain attempt to do it 'their way.' ***Attempts of sinners to somehow mitigate their vices by great deeds of charity or benevolence have precisely the same internal flaw.*** Beneficial as these deeds may be to the recipients, they have no saving power. But, they can be fatal to the man trusting in them, for they may lull him into the vain hope that God will be obligated to treat him kindly. Thus he will fail to accept God's grace on the terms offered.

## **5. Holy Spirit – the 'unseen Guest'**

***If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.***

*These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. – John 14*

**Importance of the Holy Spirit** – Our desire for the vital experience of God and for the power of godliness, is to focus not just on what God has done or what he will do or what we must do, but on what God is now doing and how he is now experienced—i.e., the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:13: ‘If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. There are miracles which God may be willing to perform if we sought his Spirit and were filled anew. And these miracles may win for him glory that is now denied to him.

**The Christian life not just that we only learn about the Holy Spirit, but that we come to know him and love him and enjoy him and be awakened by him and empowered by him to formulate and execute strategies to rout the forces of Satan and rescue hundreds from his captivity.**

The Bible portrays for us a history of redemption with three major divisions that reveal progressively the three persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Before the first coming of Christ, the great testing truth was ‘the oneness of God's nature and his monarchy over all,’ especially with respect to the person of the Father. When Christ came, the great question was whether a people orthodox on the first point would recognize and receive the incarnate Son of God in whom all the fullness of deity dwells. Then, after the Son had gathered a people who received him, he was put to death, raised up, and exalted to the Father's right hand, from which he sent the Holy Spirit with new prominence upon the church.

Before Christ's coming . . . the prominence of God the Father; during the days of Christ's earthly life . . . the prominence of God the Son; and since the ascension of the Son . . . the prominence of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we live in a unique, climactic period of redemptive history, the days of the Spirit. **Just as Israel of old had a special responsibility to know and honor God as Father in the oneness of his nature, and just as the people of Palestine had a special responsibility to know and honor Jesus as the Son of God in the days of his flesh, so now we have a special responsibility to know and honor the Holy Spirit.**

*‘The sin of despising His Person and rejecting His Work now is of the same nature with idolatry of old and with the Jews' rejection of the Person of the Son’ - Owen.*

**Conclusion** - Two Essential Truths about the Holy Spirit

- a. The first truth is that the Holy Spirit is a person not an impersonal force.
- b. The second truth is that the Holy Spirit is God not a creation of God.

## **6. Suffering – fact or fiction**

Many Churches teach that ‘suffering’ is not for the born-again Christian. Along with salvation, Christ also purchased for us the ‘good life’ (‘good’ as defined by us and not Him, ‘good’ that expresses itself through complete health and financial prosperity.) Just like Jobs friends had tried to comprehend the reasons for his suffering, today we do the same, failing to realize that our God is just and sovereign. ***His purpose is to refine us and bring us to His likeness through whatever route He desires.*** In establishing this point let's consider certain facts;

**a.All Creation has been subjected to futility** - Romans 8:18–28 I consider that the **sufferings of this present time** are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for **the creation** (*including our bodies*) **was subjected to futility**, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it **in hope**; (*who subjected creation? God / Satan – because subjection was ‘in hope’ it can’t be Satan*) because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and **not only the creation, but we ourselves**, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, **the redemption of our bodies**.

**Our bodies are part of the creation and participate in all the futility and corruption to which creation has been subjected.**

For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts of men knows, the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.

In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul says that, "We do not lose heart, but though our outer man (i.e., the body) is decaying (i.e., being corrupted) yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

This world stands under the judicial sentence of God upon a rebellious and sinful mankind—a sentence of universal futility and corruption. And no one is excluded, not even the precious children of God.

**b.An Age of Deliverance and Redemption is coming..** - *The hope in which God subjected us..*

‘Our citizenship is in heaven from which we await a Savior, the Lord, Jesus Christ, who will **transform the body of our lowliness** to be like the body of his glory’ (**Philippians 3:20, 21**).

‘In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be **raised incorruptible** and we shall be changed’ (**1 Corinthians 15:52**).

‘He will **wipe away every tear from our eyes**, and there shall be no longer any death; and there shall be no longer any mourning or crying or pain; the first things have passed away’ (**Revelation 21:4**).

**c.Christ Purchased, Demonstrated and Gave a Foretaste of it.** - The prophet Isaiah foretold the work of Christ like this in 53:5–6 (a text which Peter applied to Christians in 1 Peter 2:24): But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**d.The blessing of forgiveness and physical healing were purchased by Christ when He died for us on the cross – But When??** - Jesus raised only 3 people from the dead.. in Luke 7:13, 14 it says ‘He had compassion on her’. What about rest of the people and hundreds in tombs? Therefore, Jesus raised some to illustrate that He has that power and one day will

come again and exercise it for all his people. And He healed the sick to illustrate that in his final kingdom this is how it will be. There will be no more crying or pain any more.

The benefits purchased by the cross **can be enjoyed in measure even now**, including healing. God can and does heal the sick now in answer to our prayers, but not always. Those who guarantee that Jesus wants you always well now and heap guilt after guilt on the back of God's people asserting that the only thing between them and health is unbelief, have failed to understand the nature of God's purposes in this fallen age. They have minimized the depth of sin and the importance of God's purifying chastening and the value of faith through suffering and they are guilty of trying to force into this age what God has reserved for the next. They have also ignored the life of the disciples (as written in the Word) and failed to see the 'history of the Church'.

**e. God Controls all suffering for the good of His people.-** In **Exodus 4:11**, when Moses refused to go speak to Pharaoh, God said to him, *'Who made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I the Lord?'* Behind all sickness is finally the sovereign hand of God. God speaks in **Deuteronomy 32:39**, *'See now that I, I am he, and there is no God besides me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal; and there is no one who can deliver from my hand.'*

But what about Satan? Isn't he the great enemy of our wholeness? Doesn't he attack us morally and physically? Wasn't it Satan who tormented Job? Yes, it was. But Satan has no more power than what was given to him by God. In **Job 2:7**, *"So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and afflicted Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head."* Then after Job's wife urges him to curse God and die, Job says, *'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and not receive evil?'*

And lest we think that Job erred in attributing to God his sores afflicted by Satan, the writer adds in verse 10, *'In all this Job did not sin with his lips.'*

In other words, **it is no sin to recognize the sovereign hand of God even behind a disease of which Satan may be the more immediate cause.**

Satan fails to see that all his attempts to despoil the godly are simply turned by God's providence into occasions for the purifying and strengthening of faith. God's goal for his people in this age is not primarily to rid them of sickness and pain, but to purge us of all the remnants of sin and cause us in our weakness to cleave to him as our only hope.

*My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by him; for those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives . . . he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Hebrews 12:5, 6, 10, 11)*

*"It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes . . . I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me" (Psalm 119:71, 75).*

**Hard Times come... 2Co 1:9** *Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*

**f. We Should Pray for Healing Power and Sustaining Grace** - We should therefore pray for God's help both to heal and to strengthen faith while we are unhealed. It is fitting that a child

asks his father for relief in trouble. And it is fitting that a loving Father to give his child only what He see's best. And that he always does: sometimes healing now, sometimes not. But always, always what is best for us!!

**2 Corinth 12:7-10** – *a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

**g. We should always Trust in the Power and Goodness of God** - The great chapter on faith in the Bible is Hebrews 11. It begins, 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' What is often overlooked in this chapter, though, is the final eight verses where we get the balanced picture of faith as that which lays hold on God for rescue from suffering, and for peace and hope in suffering.

Verse 33: 'By faith they conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,... from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection.'

And Heb 11:36... Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth.

**Conclusion** - *The glory of God is manifested when he heals and when he gives a sweet spirit of hope and peace to the person that he does not heal, for that, too, is a miracle of grace! O, that we might be a people among whom God is often healing our sicknesses, but is always causing us to be full of joy and peace while our sicknesses remain. If we are a humble and childlike people who cry out to God in our need and trust in his promises, the Holy Spirit will help us and God will bless our church with every possible blessing. He will, as the Word says, ... work everything together for our good.*

## **7. Sickness & Healing**

**1 Tim 4:16** *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."*

A proper understanding of God and oneself is achieved only through the proper understanding of The Holy Scripture. A doctrine is a set of beliefs held and taught by the church. Let us have a look at what are the conditions to accept a particular doctrine that is taught by someone.

- One should accept a doctrine only if several portions of scripture compliments the essence of what it teaches.
- A teaching or action should have been initiated or instituted in the Bible by either Jesus or the Apostles.
- A true doctrine will always uplift the name of Jesus and humble the believer.

This part of the Doctrinal series ventures to answer questions like Can a believer become sick? What is the source of sickness? Is divine Healing scriptural and applicable today? Will everyone get healed of sicknesses every time? Was everyone healed in the New Testament church? Is it right to confess that you are healed when you are actually not?

One of the results of the fallen nature of man is sickness. Every person will at one time or the other go through several sicknesses. As long as we are in this body (fallen flesh), we will have sicknesses. But God by His mercy has asked us to pray for deliverance. Divine healing is one of the gifts (1 Cor 12) and is a part of the New Testament church. God heals even today according to His will. The healing that is manifested today is a tangible reminder to us of a future where we will receive our glorified bodies that will be free from every sickness and deformities.

Sadly, not everyone receives healing inspite of having solid faith. Given below is a list of instances where believers were sick and some who were not healed.

- **Job:** a great man of faith suffered tremendously.
- **Elisha:** Someone who received the double portion of the anointing suffered, had become sick with the illness of which he would die. (2 kings 13:14)
- **Paul:** (Gal 4:13) Paul confessed that because of a bodily illness he preached the gospel to them the first time.
- **Timothy:** Who had frequent stomach ailments, was advised to take some wine as a medical alternative. (1 Tim 5:23) "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities"
- **Trophimus:** Paul left him sick (2 Tim 4:20)
- **Paul:** had a thorn in his flesh (a messenger of Satan) and even though he asked God three times to remove it, all that God told him was "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me (2 Cor 12:9)
- **Epaphroditus:** The case of Epaphroditus who was nearly dead due to sickness (Phil 2:25-30), displays the Sovereignty of God in healing. Paul attributes his recovery to the mercy of God and not on Paul's positive confession or his authority to bind the sickness.

Jesus performed instantaneous healing and performed no cases of progressive healing. It is not scriptural to declare someone is completely healed when they still see signs of illness. Nowhere in the Bible do sick people say they are healed when they actually are not. Hence the position of positive confession of saying one is healed when they are not, is unscriptural.

The best position to take in the case of a person suffering from a sickness would be to keep praying in faith believing that God is able to heal and will patiently wait for it till death. For ultimately we are promised of perfect glorified bodies in Heaven where God will one day free us from all this suffering and sicknesses.

Rom 8:18-24- *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to*

*frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

It is not possible to conclude on the source or reason behind a sickness in the life of a believer either from birth or even after becoming born again. Unless God Himself reveals it, it is impossible to narrow down the source. Some of the reasons for becoming sick are;

- Abusing the body through an indisciplined lifestyle comprising of poor food habits, lack of physical exercise, Alcoholism, Tobacco and other unwanted drugs.
- The Devil targets believers to hamper their growth and if possible deceive them into rejecting God. Paul was tormented by a messenger of Satan. It should be noted that the devil can only do only as much as God gives permission (As we see in the life of Job), but a Sovereign God who knows everything from the beginning to the end does things according to His will. Several verses indicate that it is God who makes the deaf or blind (Ex4:11). We see from 2 kings 15:5 that God struck Azariah so that he was a leper until he died. Deu 32:39 says *“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”*

These verses should not discourage us but rather should encourage us that if it is God who is behind it, then He knows what’s best and will work everything towards His Glory (Rom 8:28).

It is not scriptural to blame the devil for all sicknesses. A believer should have an unconditional faith in God for their deliverance and make the most of the opportunity (that is in their weakness) to display the power of God through their perseverant faith and un-diminishing hope in their present condition.

**2 Cor 12:9-10-** *And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

#### **Conclusion:**

- **Ps 119:71, 75** *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.”*
- **Rom 5:3** *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*
- **Rom 8:18-21** *“consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.”*

## 8. Water Baptism

Water baptism has been a source of controversy since the early beginnings of the church. We see from the Book of Acts that it is closely associated with the experience of Conversion.

Several questions concerning Baptism have been asked. Should Baptism be limited to adults who have believed in Christ or can infants be included? Is Baptism necessary for Salvation? What is the proper mode of Baptism (sprinkling or Immersion)?

There are many churches who declare that one is not saved unless they have taken Baptism. The verse commonly used by those who support this is” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:5).

To understand this text more clearly, we need to put ourselves in the shoes of Nicodemus who was a Jew. It is most unlikely that he who has interpreted the word water to ‘Baptism’. An Old Testament passage that could pop up in his mind is Ezekiel 36:25-27 *“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”*

Greek students have pointed that Christ may be using a play on words. The Greek word Pneuma (translated ‘Spirit’) is actually the word for “wind”, It can be translated by either “spirit” or “wind” depending on the context. So what Christ might be saying is that “Except a man be born of water & wind, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”. Right after a few verses Christ uses the same word and says “The wind blows where it wills.” Both the natural forces of water and wind are emblems of the Holy Spirit. It is unimaginable that Christ would add the requirement of Baptism for the entrance into the kingdom of Heaven when speaking to Nicodemus but mention it nowhere else. If Baptism is necessary for salvation, it has to be stated clearly elsewhere. Whereas several times, ‘Faith’ alone is mentioned as the only requirement. 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 3:36

In Acts 10:43 Peter says “whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”

Baptism is a **public affirmation** of identification with Christ. It is an act that reveals true commitment to follow Christ.

Water does not save anyone. It is a picture of death and judgment. A person is dipped in and out of water **to symbolize death to his old life and resurrection to his new one.**

Paul clearly says that “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor 1:17). In fact Paul baptized only a few people. If he was sure that Baptism was necessary for Salvation, he would have made sure he baptized all who believed. He distinguished Baptism from the Gospel.

The thief on the cross could never have been saved if Baptism was necessary for salvation since he never got a chance to do it after getting saved. We see from the verse given below that

including Baptism as a sacrament that is required for salvation makes salvation based on Faith plus works.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph 2:8-9)*

Salvation is a free gift received by Faith only (Sola Fide).

Baptism can be compared to that of wearing a wedding ring. It is possible for someone to be married and not be wearing a wedding ring and also it is possible for someone not to be married and be wearing a wedding ring. Just because someone is not baptized that doesn't mean that they are not saved and just because someone is baptized that doesn't mean that they are saved. Baptism in the New Testament is never considered as a means of salvation.

**a. Baptism and obedience** – While it is stated that baptism is not necessary for salvation, it should not be used as a reason for delaying or procrastinating the act after understanding its importance. In most cases, it's the fear of man and rejection from society that prevents people from doing it. Jesus says in **Luke 9:26** that *“if anyone is ashamed of me I shall be ashamed of him”*. In other cases it's the indwelling of some sin which a person does not want to revoke at that moment. The Bible clearly states that a person who hears and believes the Gospel should get baptized which is followed by a new life. Baptism is the outward expression of an inward realization and commitment. It is commandment given by the Lord Himself which needs to be obeyed.

**b. Mode of Baptism** - In the New Testament, a believer was baptized by completely immersing under water and then brought back up again. The ancient Greek word 'Baptizo' means to dip or immerse something in water.

The gospel according to Mark mentions “and immediately coming up from the water” (Mk 1:10) We also see from the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch that he waited till they found sufficient water to get baptized (putting the concept of sprinkling out of the question).

*So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch **went down into the water**, and he baptized him. Now when **they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:38-39)*

The following two verses also symbolize that the proper mode of Baptism practiced in the NT is by immersion.

*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. (Rom 6:3-4)*

*You were **buried** with Him in baptism, in which you also were **raised** with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Col 2:12)*

When a person getting baptized goes down into the water, it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is a picture of being raised with Christ Jesus

to walk in the newness of life. Thus Baptism very clearly pictures death to one's old way of life and rising to a new kind of life in Christ. This can only be symbolized by immersion and not by sprinkling.

**c. Who can get baptized?** - One common pattern that we observe in the NT is that only those who gave a **profession of faith** were baptized.

*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized (Acts 2:41)*

*But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:12)*

*"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10:47-48)*

The paedo-baptist argument focuses on three points

1. Infants were circumcised in the OT
2. Baptism is compared to Circumcision in the OT
3. Instances where households were baptized

In the OT all male children were circumcised when they were 8 days old as a sign to of entrance into the covenant of God. Though it is true that baptism and circumcision are in many ways similar, but we must not forget that what they symbolize is also different in some ways. In the OT all male children born to Jewish parents were circumcised regardless of any inward spiritual life.

*This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. (Gen 17:10-13)*

The OT practice of circumcision was done based on physical descent whereas the NT practice of Baptism was based on an inward spiritual change. The means of entrance into the church is voluntary, spiritual, and internal. One becomes a member of the true church of God by being born again and by having saving faith, not by physical birth. It comes about not by an external act, but by internal faith in one's heart.

We should not be surprised that there was a change from the way the covenant community was entered in the Old Testament (physical birth) to the way the church is entered in the New Testament (spiritual birth). There are many comparable changes between the old and new covenants in other areas as well. Some of which are given below

- While the Israelites fed on physical manna in the wilderness, New Testament believers feed on Jesus Christ, the true bread that comes down from heaven (John 6:48-51).

- The Israelites drank physical water that gushed from the rock in the wilderness, but those who believe in Christ drink of the living water of eternal life that he gives (John 4:10-14).
- The old covenant had a physical temple to which Israel came for worship, but in the new covenant believers are built into a spiritual temple (1 Peter 2:5).
- Old covenant believers offered physical sacrifices of animals and crops upon an altar, but New Testament believers offer "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5; Heb 13:15-16).
- Old covenant believers received from God the physical land of Israel which he had promised to them, but New Testament believers receive "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:16).
- In the same way, in the old covenant those who were the physical seed or descendants of Abraham were members of the people of Israel, but in the New Testament those who are the spiritual "seed" or descendants of Abraham by faith are members of the church (Gal. 3:29; Rom 4:11-12).

In all these contrasts we see the truth of the distinction that Paul emphasizes between the old covenant and the new covenant. The physical elements and activities of the old covenant were "only a shadow of what is to come," but the true reality, the "essence," is found in the new covenant relationship which we have in Christ (Col 2:17).

Therefore it is consistent with this change of systems that infant (male) children would automatically be circumcised in the old covenant, since their physical descent and physical presence in the community of Jewish people meant that they were members of that community in which faith was not an entrance requirement. But in the new covenant it is appropriate that infants not be baptized, and that baptism only be given to those who give evidence of genuine saving faith, because membership in the church is based on an internal spiritual reality, not on physical descent.

Now regarding instances where it is mentioned that households got baptized. Act 16 speaks about Lydia and her household got baptized. It is not conclusive enough to state that there were infants included. Acts 2:31 says "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized".

Another point to note is that in the old covenant girls were not circumcised but in the new covenant believing girls are baptized.

## **9. The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion)**

The Lord instituted two sacraments to be observed by the church. One is baptism which is observed by a person as a sign of the beginning of his or her Christian life. The other one is the 'Lord's Supper' to be observed repeatedly throughout our Christian lives.

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.

*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of*

*you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." Mat 26:26-29*

*In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. 1 Cor 11:25*

**a. Meaning of the Lords Supper** - It symbolizes Christ's death. When the bread is broken it symbolizes that His body was broken and when the cup is poured out it symbolizes the blood that was poured out for us. *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1Cor 11:26)*

Jesus commanded us to do this, and when we partake of it, we share in the benefits earned for us by the death of Jesus on the cross.

The spiritual nourishment that is so necessary for our soul is both symbolized and experienced when we partake of the Lord's Supper.

*Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood; you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. John 6:53-57*

When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we proclaim a sign of unity with each other. *Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. (1Cor 10:17)*

We do not believe in *Transubstantiation*.

**b. Who can officiate at the Lord's Supper?** - The NT gives no instructions at all as to who can preside at the communion. Hence it would not be proper to say that only ordained Priests can serve the Lord's Supper. The NT teaches that all believers are priests and members of a royal priesthood. Unlike the OT, every believer has the right to come before God and offer worship. But it is only appropriate that an elder, a Pastor or a leader officiates it in order to guard against abuse.

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Pet 2:9)*

**c. How often should the Lord's Supper be celebrated?** - Though no frequency is mentioned, it is good to be done as often as possible so that it edifies us.

*In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Cor 11:25-26)*

**d. Who can participate in the Lord's Supper?** - It is mandatory that only Born Again individuals partake of it. Only a person who has understood and what the Lord has accomplished for him or her through His death on the cross and has given his or her life to Jesus can receive it in faith.

A person ought to examine themselves before partaking of it. We have to ask if our relationships with family members, church members do reflect the character of the Lord whom we meet at the table and represent.

*Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 1 Cor 11:27-29*

*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Mat 5:23-23)*