

**Grace Alone** - We believe and teach that Christians are saved by God's grace alone. This means that because God loves us, He has mercy on us, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus, He forgives us our sins. This grace is a gift freely given by God out of love. We do not in any way earn it. Other Christians teach that you earn salvation by living a good life, by following all the rules, or even by "deciding" to follow Jesus. Contrary to this, we believe that Christians are saved because God freely forgives because Christ died, taking our punishment for us. We did not deserve such love, but God freely gave it. This grace is truly amazing. "For by grace you have been saved through faith... a gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Because salvation is a gift, by grace through faith in Jesus, and even faith itself is a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3), then God can give that gift according to His grace to any person, regardless of age (Matthew 18:6). He has provided special "means" by which to deliver His gifts of grace: God's Word (the Bible) and Sacraments (Baptism & Communion). These are not ordinances done out of obedience, but gifts of God's grace for the building of God's church. Baptism is a means by which God combines His powerful Word (Romans 1:16) with water to give His gifts (Acts 2:38) of forgiveness, life, and salvation (1 Peter 3:21). Communion is the very body and blood of Jesus (Matthew 26:26) in the bread and wine given for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).

**Faith Alone** - We believe and teach that we receive the benefits of God's grace, namely forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, by believing and trusting the promises God has made to us through His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-24). Faith is our personal trust in Jesus Christ, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, through the means of grace. Faith does not earn the benefits, but accepts them humbly and thankfully. Faith always has an object, and saving faith is in Jesus Christ alone, true God and true man, God's only begotten Son who gave His life in our place on the cross, and rose in victory from the grave on Easter morning (John 3:16). Once faith has been received by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, we seek to grow our faith and live as disciples of Jesus through the study of God's Word, our worship life, our service to God and man, as well as our life of witness to this dying world.

**Scripture Alone** - We believe and teach that the Bible is the only source of authority. Everything we believe and teach is founded in the Bible, that is, in Scripture. We believe that the Bible is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit and therefore perfect, holy, and true from Genesis to Revelation (2 Timothy 3:16). It was written by men, but since they were directed by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), the Bible is free from human error and biases. To understand the Bible correctly, we study the context of the passage, the overall message of Scripture (God's plan of salvation through His Son), the original languages and use of those languages (Greek, Hebrew, & Aramaic), and the particular literary features of the Bible.