

God's Sovereignty

The Reformed faith revolves not around man, but God. God's sovereignty is His rule. He rules over all creation with absolute power and authority. God is the one who created heaven and earth (Gen 1:1; Isaiah 45:12). God also determines everything that happens, and controls all things. Nothing is outside of His control and dominion, or can frustrate His purposes (Ps 22:28; 104:14; Prov 16:9; Dan 4:35; Luke 1:37).

Everything which exists exists in order to give Him glory and praise (Ps 103:22; 150:6). The ultimate purpose of all of life, is thus to give God glory. This must also be the goal of your entire life (1Cor 10:31). This is all the more true, since salvation is God's work from beginning to end (Eph 2:8-10).

God's Covenant

God relates to man by means of a covenant. The covenant originates with God, and includes promises and threats, as well as demands.

Covenant promises. To believers and their children, God gives the *promise* to be their God. He gives them the promise of salvation and the forgiveness of sins (Gen 17:7; Heb 8:8-12).

Covenant demands. The covenant has a conditional aspect, for God also gives the *demand* of faith and obedience (Ex 19:5; Heb 4:1-2).

Covenant threats. Where there is unbelief and disobedience, God will not give the promise, but the *threat* of the covenant, namely, punishment and curse instead of blessing (Deut 28:15; Heb 4:11; 10:26-31).

Covenant members. God makes His covenant with believers and their children (Gen 17:7; Matt 19:14; Acts 2:38-39; 1Cor 7:14). In the old covenant with Israel, the sign of the covenant was circumcision, and was given to believers and their children (Gen 17:10). In the new covenant the sign of the covenant is baptism, and likewise is given to believers and their children (Acts 16:33; Col 2:11-12). Infant baptism is thus required by Scripture.

God's Church

Since the beginning of time, over the whole world, God is gathering for Himself a church of true Christian believers, of which Christ is the head. All true believers must join themselves to the true church. God Himself gathers this church by His Holy Spirit, through the preaching of His Word. It can be found wherever there is faithful preaching of the Bible, the use of the sacraments as Christ instituted them, and the faithful exercise of discipline in correcting sins.

God's Cultural Mandate

The Reformed faith recognizes the ongoing validity of the cultural mandate given to Adam and Eve in Paradise, to "*be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.*" (Gen 1:28). This mandate is restored in Christ, who is Lord over all things (Col 1:17; 2:10).

Reformed believers are thus called to be in the world, and not to withdraw from it. Christ reigns as King, and Christians must work in every area in society to submit all things to the Lordship of Christ, and His Word (2Cor 10:5). This is not limited to family and church, but includes politics, education, business, economics, the arts, and every other part of society. Believers are called especially to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, making disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that He have commanded (Matt 28:19).

You, too, must observe all that Christ has commanded. That is what the Reformed faith is all about. For this reason, we hope you will take this brochure very seriously.

Our Invitation to You

We invite you to come to our church services and to join us in worship and fellowship.

Pastor: Rev. Rodney Vermeulen
Phone: (289) 284-0463

We worship at 32 Unity Road just north of Caledonia, Ontario. Worship times are 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. every Sunday.



What is the Reformed Faith?

Origin

The Reformed faith derives its name from the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Men such as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin were used by God to break with the errors of the medieval Roman Catholic church. This break has become known as "The Reformation".

Teaching

The teaching of the Reformed faith basically follows the teaching of the Reformers five centuries ago. The Reformers did not want to change God's Word, but to return to the truth contained in it. Thus the Reformed faith today is the faith which Scripture teaches. This brochure aims to outline some of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformed faith, as taught by the Bible.

Importance

Many Christian churches today do not fully maintain the truth that is taught in the Bible. The Bible itself indicates the importance of maintaining the true doctrine, and the Reformed faith best reflects what God Himself teaches in the Bible. Look up the Bible passages referred to, and judge for yourself, "examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11).

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples." (John 8: 31)

Sola Scriptura – by Scripture Alone

The teaching of the Reformed faith rests completely and entirely on the Bible alone. God's Word is the complete and final authority for all matters of faith and life. Reformed believers are thus committed to the importance of the Bible both in their worship services and in their personal lives.

1. **The Bible is inspired.** Although God used human writers, the Bible is not a mere human book. It is inspired by the Spirit of God, so that what is written is the very Word of God. Since God is its author, the Bible is infallible and without error (2 Tim 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. **The Bible is authoritative.** Since the Bible is the Word of God, it has an absolute and divine authority. Neither the church nor writings of men have equal value with Scripture, and so the Bible alone is authoritative for all matters in the church (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21).
3. **The Bible is sufficient.** Scripture contains the full and complete revelation of God. All that you need to believe is contained within it. Thus you may not add or subtract from God's Word in any way, not even by further prophecies, ongoing revelation, or speaking in tongues (Deut 4:2; 1 Cor 4:6; Rev 22:18,19).
4. **The Bible is necessary.** The message of the Bible is necessary for the church, since it witnesses to Jesus Christ. God uses the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ contained in the Bible to gather His church, and work faith in the hearts of those who believe (Deut 8:3; John 20:31).
5. **The Bible is clear.** Scripture itself is clear and its message understandable. Although certain parts of the Bible can be hard to understand (2Pet 3:15-16), you do not need special statements of church leaders to explain the sense and purpose of the Bible. It is clear to those who read it carefully, with the help of the Holy Spirit (Ps 19:8; 119:105; 1 Cor 2:12-14).

Sola Fide – by faith alone

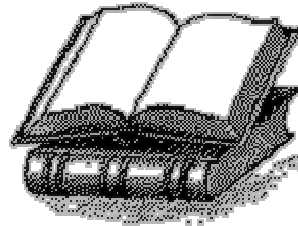
Justification. Justification is when God declares that you are innocent, and have perfectly obeyed God's law. The Bible also calls this being righteous (Rom 2:13).

Not justified by works. You can never be justified or made righteous on the basis of your own works or merits, since you are entirely corrupt (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16).

Justified by faith alone. You can be justified by faith alone. Christ was righteous before God because of His perfect obedience to God's law throughout His whole life. His righteousness is given to you as a free gift when you have faith, that is, when you believe in Him (Rom 3:28; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal 2:16).

Faith is an instrument. Faith is thus the instrument by which you embrace Christ our righteousness. When you believe, Christ's righteousness is given to you. You are not justified *on the grounds of* faith, as if God makes you righteous *because you have* faith. Faith is not enough to make you righteous – only Christ's righteousness can make you righteous. It is Christ's righteousness that justifies you, but this righteousness is given to you *by means of* faith. Thus we say that you can be justified *through* faith alone (Rom 3:25-26; 5:18; 2 Cor 5:21).

Faith is a gift. Even this faith – through which you are justified – is a gift. God Himself works in your heart by His Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel (Rom 10:17; Eph 2:8; Php 1:29).



Sola Gratia – by grace alone

Since we are entirely sinful, and unable to save ourselves, we are entirely dependent upon God for salvation. Salvation is worked by God from beginning to end, and is given as a free gift. Salvation thus has its origin in God and not in us, and is only the result of God's grace (unmerited favour). It is "by grace alone". This teaching is also known as *The Five Points of Calvinism*, which are best remembered with the acronym TULIP.

Total Depravity. We all are conceived and born in sin. By nature, you are totally incapable of doing any true good, and rather are inclined to do all evil. Your natural spiritual condition is thus much worse than just being sick. You are unable even to believe, and can thus be said to be spiritually *dead*. (Gen 6:5; Ps 51:5; Jer 13:23; Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1-3).

Unconditional Election. God, out of mere grace, has chosen from the whole human race a certain number of persons to be saved in Christ. This choice was not based on who might later believe and have faith, but was entirely based on God's good pleasure (Acts 13:48; Rom 9:15; Eph 1:4).

Limited Atonement. Christ did not redeem all men by his death. The only ones who were atoned and saved by His death are God's people, the believers elected to salvation. By His death on the cross, Christ obtained eternal salvation for all God's people, and these only (Matt 1:21; John 10:15; 17:9).

Invincible Grace. Man is in himself unable to believe in God. But God works in man's heart by His Holy Spirit, working faith and repentance. The Holy Spirit thus changes man, making him turn away from sin and towards God. Although the grace of the Spirit can be opposed, it can never be resisted completely, and God's Spirit can soften the hardest of hearts (Ezek 36:26; John 6:44; 10:27; Eph 2:8; Php 2:13).

Perseverance of the Saints. Because of the power of sin, believers could not persevere in faith if they were left on their own. But God preserves and keeps all true believers in whom He works faith unto the very end. Those who are elect and in whom God works by His Spirit, can never fall away from God completely, and lose their salvation (John 6:39; 10:28; Rom 8:28-30; Php 1:6).