

We are GC \bar{I}

Seeking a better understanding of our theological profile/orientation as a denomination.

Part 1 – THEOLOGICAL

The process of renewal our fellowship went through over 20 years ago now, led to a wholesale revision of our theology – from the ground up.

Perhaps a helpful way to view a theological system is that it should serve as a “map” which, if it is useful at all, will help us understand scriptural revelation.

There are various ways one could describe the change we went through, but perhaps the most direct way would be to call it a move from a legal focus to a grace focus.

Theology – the study of God – must begin with the most basic questions of all. Who is God? Who is Jesus Christ? What is his purpose?

Is the Bible the story of God reaching out to man (salvation) or is it descriptive of man’s searching for God? (a view that is gaining much traction).

We firmly believe that the Bible records God’s revelation of his purpose to us – to humanity. Our status before God is grounded in HIM reaching out to us (Ephesians 2:8-10).

What we do is a response, or better a participation in what God is doing.

II Peter 1:4

II Cor. 5:17-20 – What God did, in Christ, was to reconcile the world back to himself. Our message therefore is “be reconciled” – God has, in Christ, done what is needed for our salvation. What we need to do is embrace that reality in our lives. Say “yes” to the God who has already said yes to us and to all other human beings.

One of the most encouraging, and yet scriptural aspects of our teaching, is that God’s love – his plan - is inclusive of all people. No one will loose out on salvation because they weren’t loved by God, or simply weren’t included – all are including.

John 1:29

John 3:16

II Peter 3:9

I Tim. 2:4

Titus 2:11

I John 2:2

Romans 11:32

II Peter 2:1 – false teachers bought by Christ too!

Romans 10:12 – all

Romans 5:18

I Cor. 15:22

So...the gospel as we can see is good news – filled with hope. No one is excluded – granted, no one is forced into a relationship with God either. Salvation though is a gift of God that he will offer to all – it is a matter of reaching out and grasping that gift. This is where faith and repentance comes into play.

There is no limited atonement – Christ's work is ~~sufficient~~^{big enough} to cover all.

Inclusive, but not Universalism. There is a choice to accept and remain in the relationship God so graciously offers us in Christ – and there are consequences to refusing the relationship, which the Bible makes clear.

Also, the salvation God offers us is only found in Christ (Acts 4:12), so it isn't pluralism, though we can recognize good morals and teachings when we find them.

Our sanctification – just as much as our justification and glorification is a work of Christ. Many Christians grasp the fact they are saved by God's mercy and grace, but they have the idea that from now on, they have the responsibility to do better – with occasional help from the Holy Spirit. This is not the case. Sanctification isn't your response to God's grace, it is an ongoing work of God in the lives of each believer.

I Cor. 1:30

John 15:1-7 – only attached to Jesus – living in union with him – can we become fruitful (Galatians 5:22,23).

As we live in union with Christ – as we respond to the Spirit’s work in our lives and not resist or quench the activity of the Spirit – we grow. More of Jesus Christ reflects out of us, and the more we are transformed into the image of Christ. That spiritual growth doesn’t earn our salvation, but is a consequence of that salvation, and of our opportunity to live life, and experience God’s life in us. II Cor. 3:17-18.

It is the package, that forms the theological map we have come to embrace, that helps me so much. I can understand the consistency, logic, and direction of scripture – all the way from the nature of God, the flow and components of his plan, to my part in it as an individual believer.

Such topics as how salvation is by grace – a work and gift of God – are clear and explainable.

Yet, how plainly the grace of God leads to change and spiritual fruitfulness in our lives – Titus 2:11-14; (3:4-8).

A significant leader in the evangelical world came along side us for a short time in the early 1990’s. He described us as a “truth movement”. He said we weren’t the only church with that characteristic, but that we are people to whom it really matters that what we believe, stand for and teach is the truth! For most of us, that remains the case.

One of the great strengths our fellowship offers is that characteristic of valuing and wanting to live out the truth, with a track record of moving toward the truth regardless of cost. After all, Jesus is “the way, the truth and the light” (John 14:6).