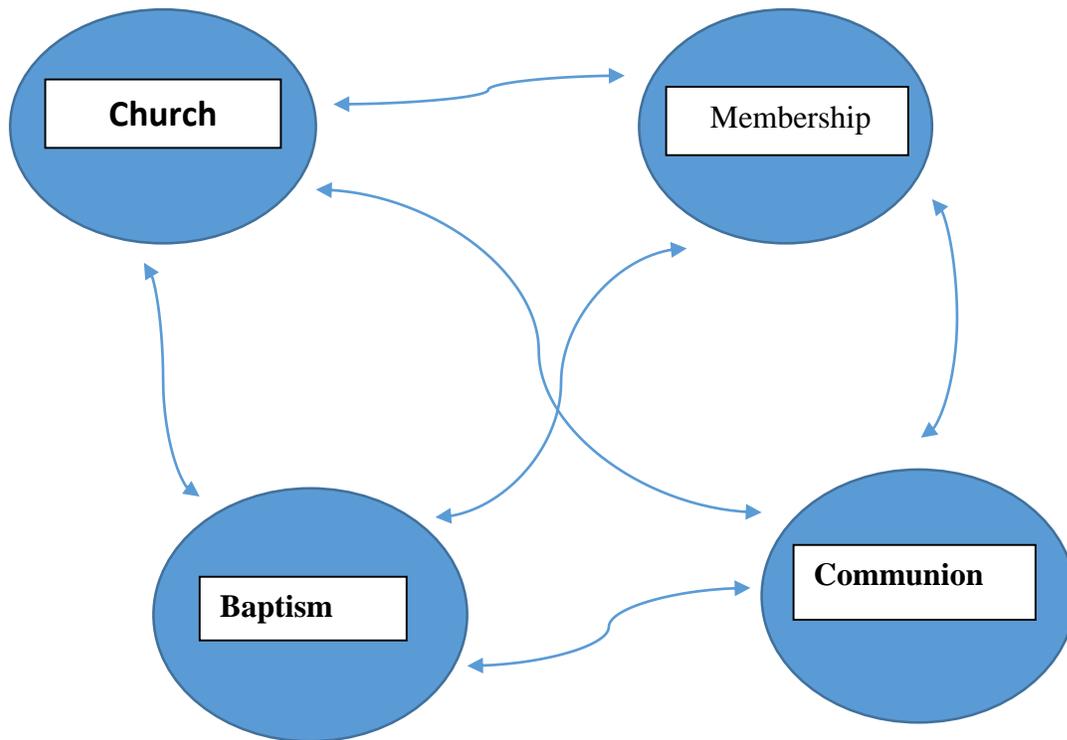


Baptism & Membership in The Free Presbyterian Church In Cloverdale



Which Comes First?

Baptism & Membership

Welcome to this Course on Baptism & Membership

It is with thanksgiving to the Lord that we present this course on Baptism and Membership. We are thankful for the gospel that makes this possible and for converts that makes it necessary. Our Session has a sense of responsibility to guide each new believer into future worship and discipleship for the Lord through baptism and membership. We desire this for the good of souls and the honour of the Lord. The Lord does not save sinners at such great cost to set them aside in this world. He calls each of his children to godly fellowship and faithful service in His church.

We realise that with differing traditions and so many assumptions in Christianity today it is not enough to exhort new believers to do these things without proper biblical instruction, or setting forth the reasons behind church procedures.

It is our prayer that each one who professes faith in our Lord Jesus will become a well-balanced and faithful disciple of Christ. We have the responsibility to pray for you and to lead you in the path of blessing. We recognize that there is no perfect church on earth and we are often weak in our attempts to teach and guide. It is with an earnest heart and by God's grace, however, that we present this course on baptism and membership so we may be found faithful to our charge as God's servants.

Thank you for participating and if during the course, or after its completion, you have questions we will gladly make ourselves available to help. If you wish to proceed with baptism, and/or membership, application forms are available for each.

This course covers:

- Week 1 – The Church as God's Divine Institution – It's the Lord's Church!
- Week 2 – The Government of the Church and The Means of Grace – Food for Faith
- Week 3 – Baptism Why? & How? – The First Step after Conversion
- Week 4 – Communion & What to look for in a church – Finding a safe church home.
- Week 5 – Get to know our denomination and our congregation – Things to Understand.
- Week 6 – Membership in our Congregation – Things to Undertake & Steps to Take

The Purpose of this course:

- To exalt the Lord by following His commands to make disciples for His Name's sake.
- To promote Christ's church on earth within our local congregation.
- To lead believers into God's will as worshippers and witnesses for Christ.

The following resources are available online at www.fpcna.org

- A Brief History of the Free Presbyterian Church of North America
- The Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms
- The Book of Church Order for the FPCNA
- Separated unto the Gospel Booklet - This should be read by each one applying for membership.

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Week #1

(As you agree with each section you can check the boxes.)

What is the Church? Why does it exist? Who should join? How should it be organized? These questions and many more must be answered by every professing Christian and the will of God must be discovered for worship and service in the Lord's church.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH is to teach the word, preach the good news of the gospel and form a community of believers who desire to worship and serve God according to the Bible. There is a chicken and egg situation in that we can't baptize professing believers without a church, and we will have no church to baptize, unless there are believers ready to commit to the formation of a visible or local church. It also requires men who will serve as deacons, elders and ministers of the word. Such a church must be made up of people who have a zeal for the glory of God and are obedient to the scriptures.

THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH are to bear witness for Christ and win souls through the proclamation of the gospel. Converts are to be disciplined in the doctrines and practices of Christianity, so that they are built into the life of the church (Matthew 28:19-20). It is God's will for every professing Christian to enjoy life in His church in a local congregation so that they be built up in the faith through the preached word and the example of fellow Christians. They are also a people who are "sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints [holy]" 1 Corinthians 1:1-2). They also seek opportunity to serve the Lord in His church (Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:23-25).

THE MODEL FOR THE CHURCH must come from the New Testament where we find Christians formed into congregations with the diligent leadership of deacons, elders, preachers, teachers and pastors to care for the flock. The eldership of the church has the role of examining converts as to their confession of faith, baptizing them, teaching them and exercising discipline over them to maintain the purity of the Lord's church. The specifics of this ministry is carefully laid out in several passages of the New Testament and require careful study so that the government of the church is truly Biblical. As in worship we follow the regulative principle of church government. The scriptures alone must guide our practices in worship and church government. We are not to arbitrarily invent things and introduce them for worship against the consciences of candidates for membership.

"The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men" (Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 21.1).

The laws of the church must be founded on the Bible. It is the very nature of denominations, however, to set standards that apply within their own interpretation of scripture and follow principles that guard the purity of the local church. Due to the required authority of the church to baptize it is necessary to study the nature of the church before we look at baptism, even though baptism is the first requirement for church membership.

A DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH

THE CHURCH VISIBLE IS GOD'S INSTITUTION ON EARTH FOR HIS OWN GLORY TO GATHER OUT OF THE WORLD A PEOPLE WHO WORSHIP AND SERVE GOD THROUGH CHRIST THEIR HEAD, ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

The first references to the church in the New Testament are found in Matthew's gospel (Matthew 16:18 and 18:17,18). The Greek word for church is EKKLESIA, which means called out ones. By this term the church is formed of those who are called out of the world and confess Jesus Christ to be the Christ – the one whom God sent into the world as Lord and Saviour of His people.

In these passages regarding the nature of the church we learn that the church has authority from God. This authority is declarative. It empowers the church to receive a person's confession of Christ or reject it. The church has authority to "hear" and adjudicate over issues concerning individual professing Christians.

Those who teach the word of God and administer the sacraments of the Lord's church are shepherds to watch for the souls of God's people. In turn, individual Christians are to place themselves under the oversight of the church and her officers (Hebrews. 13:17, 1Peter 5:2, Acts 20:28).

CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF HIS CHURCH

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“I will build my church...” (Matt. 16:18). We must ever remember that the church is the Lord’s as He bought her with His own blood and she is for His glory. The body exists to serve and magnify the head. If we profess to honour and serve the head we will also honour and serve the body.

THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

“For the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). The analogy is given of Christ as the head of the church while the church is the body of Christ the head. This analogy is consistently used in various passages: (Eph.1:22-23; Eph. 4:15-16, 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

THE CHURCH INVISIBLE

The invisible church is made up of all believers who are redeemed by the blood of Christ and will one day enter heaven to join with the souls of the just who are made perfect in the presence of God. This is also known as the church Catholic (universal). It spans all generations from the beginning of the world unto the end, and made up of peoples of all nations (Rev. 5:9; 14:6).

THE CHURCH VISIBLE

The visible church is the local congregations of saints on earth at any one time who profess the Lord Jesus Christ and meet together in a visible manner. It also includes denominations, which are branches of the Lord’s church and also visible in its various locations of ministry.

THE MARKS OF A TRUE CHURCH ON EARTH

We find in the N.T. that God’s people formed visible congregations to hold regular services to worship Christ and to remember His death (Acts 2:41-47, Acts 15). Corruptions and apostasies, however, soon appeared to corrupt the true nature of the Lord’s church. Even in the first Century false teachers and leaders arose and it became necessary to discern between the true and false church. The church that was truest to God’s commands and purest in doctrine was to be preferred (1John 4:1-3, 5:1-10; 2John; 3John). Discernment is required to know the true church. Throughout history different heresies arose that needed to be withstood, and Christians had to separate from apostate churches that willfully embraced errors. Bible believers had to re-establish a branch of the true church. This separation from error has been a hallmark of faithful Christians from the first century.

The succession of churches is found in faithful adherence to the truths of the gospel of Christ, not in church names, nor historical links. For example, there is no succession of popes from Peter. The Pope today does not reflect the doctrines of the gospel as taught by Peter, or the other apostles.

Mark # 1 THE FAITHFUL PREACHING OF THE WORD. The true church will be known by its:

- **Adherence to the verbal inspiration of Scripture.** The church is founded on the Scriptures; not the scriptures on the church.
- **Emphasis on the Word in worship.** The ministry of the word should be central to the edification of the saints the salvation of sinners.
- **Use of the regulative principle in worship.** All elements of worship should be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God. Hence the term regulated by the scriptures.

Mark # 2 BIBLICAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS (Baptism & The Lord’s Supper)

- The Bible clearly teaches that each Christian who would join himself to the church should be baptized and remember Christ’s death by the visible signs of bread and the communion cup.
- Through the apostles Christ has given the church authority to administer the sacraments along with preaching the essential truths of the gospel (Luke 22:19; 1Cor. 11:23-27). The preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments are to go together lest the ordinance be received without the knowledge of the gospel of Christ and it fall into idolatry. This authority is not given to a lone individual or a para-church. It is the power granted to the church - that body of people that bear the marks of a Biblical church.

Mark #3 EXERCISE OF DISCIPLINE TO PRESERVE PURITY & TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH.

- The church is to discern between worthy and unworthy recipients of baptism, communion and membership. It is wrong to baptize those who reject the gospel, or who are uninformed of the way of salvation. Care, however, should be taken to encourage weak believers to receive baptism and communion. This requires the candidates to be interviewed by the elders/minister of the church to give testimony of their faith in Christ and commitment to His discipleship. The candidate for baptism must give personal testimony of Christ as Lord and Saviour before he is baptized by the church (Matthew 28:19,20).
- Where a Christian falls into sin, and thereby loses his or her testimony, the church has a responsibility to guard the Lord’s name and the testimony of the church. The leadership of the church must engage in all possible means to see that person brought to repentance, and restored to good standing in the congregation. That may require a time

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of proving through the brother or sister's personal repentance and rededication to the gospel and the honour of the Lord.

WEEK # 2

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

The Presbyterian model of government is soundly founded on Biblical instructions. Elders are to be chosen by the people to minister and shepherd the flock. Their qualifications are set by the Bible and their Christian graces are outlined to match the nature of their work. 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1 record the qualifications of elders who are to rule and minister over the local congregation.

The terms "bishop," (1Tim. 3) "overseer" (Acts 20:28) and "elder" are synonymous in the N.T.

Elders Plural

Titus was commanded to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5. See also Acts 14:23).

Teaching & Ruling Elders

There is a distinction between teaching elder and ruling elder found in (1Tim 5:17). Labourers in the word and doctrine are usually the full time pastors/ministers of the church and financially supported by the congregation (1Tim. 5:18).

Elders are the spiritual shepherds of souls.

Elders are shepherds over the flock (Acts 20:28; 1Peter 5:1-4). They are to lead the people by word and example. As they must give account to God for their shepherding they must fulfil their duties diligently. They are to govern the admission of believers into membership and watch for their souls, which will require wise counsel to guide and at times correct God's people. In all things they must seek the unity and the orderly government of the church.

Elders Govern the complete life of the Church

The local eldership has the oversight of every aspect of the church: from the ministry of the word at Sunday services, youth and children's ministry, outreach, the work of the deacons and to represent the congregation at Presbytery.

Elders are representatives of the members

As elders are appointed by the people to serve the people they act in their office as the representatives of the members of the church. For this reason they are to be honoured in their work, supported by prayer and submitted to in their guidance. Godly elders are gifts from the Lord to bless His people. Their office and work is God's way of blessing His church and promoting His kingdom (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17).

To be part of the Lord's church is the greatest work on earth:

- God instituted the church for His own Glory and it will not fail (Matthew 16:18).
- It is where the Lord dwells with His people (Matthew 18:20.)
- It is the arena of redemption, where souls will be saved through gospel preaching (1Corinthians 1:17-25).
- Its purpose is to teach all nations and disciple converts to follow Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).
- It is where children of God are edified and nurtured in the faith through the "means of grace" (1Cor. 14:12, 1Tim. 5:11-16).
- It is where believers will reap eternal rewards for faithful service (Revelation 3:10-12; 21).

The Means of Grace within the Church

The means of grace in a biblical church are:

1. The Preached Word.
2. Baptism.
3. Communion.

Objective and Subjective Means of Grace

"These are the objective channels which Christ has instituted in the Church and to which He ordinarily binds Himself in the communication of His grace" (Louis Berkof, Systematic Theology pg. 604).

The more subjective means are:

1. Praise

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2. Prayer.

These are the instruments which God uses to nurture the life of faith in His people. Regeneration is the direct work of the Spirit on the heart of man, yet the Word of God has a place in that operation.

Spiritual Life Needs Food

While we must contend against the Roman Catholic view that the church holds a bank of grace to be dispensed at will, yet we must contend for the truth that God, being a God of order, uses ordinary means to feed the souls of His people and strengthen their faith. The Holy Spirit operates in hearts of believers while they are under the administration of the word and the sacraments. □

The believer's responsibility toward the means of grace

As God binds Himself to use these means to nurture the faith of His children, believers must exercise themselves in the use of the means of grace to grow spiritually. So doing, they will enjoy the sanctifying power of the Spirit of God in their souls and overcome temptations. The Lord commands us not to neglect the preaching ministry and the sacraments in the Lord's church through which His Spirit operates (Hebrews 10:25). Such neglect is disobedience to God's revealed will for our lives and will grieve the Spirit of God. To fail to obey will result in spiritual weakness and display a willful independent spirit. Members of the body of Christ may not act independently, just as a member of the human body may not serve itself.

Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 25.3

"Unto this catholic (universal) visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto."

Shorter Catechism Q. 88 "What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?"

Ans: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation. Proof texts: Matt 28:19; Acts 2:42-47.

Shorter Catechism Q. 89 How is the word made effectual to salvation?

Ans: The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation. Nehemiah 8:8; Acts 26:18; Romans 10:13-17.

Based on these truths, the church's ministry must be greatly focused on preaching the Word of God. Every meeting of the church should focus on expounding the Scriptures to present the gospel, and to call God's people to a faithful response to the truths of His word. The church is also to administer the sacraments accompanied with the preaching of the word.

This requires commitment from the eldership and minister/s of the church, and a like commitment from the people who must desire to attend the means of grace, which God has ordained for the good of their souls. □

Q & A

What does Presbyterian mean? _____

Why are elders plural? _____

What is another term for Means of grace. _____

Why must a sacrament not be administered apart from the ministry of the word of God?

Explain how prayer is a means of grace. What texts prove your answer? _____

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Would you join a church where the Biblical order of the word and sacraments were not given priority? _____

Do individual Christians have a responsibility to the Lord's church? _____

Week #3 Baptism Why? & How?

What is baptism?

A command:

It is the command of God to His born again people in order to publicly declare their discipleship to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (Matt. 28:19-20. Acts 2:38). Note that those who were baptized firstly attended to the word.

A badge:

The Latin word 'sacramentum', which is translated sacrament in English, was a Roman military term of initiation into military service declaring the soldier's allegiance. To receive the sacrament of baptism, therefore, is a badge of discipleship acknowledging that the Lord Jesus is Lord over your life.

A Symbol:

Shorter Catechism Q 94. What is baptism?

Ans: Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward grace. The inward grace being the washing away of sin and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It signifies union with Christ through repentance and faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that baptism symbolizes **spiritual** cleansing or purification, Acts 2:38, 22:16, Rom. 6:4; 1Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5; Heb 10:22; 1Peter 3:21; Rev. 1:5.

Who should be baptized?

1. Each and every adult, or adolescent, who is soundly converted to Christ through the power of the gospel and is committed to be a disciple for Christ may be baptized by the church (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. Infant children of believing church members, who are committed to the covenant view of children in the visible church, may also be baptized. Parents may present their child/children to be baptized to future faith and repentance with the understanding that baptism does not mean regeneration, or salvation at the time of baptism.
3. Parents who do not adhere to infant baptism may have their children dedicated. When that child is of age and testifies of the new birth he or she may be baptized as a believer upon his or her own profession of faith. As with participation at communion we set the age of sixteen as a minimum age for the baptism of believers to ensure that the young person has the maturity required to give a credible profession of faith.

When should a believer be baptized?

As soon as he or she has shown clear evidence of conversion to Christ with a basic comprehension of the gospel and declares a sincere desire to be a faithful witness for Christ. Before a person is received into membership of the church he or she should be baptized.

How is baptism to be performed?

1. All baptisms are to be administered by an ordained minister of the church. They are to be conducted under the headship of Christ who through the authority granted to Him as Redeemer and Mediator of His people commissioned the apostles to go forth into the world to preach the gospel and to baptize converts as His disciples.
2. Baptisms are to be performed in the Trinitarian formula using the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

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3. The church, or the elders representing the church, should hear the candidate's own confession of faith and ascertain if he or she comprehends the gospel before undertaking to administer baptism. A prior interview for this purpose will be arranged at the request of the candidate for baptism.
4. A date will be set for the baptism giving time to announce the baptism to the congregation, which is required as it is a function of the church.
5. We practice dipping of the adult believer in water, allowing for exceptions where pouring of water may be requested. Baptisms are held at a separate time from our main Sunday services and tend to be performed before or after a Sunday evening service. The baptismal tank is located in the lower level of our church, so baptisms are planned accordingly.
6. The session of the church will record all baptisms and a certificate confirming baptism is issued.
7. Most often the candidate for baptism will desire membership in the local congregation in which he or she is baptized, but there will be exceptions. It is best to keep baptism and membership as separate steps. After baptism is administered the process for membership in the church can begin. Membership in a local church is the command of the Lord and, therefore, to be encouraged.

Sample form:

Application Form for Adult Baptism Under the Ministry of The Free Presbyterian Church in Cloverdale

Name: _____

Date of Birth _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email: _____

Please answer the following questions:

1. Have you been baptized before? _____
2. Have you been a member of a church before? _____ If so, which church?

3. Give a short statement on the reason you are requesting baptism? _____
4. Do you accept the doctrine of the Trinity - of the Three Persons in the Godhead?

5. Do you profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour? _____
6. Do you have the assurance of sins forgiven and on what basis? _____
7. Do you accept the doctrine of Justification by faith alone as stated in the Shorter catechism Q. & A. 33 **What is justification?** A. 33: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins,¹ and accepteth us as righteous in His sight,² only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us,³ and received by faith alone.⁴
Eph. 1:7, 2 Cor. 5:2, Rom. 5:19, Gal. 2:16
8. Have you read and considered the information on baptism in our Baptism & Membership Course? _____
9. Are you willing to state publicly at your baptism that by God's grace you will endeavour to be a faithful disciple of Christ?
10. Will you prayerfully seek God's leading to become a member of a sound Biblical Church?

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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(There is a separate application form for infant baptism.)

Week # 4

What is Communion?

Like baptism, communion is a sacrament of the church. It is also a badge, a symbol and a command of the Lord. (Luke 22:19, 1Cor. 11:24). As a badge we publicly declare our faith in the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation. The two visible signs, bread and the redness of the wine/juice, represent the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. When the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19) He commanded his apostles to remember his death in this manner and the apostle Paul passed this ordinance on to the church (1Cor. 11:23-26). The people of God who gather as the Lord's church, therefore, are commanded to partake in the Lord's Supper using these visible symbols of Christ death. It a means of grace to strengthen our faith in the redeeming work of Christ, thereby nourishing our souls.

Larger Catechism Q. 168: What is the Lord's Supper?

A. 168: The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the New Testament,¹ wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, His death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon His body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace;² have their union and communion with Him confirmed;³ testify and renew their thankfulness,⁴ and engagement to God,⁵ and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.⁶

1. Luke 22:20; 2. Matt. 26:26–28; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; 3. 1 Cor. 10:16; 4. 1 Cor. 11:24; 5. 1 Cor. 10:14–16, 21
6. 1 Cor. 10:17



It is a great honour for a redeemed sinner to participate in communion in the Lord's church. It is our badge of profession as a Christian. It is for the nourishment of our souls. It is our re-dedication unto God and our partnering with fellow believers, who are members of the head, even Christ. The Greek word KOINONIA is translated "fellowship" and "communion" in our English Bible, and means to share as partners.

It is horizontal – unto our fellow blood-washed saints showing that we are one in Christ. We are all members of one body with Christ as our head.

It is also vertical – unto God showing that as redeemed sinners we are not our own, but that we are bought by the blood of Christ and must glorify God in our bodies and our spirits.

**“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [sharing] of the blood of Christ?
The bread which we break, is it not the communion [sharing] of the body of Christ” (1Cor. 6:16)?**



In the Lord's Supper, the benefits of Christ's death, are appropriated to the believer through his faith.

The apostle Paul declared (1Cor. 10:16) that communicants receive spiritual benefit from Christ as the fruit of His death. At the communion feast the Lord appropriates/pours in His grace as faith is exercised in Christ.

The Lord calls each professing Christian to participate in the communion feast. It is a love feast between the Lord and His redeemed. Therefore, in the Lord's name, the church must exhort all believers to attend the table of the Lord each time it is dispensed.

When dispensing the Lords' Supper, however, the church must also guard against those who are unfit to attend it. Those who have no knowledge and no saving interest in the death of Christ must be forbidden to partake. The church also has a responsibility to bar anyone whose testimony is a scandal to the gospel and to the testimony of the church. This balance between encouraging all believers to attend and guarding the purity of the Lord's sacrament can be difficult and requires wisdom and grace.

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The Importance of Church Membership

This work of guarding the Lord's church and the Lord's Table shows the importance of a church membership. The Lord calls His people to join themselves to the ministry of the local church and place themselves under the shepherding care of the church (Heb 13:17, Acts 20:28). Without members there can be no work for elders, or pastors.

The Free Presbyterian Church has an 'open policy' to invite professing Christians who are non-members to attend the Lord's Table. This accommodates visitors and those who are being introduced to the life of the church, but this should not be considered as a permanent arrangement. Regular communicants at the Lord's Table should become members of the church. So it is right that we encourage all who attend the church for their spiritual good including participation at the communion table to give serious consideration to becoming members of the church.

Who may be considered for membership?

- Those who can testify that they are born again and trust in Christ alone for salvation. The Free Presbyterian church of North America insists on a born-again membership.

When should you become a member?

- One year after conversion, or after first attendance of the church.
- After baptism.

In what church should you become a member?

- It is the individual's decision before God.
- Usually it is the will of God to join the church fellowship where God is feeding your soul, where you find faithful care of your soul and where you can agree with the doctrines and practices of the church. Remember there is no perfect church.
- Where God in His providence has already led you to a biblical church will be a strong guide. To ignore providence and go out from a fellowship may expose you to temptations.

What to look for in a church?

1. **A church that is confessional.** – It has a doctrinal statement and best to be an historical document rather than a totally new statement of faith. More often found in reformed churches that subscribe to the doctrines defended during the Protestant Reformation.
2. **A church that is united in doctrine and practice.**
Unity is the product of careful teaching and application of the church's doctrine and practice.
3. **A church that is separated from apostasy.**
Separate from ecumenism – the Romeward trend in Protestantism.
4. **A church that calls people to personal holiness.**
Seeking to call people away from worldliness, fads, dangerous trends and temptations.
5. **A church that honours the Lord's Day as God's gift and God's command to His people.**
6. **A church that provides pastoral care of its membership.**
The church is more than a preaching centre.
7. **A church that is evangelistic.**
There must be a burden for lost souls within the church and in the community.
8. **A church that faithfully preaches the word of God in a balanced ministry.**
A church must not focus on one issue. It is to feed the flock with the whole counsel of God – all that He has revealed in His word.

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(In the interest of being objective we presented these criteria for a biblical church before considering our own congregation)

Week #5

Things to understand about our Denomination

The FPCNA was formed in May 2005. Its governing document is The Book of Church Order.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Free Presbyterian Church of North America is

- a. To glorify God in the Trinity of His sacred persons, according to the Scriptures;
- b. To declare the whole counsel of God and remain faithful to His inspired and infallible Word, the Bible, with particular emphasis on the following truths: the total depravity of man as fallen in Adam; the three-fold function of the law as a mirror to expose and condemn sin, thus shutting men up to Christ as their only hope of gaining acceptance with God, as a curb to deter and re-strain the unconverted, and as a rule of life for the regenerate; the limitations of the law, in that it can neither effect justification in an unsaved person nor sanctification in a saved person; the sole mediation and saving merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; and His atoning death, bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven to be the advocate and great high priest of His people;
- c. To labor for the salvation of the lost by the preaching of the gospel of Christ and calling them to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;
- d. To seek the edification of Christians by teaching them the Scriptures and by pointing them continually to the all-sufficient Christ, the author and finisher of their faith;
- e. To oppose all expressions of human self-righteousness and to give prominence to the glorious truth of justification by faith in the merits of Christ's righteousness, which God freely imputes to His people through faith alone;
- f. To promote and participate in worldwide evangelism through biblically sound and separated mission activity.
- g. To promote scriptural and godly worship, with special emphasis on prayer, sound biblical preaching, the right administration of the sacraments, and a proper keeping of the Sabbath.
- h. To contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), opposing the enemies of the gospel, especially the antichristian system of Roman Catholicism and the unscriptural Ecumenical and Charismatic movements, thus rejecting the compromising policy of neo-evangelicalism in favor of biblical separation;
- i. To stimulate fellowship with Bible-believing men and churches who are separated unto the gospel of God.
- j. To surrender the entire work of the ministry to God for the work of the gospel, looking to Him to revive His work in this age of apostasy and to maintain the witness of this church until the glorious personal return of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

With a sense of history and hope, the Free Presbyterian Church of North America launches into the work that God has given it to do with the prayer that the Lord will place the stamp of His approval and blessing on its labors. In publishing its *Book of Church Order*, it rejoices in its clearly Presbyterian form of government but is mindful that in the final analysis, the structures we have adopted will be spiritually beneficial only as the Lord imparts to us the power of His Spirit.

Each local church in the Presbytery is levied 10% of its annual income to support missions, seminary, church planting and various Presbytery initiatives.

The Book of Church Order which is available online at www.fpcna.org forms the written constitution of the denomination and lays out procedures and doctrine. An overview of the denomination's history and practical standards is also available online. The booklet is called: "Separated Unto the Gospel." It covers the following topics:

- [How It All Began](#)
- [Why "Free Presbyterian"?](#)
- [Principles of Worship](#)
- [Our Statement of Faith](#)
- [Scripture](#)
- [The Sovereignty of God in Salvation](#)
- [The Person and Work of Christ](#)
- [The Holy Spirit](#)
- [The Christian Sabbath or The Lord's Day](#)

"There are things that are necessary to the being of the church, and there are things that are necessary to the well-being of the church."

James Bannerman.

Baptism & Membership

- Christian Baptism
- Ecclesiastical Separation
- Personal Separation
- Abstinence
- The Place of Women in the Church
- Headcovering in Public Worship
- Marriage and Divorce

Applicants are asked to read this booklet before submitting an application for membership in our local congregation.

Things to understand about The Free Presbyterian Church in Cloverdale (this is our legal name):

1. We are in full membership with the FPCNA.
2. We are incorporated under the B.C. Society Act and report annually after our Annual General Meeting.
3. We are a registered charity with Canada Revenue Agency and are eligible to issue tax receipts for donations to the church ministry. Our business number is: 13261-7887-RT0001. The annual returns are posted online by Canada Revenue Agency.
4. As Presbyterians we follow representative government. Elders & deacons are elected by the members to represent them in their decisions and regular work. Congregational meetings are held to elect office bearers, call a minister or transact other extraordinary business of the church. The regular decisions of the church are made by elders and deacons.
5. We adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith, with amendments regarding baptism and eschatology along with an added statement on the person of the Holy Spirit, as our form of doctrine. See BCO online for full version as used by our denomination.
Ministers and elders must subscribe to the W.C.F., whereas deacons and members are not asked to do so. However, all members must understand that the teaching of the church from the pulpit to the Sunday school will reflect the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith.
6. Divorcees are not eligible for elected office. (B.C.O. 2.19 & 2.28)
7. Our church is separated from apostate churches and ministries, but not isolated from other Biblical ministries. (See statement of purpose).
8. We use only the Authorized Version of the Bible in all meetings and ministries of our church. This is for unity, to avoid confusion and to assist in Bible memorization.
9. We do not allow people into membership who practice Charismatic gifts such as speaking in tongues. (B.C.O. 5.2b).
10. Our definition of marriage is outlined in W.C.F. 24:1: *“Marriage is to be between one man and one woman.”*
11. The FPCNA and each local congregation holds to a membership committed to total abstinence from alcohol.

This rule is based on the Biblical concept of self-denial to promote the unity of the church, its testimony and as an example to fellow believers and their families. It is also to protect those who may struggle from the abuse of alcohol.

“Our standards are not standards of bondage but expressions of our liberty, purity, testimony, and community – because they tell the weakest saint among us that we care enough for him to banish even the possibility of our causing him to stumble” (Separated Unto the Gospel).

Baptism & Membership



Week #6

1Timothy 3:15

Things to undertake to become a member of the FPC in Cloverdale:

1. Testify to personal assurance that your sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ and of the new birth experience.
2. Testify of your baptism into the Christian faith under the Trinitarian formula.
3. Give testimony to a comprehension of the divine institution of the church for God's glory and the welfare of souls through the God appointed means of grace.
4. Invite the rule of eldership as overseers to care for your soul – this is what application for membership indicates.
5. Commit to faithful attendance at all Sunday Services with exceptions due to age, infirmity, distance or works of necessity and mercy.
6. Commit to regular attendance at the Lord's Table.
7. Commit to attend prayer meetings when possible – exceptions may be accepted by the session in special situations.
8. Honour the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath – one whole day out of seven – making Sunday a day of public worship and witness for Christ in His church, apart from works of necessity and mercy.
9. Tithe.
10. Testify to the desire for personal separation from the world and for growth in personal holiness.
11. Abstain from alcoholic beverages – except as prescribed for health reasons.

This rule is based on the Biblical concept of self-denial to promote the unity of the church, its testimony and as an example to fellow believers and their families. Also to protect those who may struggle from the abuse of alcohol.

“Our standards are not standards of bondage but expressions of our liberty, purity, testimony, and community – because they tell the weakest saint among us that we care enough for him to banish even the possibility of our causing him to stumble” (Separated Unto the Gospel).

12. Abstain from public dancing.
13. Ladies undertake to wear head covering at worship services in compliance with the apostle Paul's teaching in 1Corinthians 11:1-16. It is to be noted that the apostle based this practice on creation (v7 – 9) not culture, which stamps the practice as permanent, not temporary. It is referenced to the angels attending worship (v10) and, therefore, to do with public worship in the church.
14. Accept the biblical doctrine that a member's final appeal is to church courts, not civil courts (1Cor. 6:1-8) BC0. 1.7 This is stated on each membership form.

Privileges of Membership

1. Enjoy the support of the life and ministry of the church.
2. Enjoy the pastoral support of the eldership and the congregation.

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3. Hold appointed position in the church such as Sunday School teacher, youth worker, or other ministry under the guidance of the session.
4. Nominate candidates and vote at all church elections.
5. Men may hold elected office.
6. Appeal to the session for direction or concerns as a member.
7. Appeal to presbytery if not satisfied with an appeal to the session.

Steps to Becoming a Member

1. Pray for the Lord's guidance over the first year of attendance.
2. Submit a membership form as a request to become a member.
3. Attend an interview with minister and elder/s.
4. Receive acceptance of the session at a duly arranged session meeting.
5. Be publicly received into membership at a Sunday communion service.
6. Have your name placed on our church's membership list - published annually at AGM.

Erasure from membership list.

Upon written request of the member.

By letter from the session terminating membership.

By letter of transfer to another church.

(Erasure, or resignation should be stated in writing for clear communication between session and members and proper record keeping.)

Thank you for taking this Baptism & Membership course. We trust it has been informative and will enable you to follow the Lord in baptism and membership in the church to which He will lead you. Please remember the diagram on the front cover that illustrates that the institution of the Lord's church, individual membership baptism and communion are all intertwined. If God leads you to one He will lead you to all (Romans ch.12; James 1:4-8).

It is our prayer that God's people are well taught, well guided and well supported through their walk with the Lord. While there is no perfect church and we confess our shortcomings before God, we do strive to be good shepherds of the flock knowing we shall give account of each soul that comes under our ministry (1Peter 5:1-4). We ask that you take the initiative to honour the Lord in your Christian life by proceeding to be baptized and to seek membership in a Bible preaching church as the Lord leads you. Forms are available for this. When you fill them in and pass to the minister or an elder we will follow up. We look forward to future worship and service together for the Lord.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

And of some have compassion, making a difference:

And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless

before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

Amen.”

Jude 1:20 - 25

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Addendums

THE LORD'S DAY

Read the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11.

Larger Catechism Q. 116. *What is required in the fourth commandment?*

A. The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called *The Lord's Day*.

The Saturday Sabbath was based on God's rest from Creation.

The Sunday Sabbath is based on the Christian's rest on the day of the Lord's resurrection.

1Cor. 16:1, Acts 20:7, Rev. 1:10

The principle of one day in seven as a day of rest from labour remains the same.

Larger Catechism Q. 117. *How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?*

A. The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship: and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

Larger Catechism 120. *What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?*

A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from:

1. the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, *Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:*
2. from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, *The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: from the example of God, who in six days ... made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day:*
3. and from that blessing which God put upon that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it; *Wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

How do we personally apply the 4th commandment?

1. Pray that it will be a personal commitment between your soul and the Lord. Exo 31:13
2. Pray that it will be a part of your testimony before the ungodly. Neh. 13.

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3. Pray that it will be a help to public worship for all in our congregation.

“Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I *am* the LORD.” Lev 19:30, Is. 56:2-7.

4. Pray that it will ever be a blessing and not a burden.

“For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.” Matt. 12:8, Isaiah 58:13-14.

To crown all, Christ says that he was Lord of the Sabbath. He had a right to direct the manner of its observance - undoubted proof that He is divine.

HEADCOVERING:

Practiced in the Past

There is a debate about headcovering and many Christian women don't even know there is a history of headcovering, or that there is clear Bible teaching on this matter. Nevertheless, historically, it has been the general practice in almost all churches. It is only since the 1960s, during the rise of the feminist movement, among other humanistic philosophies, that the practice of women wearing headcovering in public worship has declined. If you search for pictures of Christian congregations prior to that time you will find that ladies in most churches wore headcovering.

Cultural

The debate centres around its cultural relevance. Some say, what was required for worship in Corinth, in New Testament times, was only required in that culture.

The answer to that is that in 1Corinthians 11 the apostle Paul based the requirement for women to wear headcovering upon the need for women to submit to their husbands upon creation (See v9). Adam was made first and “the woman was made for the man.” Head covering in public worship is the symbol of that submission. It is a fixed rule of Bible interpretation which should be consistently applied, that what is based on creation is for all time and for all peoples, not just one culture group.

Complement

These same verses lead to the teaching that the woman is the complement to the man. This teaching is not very popular in our present-day-world and often leads to a rejection of the principle that the woman is to complement the man. As it requires the woman to accept the man's headship and to be in submission to him. Because the principle of submission is rejected, so the symbol has been rejected as well. When the practice of women submitting to husbands is tabooed the symbol will also be shunned.

When and Where?

The Bible does not require women to practice headcovering at home when in worship, nor in public places when socializing. The apostle Paul referred to women at worship in the church. Paul's letter to the Corinthians was a church letter and the reference to “ordinances” in ch. 11:2 refers to practice in the church. To insist that women should have their heads covered at all times goes beyond the instructions found in 1Corinthians 11.

What to wear?

This is not fully defined in 1Corinthians 11. The Greek word KATAKALUPTO behind the English words “covered” v6, and “cover” v7 means something pressing down on the head. It refers to a man-made material laid on top of the head.

Whereas, the word “covering” translated from the Greek term PERIBOLION in v15 means a wrap-around and is a reference to the woman's hair.

Note that the hair does not replace the material covering. To take that position would undermine the apostle's line of argument in the whole passage leading up to v15, and would render the instructions found in v7 ridiculous, “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God.” To

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instruct a man that his hair is a covering and then that it is a shame for him to worship with his head covered would demand that his head be totally shaven.

A Bad Custom

Some people try to undo all that the apostle taught in 1Cor. 11:1 - 15 by applying the word “custom” in v16 to the whole practice of headcovering. That is to twist the apostle’s plea to avoid contention on this matter. The apostle simply stated that headcovering should be accepted as a proper practice for women in public worship in Corinth, and other N.T. churches. The word “custom” refers to the term “contentious” in the same verse, and guards against people’s opposition to the practice of headcovering. Opposition to the practice was not accepted in the church at Corinth nor the other churches in the New Testament.

Going back to what was said earlier, the reference to the “churches” confirms that it was not just a cultural practice in Corinth alone. The other churches in the N.T. followed this practice too. That is strong evidence that it was not situational, nor cultural. The church in Rome was the very home of Roman culture, whereas the church in Corinth was in the centre of Greek culture, while the churches in Judea, were steeped in Jewish culture. The conclusion of the matter is that headcovering applies to all cultures and has been the practice for centuries.

Giving the Glory to God

The spiritual attitude is for women to follow the truth found in verse 15. Women are to cover their heads in public worship in order to give glory to God. The apostle pointed out that the woman’s hair is her glory. As we all know, the woman's hair is exceedingly important to her. So she is to cover her glory and give it to God. She is not doing so for man, but for her Lord. She takes delight in giving the Lord all the glory in her worship.

ECCLESIASTICAL AND PERSONAL SEPARATION

FPC Book of Church Order - ADDENDUM TO CHAPTER 25 Of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

“It is the duty of particular churches to maintain the highest possible standards of purity of doctrine and practice.¹ To be faithful to Christ, they are called to separate themselves unto Him from all fellowship or cooperation in worship or service with churches or other organizations or individuals that have degenerated into apostasy by denying or by maintaining fellowship with those who deny any of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith;² or by adopting the moral relativity of the world in defiance of the ethical standards of the Scriptures of truth.³ They are further called to separate from brethren who maintain fellowship with those who de-ny the faith⁴ to repudiate all false ecumenism, and to refuse to compromise any essential truth of the gospel in an effort to achieve visible church union with de-generate churches.⁵ They must also humbly maintain Scriptural standards of holiness among their members and officers, not being conformed to the standards of the world but purposing to live by the faith of the gospel in obedience to God’s holy law.⁶

Because the Lord Jesus Christ saves His people from their sins and commands them to adorn the doctrine of God by holy living,⁷ the church believes that its members should embrace standards of personal separation from the worldliness of the present evil age.⁸ Particularly, in light of the scourge that the use of drugs and consumption of alcoholic beverages causes to individuals, families, and society, the church requires its members to express part of their separation unto God by their total abstinence from all social, recreational, or non-medicinal use of drugs and beverage alcohol.”⁹

1. Ps. 93:5; 96:9

2. Eph. 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:14–18; 1 Tim. 6:3–5

3. Matt. 5:17–20; Heb. 10:16

4. 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15; Rom. 16:17

5. Prov. 23:23; Amos 3:3; 2 John 9–11

6. Rom. 12:1–3; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; Eph. 4:22–24; 5:1–11; 1 John 2:15–16

7. Matt. 1:21; Titus 2:10

8. Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15

9. 1 Cor. 6:19–20; Rom. 14:7, 15–17, 21; 1 Cor. 8:11–13; 10:31–33

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See also Westminster Confession of Faith, 20.3 (Chapter 20 deals with Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience).

They who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.¹

1. Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16; 2 Peter 2:19; John 8:34; Luke 1:74–75.

Abstinence from Alcohol a Matter of Self Denial

First, let it be said that our church's rule on total abstinence from alcohol does not force anyone's conscience to participate in what is contrary to the will of God. To insist that all participate in drinking alcohol would be 'forcing' people to act against conscience. Our church's policy does the very opposite. Our church requires a voluntary self-denial to abstain from alcohol for the good of the church and of society.

Does the church have the right to call its membership to this standard?

This is an important question because there is a strong movement that argues for the Christian's liberty in any matter that is not related to salvation.

In answer to this there are many good arguments for the church's right to rule on a matter that is not imperative to salvation, or on things that are extra Biblical.

For example, creeds are themselves extra Biblical. They are interpretations of Scripture with settled positions on theological doctrines and controversies. These are considered acceptable and essential in all reformed churches.

How then can Protestant bodies that claim Sola Scriptura justify such bold action?

The answer is given in the Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 1:6: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture . . ." however "there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church common to human actions and societies which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

We see this at work in the Jerusalem council made up of apostles and elders who made decrees about meats offered to idols, eating of blood and things strangled (Acts 15:29). These were dietary restrictions practiced by Jews, which Gentile converts to Christianity were also to obey (Acts 16:4). These decrees were made as a concession to the conscience of others.

Note God's commendations to those who did refrain from alcohol.

- The Nazarites Numbers 6.
- The Rechabites Jer. 35
- John the Baptist touched neither wine nor strong drink. John 1:35.
- Timothy was advised to take a little wine for his stomach's sake - medicinal use. This would indicate that he did not take wine on a regular basis.

The Principle of Self-Denial

We have seen the self-denial principle at work in Acts 15 in the circumcision debate which took place in Jerusalem.

In agreement with that earlier practice, Paul the apostle taught that the strong Christian is to deny himself in consideration of the weaker brother (Rom. 14:7, 13–17, 21).

The weak person here is the one who cannot exercise freedom, or is unaware of his freedom, to eat certain meats because of their association with idol worship. He sees the pollution of idolatry in every piece of meat and in the use of the wine. Therefore, he feels convicted of wrong doing by participating in it and is offended when his brothers and sisters dare eat or drink of it.

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The apostle points out the responsibility of those who believe they may exercise their right to eat and drink. They are to abstain due to the offence their eating will cause to the weaker saint and the harm it will do to the life of the church.

A Christian's personal sense of liberty in this matter must not be exercised while others are offended. We may become guilty of wounding a "weak conscience" and thereby offend Christ (1Cor. 8:11-12).

Paul the apostle declared his personal commitment to this need for self-denial while the occasion of offence remained in the world (1Cor 8:13). There is still tension today among Christians over alcohol consumption as we witness its harm within society and its harm to the individual Christian's testimony. Thus there is still the need for this commitment in the world.

In his letter to the Corinthians (1Cor. 10:31-33) Paul the apostle saw the need to be sensitive to another person's conscience. As he exhorted all his readers in his letter to the Corinthians, this applies to all Christians. His reasons are solidly laid out:

- We may be evil spoken of. 1Cor. 10:30
- We should do all to the glory of God. V31
- Christians need to think of the whole church when they practice things that may offend. V 32
- The salvation and welfare of souls is much more important than personal liberty to enjoy what could be rationalized as legitimate.

Is the use of alcohol acceptable practice for a Christian?

There are many warning passages in the Bible.

Noah's drunkenness was due to his wine drinking. Genesis 9 This led to fornication and a curse on the house of Canaan.

Lot's drunkenness led to incest with his daughters. Genesis 19.

God's warning to Aaron: Lev 10:9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations: This came after the sudden slaying of Aaron's sons, Dathan and Abiram, when they offered strange fire before the Lord. They must have been under the influence of such drink when they sinned against the Lord.

Nabal the fool was drunken when David approached him and his drinking cost him his life. 1Samuel 25.

Warnings to avoid wine and strong drink in the book of Proverbs

Pro 20:1 Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Pro 21:17 He that loveth pleasure *shall be* a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

Pro 23:30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Pro 23:31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.

Pro 31:4 *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

This proverb shows that leaders ought to abstain from the influence of alcohol.

Pro 31:6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.

Drunkenness is Sinful

Eph. 5:18 "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit."

Drunkenness may not be tolerated

The elder (Titus 1:7) and the deacon (1Tim. 3:8) is to control his drinking of wine. "Not given to much wine."

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Why do those who drink alcohol cause offence?

Albert Barnes commenting on Paul's statement, "Nor to drink wine" (Romans 14:21) wrote: "Wine was a common drink among the Jews, and usually esteemed lawful. But the Nazarites were not allowed to drink it Num 6:3, and the Rechabites Jer. 35 drank no wine, and it is possible that some of the early converts regarded it as unlawful for Christians to drink it. Wine was moreover used in libations in pagan worship, and perhaps the Jewish converts might be scrupulous about its use from this cause.

The caution here shows us what should be done "now" in regard to the use of wine. It may not be possible to prove that wine is absolutely unlawful, but still many friends of "temperance" regard it as such, and are grieved at its use. They esteem the habit of using it as tending to intemperance, and as encouraging those who cannot afford expensive liquors. Besides, the wines which are now used are different from those which were common among the ancients. That was the pure juice of the grape. That which is now in common use is mingled with alcohol, and with other intoxicating ingredients. Little or none of the wine which comes to this country is pure. And in this state of the case, does not the command of the apostle here require the friends of temperance to abstain even from the use of wine?"

We will not end the controversy over the use of alcohol and the liberty some believe they may exercise. Much of the controversy surrounds whether the wine spoken of in the Bible was always alcoholic or if it was the pure juice of the grape. Much has been written about it and much has been debated, still Christians are divided over the matter.

As a church we believe that it is right to exercise self-denial on this matter while the controversy continues and while there is such carnage through the abuse of alcohol in so many countries around the world. This is not a cultural issue. It is not an academic issue solely, but a love issue for our brethren and the many who have suffered, or may yet fall into the curse that alcohol so often holds over homes and families.

When we stand before the Lord, we will have no regrets for taking an abstinence position. We may wish the church had been free to do more to stem the debauchery that alcohol has brought upon this fallen world. A world where sinners resort to the false hopes of wine and strong drink rather than the gospel for satisfaction in Christ. Let us enjoy the Lord's grace to the full, while we deny ourselves what destroys so many souls around us.

Helpful articles:

Separated Unto the Gospel – Abstinence

A Defense of Church Standards

Regarding the Use of Alcoholic Beverages

Reginald C. Kimbro

Grace Free Presbyterian Church
Winston-Salem, NC

What About Bible Wines?

By Rev. Myron Mooney Minister of Trinity FPC, Alabama
(To be posted on Cloverdale FPC website)

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