

TPC 101

Class 3—The Grace of Reformed Theology

Presbyterianism traces its roots to John Knox, who started the Presbyterian church in Scotland, after sitting under Calvin's authority in Geneva for several years. This means Presbyterianism flows directly out of the Reformation of the 16th century.

Importance of Theology

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves... - John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion 1-1-1

Our understanding of God ought to reflect the transcendent immanence and Sovereign majesty of the biblical God of love and holiness. And our understanding of man ought to reflect the biblical portrait of beings not only created in the image of that God but fallen in sin. And our understanding of salvation must comprehend not only redemption from that fallen state but restoration into a journey of being prepared to once again and eternally reflect the image of that Divine love and holiness.

1. Committed to the Glory of God

Central to Reformed Theology is a commitment to God's glory. We understand the bible to teach that all things exist, and ultimately come to pass, to manifest God's glory.

God's glory encompasses the greatness, beauty, and perfection of all that He is and all that He does, every attribute and every action. Paul Tripp *The Doctrine of Glory*

Rom. 11:36 For from him (God) and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.

Scripture is **Theocentric** – God-centered, as opposed to man-centered. This is reflected, even in how we frame our worship. We do it, not with the idea of what is most appealing to people, but rather, how would God have us to worship Him to extol His glory!

Is 40:17, 22&23 All the nations are as nothing before him... It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

Scripture does not present a dualistic notion of God struggling against the forces of evil. But rather, He *sits above the circle* of all that He Has created, appointing its end, and its path to that end. Everything comes to pass according to His perfect wisdom, including our salvation.

"Soli Deo Gloria must govern everything we think and say about what the scripture teaches" Lane Tipton, Lectures on God's Sovereignty

2. Committed to the Scripture as Our Ultimate Authority

The original intention of the Reformers was not to start the Protestant Church. Many in the Roman Catholic church were seeking reform as well. But Luther realized so many of those reforms were superficial, and what really needed to be dealt with was the central issue of - **where does the authority of our faith rest?**

The message of scripture is the message of God's gospel of grace to a fallen and sinful humanity.

3. Committed to the Gospel of God's Free Grace

When we say Trinity is Reformed, we mean that we are a church that gladly holds that our justification before God is not dependent upon anything in us. Rather it is God's gift given to us which is received by faith alone.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

We believe salvation is due to God's sovereign **grace alone**, received through **faith alone**.

Formal cause of the Reformation – our ultimate authority is Scripture alone

Material cause of the Reformation – our justification before God is through Faith alone

Reformed theology holds that the essence of saving faith is not a quality in us, but it is a turning away from anything in us to depend completely upon that work outside of us, which is an absolutely free justification and therefore, completely by God's grace.

Rom 3:24 we are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

4. Committed to the Doctrines of God's Sovereign Grace

By virtue of Scripture being our authority, we seek to have a biblical view of man and the extent of his fall, and a biblical view of God and the grace of His redemption.

- Man, and the extent of his fall

Eph. 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- God, and the sovereignty of His grace

Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

2 Cor. 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

When we say we are committed to the sovereign grace of God, we are saying we believe our salvation must be a work totally from God, from beginning to end. This grace is typically laid out under five points, which are known as the five points of Calvinism or TULIP.

A. The Five Points are more fully comprehended as the Doctrines of God’s Grace

To many, outside Reformed circles, the concept of Calvinism is that it is a cold and heady religion; that it presents a cruel God who treats people as puppets on a string; that its defenders have somewhat of an elitist attitude, who think of themselves as chosen because they’re better than other people.

These stereotypes severely miss the mark. When rightly understood, God’s sovereign grace is not cold but warm. And, instead of being cruel, the beauty and depth of that grace is overwhelming. And to those who see it, they do not think of themselves as better, but realize their salvation was not because of anything in them. They know that they are saved by God’s grace alone. And they have a passion for others to understand the overwhelming depth and beauty of that grace. Therefore, these five points are most accurately labeled the **“Doctrines of Grace”**.

B. Our Salvation is a Trinity of Grace with a Unity of Purpose

The five points of Calvinism are an exposition of the ONE point - that salvation must be a work wholly of God and His sovereign grace, because man is completely unable to save himself, or even contribute anything to his salvation.

Man’s natural condition

Total Depravity – The inability of man

The work of God in saving man

Unconditional Election – The Father’s work

Limited Atonement – The Son’s work

Irresistible Grace – The Spirit’s work

Man’s new redeemed condition

Perseverance of the Saints – man kept in the saving power of God

As each member of the Trinity fulfills their part, they complete the redemption they set out to accomplish.

TULIP – **Total Depravity** –

The doctrines of grace begin with the acknowledgement of the human condition. We are not simply sinners. Sin has affected our natural condition. We have become corrupted (like a drop of ink corrupts an entire glass of water) which causes us to enter this world spiritually dead. This death creates an **inability** in us, not only to perform, but even to perceive that which is spiritually good.

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Eph 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

*1 Cor. 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is **not able** to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

This is why the cross of Christ is *“foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” - 1 Cor. 1:18*

Our spiritual inability is represented in scripture in several different ways.

- a. Speaking of us being spiritually blind, Jn 9:39
- b. Spiritually deaf. Jn 8:47
- c. Spiritually dead. Eph 2:1
- d. Having a heart of stone. Ezek 36:26
- e. Having a will that is in bondage to Satan, Jn 8: 44

TULIP - **Unconditional Election—The grace of the Father** –

Out of fallen humanity, the Father chooses a people to redeem. He sends the Son and the Spirit to accomplish and apply this redemption. God’s act of sovereignly choosing is neither arbitrary nor capricious, but is motivated solely by His unconditional love. Apart from God’s gracious choosing, all humanity would be lost in sin and death. (Matt. 11:27, Jn. 15:16, Acts 13:48, Eph. 1 and 2:8-10)

Eph 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Deut 7:6-8 The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Before Rebecca's children were born and had done nothing either good or bad, God chose Jacob over Esau—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— Rom 9:11

Unconditional election stresses the point that God's choice flows, not out of anything in us, but out of His own good purposes of love toward us. We are sovereignly chosen by God to be the recipients of Christ's redemptive work.

Rom 9:20&21 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

The depth of this grace should overwhelm us instead of moving us to question God.

TULIP - The Atonement – The grace of the Son –

God provides a path for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes in redeeming His elect. That path is found in the work of the Son and the Spirit. The atonement accomplishes that redemption, and the grace of the Spirit applies that redemption.

*Jn 17:1&2,6,22&23 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all **whom you have given him**... I have manifested your name to the people **whom you gave me out of the world**. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word... The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

In this prayer we find that in the act of the Father giving this elect group to the Son, Christ assumes a oneness with them. He says He is "**in them**". They are His, as His body. And He is their Head. This Divinely established covenant relationship between Christ and this elect group is the basis for this prayer of intercession. And it is the basis for the atoning work that is set before Christ. He is going to accomplish the redemption necessary to save this family given to Him by the Father.

And just as this prayer of intercession ensures the Father's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, this eternally sanctioned covenantal union of Christ with His people ensures the communication of the efficacy of that sacrifice to all those "in Him". It ensures the transmission of the sins of the elect to Christ, for He is their Head. And it ensures the transmission of His righteousness to them, for they are His body.

*2 Cor 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that **in him** we might become the righteousness of God.*

- **The absolute efficacy of the atonement**

Christ's death needs nothing added to it to accomplish its intent toward the elect. Its acceptance by the Father ensures its accomplishment. And so, Christ's death does not simply enable the salvation of the elect. It actually saves them.

Rom 5:10&11 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

And, as we will see in the next point, this accomplished work of the atonement empowers the Spirit to work faith in the elect through regeneration, thereby providing the avenue for them to receive their justification.

- **God's design in the atonement**

It was the Father's design from all eternity that Jesus should bear the sins of those who were "in Him". This is why Paul can say:

1 Cor 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

All Adam's family died because they were in Adam. All Christ's family shall be made alive because they are in Christ.

It is this very design of the Father and absolute efficacy of Christ's redeeming work which limits the scope of the atonement to those given to Christ by the Father.

Jesus said:

*Jn. 6:38-39 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, **that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.***

Reformed theology holds that the atoning work of Christ completely saves all those for whom He died. And it is by the power of that atonement that the Spirit brings new life to that elect group through the gift of faith. And that faith, which is not of ourselves, flows from Christ's atoning work performed for us.

TULIP – Irresistible Grace - The grace of the Spirit —

The Spirit applies the redeeming work of the Son to the elect by effectually calling them into their union with Christ. (Jn. 1:12&13, Jn. 6:37, 44&45, Acts 16:14, Eph. 2:1&5)

This action of the Spirit is represented in scripture in several different ways.

- a. A new birth, Jn 3:3-8
- b. A new creation, 2 Cor 5:17
- c. Being taught of God, Jn 6:45
- d. The restoration of sight and hearing, Jn 9:39
- e. The giving of a new heart and a new will, Ezek 36:25-27
- f. A resurrection from the dead, Eph 2:5

This work of the Spirit is so closely associated with the death and resurrection of Christ, because the Spirit places us in union with Christ. And as He has died and been raised into a new life, we have spiritually taken that journey in Him, resurrected from our death.

We were blind and deaf with hearts of stone, enslaved to Satan. The Spirit frees us from that bondage, restores our spiritual senses to us, and not only transplants a new heart in us, but transplants us into the resurrected life of Christ. And so, Paul praises God when he says:

Col. 1: 13&14 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

And so, when we understand the greatness of this grace of the Spirit, it almost seems superfluous for us to question if it's irresistible. What the Spirit does actually makes Christ irresistible to us, when before all we could see at the cross was foolishness.

All three members of the Trinity have the same design in salvation. The Son dies for those the Father chose. And the Spirit applies that death and new life of the Son to that elect group, bringing them to faith. What a beautiful Trinitarian work of grace is our salvation!

TULIP - Perseverance of the Saints - Man's new redeemed condition—

All who come to Christ will not be perfect until they are with Christ, however, despite their sin they will persevere because God holds them securely in His hand. The grace of God's salvation makes us new creations who live a new life unto His glory. (Jn. 5:24, 6:35-40)

We are secure in His hands, for His Spirit applies the death and resurrection of Christ to us, which enables us to put our sin to death and walk in a newness of life.

Rom 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

These five points give us a systematic understanding of the grace of salvation and the story of redemption. As Reformed, we believe they are a faithful statement of the gospel.

5. Committed to be Evangelical

This gospel of God's grace is to be preached and taught and shared with all. It is the mission of the church. For through the sharing of the gospel, God brings His elect children to faith.

Rom 10:13&14 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

6. Committed to be a Confessional Church

This means that Trinity has a written confession of faith which we confess to be a good and accurate summary of the Bible's teaching. Our confession consists of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*. These documents are not without flaw; yet we believe they do contain carefully worded summaries of what the Bible teaches. All ruling and teaching elders and deacons in the PCA must vow that they hold to these standards and are required to indicate to their presbyteries or sessions where they take exceptions.

Summation

It is important to know these commitments are good ones; that is to say, it is profitable and health-producing for Christians to know what they believe. We believe that as we come to delight in them, we will grow to love and honor the Lord Jesus more fully and understand more richly what it means to live by grace.

Nevertheless, acceptance of all these commitments is not required for membership at Trinity. One can join and be a participating member of our church by professing Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures as one's sole hope for life and salvation. Only ruling and teaching elders and deacons must hold to all these commitments.

At Trinity we seek to be warm, gracious, welcoming, and non-judgmental; and yet at the same time hold strong convictions that flow from the bible.

TPC 101

Class 4—The Grace of Covenant Theology

1. What is Covenant Theology?

Covenant Theology teaches that the unifying principle of the Scriptures is the Covenant of Grace. The essence of this covenant is the promise that God calls a people to Himself to make them His possession: 'I will be your God and you will be my people.' And this one covenant, which God instituted in the Old Testament, meets its fulfillment in the person and work of Christ.

To speak of the one Covenant of Grace means that we believe there is one over-arching story in scripture, God's story of grace centered on Christ, and one way of salvation – by grace through faith in Christ. God's covenant is a Covenant of Grace that encompasses all of history. It includes one people and one purpose of grace.

2. What is a Covenant?

A covenant (theologically speaking) is an agreement, a compact, or an arrangement established by God between God and His people, but it is a compact of relationship. It is an agreement that contains the promises and obligations in which such a relationship exists.

"You will be my people and I will be your God." Gen 17:7

3. God's Covenant with Adam in the Garden

As God created Adam, He entered into a relationship (or communion) with the man, not by a covenant of grace, for Adam was yet unfallen. This first covenant is commonly referred to as the Covenant of Works, or the Covenant of Life. In that covenant relationship promises and obligations were established, blessing and curse were associated with it.

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. WCF 7-1

4. God's Covenant after the Fall

THE message or "story" of scripture is that upon Adam breaking the covenant and losing mankind's communion with God, God establishes a second covenant, in which the obligations of the first are fulfilled by God Himself in order to re-establish that lost communion. So, this second covenant is no longer dependent upon man's personal performance, but upon the covenant-keeping God. It is for us, a covenant of grace.

God said to Abram, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in

*half. 11 And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.
12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram...*

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. (Gen. 15:9-12&17)

In this event we have the first formal establishment of the covenant of grace. It was promised to Abraham earlier in Genesis chapter twelve, when God told Abraham that he would not only be the father of a nation, but that all the nations will be blessed through him. According to Paul in Galatians, this covenant with Abraham was the covenant promise of the gospel in shadow and type.

*Gal. 3:7-9 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."** So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

The promise of the blessing that would come upon the nations through Abraham was the gospel of Christ being preached to Abraham. And Paul continues in verses 13&14 to give us the essence of that gospel.

Gal. 3:13-14 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Paul takes us back to that covenant ceremony with Abraham and tells us that Christ was the *smoking fire pot and the flaming torch* who passed between the pieces. He took the curse of the covenant upon Himself. He fulfilled this by the redemptive work of His death and resurrection. And so, this covenant made with Abraham is the covenant of Christ, garbed in the Old Testament clothing of shadow and type.

And so, Paul sees, not only a connection between the Old and New Testaments, but a complete continuity of this one covenant of grace in Christ. This is the essence of covenant theology. After the fall God initiates a second covenant in Christ which answers and undoes the curse of the first covenant. And the story of scripture is the revelation of this one covenant of God's grace in Christ.

At the same time, there is a progressive character to this covenant, and its revelation. This is why there is an Old Testament (Old Covenant) and a New Testament, not to declare a disunity between the two, but a continuity .

"The New Testament is in the Old concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New revealed." Saint Augustine

5. God's Covenant, Old and New

- The Old Covenant (Testament) - the old administration of Christ's covenant of grace before He came.
- New Covenant (Testament) - the administration of Christ's covenant of grace after He fulfilled the covenant.

What is the essential difference between these economies?

- The covenant of grace was communicated to God's people under the Old Testament economy by shadowy pictures of the *"Christ who was to come"*.
- Then, under the New Testament economy, it is revealed in the reality (substance) of what those shadows were pointing to – *Christ as come, and His work as fulfilled* – that work of being mediator of this one covenant of grace.

By presenting the covenant in this way the bible connects the Testaments in a unity, being one and the same story of redemption. There is diversity between these two economies of the covenant, but it is a diversity within the unity of the one covenant of grace.

WCF 7-5. This covenant (the one covenant of grace) was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation, and is called the Old Testament.

WCF 7-6. Under the gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed, are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.

6. What is the scope of the Covenant?

- Familial rather than simply Individual

*Gen. 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and **your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant**, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*

As the covenant comes, it comes to us and to our offspring under our headship to encompass the family under the umbrella of its promises and blessings. There is a “household” paradigm of the covenant in both the Old and New Testament.

We see this in the Old with the promise made to Abraham and his children. And we see it in the New, as Peter reiterates this promise on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

This is a strikingly parallel promise to the original establishment of this covenant in Genesis 17 when God said:

Gen. 17:10-14 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

The covenant promise is laid out in its old administration to three specific groups.

1. to Abraham, v11
2. to the children born into his family, v 12
3. and to any foreigner who comes into the family. v 13

Peter parallels these three groups when he tells his hearers the promise is:

1. for you
2. for your children
3. and for those far off whom the Lord calls to be in this family

It is not a coincidence that Peter harkens back to this original establishment of the covenant. The familial framework of the promise continues. And it is a promise to you and to your children and to all those the Lord calls to be in this family.

7. The signs of the Covenant

"The sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace"...WCF 27

Every covenant has sacraments which sign and seal that covenant to its members. They are tangible testimonies of the spiritual realities of the covenant.

"Sacraments are visible signs of the invisible grace of the covenant." Augustine

WCF 27-4 There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospels, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any but a minister of the Word, lawfully ordained.

At Trinity, we take these two sacraments very seriously. We do not view them as man's testimony to God, but as God's testimony to us of His covenant of Grace.

- What about the Old Testament? Do we see corresponding sacraments to the sacraments of the New?

WCF 27-5 The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the New.

Paul tells us in Rom. 4:11 that Abraham...

*.. received the **sign** of circumcision as a **seal** of the righteousness that he had by faith...*

- Circumcision signified the same spiritual reality as baptism. Yet the signs were different. The same holds true for Passover and the Lords Supper. Why?

The Covenant under the Old was yet unfulfilled. And so, the signs depicted a pre-accomplished state of the Covenant. Under the New the signs reflect the accomplished state of the covenant.

God has accomplished the covenant! Every time we participate in communion, we proclaim this truth to ourselves. And every time we experience a baptism in the congregation, we testify that the doors of God's covenant has been opened by Christ to receive sinners into His kingdom.

8. Children of the Covenant

How do we regard our children?

- Are they out of the covenant until they profess faith?
- Are they innocent until they profess faith?
- **Are they regarded in the covenant even though they haven't professed faith?**

Unhealthy vs. Healthy Presumption

“There is no reason to presume that because children are not yet able to express mature faith, they must be treated as unbelievers. It is not hypocritical to take them to church, urge them to express joy that Jesus loves them, or allow them to pray at bedtime, or make other such expressions of childish faith. To the contrary, it would be unbiblical to treat our children as the offspring of Satan, unloved by God, and enemies of the household of faith, until they express saving faith. Such treatment may be logically defensible, if one does not accept the covenant relation of the child. – Bryan Chapell

- Placing the Covenant Sign Upon Our Children – Why do we do it?

This issue has much to do with one’s perception of what is being done in baptism. Do we understand baptism as a sacrament **of God’s covenant**? In other words, is baptism primarily something God is doing as He places His sign upon his people, just as He did with circumcision in the old covenant? Or is baptism primarily something man is doing in his act of obedience in following Christ.

- We at Trinity believe:
 - Our children should be baptized because of the unity of the covenant of grace. If God included children under the Old Covenant, then it follows that they are included in the New Covenant as well. (See Acts 2:38, Acts 16:15 & 31-34, 1 Cor. 1:16)
 - Baptism, like circumcision, is the sign of initiation into the Christian community, the place where discipleship happens. Therefore, for children of believers, baptism is to be administered at the beginning of their life because they belong to the covenant community.
 - Baptism is the sign and seal that points us to God and what God promises to do in His grace. In this way it is a clear sign that God takes the initiative in salvation. Seen in this way baptism ought to be administered to the children of the covenant before they believe, for it calls them to faith.
 - Baptism does not make anyone a Christian. Just like any believing person’s baptism, the internal reality of baptism for the infant cannot be guaranteed, nor is it the necessary result of receiving the sign. There will always be covenant breakers who are born into the covenant family, but who do not keep the covenant.

9. What is the mode of Baptism?

The 'official' position of the Presbyterian Church in America is that baptism by immersion is not necessary, but that it is rightly administered in sprinkling or pouring. Many believe that putting water on the person, rather than putting the person in water, best symbolizes the meaning of baptism – which primarily concerns cleansing.

10. The Lord's Supper or Communion or the Eucharist

This is a time for all people to seek the Lord. For Christians, Communion is a time to meet with their Savior by faith, to be strengthened and renewed by Him as they eat bread and drink of the fruit of the vine. We believe that in Communion, while no physical change takes place in the bread and wine, Christ really is present through the Spirit, and that those who come in faith are truly blessed and that they spiritually receive Christ's body and blood. Communion is a symbol, but it's not just a symbol.

For this reason, only baptized Christians who trust in Christ alone as their Savior and Lord, belong to a church that embraces the gospel, are at peace with their fellow neighbor, and seek strength and grace to live more faithfully to Christ, are invited to participate. If someone is not a Christian, or if they have not been baptized or are prepared to share this meal, we encourage that the time be spent in prayer and in consideration of one's relationship to Christ. We also ask that children who have not yet publicly professed their faith in Christ to refrain from partaking until doing so.