

## Principles of Reformed Theology by Pastor Wayne DeVrou

In this article I will outline the fundamental beliefs of Reformed Christianity. If you are thinking... "What difference does it make?" then I want to make it as plain as I can. The Christ centered principles of the Reformation are imperative for a healthy and God glorifying Church. As Christians become more and more biblically illiterate, churches drift farther away from the basic truths of scripture. Doctrines that were once clear to the Church are today looked upon as antiquated and socially unacceptable. We are living in a day in which practically every Church denomination is being attacked from within on these points. Virtually all Protestant churches once held to most of these scriptural truths and were "Reformed," but are the source of much unbiblical teaching today. The following are the general guidelines of the doctrines of Reformed Christianity:

1. We accept without question that the 66 books of the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments, are the divinely inspired Words of God to man (Psalm 119:160).
2. We believe that the Bible in it's original manuscript, is infallible, and thus the ultimate authority for the Christian Church today (2 Timothy 3:16).
3. We believe in one God, revealed in the three persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This God is Sovereign Creator and ruler of the universe (1 Jn 5:7; Isaiah 48:16) who upholds all by His power.
4. We believe in the fall and lost estate of man, which places him under the curse of sin. He is a slave (in bondage) so that he cannot please God with his good works, unless he is regenerated unto righteousness by the Spirit of God (Jeremiah 17:9-10; Romans 3:10-18).
5. We believe in the necessity of regeneration, or being born from above a new creation in Christ. Every person who is justified before God, must be born from above (John 3:7).
6. We believe in God's irresistible Grace, that all whom God has chosen unto Salvation, and all for whom Jesus Christ died, will be drawn of God, by absolutely no merit of their own, and be saved through faith (John 6:44; Ephesians. 2:8).

7. We believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior (Acts 4:12), the God/Man who was crucified in our stead, that our sins might be forgiven. It is in our wearing His robe of Righteousness, that we are accounted to stand righteous (1 Peter 2:24) before God.
8. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, His miraculous virgin birth, and His fulfilling the prophesy of the coming Messiah (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:14; Isaiah 53;), Savior of man.
9. We believe that in Christ's Resurrection from the dead, we were raised with Him, and as He was raised without sin, so we are risen without spot or blemish, an eternal redemption. (Matt. 1:21). He Saved all His people from their sins.
10. We believe in Christ's Resurrection from the dead, His present exaltation at the right hand of the father, and that in due time He will come again and bring all of His saints with him, and so they will reign in Life and Glory evermore (Luke 24:1-8).
11. We all believe in the spiritual, indivisible (not invisible) Church, the Body of Christ that is bound together by the Holy Spirit. We believe that the "true" body consists only of those who are born from above, for whom Christ now makes intercession in Heaven. We believe in the visible return of Christ to this world for final judgment (Acts 17:31).
12. We believe in eternal security, where all for whom Christ died, washing away 'every' sin, cannot have that sin return wherein they could be lost again. Those who "truly" receive salvation from God are sealed (secured) by the holy Spirit and preserved in strength of His faith, that they will endure to the end, not by their own merit, but by the meritorious work of Christ. (John 10:27-29; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2nd Cor. 1:22).

This is certainly not an exhaustive list of all the Reformed beliefs, but lists many of the most vital. The term 'Reformed' is now generally applied only to those Churches that follow the Biblical doctrines of Predestination (Sovereignty of God), Irresistible Grace, and Salvation by faith alone. These are often called "Doctrines of Grace" and are frequently illustrated in the acronym TULIP.

Total depravity:

Man is in bondage (a Slave) to sin!

Unconditional Election:

Unmerited, totally unconditional Grace and favor of God!

Limited atonement:

Christ died for the sins of His People, not one in vain!

Irresistible Grace:

Whosoever God chooses, and justifies "will" be Saved!

Perseverance of the Saints:

Sealed or secured by the Spirit, eternal Salvation!

Reformed theology reveals that keeping God's Word is not the reason we are saved, it is the evidence that we are saved (John 2:4-5).

I can hardly present these doctrines without identifying the great historic creeds and confessions that we effectively use to help steer us to the truths in scripture. We believe in the usefulness and effectiveness of these creeds, but we understand that they are subordinate to the Bible. We never place our creeds or confessions above the scriptures, and we recognize they are man-produced documents that may need to be changed if it is shown that the bible teaches otherwise. We call these statements of faith *Doctrinal Standards*. The doctrinal standards of the Reformed Church in America are: The Belgic Confession; the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort.

The need for a return to the Biblical theology so characterized by the Reformation, in today's Church is greater than ever.