

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Introduction

Throughout the history of the church, Christians have written concise statements summarizing the biblical truths to teach, unify, and guard the church. This Statement of Faith¹ summarizes the essential beliefs around which we unite as a family of churches and unites us with all who affirm the truths of historic, biblical Christianity.

1. God

We believe in one, true and living God², eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit³, who know, love, and glorify one another. This God is infinitely perfect in all His attributes. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible⁴, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration⁵. Immortal and eternal, He perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about His eternal good purposes to redeem a people for Himself and restore His fallen creation, to the praise of His glorious grace. ⁶While the three Persons of the God-head are equal in every divine perfection, they execute distinct but harmonious roles in the work of creation and redemption.⁷

2. Revelation

We believe that God has graciously disclosed His existence and power in the created order⁸, and has supremely revealed Himself to fallen human beings in the person of His Son, the incarnate Word.⁹ Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by His Spirit has graciously disclosed Himself in human words¹⁰: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of His saving work in the world.¹¹ These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in

¹ This Statement of Faith is adapted from the Gospel Coalition *Confessional Statement*.

² Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:6

³ Matt. 28:18; 2 Cor. 13:14

⁴ Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 11:3

⁵ Rom. 11:36

⁶ Ps. 33:10-11, 115:3; Prov. 16:4, 21:1; Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:3-10

⁷ Gen. 1:2; Is. 44:24, 45:12; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15-16

⁸ Ps. 19:1-4; Rom. 1:19-20

⁹ Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Heb. 1:1-3

¹⁰ Gen. 1:3, 28; Heb. 1:1

¹¹ Matt. 22:31-32; Jn. 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21, 3:15-16

the original writings, complete in its revelation of His will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over everything to which it speaks.

We admit that both our finiteness and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth perfectly, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly.¹² The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel.¹³

3. Creation of Humanity

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in His own image.¹⁴ Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God Himself declared to be very good, serving as God's representatives to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and happy fellowship with their Maker.¹⁵ Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶

Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one flesh union, which establishes the only normative pattern for marriage – a covenantal union for life between one man and one woman – and the only right pattern for sexual relations for human beings.¹⁷ In God's wise purposes, men and women, who share equality in value and personhood, are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways that reflect the eternal realities contained within the Trinitarian relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The distinctive leadership role of elder/pastor/overseer within the church is given uniquely to qualified men. This reality is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption, and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.¹⁸

4. The Fall

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image by disobeying God and falling into sin through Satan's temptation.¹⁹ He thus forfeited

¹² Jn. 14:26, 16:13; 2 Cor. 2:10-16

¹³ 1 Tim. 4:11-13, 2 Tim. 3:14-17

¹⁴ Gen. 1:27, 2:7; Matt. 19:4

¹⁵ Gen. 1:1, 28-31, 2:21-22

¹⁶ Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18

¹⁷ Gen. 2:18, 21-25; Lev. 20:10-16; Prov. 5:18-21; Lk. 1:34; 1 Cor. 7:1-9; Heb. 13:4

¹⁸ 1 Tim. 2:12-15, 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9

¹⁹ Gen. 3:1-8; Rom. 5:12; 2 Cor. 11:3

his original blessedness—for himself and all his descendants.²⁰ As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually)²¹, personally opposed to God²², and therefore, condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God’s own gracious intervention.²³ The great and universal need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just judgment and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to Himself.²⁴

5. The Plan of God

We believe that from eternity past God determined in His grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end He foreknew them and chose them.²⁵ We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that He will one day glorify them—all to the praise of His glorious grace.²⁶ In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set His saving love on those He has chosen and having ordained Jesus Christ to be their Redeemer.²⁷

6. The Gospel

We believe that the gospel is the good news that God saves sinners through faith in Jesus Christ who died in our place and rose again. This good news is God’s very wisdom, utter foolishness to the world, and yet it is the power of God to those who are being saved.²⁸ It centres on the cross and resurrection of Christ. The gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if His death and resurrection are not central (the message is: "Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised"²⁹). This good news is biblical (His death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures³⁰), salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God³¹), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others³²), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were

²⁰ Gen. 3:22-24; Rom. 3:12, 15, 17-19

²¹ Gen. 6:5, 8:21; Jn. 3:16, 6:44; Eph. 2:1-3

²² Rom. 1:18-32

²³ Rom. 5:18-21, 6:23, 5:6-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9

²⁴ Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:10-11; Gal. 3:22; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Tim. 1:15

²⁵ Eph. 1:4; Rev. 5:9, 7:9-10

²⁶ Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14

²⁷ Ac. 3:19, 17:30; 1 Tim. 2:5

²⁸ 1 Cor. 1:18

²⁹ 1 Cor. 15:4

³⁰ 1 Cor. 15:3, 4

³¹ 2 Cor. 5:18-19

³² 1 Cor. 15:12-19

witnesses of these saving events³³), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual people are saved³⁴).

7. Redemption in Christ

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to His Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures.³⁵ The man Jesus, the promised Messiah, was conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin, Mary.³⁶ He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father³⁷, lived a sinless life³⁸, performed miraculous signs³⁹, was crucified under Pontius Pilate⁴⁰, rose bodily from the dead on the third day⁴¹, and ascended into heaven.⁴² He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising all of God's sovereignty in heaven and on earth⁴³, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate⁴⁴, and coming King.⁴⁵ We believe that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute.⁴⁶ He did this so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God⁴⁷: on the cross He cancelled the record of our debt of sin⁴⁸, satisfied God's righteous wrath⁴⁹, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe.⁵⁰ By His resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by His Father⁵¹, broke the power of death and defeated Satan, and brought everlasting life to all His people. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.⁵²

8. Justification of Sinners

We believe that man's rebellion against God rendered us spiritually dead and therefore completely unable to initiate any reconciliation with God.⁵³ However, when

³³ 1 Cor. 15:3-8; Lk. 1:1-2

³⁴ 1 Cor. 15:2; Col. 1:21-23

³⁵ Jn. 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:6-8; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:14, 17

³⁶ Lk. 1:34-35, 2:7; Gal. 4:4

³⁷ Jn. 8:28-29

³⁸ 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15

³⁹ Jn. 20:30-31, 21:25; Ac. 10:38

⁴⁰ Jn. 19:15-16; Ac. 10:39

⁴¹ Lk. 24:1-7; Ac. 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4

⁴² Ac. 1:9

⁴³ Heb. 1:3, 13, 10:12

⁴⁴ Heb. 2:17, 4:14-15; 1 Jn. 2:1

⁴⁵ Matt. 16:27; Ac. 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:23-24; 2 Tim. 4:1

⁴⁶ Is. 53:4-6, 12; 1 Pe. 3:18

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. 5:21

⁴⁸ Col. 2:14

⁴⁹ Rom. 3:25-26, 5:9

⁵⁰ Rom. 5:10-11; Jn. 1:12

⁵¹ Rom. 6:4

⁵² Ac. 4:12

⁵³ Eph. 2:1-3

God graciously initiates by regenerating human hearts, enabling us to respond to God’s call to salvation with repentance and faith, and when we respond thus, we are justified – that is, our sins have been imputed to Christ and punished and we are therefore completely forgiven, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and we are thereby declared righteous and fully accepted by God.⁵⁴ We believe this justification is offered to us by God’s grace alone, to be received through faith alone⁵⁵, and results in our adoption into God’s family and simultaneously puts on glorious display the perfect justice and the great love of God.⁵⁶

9. The Christian Life Empowered by the Holy Spirit

We believe that at the point of conversion the Holy Spirit “baptizes” believers into union with Christ and that He indwells them as a pledge of their promised inheritance.⁵⁷ All genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion.⁵⁸ The New Testament also indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit which the believer is encouraged to pursue regularly. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power, acting in the believer to encourage, guide, and ultimately effect growth in Christ-likeness and Christian witness.⁵⁹ This work of sanctification is a progressive work by which the disciple of Christ becomes more and more free from sin and more and more like Christ.⁶⁰ We believe it begins at conversion and, though it is carried out by the presence and power of the Spirit, it is a work with which the individual believer cooperates especially, by means of engagement in active obedience, prayer, meditation on Scripture, worship, and true fellowship with other believers.⁶¹ Those who have been saved delight in the blessings of the gospel: the forgiveness of sins; the inward transformation of the heart that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God; and the prospect of the glory yet to come. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace.⁶² Though indwelling sin remains, actual growth in holiness is the norm for the Christian life.⁶³

We also believe that each believer receives gifts from the Spirit, to be used to build up the church.⁶⁴ Just as the Holy Spirit is at work in the individual believer, so too, the Spirit is at work in the church corporately, empowering it for worship, edification,

⁵⁴ Rom. 3:28, 5:1, 10:10; Gal. 2:16

⁵⁵ Eph. 2:4-9; Tit. 3:4-7

⁵⁶ Rom. 3:21-26, 5:8-9; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5

⁵⁷ Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14

⁵⁸ Tit. 3:4-6

⁵⁹ Rom. 8:13, 15:13; Gal. 5:16; 2 Tim. 1:14

⁶⁰ Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 4:23-24

⁶¹ Ps. 119:9-11; Jn. 14:15-17; Rom. 8:13-14; Gal. 5:16; Phil. 2:12-13; 2 Tim. 1:14

⁶² Eph. 2:10; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 10:24; Jam. 2:14-26

⁶³ Rom. 6:1-14; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 2 Pe. 3:18

⁶⁴ Rom. 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7; 1 Pe. 4:10

mission, and service.⁶⁵ The gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the New Testament church are available today, are vital for the mission of the church, and are to be earnestly desired and used to build up the church.⁶⁶

10. The Church

We believe the Church is made up of all those who have by faith received the free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.⁶⁷ This universal church is manifested in local gatherings of believers of which Christ is the only Head.⁶⁸ We believe that everyone who is part of the universal church should be a committed member of a local church.⁶⁹ The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit and the ongoing witness to Christ in the world.⁷⁰ We believe the church should neither hide from the world nor blend in with the world, but should be distinctively engaged in the world as both "salt" and "light".⁷¹ The church is distinguished by her gospel preaching from Scripture, her discipline, her mission, her worship of God, her observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, her faithful obedience, and above all, by her love for God and by her members' love for one another and the world.⁷²

11. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ as means of God's sanctifying grace and blessing to the church. Baptism is the immersion of the believer – one who has repented and trusted in Christ – in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁷³ This water baptism is a visual sign of a person's union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. It signifies that one's former way of life has been put to death, that one is released from enslavement to sin, and that one has entered into a new life of obedience and faith.⁷⁴ The Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have trusted Christ for salvation and is to be observed regularly throughout the Christian life as a commemoration and proclamation of Christ's death and as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of that death. In the observance of the Lord's Supper we are strengthened in our faith, we signify our unity with other members of Christ's body, and we anticipate Christ's return.⁷⁵

⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 2:19-22

⁶⁶ 1 Cor. 12:7, 14:1-4, 12

⁶⁷ Rom. 5:15-17

⁶⁸ Col. 1:17-18; Heb. 10:24

⁶⁹ Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Heb. 10:24-25

⁷⁰ Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:22, 3:10, 21

⁷¹ Matt. 5:13-16

⁷² 2 Tim. 4:1-4; Matt. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Matt. 28:19-20; Heb. 12:28; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Jn. 14:15; 1 Pe. 1:8; Jn. 13:34-35; 1 Pe. 4:8, Jn. 3:16

⁷³ Matt. 28:19-20

⁷⁴ Rom. 6:1-14; Col. 2:11-13

⁷⁵ Lk. 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26, 27-30

12. The World to Come

We believe all believers are exhorted to persevere in their faith to the end of their lives and the end of this age.⁷⁶ The believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based on the sure promise of God to preserve to the end those who truly belong to Him. The end will come when Christ returns. We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ when He will exercise His role as perfectly righteous Judge and fully establish His perfect kingdom forever.⁷⁷ We believe in the bodily resurrection of all people. For those who have not been justified there will be judgment and the eternal punishment of hell. For those who are justified there will be eternal joy in the presence of God in the new heaven and the new earth.⁷⁸ All sin will be purged away and its wretched effects forever banished. On that day, the eager longing of all creation will be realized and the whole earth will proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Matt. 10:22, 24:12-14; Mk. 13:13; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 10:39

⁷⁷ Matt. 24:30, 25:31-32; 1 Cor. 15:22-28

⁷⁸ Matt. 25:31-46; Jn. 5:28-29; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15

⁷⁹ Rev. 21:1-8