



STATEMENT of FAITH

THE SCRIPTURES

We receive the Bible, consisting of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament, as the written word of God. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind, able to lead us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Given by God, Scripture is fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, in the original writings, the Bible is inerrant and true. Believers are to interpret each book according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord, who speaks through Scripture in living power. All believers are exhorted to study Scripture and diligently apply it to their lives. Scripture is the authoritative, normative, and completely sufficient rule and guide for all life, practice, and doctrine to which it speaks. Therefore, it must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation—whether of creed, confession, or theology—must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture (2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Psalm 19:7-11).

GOD IS TRIUNE

There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty, self-existent, and unchangeable in his being and perfect in his holiness, truth, and love. In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal, and who love and glorify one another in perfect fellowship. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father—yet each is truly God. One God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the foundation of Christian faith and life (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19). God commands to be worshipped and is alone worthy of worship.

GOD THE FATHER

God the Father is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, who by his Word and for his glory, freely and supernaturally created the world out of nothing (Genesis 1; John 1:1-3; Isaiah 40:28). He sovereignly rules over all (Psalm 47:8, 115:3). His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2). He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love him, and in his unfathomable grace gave his son, Jesus Christ, to redeem a people for himself (Romans 8:28-39). He made man for fellowship with himself and intended that all creation should live to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:3-14).

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the eternal Word who was made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of Mary, who was a virgin (John 1:1-18; Matthew 1:18-25). He is perfect in his nature (Hebrews 1:3) and obedience to his Heavenly Father, having been tempted as we are yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He is fully God and fully man. He always was with God and is God. Through him all things came into being and were created (John 1:1-4). He was before all things and in him all things hold together by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3). He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, and in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 1:15,19). He is the only Savior for humanity, shedding his blood and dying a substitutionary death suffering God's wrath for the sins of his people on Calvary's cross (Romans 3:25, 5:6-9; Colossians 1:20-22). By his death in our place, he revealed divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, on the third day he rose bodily from the grave—victorious over death and the powers of darkness—and for a period of 40 days appeared to more than 500 witnesses, performing many convincing proofs of his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-7; Acts 1:3). He ascended into Heaven where, at God's right hand, he intercedes for his people and rules as Lord over all (Hebrews 7:25; Ephesians 1:20-22). He is the head of his body—the Church—and should be worshiped, loved, served, and obeyed by all (Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:17; Revelation 5:12-14).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit—the third Person of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19)—is the Giver of life (Psalm 104:30) and convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). Through the proclamation of the Gospel, he regenerates and persuades sinners to repent and confess Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ through faith and dwells within them (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; John 3:5-8; Romans 8:9-11), producing fruit in their lives (Galatians 5:16-24). The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son, who in turn came to glorify the Father (John 16:13-15, 17:4). The Holy Spirit leads the Church into a right understanding and application of God's word (John 16:13-15). He is to be respected, honored, and obeyed as God (Acts 5:1-5; Ephesians 4:30).

MAN

God made man—male and female—in his own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with him (Genesis 1:26-27). God created man with a reasonable and immortal soul (Genesis 2:7), endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, having the law of God written in his

heart (Romans 2:14-15) and power to fulfill it (Ecclesiastes 7:29), yet under a possibility of transgressing (Genesis 3:6). The man and the woman were in communion with God and with each other. God blessed man and gave them dominion over all earthly creatures. Representing the human race as real and historical persons, Adam and Eve rebelled against God after Satan tempted them, thereby forfeiting God's blessing and meriting God's judgment for themselves and all humanity (Genesis 3). Being estranged from his Maker, yet responsible to him, man became subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and—apart from a special work of grace—incapable of returning to God (Ephesians 2:1-3). This depravity is universal and pervasive, extending to the mind, will, and affections (Romans 3:10-18). Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan and is at enmity with God (Romans 5:10, 8:7; Colossians 1:21). Fallen, sinful man—whatever his character or attainments—is lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ (Ephesians 2:12).

THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is the good news that God redeems sinners through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-35), is both fully God and fully man who lived in perfect obedience to the will of the Father thereby meriting God's favor on our behalf (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). His obedience to the Father culminated in his substitutionary atoning death, shedding his blood as a sacrifice on the cross under Pontius Pilate (Philippians 2:7-8; Hebrews 10:12) and taking upon himself the judgment our sins deserved (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Romans 4:25). He was resurrected on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4) and was seen by many witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:6). By his resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4) and having ascended into Heaven he is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Acts 1:9-11; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 10:12) and will return to judge the living and the dead (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Timothy 4:1). His death and resurrection secured forgiveness of sins, righteousness before God, and eternal life for all who repent and believe (Romans 3:21-36, 4:25; John 3:16).

Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world (1 John 4:14), the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12), and the only mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5). This message of salvation in Christ alone is of first importance (1 Corinthians 15:1-5) and is foolishness to the world, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18).

MAN'S RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

Man's response to the Gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and unconditional election of God for his own pleasure and glory (Ephesians 1:4-6; Acts 13:48). Yet the message of the Gospel is effectual only for those who, by God's grace, genuinely repent of their sins and put saving faith in Christ (Matthew 22:14; Mark 10:45). Believers are to preach this Gospel of grace sincerely and boldly to all men in all nations (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 16:31). Genuine repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by Kingdom work (Luke 3:8; James 2:14-17; Ephesians 2:10). While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Christ, he cannot be Christ's disciple (Luke 9:23-24).

BENEFITS OF THE GOSPEL

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone (Ephesians 2:4-9; 1:14). Anyone who repents of sin and trusts in Christ is declared righteous by God as a free gift and receives eternal life (John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21). The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is justified and fully accepted by God and brought into his Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Through Christ's atonement for sin, an individual is reconciled to God the Father and becomes his child (Romans 3:21-26, 5:1-11). The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and by the miracle of regeneration is liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit (Romans 8:1-3). Having been united to Christ, the believer partakes in his death and resurrection to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-5) and awaits the fullness of his glorification in the new heavens and the new earth (Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 15:49; Revelation 21:1-4).

SANCTIFICATION

By the grace of God, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, producing fruit in our lives and conforming us to the image of Christ (Titus 2:11-12; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-23). Although indwelling sin remains a reality, as we are led by the Spirit we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping his commandments and endeavoring to live in the world so that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father, who is in Heaven (Galatians 5:16; Matthew 5:16). All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith, knowing we will have to give an account to God for our every thought, word, and deed (Colossians 1:22-23; Romans 14:10-12). Nevertheless, a believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based on God's sure promise to preserve his elect until the end (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24;

Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:33-39).

EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service (Acts 1:8). While the Holy Spirit indwells all believers at conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13), the New Testament indicates that each believer should seek the ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion (Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit imparts gifts for the edification of the Body and for various works of ministry (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are available today for the building up of the Church and the advancement of Christ's mission. We are to earnestly desire and employ them, in accordance with God's word (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1-5, 12, 26, 40).

THE CHURCH

God, by his Word and Spirit, creates the Church by calling sinners out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body (Ephesians 1:13, 4:3-4). By the same Word and Spirit, he guides and preserves redeemed humanity (Romans 8:14; Ephesians 5:26). The Church is not merely a religious institution; rather, it is the temple of God made up of all people who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ by personally trusting in him (Ephesians 2:21-22). The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve him by faithfully doing his will on Earth. This involves a commitment to see the Gospel preached and churches planted in all the world as an enduring witness to Jesus Christ. The ultimate mission of the Church is to make disciples through the preaching of the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). When God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation (1 Peter 4:10). Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church in which they devote themselves to God's word, fellowship, the sacraments, prayer, and the mission of the Church (Acts 2:42).

While all members of Christ's body are called to employ their God-given gifts for ministry and service in the Church (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; 1 Peter 4:10-11), Scripture restricts the office of pastor/elder to qualified men (1 Timothy 2:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 2 Timothy 2:1-2).

SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

Water baptism is intended only for individuals who have professed faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (Acts 2:38). In obedience to Christ's command—and as a testimony to God, the Church, and the world—a believer, therefore, should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Through baptism, the believer provides a visual demonstration of his union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection. It vividly depicts that a believer's former way of life has been put to death and his new life in Christ has begun (Romans 6:1-11).

As with baptism, only genuine followers of Christ are to observe the Lord's Supper. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf and a Christian is to observe it repeatedly throughout his life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death (Matthew 26:26-29). As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 11:27-28, 11:26, 10:17).

MARRIAGE

God ordained marriage as a covenantal union between one genetic man and one genetic woman, which he established at creation and which the Lord Jesus and his apostles affirmed (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Colossians 3:18-22; Hebrews 13:4).

God intends marriage to reflect the union between Christ and the Church. Men and women are made in the image of God and therefore have equal dignity and worth. However, a husband and a wife have been given different roles within the marriage relationship to fulfill God's design. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, while a wife is to submit herself to the loving leadership of her husband just as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 11:3-12).

Scripture prohibits fornication, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, and any sexual acts outside the bounds of God-ordained marriage (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4). But forgiveness of sin and cleansing is offered to all in the name of Christ through

repentance and faith (1 Corinthians 6:11).

THE CONSUMMATION

The Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal, and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's Kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth (Matthew 24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Acts 17:31, 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 21:1-4). In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ will be finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, condemned to eternal punishment in Hell (Luke 13:28), but the righteous, in glorified bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53), shall live and reign with him forever (Revelation 20:10, 20:15, 22:1-5). The Church, as Christ's Bride, will be in the presence of God forever, serving him and giving him unending praise and glory, with sin and all its consequences removed. Then the eager expectation of creation will be fulfilled, and the whole Earth shall proclaim the glory of God, who makes all things new (Romans 8:18-25).