

Statement of Beliefs



Inerrancy of Scripture - We accept the Bible as the recorded Word of God. It is without error in its original autographs and consists of 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. The Bible is the record of God's revelation of Himself in human history. Its unique truth leads us to an understanding that salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, to the glory of God alone. The Scriptures are fully and verbally inspired by God as the prophets were moved by His Spirit. It is living and powerful, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Scriptural Interpretation - Each book of the Bible is to be interpreted according to its grammatical context and historical purpose as believers are illumined by the Spirit of God. The Lord speaks through the Bible in living power. All believers are exhorted to diligently study the Scriptures and apply them to the conduct of their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and governing rule of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine. They are completely sufficient, neither to be added to nor taken away from. Being sufficient, the canon of Scripture is self-contained; it is therefore closed. Every man-made creed, confession, or theology must be tested against the full counsel of God's Word to ensure they conform to it. It is the final arbiter of truth.

The Trinity – God is One. He is infinite, eternal, almighty, and perfect in holiness, truth, and love. There are three persons in the one substance of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These persons are distinct with regard to one another, and yet they are co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal. Each is truly God. There is One God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the foundation of Christian faith and life. To deny the Trinity is to deny the central truth of the Christian faith.

- **God The Father** - God is the Creator of heaven and earth. By His word and for His glory, He freely and supernaturally created the world out of nothing. Through His Word He daily sustains all creation. He rules over it all, being sufficient in and of Himself. He is the Only God. Besides Him, there is no other. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He fulfills every promise, and He works all things together for good to those who love Him. In His unfathomable grace, He sent His only Son Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice to redeem mankind from the penalty of sin, which is death. He made man for fellowship with Himself – even so, being all-sufficient in Himself, God needs nothing outside Himself. He has made all of creation for the praise of His own glory.
- **Jesus Christ** - Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. He is the eternal Word made flesh that He might reveal God to men, and that God might provide for man's salvation. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He is perfect in nature, teaching and obedience. He is fully God and fully man. He was with God in the beginning and He is God. Through Him all things came into being and were created. He was before all things and in Him all things hold together by the word of His power. He is the exact representation of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. In Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having atoned for them by His blood and having died a substitutionary death on the cross. By dying in our place, He revealed God's divine love and upheld God's divine justice. He permanently removed our guilt and completely reconciled us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, He bodily rose from the grave on the third day following His crucifixion. He was victorious over death and the powers of darkness. For a period of forty days, He appeared to over five hundred disciples, performing many convincing proofs of His resurrection. He ascended into heaven where He now sits at God's right hand to intercede for His people and to rule as Lord over all. He is the Head of His Body, the Church. As such, He is to be worshipped, adored, loved, served, and obeyed by all believers. At the Last Day, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- **The Holy Spirit** - The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Through the proclamation of the gospel, He summons men to repent of their sins and to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The same Spirit brings about the new birth, regeneration, by which a person is given the faith to receive God's gracious gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ by faith. He indwells them to bring about their sanctification according to God's will and His purposes. The Holy Spirit glorifies the Son who in turn glorifies the Father. The Holy Spirit leads the Church into a right understanding and application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored, and worshipped as God Himself – the Third Person of the Trinity.

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Man's Condition - God made mankind both male and female in His own image, as the crown of His creation, that man might have fellowship with Him. Tempted by Satan in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve rebelled against God and sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit. Through Adam's Fall, death entered into the world, separating mankind from God and making us all objects of His wrath. Despite being a responsible creature, Adam and all His offspring are inwardly depraved, unable to do what is right and pleasing in God's sight. Apart from a special work of God's grace, men are utterly incapable in themselves of being saved from His wrath or of returning to His favor and fellowship. This depravity in mankind is radical and pervasive. It extends to man's mind, will, and affections. Unregenerate man lives in bondage to sin. He is at war with God; he is hostile and hateful toward God. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or moral successes, remain lost and without hope in the world apart from the salvation which is to be found in Christ alone.

The Gospel - Jesus Christ is Himself the gospel, the Good News. This good news is revealed in His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the *heart* of the gospel. His resurrection is the *power* of the gospel. And His *ascension* is the glory of the gospel. Christ's death is substitutionary. He died in our place. His death was a propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins, satisfying the demands of God's holy justice and appeasing His holy wrath on our behalf. It was a demonstration of God's love that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The benefits of this gracious act that saves us from eternal damnation are freely given to those who repent, to those who place their faith in Christ's atoning work alone and not in their own works. Jesus Christ is the only mediator, or intercessor, between God and man. There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is Jesus' identity as God in the flesh, and Jesus' cross as the point at which our salvation was fully accomplished. All our gospel worship, praise, obedience, love, and service therefore proceeds from and looks to the cross.

Our Saving Response to the Gospel – God's grace through Christ's Atonement is the only cause of man's salvation. From before the foundation of the world, our salvation has been rooted in the free and unconditional election of God which was decreed by God for God's own pleasure and glory. Every elect man and woman is a free agent, imbued by the Holy Spirit with the requisite faith to trust in Christ alone for his or her salvation. Saving faith requires that we genuinely repent of our sins and by God's grace embrace Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. This gospel of grace is to be sincerely preached to all men in all nations. The evidence of biblical repentance is a changed life. Saving faith in Christ requires good works as the necessary evidence of that saving faith. And yet neither repentance nor good works can save us; they cannot earn or repay what has been done by Christ alone. Salvation is the free gift of God in Christ. Nonetheless, a believer must be willing to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Christ, or else he cannot become His disciple.

Salvation Inherited through the Gospel – Salvation is the free gift of God provided by grace alone, received through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone turning from sin and trusting in Christ and His substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life. He is declared righteous by God because of Christ. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to Him. He is fully justified and fully accepted by God. He has been reconciled to God. God is His Father and the believer is adopted as His child. The debt of his sin is forgiven. And because he has been made a new creature through regeneration, he is liberated from the law of sin and death. He has been transferred into the kingdom of the Son, to live in freedom according to God's Spirit. He has become an heir to the kingdom of God and a co-heir with Christ.

Sanctification - The Holy Spirit is actively guiding and producing our sanctification. He empowers us to produce His fruit as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds through God's Word,. Over time we are being transformed into the image of Christ. By God's grace, the power of sin has been destroyed, even though its presence remains in our flesh; but we can now say no to the flesh and yes to the Spirit. As we are led by the Spirit, we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, freely keeping His commandments. We endeavor to live in such a way that people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith, knowing they will give an account to God for every thought, word, and deed. To aid them in their walk of faith, believers ought to practice spiritual disciplines, especially Bible-study, prayer, worship and confession. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based on God's promise to preserve His people until the end. To this end, the Holy Spirit has been given to them as a pledge, guaranteeing what is to come, and empowering believers for Christian witness and service.

The Work of the Spirit - All genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion. Yet the New Testament indicates that there is also an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion. Being indwelt by the Spirit as a pledge of salvation, and being filled with the Spirit for works prepared in advance for us to do, are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit continually and repeatedly fills each believer with power for Christian life and witness as necessary. He imparts His supernatural gifts to individual believers for the common good, and to edify the Body of Christ for various works of ministry in the world. Gifts of the Holy Spirit are vital for the mission of the church, and they are meant to be earnestly desired and practiced.

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The Church – By His Word and Spirit, God has created, preserves, and guides the Church. The Church is a gathering or assembly of the elect of all ages and all nations. Sinful men have been called out of the whole human race for redemption and sanctification in the fellowship of Christ's Body. The Church is not a religious institution, organization, or denomination. Rather, the universal Church is comprised of all those who have personally appropriated the gospel and who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God. It also exists to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on earth as it is done in heaven. Believers commit themselves to God and to one another to preach the gospel and to plant churches throughout the world as a testimony to the love and grace of God. The Great Commission entrusted to the Church is to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded. New believers are to be added to a local church. There they devote themselves to the teaching of God's word, to the fellowship of the Body, to breaking bread together, and to prayer.

Giftedness for Service - All believers are to be a vital part of a local church. It is in the context of the local church that God's people receive pastoral care and leadership. They are given the opportunity to employ their God-given gifts in His service, both with regard to one another and with regard to the world. They are called to live out the New Covenant in Christ's blood as the people of God, demonstrating the reality of the kingdom in the world. To that end, Christ has gifted the church with apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints for works of ministry, so that the Church will mature and grow. Women play a vital role in the life of the church; but in keeping with God's design, they are not permitted "to teach or to have authority over a man" (1 Tim. 2:12). Leadership in the church is therefore male.

Sacraments – The Scripture provides for two sacraments or ordinances: baptism and communion. Sacraments are physical signs and seals of a spiritual reality. Water baptism is an outward sign of an inward change. As such, it is only intended for the person who has by faith received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work, and has become His disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a public testimony to God, the Church, and the world, a believer is immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Water baptism visually represents a person's union with Christ, signifying his own death and resurrection. His former way of life is symbolically put to death as he is immersed in the water, and his resurrection to newness of life is vividly depicted as he is raised up out of the water.

The Lord's Supper is likewise to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf. It is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life in remembrance of the atoning benefits of Christ's death. We partake of the Lord's Supper with faith and an attitude of self-examination as a congregation, so that the whole body is joined together in the communion of the saints. As we take of the elements together, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ on our behalf, and we receive real spiritual nourishment for our souls. By participating, we signify the unity of Christ's Body whose life flows from His blood, and is healed by His stripes.

The Last Day – We patiently await the visible, personal, and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the translation of those remaining alive in Christ, the Judgment of both the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. On that day, Satan with his fallen angels, and all those who are outside Christ, will be finally separated from the benevolent presence of God and endure eternal punishment. But the righteous who will receive glorious bodies, shall live and reign with Him forever. The Marriage Feast will celebrate the wedding of Christ to His Bride the Church, which will be presented to Him without spot or blemish. In this way, the Church will be in God's presence forever, serving Him and giving Him endless praise and glory. The whole earth will proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new.