

# *Southside Bible Church*

## **Doctrinal Statement**

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## **The Benefits and Limitations of a Statement of Faith**

Although the Bible is the only authority in matters of faith and practice, a statement of faith can serve as an excellent summary of what we believe the Bible teaches. Many people claim to believe the Bible, yet disagree on vital issues. A statement of faith provides necessary definition. It also serves as a helpful teaching tool by providing a concise summary of biblical truth. We recognize that any statement of faith is a fallible, human attempt to summarize the riches of God's revelation and should therefore be open to further revision in the light of Holy Scripture. The following is a summary of what is taught as Biblical truth at Southside Bible Church.

### ***WHAT WE TEACH***

#### **I. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**

We teach that the Bible is God's complete written revelation, and the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired in all parts) word of God (1Cor 2:7-14; 2Pt 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1Cor 2:13; 1Thes 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2Tim 3:16), infallible, and absolutely inerrant in the original manuscripts.

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2Pt 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matt 5:18; 2Ti 3:16).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice, being fully sufficient for every human need and all that pertains to life and godliness. (Matt 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1Cor 2:13; 2Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2Pt 1:3, 20-21).

We teach that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, every portion of Scripture including the Old Testament while having clarity in its original context, is meant to point us to an understanding of God's overall purpose to glorify His name in and through the person and work of Christ in His first and second coming (Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39, 46; Acts 17:2-3; 18:28; Col 1:16).

We teach that it is the responsibility of all believers to give themselves to the diligent study of the word of God in order to be able to ascertain the true intent and meaning of the Scripture, recognizing that proper, accurate application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture always stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it (Ps 119:89; 138:2; John 5:45; 12:48; Acts 17:10-11; 2Tim 3:16).

## **II. GOD**

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5-7; 1Cor 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes and substance, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19; 2Cor 13:14), each equally deserving worship and obedience.

### **A. God the Father**

We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and directs all things according to His own purpose and grace (Ps 145:8-9; Isa 46:9-11; 1Cor 8:6; Eph 1:11). By His will all things were created and they continue to exist according to His good pleasure (Gen 1:1-31; Eph 3:9; Rev 4:11).

As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Ps 103:19; Rom 11:36). His Fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with His elect.

As Creator, He is the God of all men (Rom 1:18-25), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Rom 8:14; 2Cor 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Eph 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1Chr 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the guilty author nor approver of sin (Hab 1:13; John 8:38-47, **Jas** 1:13), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (Rom 2:1-3; 1Pe 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Eph 1:4-6). He saves from sin and adopts as His own all who come to Him through Jesus Christ and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12-13; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5; Heb 12:3-9).

### **B. God the Son**

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, being co-equal, consubstantial, and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created all things according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom, and for whom, all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3, 10; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity condescended to the place of a creature and took on Himself the full nature and existence of man as the Son of David while never divesting Himself of His divine essence and attributes as God the Son, thereby becoming the God-man (Phi 2:5-8; Col 2:9 Rev 22:13, 16).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ as the God-man represents the fullness of humanity and the fullness of deity inseparably united without confusion in one person for all eternity (Mic 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Col 2:9;).

We teach that Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35), that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14), and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Ps 2:7-9; Isa 9:6; John 1:29; Phi 2:9-11; Heb 7:25-26; 1Pt 1:18-19).

We teach that Jesus Christ accomplished the redemption of the elect through His sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, penal, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (Isa 53:4-6; John 10:15; Rom 3:24-25; 5:8; Heb 9:28; 1Pt 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and, one day, the very presence of sin and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Rom 3:25; 5:8-9; 2Cor 5:14-15; 1Pt 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by Christ's literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He continually mediates as Advocate and High Priest (Matt 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-32; Rom 4:25; 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:24; 1Jn 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Rom 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1Cor 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the Church, which is His body, unto Himself at the rapture and, returning with His church in glory, will establish His glorious kingdom on earth (Acts 1:6-11; 1Thes 4:13-18).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind, both the saved and unsaved in every generation, at the Great White Throne Judgment (John 5:22-23; Rev 20:11-15).

As the mediator between God and man (1Tim 2:5), the head of His body the Church (Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18), and the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Isa 9:6; Luke

1:31-33), He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matt 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

### **C. God the Holy Spirit**

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1Cor 2:10-13), emotions (Eph 4:30), will (1Cor 12:11), eternality (Heb 9:14), omnipresence (Ps 139:7-10), omniscience (Isa 40:13-31), omnipotence (Rom 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13).

In all the divine attributes He is co-equal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matt 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1Cor 12:4-6; 2Cor 13:14; Jer 31:31-34 together with Heb 10:15-17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to His elect. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Gen 1:2), the incarnation (Matt 1:18), the written revelation (2Pt 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7; 6:63).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to complete the building of the body of Christ, which is His Church (1Co 12:13; Eph 2:21-22). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, issuing the call of God in the hearts of men, effecting the regeneration and conversion of the elect, and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Rom 8:29; 2Cor 3:18; Eph 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ at the moment of conversion (1Cor 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers for service, and seals the saints of God unto the day of redemption (Rom 8:9; Eph 1:13; 1Pt 1:3-5).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they were moved to write God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Rom 8:9; Gal 5:16; Eph 5:18; 2Pt 1:19-21; 1Jn 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by revealing Him to His people, implementing His work of redeeming the lost, and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 15:26; 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1Cor 12:4-11; 2Cor 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the Church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles

as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (Rom 12:3-8; 1Cor 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2Cor 12:12; Eph 4:7-12; Heb 2:1-4; 1Pt 4:10-11).

### **III. MAN**

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created in all spiritual, moral, and physical perfection, with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Gen 2:7, 15-25; Jas 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isa 43:7; Col 1:16; Rev 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. Man has no recuperative powers that enable him to recover himself, and thus he is hopelessly lost. Man will never seek after God on his own (Rom 3:10-11), he is enslaved to sin (John 8:34; Rom 6:17), spiritual things are complete foolishness to him (1Cor 1:18; 2:14), his heart is deceitful and desperately sick (Jer 17:9) and will only do evil continually (Gen 6:5). Therefore, man's salvation is nothing of himself, but wholly by the sovereign act of God through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:13; 6:44-45; Eph 2:1-9; 2Pt 1:1; 2Ti 1:8-9; 2:25; Acts 13:48; 1Jn 1:8).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, his guilt was justly imputed to every man, and a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception (Rom 5:18-19).

All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Ps 14:1-3; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12). Although man is radically and pervasively depraved, he, by the common grace of God, does not always fulfill his full potential to sin.

### **IV. SALVATION**

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12-13; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; Tit 3:5; 1Pt 1:18-19).

#### **A. Election**

We teach that election is the sovereign act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He will graciously call, regenerate, save, and sanctify (Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4-11; 2Thes 2:13; 2Tim 2:10; 1Pt 1:1-2). The basis of God's choosing was His own good

pleasure and was not based on anything He saw in man (Rom 9:6-23). He did not choose certain men because He saw their faith or knew they would believe. Faith is the gift of God (Eph 2:8-9). He did not choose because He saw any goodness in man - "There is none righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:10-18). He eternally chose men according to His own will, totally independent of anything in man.

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative or divinely improved effort of their own, nor to God's anticipation and foreknowledge of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy in accordance with His eternal purpose (Eph 1:4-7; Tit 3:4-7; 1Pt 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Rom 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 11:25-28; 2Tim 1:8-9).

Accordingly, we teach that man exercises no free will in his salvation, but is wholly acted upon by God in his salvation experience. Although it would appear from our own experience that we exercised our own free choice in salvation, we must evaluate our salvation experience from Scripture and find that God alone chose us and drew us to Himself apart from any initiative of our own (Rom 9:10-23; John 1:13; Jas 1:18; John 6:44, 15:16). This drawing and regenerating work of God is accomplished in such a manner as produces a realignment of the mind, will, and affections of the sinner, causing him to call upon the name of the Lord in repentant faith, come to Christ, and be converted.

While it is true that all who come to Christ will not be cast out (John 6:37), all who believe in Christ will be saved (John 1:12), and all who confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord will be saved (Rom 10:9), due to the total depravity of man (Rom 3:10; Jer 17:9; Gen 6:5) the only ones who can come, believe, or confess are those whom God has chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world and effectually draws unto Himself (Rom 9:15-16; John 1:13; 6:44, 65; Eph 1:3-12; Acts 13:48).

We teach that God's act of election does not eliminate the Christian's responsibility to evangelize the lost. Rather, God has established the Christian's duty and privilege to evangelize because He has elected some to salvation and He has determined to save sinners through the preaching of the gospel. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom 10:13-17; 1Cor 1:18-21).

The Christian does not know who God has elected to salvation, so he is responsible to evangelize or share the gospel with as many people as he has opportunity to share with. The Lord Christ preached the gospel (Matt 4:23; 9:35), and commanded His disciples to do the same (Matt 28:19-20). The heart of the Apostle Paul's ministry that he had personally received from Jesus Christ was to preach the gospel (Acts 20:24; 1Cor 1:17); by Paul's own appraisal, if he failed to heed this command, he was worthy of condemnation (1Cor 9:16). Paul commanded Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2Tim 4:5). When Paul desired to be rid of his ministry in Corinth due to surrounding circumstances, the Lord told Paul he must return because, "I have many people in this city" (Acts

18:10). Peter likewise recognized that God saves sinners by preaching and evangelism (Acts 15:7). The Lord Jesus and the apostles all taught the truth of election while being committed to preaching the gospel.

## **B. Atonement**

We teach that the moving cause of the atonement lay not in the sympathetic love of Christ for sinners but in the good pleasure of God (Isa 53:10; Matt 11:25-26; Luke 2:14; Eph 1:3-14; 2:4-7; Col 1:19-20).

God's good pleasure to save sinners by a substitutionary atonement was founded in the love and justice of God. It was the justice of God that required the demands of the law to be met and His love that provided a way of escape for lost sinners. Considering the extent of the sacrifice which Christ paid, the atonement must indeed be the only possible means to the salvation of sinful man (Luke 24:26; Gal 3:21-24; Heb 2:10; 9:11-14; 10:1-14). If there were any other way to satisfy the justice of God, it would have been rendered (Acts 4:12; John 8:23-24; 14:6).

The atonement made propitiation to God, reconciling Him to elect sinners who were the objects of His judicial wrath by the sacrificial covering of their sin in satisfaction of God's justice and the righteous demands of His law. The Scripture sets forth the atoning work of Christ as propitiation (Rom 3:21-26), expiation (Heb 7:26-27; 9:6-15), reconciliation (Rom 5:10; 2Cor 5:18-19), and redemption (Matt 20:28; Rom 3:24; 1Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7), thereby affirming it to have been fully effectual in accomplishing its eternal intention.

Understanding its purpose and effect, the atonement cannot be universal with regard to its redemptive design, but has as its objects those who are brought into the saving grace of God according to the kind intention of His will (Matt 1:21; 20:28; John 6:37-44, 65; 10:14-15; 17:2-3, 9, 24; Eph 1:3-11).

The work of Christ on the cross did not merely make men savable, but actually purchased and procured the certain salvation of the elect (Mark 10:45; Acts 20:28; Rom 5:9-10; 1Pt 1:18-19). The shedding of Christ's blood on behalf of all for whom He died, though applied at a later date, is the sole basis of the salvation of the elect. Jesus Christ's atoning work was finished on the cross.

## **C. Regeneration**

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the soul is quickened and divine life is imparted (John 3:3-7; Tit 3:5). It is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24; Rom 10:13-17). Having been regenerated, the sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, is brought to repentance and responds in faith (God's gift) to the divine provision of salvation and is converted unto Christ (1Jn 5:1).

Genuine regeneration will manifest itself in fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct (1Cor 6:18-20; Gal 5:17-25; Eph 2:10) as the believer submits to the control

of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Eph 5:17-21; Phil 2:12b; Col 3:16; 2Pt 1:4-11).

This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (2Cor 3:18). Such conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Rom 8:17; Col 3:4; 1Pt 1:3-5; 1Jn 3:2-3). It is impossible for man to achieve sinless perfection in this life, but holiness will be the primary direction of his life and is the basis of his assurance (Heb 6:11-12; 1Jn 1:8).

#### **D. Justification**

We teach that the justification of sinners is an act of God (Rom 3:21-26; 8:33) by which He legally declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Isa 55:6-7; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Rom 2:4; 5:1; 2Cor 7:10) and confess Him as Sovereign Lord (Rom 10:9-10; 1Co 12:3; 2Co 4:5; Phil 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Rom 3:20; 4:6), and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Col 2:14; 1Pt 2:24), and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 5:21). By this means God is enabled to be "just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:26).

#### **E. Sanctification**

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous, having to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition, and should not be confused with progressive sanctification (Acts 20:32; 1Cor 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2Thes 2:13; Heb 2:11; 10:10; 13:12; 1Pt 1:2).

We teach also a progressive sanctification beginning at the point of conversion by which the practice of the believer is continually brought closer to the position he enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Spirit, the believer is both enabled and compelled to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Rom 6:1-22; 8:29; 12:2; 2Cor 3:18; 1Thes 4:3-5; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict--the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh--but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. The total eradication of sin in this life is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Gal 5:16-25; Eph 4:20-24; Phil 3:12; Col 3:9-10; 1Pt 1:14-16; 1Jn 3:5-9). Hence, we do not teach a sinless perfection, but we do teach that the believer's life will necessarily be characterized by the pursuit of holiness (1Cor 5:9-13; Tit 1:16; 1Jn 2:3-6; 3:9-10).

## **F. Security and Assurance**

We teach that the redeemed are kept and persevere by God's preserving power and are secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-50; 10:27-30; Rom 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1Cor 1:4-9; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; Heb 7:25; 13:5; 1Pt 1:5; Jude 24). However, the believer's assurance of salvation is bestowed as a sovereign grace of God in accordance with the testimony of a life of obedience consistent with God's word. Therefore, the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality denies the essence of the believer's security and removes the basis of his assurance (Rom 6:11-22; 13:13-14; Gal 5:13, 22-26; Tit 2:11-14).

## **G. Separation**

We teach that separation from sin is a biblical obligation binding all who profess faith in Christ, despite the progressive apostasy and worldliness that will characterize the days preceding Christ's return (2Cor 6:14-7:1; 2Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-5).

We teach that out of deep gratitude for the grace of God and because God is worthy of the believer's total consecration, every Christian should live in a manner that demonstrates adoring love to God so as not to bring reproach upon the name of Christ. Separation from all religious apostasy, and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Rom 12:1-2; 1Cor 5:9-13; 2Cor 6:14-7:1; 1Jn 2:15-17; 2Jn 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 4:17-24; Heb 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness demonstrated by a continual pursuit of holiness (Matt 5:2-12; Rom 12:1-2; 2Cor 7:1; Heb 12:14; Tit 2:11-14; 1Jn 3:1-10). However, a believer is not to withdraw in isolation from the world; the world is his God-ordained place of ministry (Matt 5:13-16, John 17:15; 1Cor 5:9-10). Rather, he is to expose the deeds of darkness as one who is in the world but not of the world (Eph 5:1-17).

# **V. THE CHURCH**

## **A. The Makeup of the Church**

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the Church (1Cor 12:12-13), the Bride of Christ (2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-32; Rev 19:7-8), of which Christ is the head (Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Eph 2:11-3:6).

We teach that the establishment, autonomy, and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal 1:2; Phil 1:1; 1Thes 1:1; 2Thes 1:1) and that the members of the Church Universal are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies for edification, worship, prayer, and the ministry of the word (1Cor 11:18-20; Heb 10:25).

We teach the obedient submission of believers to the leaders God has appointed over them (Heb 13:7, 17), the necessity of discipleship (Matt 28:19-20; 2Tim 2:2), the mutual accountability of all believers to one another (Matt 18:5-14), and the practice of church discipline in accordance with the standards of Scripture (Matt 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1Cor 5:1-13; 2Thes 3:6-15).

We teach the autonomy of the local church with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any external hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Tit 1:5). Churches are to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the one true faith. However, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, each local church should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1Cor 5:4-7, 12-13; 1Pt 5:1-4).

We teach that God uses the church as His primary instrument to accomplish His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:7-12). He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the body of Christ (Rom 12:5-8; 1Cor 12:4-31; 1Pt 4:10-11).

## **B. *The Leaders of the Church***

We teach that the one, supreme authority for the church is Christ (1Cor 11:3; Eph 1:22; Col 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders, men called to the primary responsibilities of prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-4). While all elders are pastors and men who should be able to teach the Word, some are especially called to the ministry of preaching and teaching (Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; 1 Pt 5:1-2). Additionally, God has also appointed deacons to the operational and administrative leadership responsibilities of the body. Men functioning in these offices must meet the spiritual qualifications set forth in the Scriptures (1Tim 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9; 1Pe 5:1-5).

## **C. *Spiritual Gifts***

We teach that the early church was given two classes of spiritual gifts: 1) miraculous gifts given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message; 2) ministering gifts given to equip believers for edifying one another and for accomplishing every facet of the work of the ministry.

With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture is the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1Cor 13:8-12; Rom 12:6-8; Heb 2:3-4; 2Cor 12:12). While no one possesses the gift of healing today, God does hear and answer the prayer of faith in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-8; 2Cor 12:6-10; Jas 5:13-16; 1Jn 5:14-15). The ministry gifts, however, are spiritual graces essential to the life and health of the Church, and will continue to operate until the Lord's return at the end of the age.

## **D. Ordinances**

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:36-42).

### **1. Believer's Baptism**

Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to new life (Rom 6:1-11; Col 2:11-12). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42), and is a pledge in the presence of God and His saints to live a life of good conscience before Him (1Pt 3:21). Baptism has absolutely no saving merit or regenerative power; salvation is entirely the work of Almighty God in accordance with the eternal decree of the Father (Eph 1:3-6), as accomplished on the cross by the Son (Rom 5:9-10), and applied by the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5).

### **2. The Lord's Supper**

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of Christ's death until He comes. The Lord's Supper is reserved for those who have been born of the Spirit of God and must always be preceded by sober self-examination (1Cor 11:28-32). The Lord's Supper is an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way in fellowship with His people (1Cor 10:16). However, the elements of communion are nothing more than a representation of the flesh and blood of Christ.

## **E. The Mission of the Church**

### **1. Exalting the Lord**

We teach that it is the primary mission of the church to bring glory to God consistent with His ultimate purpose for all of the created order. Therefore, the corporate gathering of the Church is not for the personal ministry of the saints to one another, but for the exaltation of God in worship, prayer, and the preaching of His word (Rom 11:36; 1Cor 14:23-25; Eph 3:21).

## **2. Edifying the Saints**

We teach that the saints are edified through the means of grace by the instruction of the Word (Eph 4:13-16; 2Tim 2:2, 15; 3:16-17; 4:1-2), by biblical fellowship (Acts 2:46-47; Heb 10:25; 1Jn 1:3), and by the corporate observance of the ordinances (Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:38-42).

## **3. Evangelizing the Lost**

We teach that Jesus Christ has given the church an enduring commission to evangelize the lost, with this responsibility extending to every believer. Biblical evangelism must involve both the spoken word and the unspoken testimony of a life transformed by the grace of God in Christ (Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8; 1Thes 1:2-10; Tit 3:1-8; 1Pt2:12; 3:1-4, 15).

# **VI. ANGELS**

## **A. Holy Angels**

We teach that angels are created spirit beings and are therefore not to be worshipped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they cannot procreate and have been created to serve God and to worship Him (Ps 103:20-21; Luke 2:9-14; Heb 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Rev 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

## **B. Fallen Angels**

We teach that Satan, the chief of the fallen angels, as a created being is eternally subject to the sovereignty of God (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isa 14:12-17; Ezek 28:11-19), by taking one third of all the created angels with him in his fall (Rev 12:1-4), and by tempting and enticing Eve to sin in which Adam followed, thereby relegating the entire human race to ruin and misery (Gen 3:1-15; Rom 3:16-17; 5:12).

We teach that Satan and the other fallen angels are the open and declared enemies of God and man (Isa 14:13-14; Matt 4:1-11; Rev 12:9, 17). Having been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 12:30-31), they, being unredeemable, shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isa 14:12-17; Ezek 28:11-19; Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10).

## **VII. LAST THINGS**

### **A. *Death***

We teach that physical death involves a separation of soul and body with no loss of immaterial consciousness. The souls of the redeemed are made perfect in holiness (Heb 12:23) and pass immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Phi 1:23; 2Cor 5:8), while the souls of the unsaved are held in torment awaiting final judgment (Luke 16:19-26).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Rom 8:10-11, 19-23; 2Cor 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29; Rev 20:11-15). Believers shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the Day of Judgment (Mat 10:32) and made perfectly blessed in both body and soul unto the full, eternal enjoyment of God. The unsaved shall be condemned at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15) and cast into hell, the lake of fire, where they will be cut off from the life of God, abiding under his undiminished wrath forever (Dan 12:2; Matt 25: 46; 2Thes 1:6-9).

### **B. *The Rapture of the Church***

We teach the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Thes 4:16-17; Ti 2:11-13) to translate His Church from this earth (John 14:1-2; 1Cor 15:51-53; 1Thes 4:15-5:11) and so the saints shall always be with the Lord.

### **C. *The Day of the Lord***

We teach that the time is coming as prophesied in the Old Testament when God will pour out the full fury of His wrath upon an unbelieving world (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Zep 1:7-18; Rev 14:13-16:21). This time is called the “Day of the Lord”. These judgments which are also described as a coming time of tribulation will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory with His saints and His holy angels to judge all those living upon the earth (Matt 24:27-31; Matt 25:31-46; 2Thes 2:7-12).

### **D. *The Second Coming of Christ***

We teach that following the Day of the Lord judgment, Christ will literally and bodily return to earth to establish His messianic kingdom. The saints will share in Christ’s “authority over the nations” to “rule them with a rod of iron”. (Zech 14:4; Acts 1:11; Matt 19:28; Rev 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4).

We teach that at the second coming of Christ the covenant promises of God made to Abraham and his seed will be fulfilled to Israel (Isa 65:17-25; Ezek 37:21-28; Zech 8:1-8) and they will inherit the blessings forfeited through the disobedience of their forefathers (Deut 28:15-68).

The result of their disobedience was that national Israel was temporarily hardened (Matt 21:43; Rom 11:1-26) but the elect remnant living at the time of Christ's return will be awakened unto repentance to be grafted back into their own olive tree and experience God's promised blessings (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:22-32; Zech 12:9-13:9; Rom 11:13-29). This time of the Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, and righteousness (Isa 11:6-10; 65:17-25; Ezek 36:33-38).

Concerning the realization of our future hope to be consummated at the return of Christ, Peter's instruction and admonition sets forth an important principle for the saints. When serious consideration is given to the return of Christ and the cataclysmic destruction that will characterize the impending Day of the Lord, the exhortation to Christians is sobering:

*"Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!"*  
(2Pt 3:11-12)

## **E. Eternity**

### **1. The Eternal State of the Lost**

We teach that prior to the final judgment Satan will be cast into the lake of fire where he, the beast, and the False Prophet will be tormented day and night forever (Rev 20:10). At that time Christ, who is the judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne Judgment. (Rev 20:11-15). The resurrection of the unsaved to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment they will be committed, under the abiding wrath of God, to an eternal, conscious, and unrelenting punishment in the lake of fire with the devil and his angels (Matt 7:21-23; 13:40-42, 49-50; 25:41; Heb 10:26-31; Rev 20:11-15).

### **2. The Eternal State of the Elect**

We teach that after the Great White Throne Judgment the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God. Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Rev 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will forever enjoy fellowship with God and one another (Isa 35:8-10; John 17:3; Rev 21, 22). The Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1Cor 15:24-28).