

## Statement of Faith<sup>1</sup>

### Preamble

Throughout church history, Christians have summarized the Bible's truths in short statements that have guided them through controversy and also united them together in fellowship in local churches. This Statement of Faith summarizes the essential Christian beliefs around which we unite as a church.

### 1. The Triune God

We believe in one God, and only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Corinthians 8:6), eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18, 2 Corinthians 13:14), 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 invisible (Genesis 1:1, Psalm 33:6, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 11:3), and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration (Romans 11:36). 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 (Psalm 33:10-11; 115:3, Proverbs 16:4; 21:1, Daniel 4:34-35, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 1:3-10). While the three persons of the Godhead are equal in every divine perfection, they possess distinct but harmonious roles in the work of creation (Genesis 1:2, Isaiah 44:24; 45:12, John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-16) and redemption (Ephesians 1:3-6, 7-12, 13-14).

### 2. Revelation

We believe that God has graciously disclosed His existence and power in the created order (Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:19-20), and has supremely revealed Himself to fallen human beings in the person of His Son, the incarnate Word (John 1:1-3, 14, Hebrews 1:1-3). Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by His Spirit has graciously disclosed Himself in human words (Genesis 1:3, 28, Hebrews 1:1): 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 (Matthew 22:31-32, John 10:35, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21; 3:15-16). These writings

<sup>1</sup> This statement is adapted from the Gospel Coalition *Confessional Statement* and Crossway Church (Kenosha, WI) *Statement of Faith*.

alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of His will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, timelessly relevant in its application, 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 (John 14:26; 16:13, 2 Corinthians 2:10-16). 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 power of the gospel (1 Timothy 4:11-13, 2 Timothy 3:14-16).

### **3. Creation of Humanity**

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in His own image (Genesis 1:27; 2:7, Matthew 19:4). 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 (Genesis 1:1, 28-31; 2:21-22). Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 5:2, Ephesians 2:18).

In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways (Genesis 2:18-25). The way in which men and women are equal in value and personhood, yet distinct and complementary in roles and relationships, reflects eternal realities contained within the Trinitarian relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Singleness and marriage are equally precious gifts from God (1 Corinthians 7:7). In the ministry of the church, both men and women, single and married, are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). The first married couple, Adam and Eve, were made to complement each other in a one flesh union for life. This relationship becomes the pattern for marriage for all time: a covenantal union for life between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18, 21-25). Further, it establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations - God's design is for sexual activity to be enjoyed in, and only in, the marriage relationship (Leviticus 20:10-16, Proverbs 5:18-21, Luke 1:34, 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, Hebrews 13:4). Marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:18-33). Within marriage, God ordains that men and women assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the Church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the Church for her Lord (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9; 15:20-28, Ephesians 5:22-33).

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 (1 Timothy 2:12-15; 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).

#### **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 (Genesis 3:1-8, Romans 5:12, 2 Corinthians 11:3). He thus forfeited his original blessedness – for himself and all his descendants (Genesis 3:22-24, Romans 3:12, 15, 17-19). As a result, all human beings are alienated from God and corrupted in every aspect of their being (body, mind, will, emotions) (Genesis 6:5; 8:21, John 3:16; 6:44, Ephesians 2:1-3), being personally opposed to God (Romans 1:18-32), and therefore, condemned finally and irrevocably to death – apart from God's own gracious intervention (Romans 5:18-21; 6:23; 5:6-9, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). 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 (John 3:16, Romans 5:10-11, Galatians 3:22, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Timothy 1:15).

#### **5. The Gospel**

We believe that from eternity past God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation (Ephesians 1:4, Revelation 5:9-10). The gospel is this good news – God's very wisdom; utter foolishness to the world, yet it is the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). This good news centers 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" 1 Corinthians 15:4). This good news is biblical (His death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3,4), saving (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19), 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 others, 1 Corinthians 15:12-19), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Luke 1:1-2), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual people are saved, 1 Corinthians 15:2, Colossians 1:21-23).

#### **6. 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

(John 1:1, 14, Philippians 2:6-8, 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 2:14, 17 ). The man Jesus, the promised Messiah, was conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin, Mary (Luke 1:34-35; 2:7, Galatians 4:4). He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father (John 8:28-29), lived a sinless life (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15), performed miraculous signs (John 20:30-31; 21:25, Acts 10:38), was crucified under Pontius Pilate (John 19:15-16, Acts 10:39), rose bodily from the dead on the third day (Luke 24:1-7, Acts 10:40, 1 Corinthians 15:4), and ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9). He is seated at the right hand of God the Father (Hebrews 1:3, 13; 10:12), and is our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14-15) and coming King (Matthews 16:27, Acts 1:11, 1 Corinthians 15:23-24, 2 Timothy 4:1). We believe that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute (Isaiah 53:4-6, 12, 1 Peter 3:18). He did this so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21): on the cross He canceled the record of our debt of sin (Colossians 2:14), satisfied God's righteous wrath (Romans 3:25-26; 5:9), and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe (Romans 5:10-11, John 1:12). By His resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by His Father (Romans 6:4), 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 (Acts 4:12). In love, God commands and implores all people to repent and believe in the glorious person and perfect work of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer (Acts 3:19; 17:30, 1 Timothy 2:5). (See also paragraph 7, *The Plan of God*)

## **7. The Plan of God**

We believe that from all eternity God determined in 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. (Revelation 5:9, 7:9-10) 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 (Romans 8:28-30, Ephesians 1:3-14). 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. The commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations is binding on His Church to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20). This task is to proclaim the gospel to every tribe and language and people and nation, baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into disciple-making churches, in order to continue to fulfill His Great Commission.

## **8. Justification**

We believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone (Ephesians 2:4-9, Titus 3:4-7) and that, when God's grace is met by saving faith, a person is justified – that is, each person's sins have been imputed to Christ and he or she is therefore completely

forgiven, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to each person who is thereby declared righteous and fully accepted by God (Romans 3:28; 5:1; 10:10, Galatians 2:16). This justification, resulting in adoption into God's family and union with Christ, puts on glorious display the perfect justice and the great love of God (Romans 3:21-26; 5:8-9, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5).

## **9. 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 (Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5, Ephesians 1:13-14). All genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion (Titus 3:4-6). The New Testament also indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion which the believer is encouraged to pursue. 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 (Romans 8:13; 15:13, Galatians 5:16, 2 Timothy 1:14). The Spirit indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service. Each believer receives gifts from the Spirit, to be used to build up the church (Romans 12:5-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 1 Peter 4:10). 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, mission, and service (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 2:19-22). 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 (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:1-4, 12).

## **10. Sanctification**

Sanctification is a progressive work by which the disciple of Christ becomes more and more free from sin and more and more like Christ (Romans 8:28-29, Ephesians 4:23-24). This work 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 (Psalm 119:9-11, John 14:15-17, Romans 8:13-14, Galatians 5:16, Philippians 2:12-13, 2 Timothy 1:14). 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 (Ephesians 2:10, Titus 2:14, Hebrews 10:24, James 2:14-26). Though indwelling sin remains, actual growth in holiness is the norm for the Christian life (Romans 6:1-14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, 2 Peter 3:18).

## **11. 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 (Romans 5:15-17). This universal church is manifested in local gatherings of believers of which Christ is the only Head (Colossians 1:17-18, Hebrews 10:24). We believe that everyone who is part of the universal church should be a committed member of a local church (Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Hebrews 10:24-25). The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit and the ongoing witness to Christ in the world (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 2:22; 3:10, 21). 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" (Matthew 5:13-16). The church is distinguished by her gospel preaching from Scripture (2 Timothy 4:1-4), her discipline (Matthew 8:17, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), her mission (Matthew 28:19-20), her worship of God (Hebrews 12:28), her observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), her faithful obedience (John 14:15), and above all, by her love for God and by her members' love for one another and the world (1 Peter 1:8, John 13:34-35, 1 Peter 4:8, John 3:16).

## **12. Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances, or sacraments, to the local church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of the believer in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). This water baptism is a visual sign of a person's union with Christ in his or her 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 (Romans 6:1-14, Colossians 2:11-13). 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 anticipate Christ's return, we are strengthened in our faith, and we also signify our unity with other members of Christ's body (Luke 22:14-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 27-30).

## **13. 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 (Matthew 10:22; 24:12-14, Mark 13:13, 2 Timothy 2:12, Hebrews 10:39). 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 (Philippians 1:6). 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 (Matthew 24:30; 25:31-32, 1 Corinthians

15:22-28). 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 (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:28-29, Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 20:11-15). 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 (Revelation 21:1-8).