

Affirmation of Faith

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1. Scripture, the Word of God Written

We believe that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (*1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21*).

We believe that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (*1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13*), verbally inspired in every word (*2 Timothy 3:16*), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (*Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17*).

We believe that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (*Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21*).

We believe 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 (*2 Peter 1:20-21*) without error in the whole or in the part (*Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16*).

We believe that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (*John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20*). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

2. The Trinity, One God as Three Persons

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

God the Father

We believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (*Psalms 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6*). He is the Creator of all things (*Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9*). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (*Psalms 103:19; Romans 11:36*). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (*Ephesians 4:6*), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (*Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18*). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (*Ephesians 1:11*). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (*1 Chronicles 29:11*). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (*Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47*), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (*1 Peter 1:17*). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (*Ephesians 1:4-6*); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as his own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (*John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9*).

God the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (*John 10:30; 14:9*).

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

We believe 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 accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God Man (*Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9*).

We believe that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (*Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9*).

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (*Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 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 (*Psalms 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19*).

We believe that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (*Philippians 2:5-8*).

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (*John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24*).

We believe that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord 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 (*Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18*).

We believe that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (*Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1*).

We believe 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; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23*).

We believe 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 millennial kingdom on earth (*Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20*).

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (*John 5:22-23*):

- a. Believers (*1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10*)
- b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (*Matthew 25:31-46*).
- c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (*Revelation 20:11-15*).

As the Mediator between God and man (*1 Timothy 2:5*), the Head of His Body the church (*Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18*), and the coming universal King, who will reign on

the throne of David (*Isaiah 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 (*Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31*).

God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (*1 Corinthians 2:10-13*), emotions (*Ephesians 4:30*), will (*1 Corinthians 12:11*), eternity (*Hebrews 9:14*), omnipresence (*Psalms 139:7-10*), omniscience (*Isaiah 40:13-14*), omnipotence (*Romans 15:13*), and truthfulness (*John 16:13*). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (*Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17*).

We believe that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (*Genesis 1:2*), the incarnation (*Matthew 1:18*), the written revelation (*2 Peter 1:20-21*), and the work of salvation (*John 3:5-7*).

We believe that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (*John 14:16-17; 15:26*) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (*1 Corinthians 12:13*). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (*John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22*).

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:13*). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (*Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13*).

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible (*2 Peter 1:19-21*). 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; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27*).

We believe 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 implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (*John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18*).

We believe, 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 the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were used for pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of all believers (*1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7 12; Hebrews 2:1-4*).

3. Man

We believe that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (*Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9*).

We believe 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 (*Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11*).

We believe 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. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8*).

We believe that, because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (*Psalms 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12*).

4. Salvation

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (*John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19*).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (*John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5*). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit mainly through the instrumentality of the Word of God (*John 5:24*) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10*) and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (*Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10*). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Corinthians 3:18*). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (*Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3*).

5. God's Eternal Purpose and Election

We believe that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and *sanctifies* (*Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2*).

We believe that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (*Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17*). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (*John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8*).

We believe that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (*Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2*).

We believe 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 (*Romans 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 our Lord Jesus Christ (*Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9*).

6. Justification

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

7. Sanctification

We believe that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (*Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2*).

We believe that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (*John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23*).

In this respect, we believe 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. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (*Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9*).

8. Security

We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (*John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24*).

We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (*Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14*).

9. Separation

We believe that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (*2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5*).

We believe that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We believe that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (*Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11*).

We believe that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2*) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (*Matthew 5:2-12*) and a continual pursuit of holiness (*Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10*).

10. The Church

We believe that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (*1 Corinthians 12:12-13*), the bride of Christ (*2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8*), of which Christ is the Head (*Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18*).

We believe that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:1-21, 38-47*) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (*1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*).

We believe that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (*Ephesians 2:11-3:6*). The church is distinct from Israel (*1 Corinthians 10:32*), a mystery not revealed until this age (*Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32*).

We believe that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (*Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1*) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (*1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25*).

We believe that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (*1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 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 (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers; *Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11*) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (*1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5*).

We believe that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (*1 Timothy 5:17-22*) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (*Hebrews 13:7, 17*).

We believe the importance of discipleship (*Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2*), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (*Matthew 18:5-14*), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (*Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16*).

We believe the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (*Titus 1:5*). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, 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 as well (*Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4*).

We believe that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (*Ephesians 3:21*) by building itself up in the faith (*Ephesians 4:13-16*), by instruction of the Word (*2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17*), by fellowship (*Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3*), by keeping the ordinances (*Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42*) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (*Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42*).

We believe the calling of all saints to the work of service (*1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12*).

We believe the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (*Ephesians 4:7-12*), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (*Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11*).

We believe that there were two kinds of gifts given at the start of the church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, mainly for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (*Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12*); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. Scripture is the test of the authenticity of a man's message and gifts. (*1 Corinthians 13:8-12*). We must always be careful since miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (*1 Corinthians 13:13-14; Revelation 13:13-14*).

We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (*Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15*).

We believe that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (*Acts 2:38-42*). 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 a new life (*Romans 6:1-11*). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (*Acts 2:41-42*).

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (*1 Corinthians 11:28-32*). I also believe that, whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people (*1 Corinthians 10:16*).

11. Angels

Holy Angels

We believe that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (*Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9*).

Fallen Angels

We believe that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (*Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19*), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (*Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14*), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (*Genesis 3:1-15*).

We believe that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (*Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10*); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*Romans 16:20*); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (*Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10*).

12. Eschatology

Death

We believe that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (*Revelation 6:9-11*), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (*Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8*), that there is a separation of soul and body (*Philippians 1:21-24*), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (*1 Thessalonians 4:13-17*), which initiates the first resurrection (*Revelation 20:4-6*), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (*Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54*). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:8*).

We believe the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (*John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14*), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (*Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15*).

We believe that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (*Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15*), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (*John 5:28-29*). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (*Revelation 20:11-15*) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (*Matthew 25:41-46*), cut off from the life of God forever (*Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9*).

We believe that following the release of Satan after the thousand-year reign of Christ (*Revelation 20:7*), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (*Revelation 20:9*). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (*Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10*) whereupon 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.

We believe that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (*John 5:28-29*), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (*Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15*).

Eternity

We believe that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (*2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15*), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (*2 Peter 3:10*) and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (*Ephesians 5:5*;

Revelation 20:15, 21:1-27; 22:1-22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (*Revelation 21:2*) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (*John 17:3; Revelation 21-22*). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (*1 Corinthians 15:24-28*), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (*1 Corinthians 15:28*).

13. What It Means to Be a Christian

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation. Consider the following truths found in Scripture.

God is Sovereign Creator

Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (*John 1:3; Colossians 1:16*). Therefore, He also owns and rules *everything* (*Psalms 103:19*). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

God is Holy

God is absolutely and perfectly holy (*Isaiah 6:3*), therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil (*James 1:13*). God requires holiness of us as well. *First Peter 1:16* says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Mankind is Sinful

According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: "There is no man who does not sin" (*1 Kings 8:46*). That doesn't mean we're incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we're utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own (*Romans 3:10-12*).

Sin Demands a Penalty

God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death (*Ezekiel 18:4*). That's why simply changing our patterns of behavior can't solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences.

Jesus is Lord and Savior

The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (*Colossians 1:16*). Therefore, He owns and rules everything (*Psalms 103:19*). That means He has authority over our

lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship. *Romans 10:9* says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Even though God's justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for sinners (*1 Peter 3:18*). Christ's death satisfied the demands of God's holiness (*2 Corinthians 5:21*), thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (*Romans 3:26*).

The Character of Saving Faith

True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin (*Luke 13:3, 5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9*) and pursue Christ (*Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:3*) and obedience to Him (*1 John 2:3*). It isn't enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (*James 2:19*), but they don't love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (*Ephesians 2:10*).

14. Living God's Word by Meditation and Prayer

We believe that faith is awakened and sustained by God 's Spirit through His Word (*Romans 10:17*) and prayer (*Mark 9:24, Luke 22:31-32, Ephesians 1:18-19*) The good fight of faith is fought mainly by meditating on the Scriptures (*Ephesians 6:17-18*) and praying (*Psalms 119:36*) God would apply them to our souls.

We believe that the promises of God recorded in the Scriptures are suited to save us from the deception of sin by displaying for us, and holding out to us, superior pleasures in the protection, provision, and presence of God (*2 Peter 1:3-4*). Therefore, reading, understanding, pondering, memorizing, and savoring the promises of all that God will be for us in Jesus are primary means of the Holy Spirit to break the power of sin 's deceitful promises in our lives. Therefore, it is needful that we give ourselves to such meditation day and night.

We believe that God has ordained to bless and use His people for His glory through the means of prayer, offered in Jesus's (*John 14:13*) name by faith (*James 1:5 – 8*). All prayer should seek ultimately that God 's name be hallowed, and that His kingdom come, and that His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven (*Matthew 6:9 – 10*). God 's sovereignty over all things is not a hindrance to prayer, but a reason for hope that our prayers will succeed (*Ezekiel 36:37 – 38*).

We believe that prayer is the indispensable handmaid of meditation, as we cry out to God for the inclination to turn from the world to the Word (*Psalms 119:36*), and for the spiritual ability to see the glory of God in His testimonies (*Psalms 119:18*) and for a soul-satisfying sight of the love of God (*Psalms 90:14*) and for strength in the inner man to do the will of God (*Ephesians 3:14 – 16*). By prayer God sanctifies His people, sends gospel laborers into the world (*Matthew 9:38*) and causes the Word of God to spread and triumph over Satan and unbelief (*2 Thessalonians 3:1*).

15. Christ's Commission to Make Disciples of All Nations

We believe that 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 tongue and people and nation (*Revelation 5:9*), baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into churches (*Acts 14:23*), able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. The ultimate aim of world missions is that God would create, by His Word, worshippers who glorify His name through glad-hearted faith and obedience (*Romans 1:5*). Missions exists because worship doesn't. When the time of ingathering is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and the goal of missions.

16. The Spirit of This Affirmation of Faith and the Unity of the Church

We do not believe that all things in this affirmation of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order for one to be saved.

Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach — the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth (Titus 1:1) and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion (Ephesians 4:13 – 14) and strengthens the church in her mission to meet the great systems of false religion and secularism. We believe that the supreme virtue of love is nourished by the strong meat of God-centered doctrine (1 Timothy 1:5). And we believe that a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ is sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and His wonderful works (Psalm 9:10).

We believe that the cause of unity in the church (Ephesians 4:4 – 6) is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of church or school or mission or ministry, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other (John 13:34 – 35) across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries. In this way, the importance of truth is served by the existence of doctrinal borders, and unity is served by the way we love others across those borders.

We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:12). Yet we do hold firmly to these truths as we see them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). As conversation and debate take place, it may be that we will learn from each other, and the boundaries will be adjusted, even possibly folding formerly disagreeing groups into closer fellowship.

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NOTE: The many Biblical descriptions of God's work in salvation are diverse. Therefore, similar or identical terms may be used differently in different contexts. Our aim in this affirmation of faith is not to limit how Biblical writers can use the terms we use here, or to say that the terms of this affirmation may not be used differently by the Biblical writers in various contexts, but rather our aim is to claim that the reality described here is in fact Biblical reality.

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