

The Grace Church Elder and Teacher Affirmation of Faith

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This affirmation of faith is rooted in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith (LBCF), linking us to the historical Christian (and Baptist) doctrines documented during the Protestant Reformation. Rather than cite exceptions to the LBCF, it is our desire to positively affirm our beliefs. The LBCF has been an effective tool in our church in characterizing Biblical truth, but with the goal of greater clarity and unity, we believe that the cause of unity in the church¹ is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of the truths we teach. We believe in 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 each² other 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.

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.”⁵ Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth,⁶ and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion⁷ 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.⁸

¹ Ephesians 4:4-6

² John 13:34-35

³ 1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 Peter 3:18

⁴ Acts 17:11

⁵ Acts 20:27

⁶ Titus 1:1; 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 4:1

⁷ Ephesians 4:13-14

⁸ 1 Timothy 1:5

THE GRACE CHURCH ELDER & TEACHER AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

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1. Scripture, the Word of God Written

1.1 We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God,⁹ and without error¹⁰ in the original manuscripts, absolute in its authority, complete in its revelation, final in its content.

1.2 We believe that God's intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right in matters of faith and practice. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

1.3 We believe God's intentions are revealed through the intentions of inspired human authors, even when the authors' intention was to express divine meaning of which they were not fully aware, as, for example, in the case of some Old Testament prophecies.¹¹ Thus the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. However, while meaning does not change, the application of that meaning may change in various situations. Nevertheless it is not legitimate to infer a meaning from a Biblical text that is not demonstrably carried by the words which God inspired.¹²

1.4 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 man¹³ without error in the whole or in the part.¹⁴

1.5 We teach 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.¹⁵ 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

2.1 We believe in one¹⁶ living,¹⁷ sovereign,¹⁸ and all-glorious God,¹⁹ perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy

⁹ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21, 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:37, 2:13; Matthew 22:43-44; John 14:26, 16:13-14

¹⁰ Proverbs 30:5; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 12:6; Hebrews 6:18; Matthew 24:35; John 17:17; Matthew 22:29

¹¹ 1 Peter 1:10-11; John 11:51

¹² 2 Peter 3:16; Matthew 4:6-7

¹³ 2 Peter 1:20-21

¹⁴ Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁵ John 7:17, 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 6:4

¹⁷ Mark 16:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 3:12; Revelation 7:2

Spirit²⁰—each equally deserving worship and obedience: God the Father,²¹ fountain of all being,²² God the Son,²³ eternally begotten,²⁴ not made, without beginning,²⁵ being of one essence²⁶ with the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, proceeding in the full, divine essence,²⁷ as a Person,²⁸ eternally from the Father and the Son.

2.2 We believe that there is one true God, eternally existent, creator of heaven and earth, perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, and manifested in three persons: FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT. These three persons are one God; distinct in personal attributes, yet without division of nature, essence, and being. They execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption.²⁹

3. God's Eternal Purpose and Election

3.1 We believe that God, from all eternity,³⁰ in order to display the full extent of His glory,³¹ did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will,³² freely and unchangeably³³ ordain³⁴ and foreknow³⁵ whatever comes to pass.

3.2 We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies³⁶ to subatomic particles,³⁷ from the forces of nature³⁸ to the movements of nations,³⁹ and from the public plans of politicians⁴⁰ to the secret acts of solitary persons⁴¹ – all in accord with His eternal, all-wise⁴² purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins,⁴³ nor is the author of sin,⁴⁴ nor ever condemns a person unjustly;⁴⁵ but that His ordaining and

¹⁸ Job 42:2; Psalm 115:3, Daniel 4:25, 4:34-35; Ephesians 1:11; James 4:15

¹⁹ Psalm 138:5

²⁰ Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

²¹ John 1:18, 5:18, 6:46, 20:17; Acts 2:33; Romans 1:7, 15:6; 1 Peter 1:3; Philemon 1:3

²² 1 Corinthians 8:6

²³ John 20:31, 1:1-3, 5:18, 6:46; Matthew 1:23, 11:27; John 12:45, 14:7; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:3, 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; Revelation 22:13

²⁴ Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:5-6; John 1:14, 18

²⁵ John 1:1

²⁶ Colossians 2:9

²⁷ Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 2:10-11; Romans 8:27

²⁸ John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:30

²⁹ Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; John 14:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 5:7; Genesis 1:2

³⁰ 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 3:11, 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8

³¹ Romans 11:36, Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14; Isaiah 60:21, 43:7, John 12:27-28, 17:1, 4; Philippians 2:11

³² Ephesians 1:11

³³ Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29

³⁴ Isaiah 46:9-10; Proverbs 16:33, 19:21

³⁵ Isaiah 41:21-23, 42:8-9; Genesis 15:13, 40:13, 19; Exodus 3:19; Deuteronomy 31:16; Psalm 34:20;

Isaiah 44:6-8, 44:24-28, 45:11, 45:20-21, 46:8-11, 48:1-6; Zechariah 12:10; John 6:64, 19:36-37

³⁶ Job 9:7; Isaiah 40:26

³⁷ Matthew 10:29-30; Colossians 1:16-17

³⁸ Job 37:6-13; Psalm 147:15-18, Mark 4:39-41

³⁹ Psalm 33:10-11; Amos 3:6; Lamentations 3:37-38; Genesis 50:20

⁴⁰ Revelation 17:16-17; Proverbs 21:1, 16:33

⁴¹ Proverbs 20:24, 16:9

⁴² Psalm 104:24; Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 1:21

⁴³ Deuteronomy 32:4, 1 John 1:5, James 1:13; Romans 3:4

⁴⁴ James 1:13-14

governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability⁴⁶ of all persons created in His image.

3.3 We believe that God's election is an unconditional⁴⁷ act of free grace⁴⁸ which was given through His Son Christ Jesus before the world began.⁴⁹ By this act God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin⁵⁰ and brought to repentance⁵¹ and saving faith⁵² in His Son Christ Jesus, and those who would not be delivered and left to themselves to justly suffer the consequences of sin.

4. God's Creation of the Universe and Man

4.1 We believe that God created the universe,⁵³ and everything in it,⁵⁴ out of nothing,⁵⁵ by the Word of His power. Having no deficiency in Himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in His joyful self-sufficiency,⁵⁶ God was pleased in creation to display His glory⁵⁷ for the everlasting joy⁵⁸ of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.⁵⁹

4.2 We believe that God directly and immediately created Adam from the dust of the ground⁶⁰ and Eve from his side.⁶¹ We believe that Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race;⁶² that they were created male and female equally in the image of God,⁶³ without sin;⁶⁴ that they were created to glorify⁶⁵ their Maker, Ruler, Provider, and Friend by trusting His all-sufficient goodness, admiring His infinite beauty, enjoying His personal fellowship, and obeying His all-wise counsel; and that, in God's love and wisdom, they were appointed differing and complementary roles in marriage as a type of Christ and the church.⁶⁶

⁴⁵ Romans 1:20, 2:11-12; Daniel 4:37

⁴⁶ Romans 3:19

⁴⁷ Romans 9:11-18; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; John 10:25-29, 17:6, 6:37-39; Romans 8:28-30

⁴⁸ Romans 11:5-8

⁴⁹ 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:4

⁵⁰ Romans 6:17, 8:2

⁵¹ 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Acts 11:18

⁵² John 6:44, 6:65; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Matthew 11:27, 16:17; Acts 16:14

⁵³ Genesis 1:1

⁵⁴ Psalm 24:1-2

⁵⁵ Hebrews 11:3, 1:2; John 1:1-3

⁵⁶ Exodus 3:13-14; Psalm 50:9-15; Acts 17:25

⁵⁷ Isaiah 43:7

⁵⁸ Isaiah 35:10; Matthew 25:23

⁵⁹ Revelation 5:9, 7:9-10

⁶⁰ Genesis 2:7, 1:27

⁶¹ Genesis 2:21-22

⁶² 1 Corinthians 15:22, 15:45; Romans 5:14, Genesis 3:20, Acts 17:26

⁶³ Genesis 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9

⁶⁴ Genesis 1:31

⁶⁵ Revelation 5:9, 7:9-10

⁶⁶ Ephesians 5:22-33; Genesis 2:18

5. Man's Sin and Fall from Fellowship with God

5.1 We believe that, although God created man morally upright, he was led astray from God's Word and wisdom by the subtlety of Satan's deceit,⁶⁷ and chose to take what was forbidden,⁶⁸ and thus declare his independence from, distrust for, and disobedience toward his all-good and gracious Creator. Thus, our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original innocence and communion with God.⁶⁹

5.2 We believe that, as the head of the human race, Adam's fall became the fall of all his posterity, in such a way that corruption, guilt, death, and condemnation belong properly to every person.⁷⁰ All persons are thus corrupt by nature,⁷¹ enslaved to sin,⁷² and morally unable⁷³ to delight in God and overcome their own proud preference for the fleeting pleasures of self-rule.

5.3 We believe God has subjected the creation to futility,⁷⁴ and the entire human family is made justly liable to untold miseries of sickness,⁷⁵ decay,⁷⁶ calamity,⁷⁷ and loss.⁷⁸ Thus all the adversity and suffering in the world is a witness of the exceedingly great evil of moral depravity in the heart of mankind; and every new day of life is a God-given, merciful reprieve from imminent judgment, pointing to repentance.⁷⁹

6. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God

6.1 We believe that in the fullness of time⁸⁰ God sent forth His eternal Son as Jesus the Messiah,⁸¹ conceived by the Holy Spirit,⁸² born of the virgin Mary.⁸³ We believe that, when the eternal Son became flesh,⁸⁴ He took on a fully human nature⁸⁵ so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one Person, without confusion or mixture. Thus the Person, Jesus Christ, was and is truly God⁸⁶ and truly man,⁸⁷ yet one Christ who possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal and coeternal with the Father, of one and the same substance, essence, and

⁶⁷ Ecclesiastes 7:29, Genesis 3:1, 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3

⁶⁸ Genesis 2:17, 3:6

⁶⁹ Genesis 3:7-8; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21

⁷⁰ Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22-45

⁷¹ Ephesians 2:2-3

⁷² Romans 6:16, 20

⁷³ 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7-8; Deuteronomy 29:4

⁷⁴ Romans 8:20

⁷⁵ Romans 8:23

⁷⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:16

⁷⁷ Romans 8:35-36

⁷⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:13

⁷⁹ Romans 2:4

⁸⁰ Galatians 4:4

⁸¹ John 3:16-17; Matthew 16:16

⁸² Luke 1:34-35

⁸³ Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:34-35

⁸⁴ John 1:14

⁸⁵ Hebrews 2:14, 17

⁸⁶ John 1:1

⁸⁷ Philippians 2:6-8

nature.⁸⁸ In the incarnation, Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, He accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man⁸⁹ and is therefore the only Mediator between God and man.⁹⁰

6.2 We believe that Jesus Christ lived without sin, though He endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life.⁹¹ He preached and taught with truth and authority unparalleled in human history.⁹² He worked miracles, demonstrating His divine right and power over all creation.⁹³

6.3 We believe that His life was governed by His Father's providence with a view to fulfilling all Old Testament prophecies concerning the One who was to come,⁹⁴ such as the Seed of the woman,⁹⁵ the Prophet like Moses,⁹⁶ the Priest after the order of Melchizedek,⁹⁷ the Son of David,⁹⁸ and the Suffering Servant.⁹⁹

6.4 We believe that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily¹⁰⁰ in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan,¹⁰¹ that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate,¹⁰² that He died,¹⁰³ was buried¹⁰⁴ and on the third day rose from the dead¹⁰⁵ to vindicate the saving work of His life and death¹⁰⁶ and to take His place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory.¹⁰⁷ During the forty days after His resurrection, He gave many compelling evidences of His bodily resurrection¹⁰⁸ and then ascended bodily into heaven,¹⁰⁹ where He is seated at the right hand of the Father,¹¹⁰ interceding for His people¹¹¹ on the basis of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet.¹¹²

⁸⁸ John 10:30; 14:9

⁸⁹ Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9

⁹⁰ 1 Timothy 2:5

⁹¹ Hebrews 4:15

⁹² John 7:46; Mark 1:27; Matthew 22:16

⁹³ Mark 1:27; Matthew 4:23, 11:4-6; Mark 4:39; Matthew 14:19-20, 25

⁹⁴ Luke 24:25-26

⁹⁵ Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20

⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 18:18; Acts 3:20-23

⁹⁷ Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:5-6

⁹⁸ Isaiah 9:7; Matthew 1:1, 22:42

⁹⁹ Isaiah 52:13, 53:3-6; Mark 10:45

¹⁰⁰ John 10:18

¹⁰¹ Acts 2:23

¹⁰² Acts 4:27-28

¹⁰³ John 19:30; 1 Corinthians 15:3

¹⁰⁴ John 19:40-41; 1 Corinthians 15:4

¹⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:4; Matthew 28:6

¹⁰⁶ Romans 4:25

¹⁰⁷ Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 17:31

¹⁰⁸ Acts 1:3

¹⁰⁹ Acts 1:9-11

¹¹⁰ Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33, 5:31; Colossians 3:1

¹¹¹ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14; 1 John 2:1

¹¹² 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13

7. The Saving Work of Christ

7.1 We believe that by His perfect obedience to God¹¹³ and by His suffering and death¹¹⁴ as the immaculate Lamb of God,¹¹⁵ Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins¹¹⁶ and the gift of perfect righteousness¹¹⁷ for all who trusted in God prior to the cross¹¹⁸ and all who would trust in Christ thereafter.¹¹⁹ Through living a perfect life and dying in our place, the just for the unjust, Christ absorbed our punishment,¹²⁰ appeased the wrath of God against us,¹²¹ vindicated the righteousness of God in our justification,¹²² and removed the condemnation of the law against us.¹²³

7.2 We believe that the atonement of Christ for sin warrants and impels a universal offering of the gospel to all persons, so that to every person it may be truly said, “God gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life.”¹²⁴ Whosoever will may come¹²⁵ for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out.¹²⁶

7.3 We believe, moreover, that the death of Christ did obtain more than the bona fide offer of the gospel for all; it also effectually secured repentance¹²⁷ and faith¹²⁸ for God’s elect. Christ died for all, but not for all in the same way.¹²⁹ In His death, Christ expressed a special covenant love to His friends,¹³⁰ His sheep,¹³¹ His bride.¹³² For them He obtained the infallible and effectual working of the Spirit to triumph over their resistance and bring them to saving faith while being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man.¹³³ All of God’s mercy toward unbelievers – from the rising sun to the worldwide preaching of the gospel – is made possible because of the cross.

¹¹³ Romans 5:18-19

¹¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; Romans 3:24-25; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Romans 5:6, 8:34, 14:9; Galatians 2:21

¹¹⁵ John 1:29

¹¹⁶ Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Acts 13:38

¹¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:21-22

¹¹⁸ Romans 4:3, 3:25-26

¹¹⁹ Romans 3:26, 28; Galatians 2:16

¹²⁰ Romans 8:1, 3; Galatians 3:13

¹²¹ Ephesians 2:3-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9

¹²² Romans 3:25-26

¹²³ Colossians 2:13-14; Galatians 3:13

¹²⁴ John 3:16; Matthew 28:19; Colossians 1:23; Acts 1:8

¹²⁵ Revelation 22:17; John 4:14

¹²⁶ John 6:37

¹²⁷ 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Acts 11:18

¹²⁸ John 6:44, 65; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Matthew 11:27, 16:17; Acts 16:14

¹²⁹ 1 Timothy 4:10; Matthew 5:43-45

¹³⁰ John 15:13

¹³¹ John 10:14-15

¹³² Ephesians 5:25

¹³³ Revelation 5:9; John 17:6, 9, 19, 11:51-52; Romans 8:32

8. The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit

8.1 We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity,¹³⁴ being coequal and coeternal with the Father and the Son, of one and the same substance, essence, and nature.¹³⁵ He has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation,¹³⁶ awakening faith in the remnant of God's people,¹³⁷ performing signs and wonders,¹³⁸ giving triumphs in battle,¹³⁹ empowering the preaching of prophets¹⁴⁰ and inspiring the writing of Scripture.¹⁴¹ Yet, when Christ had made atonement for sin, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He inaugurated a new era of the Spirit by pouring out the promise of the Father on His Church.¹⁴²

8.2 We believe that the newness of this era is marked by the unprecedented mission of the Spirit to glorify the crucified and risen Christ.¹⁴³ This He does by giving the disciples of Jesus power to preach the gospel of the glory of Christ,¹⁴⁴ by opening the hearts of hearers that they might see Christ and believe,¹⁴⁵ by revealing the beauty of Christ in His Word and transforming His people from glory to glory,¹⁴⁶ by manifesting Himself in spiritual gifts for the upbuilding of the body of Christ¹⁴⁷ and the confirmation of His Word,¹⁴⁸ by calling all the nations to the gospel of Christ,¹⁴⁹ and, in all this, thus fulfilling the New Covenant promise to create and preserve a purified people¹⁵⁰ for the everlasting habitation of God.¹⁵¹

8.3 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.¹⁵²

¹³⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Corinthians 12:11, Hebrews 9:14, Psalm 139:7-10, Isaiah 40:13-14, Romans 15:13, John 16:13

¹³⁵ Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17

¹³⁶ Psalm 104:30; Genesis 1:2

¹³⁷ Romans 8:7-9

¹³⁸ Judges 14:6

¹³⁹ Judges 3:10

¹⁴⁰ 1 Samuel 10:6

¹⁴¹ 2 Peter 1:21; Matthew 22:43, referring to Psalm 110:1

¹⁴² Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33

¹⁴³ John 16:13-14, 7:39

¹⁴⁴ Acts 1:8

¹⁴⁵ Romans 15:18-19; Acts 16:14; John 3:8

¹⁴⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

¹⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 2:4

¹⁴⁸ Hebrews 2:3-4

¹⁴⁹ Acts 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Romans 15:18-19; Acts 13:2, 4:31

¹⁵⁰ Jeremiah 31:33-34, 32:40

¹⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21

¹⁵² 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4

8.4 We believe that, apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one would come to faith,¹⁵³ because all are dead in trespasses and sins;¹⁵⁴ that they are hostile to God, and morally unable to submit to God or please Him,¹⁵⁵ because the pleasures of sin appear greater than the pleasures of God.¹⁵⁶ Thus, for God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance,¹⁵⁷ wakens the dead,¹⁵⁸ removes blindness,¹⁵⁹ and manifests Christ in such a compellingly beautiful way through the Gospel that He becomes irresistibly attractive to the regenerate heart.

8.5 We believe the Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.¹⁶⁰ Thus neither the work of the Father in election, nor the work of the Son in atonement, nor the work of the Spirit in regeneration is a hindrance or discouragement to the proclamation of the gospel to all peoples and persons everywhere. On the contrary, this divine saving work of the Trinity is the warrant and the ground of our hope that our evangelization is not in vain in the Lord. The Spirit binds His saving work to the gospel of Christ, because His aim is to glorify the Christ of the Gospel.¹⁶¹ Therefore we do not believe that there is salvation through any other means than through receiving the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶²

9. The Justifying Act of God

9.1 We believe that in a free act of righteous grace God justifies the ungodly by faith alone apart from works,¹⁶³ pardoning their sins,¹⁶⁴ and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable in His presence.¹⁶⁵ Faith is thus the sole instrument¹⁶⁶ by which we, as sinners, are united to Christ, whose perfect righteousness and satisfaction for sins is alone the ground of our acceptance with God.¹⁶⁷ This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the first instant of justification.¹⁶⁸ Thus the righteousness by which we come into right standing with God is not anything worked in us by God over time, neither imparted to us at baptism, but rather is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us.

¹⁵³ 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Acts 11:18; John 6:44, 65; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Matthew 11:27, 16:17; Acts 16:14

¹⁵⁴ Ephesians 2:4-6

¹⁵⁵ Romans 8:7-8

¹⁵⁶ Mark 4:19

¹⁵⁷ Romans 6:17, 8:7-9

¹⁵⁸ Ephesians 2:4-6

¹⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

¹⁶⁰ Acts 16:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:4, 6

¹⁶¹ John 16:14

¹⁶² Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 3:19-22; Ephesians 3:6; Romans 1:5; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 10:13-15

¹⁶³ Titus 3:5-7; Romans 3:28, 23-24, 4:4-5; Galatians 2:16; Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:24, 5:4, Philippians 3:8-9

¹⁶⁴ Romans 4:6-8

¹⁶⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:21-22

¹⁶⁶ Romans 3:28, 4:4-5

¹⁶⁷ Romans 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Jeremiah 23:5-6

¹⁶⁸ Romans 5:1

9.2 We believe, nevertheless, that the faith, which alone receives the gift of justification, does not remain alone in the person so justified, but produces, by the Holy Spirit,¹⁶⁹ the fruit of love¹⁷⁰ and leads necessarily to sanctification.¹⁷¹ This necessary relation between justifying faith and the fruit of good works gives rise to some Biblical expressions which seem to make works the ground or means of justification,¹⁷² but in fact simply express the crucial truth that faith that does not yield the fruit of good works is dead, being no true faith.¹⁷³

10. God's Work in Faith and Sanctification

10.1 We believe that justification and sanctification are both brought about by God through faith,¹⁷⁴ but not in the same way. Justification is an act of God's imputing and reckoning;¹⁷⁵ sanctification is an act of God's imparting and transforming.¹⁷⁶ Thus the function of faith in regard to each is different. In regard to justification, faith is not the channel through which power or transformation flows to the soul of the believer, but rather faith is the occasion of God's forgiving, acquitting, and reckoning as righteous.¹⁷⁷ But in regard to sanctification, faith is indeed the channel through which divine power and transformation flow to the soul;¹⁷⁸ and the sanctifying work of God through faith does indeed touch the soul and change it into the likeness of Christ.

10.2 We believe that the reason justifying faith necessarily sanctifies in this way is fourfold:

First, justifying faith is a persevering, that is, continuing, kind of faith.¹⁷⁹ Even though we are justified at the first instant of saving faith,¹⁸⁰ yet this faith justifies only because it is the kind of faith that will surely persevere. The extension of this faith into the future is, as it were, contained in the first seed of faith, as the oak in the acorn. Thus the moral effects¹⁸¹ of persevering faith may be rightly described as the effects of justifying faith.

¹⁶⁹ Galatians 5:22-23

¹⁷⁰ Galatians 5:6; 1 Timothy 1:5; Colossians 1:4-5; 1 John 3:14, 4:8, 16, 20

¹⁷¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 26:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; James 2:17, 26; Acts 15:9; 1 John 2:3-4, 5:1

¹⁷² Hebrews 12:14; Romans 8:13-14; Galatians 5:21, 6:8-9; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Matthew 18:34-35; James 2:21-25

¹⁷³ James 2:17-20, 26

¹⁷⁴ Acts 26:18, 15:9

¹⁷⁵ Romans 4:3, 5; Luke 7:29, 35, 16:15

¹⁷⁶ 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 4:7; Romans 6:19, 22

¹⁷⁷ Galatians 3:5

¹⁷⁸ Galatians 5:6; 1 Timothy 1:5; Colossians 1:4-5; 1 John 3:14, 4:8, 16, 20; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 26:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; James 2:17, 26; Acts 15:9; 1 John 2:3-4, 5:1; James 2:17-20, 26; Acts 26:18, 15:9

¹⁷⁹ 1 John 2:19; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13; Romans 4:3 (= Genesis 15:6), 4:19-22 (= Genesis 17:17); James 2:21-23 (= Genesis 22:10)

¹⁸⁰ Romans 5:1

¹⁸¹ Hebrews 12:14; Romans 8:13-14; Galatians 5:21, 6:8-9; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Matthew 18:34-35; James 2:21-25, 2:17-20, 26

Second, we believe that justifying faith trusts in Christ not only for the gift of imputed righteousness and the forgiveness of sins,¹⁸² but also for the fulfillment of all His promises to us based on that reconciliation.¹⁸³ Justifying faith magnifies the finished work of Christ's atonement, by resting securely in all the promises of God obtained and guaranteed by that all-sufficient work.¹⁸⁴

Third, we believe that justifying faith embraces Christ in all His roles:¹⁸⁵ Creator,¹⁸⁶ Sustainer,¹⁸⁷ Savior,¹⁸⁸ Teacher,¹⁸⁹ Guide,¹⁹⁰ Comforter,¹⁹¹ Helper,¹⁹² Friend,¹⁹³ Advocate,¹⁹⁴ Protector,¹⁹⁵ and Lord.¹⁹⁶ Justifying faith does not divide Christ, accepting part of Him and rejecting the rest. All of Christ is embraced by justifying faith, even before we are fully aware of, or fully understand, all that He will be for us. As more of Christ is truly revealed to us in His Word, genuine faith recognizes Christ and embraces Him more fully.¹⁹⁷

Fourth, we believe that this embracing of all of Christ is not a mere intellectual assent, or a mere decision of the will, but is also a heartfelt, Spirit-given (yet imperfect) satisfaction in all that God is for us in Jesus.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, genuine repentance, the change of mind and heart that turns from the moral ugliness and danger of sin, is included in the very nature of saving faith.

10.3 We believe that this justifying faith is life-transforming,¹⁹⁹ and therefore renders intelligible the teaching of the Scripture that final salvation in the age to come depends on the transformation of life,²⁰⁰ and yet does not contradict justification by faith alone. The faith which alone justifies, cannot remain alone, but works through love.²⁰¹

¹⁸² Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:21-22; Acts 10:43

¹⁸³ Romans 4:20-22; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 11:1, 3:6; Romans 6:8; 1 Timothy 1:16

¹⁸⁴ 2 Corinthians 1:20

¹⁸⁵ Romans 10:9; 1 John 3:23; Acts 20:21; Galatians 2:16; Colossians 1:4, 2:5; 2 Timothy 3:15; John 20:31; Philippians 1:29

¹⁸⁶ John 1:1-3

¹⁸⁷ Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3

¹⁸⁸ Luke 2:11

¹⁸⁹ John 13:13

¹⁹⁰ Acts 16:7

¹⁹¹ John 14:18, 27; 2 Corinthians 1:5

¹⁹² Philippians 1:19

¹⁹³ John 15:13-15

¹⁹⁴ 1 John 2:1

¹⁹⁵ 2 Thessalonians 3:3

¹⁹⁶ Romans 10:9

¹⁹⁷ Philippians 3:15

¹⁹⁸ John 6:35; 1 John 5:1-4; John 3:19-21; Hebrews 11:1, 24-26

¹⁹⁹ James 2:17-20, 26; Acts 26:18, 15:9

²⁰⁰ Hebrews 12:14; Romans 8:13-14; Galatians 5:21, 6:8-9; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Matthew 18:34-35; James 2:21-25

²⁰¹ Galatians 5:6

10.4 We believe that this simple, powerful reality of justifying faith is God's gift²⁰² which He gives unconditionally in accord with God's electing love,²⁰³ so that no one can boast in himself,²⁰⁴ but only give all glory to God for every part of salvation.²⁰⁵ We believe that the Holy Spirit is the decisive agent in this life-transformation, but that He is supplied to us and works holiness in us through our daily faith in the Son of God²⁰⁶ whose trustworthiness He loves to glorify.²⁰⁷

10.5 We believe that the sanctification, which comes by the Spirit through faith,²⁰⁸ is imperfect and incomplete in this life.²⁰⁹ Although slavery to sin is broken,²¹⁰ and sinful desires are progressively²¹¹ weakened by the power of a superior satisfaction in the glory of Christ, yet there remain remnants of corruption in every heart that give rise to irreconcilable war,²¹² and call for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith.²¹³

10.6 We believe that all who are justified will win this fight. They will persevere in faith to the end, and never surrender to the enemy of their souls.²¹⁴ This perseverance is the promise of the New Covenant,²¹⁵ obtained by the blood of Christ,²¹⁶ and worked in us by God Himself,²¹⁷ yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance;²¹⁸ so that we may say in the end, I have fought the good fight,²¹⁹ but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me.²²⁰

11. Christ's Church, Commission and Her Ordinances

11.1 We believe in the one universal Church, composed of all those, in every time and place, who are chosen in Christ and united to Him through faith by the Spirit in one Body, with Christ Himself as the Head.²²¹ We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God²²² in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship.²²³

²⁰² 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Acts 11:18; John 6:44, 65; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Matthew 11:27, 16:17; Acts 16:14

²⁰³ 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 8:29-30

²⁰⁴ Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁰⁵ Romans 15:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, 15:10, 4:7; Hebrews 13:21; Romans 11:36

²⁰⁶ Galatians 3:5

²⁰⁷ John 16:13-14

²⁰⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:13

²⁰⁹ Philippians 3:12; 1 John 1:8-10, 2:1; Matthew 6:11-12; Romans 6:11-13; Galatians 5:16-18

²¹⁰ Romans 6:14, 17

²¹¹ 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Hebrews 10:14; 2 Peter 3:18

²¹² Galatians 5:16-18; 1 Peter 2:11

²¹³ Hebrews 3:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

²¹⁴ Mark 13:22; Luke 22:31-32; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:30; Hebrews 3:14; 1 John 2:19; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5

²¹⁵ Jeremiah 32:40

²¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:25

²¹⁷ Hebrews 13:20-21

²¹⁸ Philippians 2:12-13

²¹⁹ 2 Timothy 4:7-8

²²⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:10

²²¹ Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 3:6, 4:15-16, 5:23

²²² Ephesians 3:10; Matthew 5:14-16

²²³ Revelation 5:9-12

11.2 We believe it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches²²⁴ in which believers agree together to hear the Word of God proclaimed,²²⁵ to engage in corporate worship,²²⁶ to practice the ordinances of baptism²²⁷ and the Lord's Supper,²²⁸ to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love,²²⁹ to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical church discipline,²³⁰ and to engage in local and world evangelization.²³¹ The Church is a body in which each member should find a suitable ministry for His gifts;²³² it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells;²³³ it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world;²³⁴ and it is a city set on a hill so that men may see the light of its good deeds and give glory to the Father in heaven.²³⁵

11.3 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. This task is to proclaim the Gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation, baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into churches 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.

11.4 We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have repented and come to faith²³⁶ publicly declare their union with Christ²³⁷ in His death and resurrection,²³⁸ in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.²³⁹ It is a sign of belonging to the new people of God, the true Israel,²⁴⁰ and an emblem of burial²⁴¹ and cleansing,²⁴² signifying death to the old life of unbelief, and purification from the pollution of sin.

11.5 We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord²⁴³ in which gathered believers²⁴⁴ eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for His people, and drink the cup of

²²⁴ Acts 8:1; 1 Corinthians 16:19

²²⁵ Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 4:1-2

²²⁶ Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:15-16

²²⁷ Matthew 28:19

²²⁸ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²²⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 14:26; Romans 12:6-8

²³⁰ Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7, 11-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

²³¹ Colossians 4:5-6; Romans 15:24; 3 John 7-8; Matthew 18:18-20

²³² 1 Corinthians 12:13-18

²³³ Ephesians 2:20-22

²³⁴ 1 Timothy 3:15

²³⁵ Matthew 5:14-16

²³⁶ Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 2:38; Matthew 3:6

²³⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:13

²³⁸ Romans 6:3-4

²³⁹ Acts 8:36-39; John 3:23; Romans 6:4

²⁴⁰ Romans 2:28-29, 4:16; Galatians 3:7; Mark 1:4-5

²⁴¹ Romans 6:3-4

²⁴² Hebrews 10:22

²⁴³ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood.²⁴⁵ We do this in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim His death until He comes. Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's body and blood, not physically, but spiritually, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the benefits He obtained through His death, and thus grow in grace, and, as with baptism, is a means of His sanctifying grace.²⁴⁶

11.6 We believe that each local church should recognize and affirm the divine calling of spiritually qualified men to give leadership to the church through the role of pastor-elder in the ministry of the Word and prayer. Women are not to fill the role of pastor-elder in the local church, but are encouraged to use their gifts in appropriate roles that edify the body of Christ and spread the gospel.²⁴⁷

12. Death, Resurrection, and the Coming of the Lord

12.1 We believe that when Christians die they are made perfect in holiness,²⁴⁸ are received into paradise,²⁴⁹ and are taken consciously into the presence of Christ, which is more glorious and more satisfying than any experience on earth.²⁵⁰

12.2 We believe in the blessed hope²⁵¹ that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally,²⁵² visibly,²⁵³ bodily,²⁵⁴ and suddenly²⁵⁵ in power and great glory,²⁵⁶ and that He will gather His elect,²⁵⁷ raise the dead,²⁵⁸ judge the nations, and establish His kingdom.²⁵⁹ We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master,²⁶⁰ and those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness²⁶¹ will be consigned to everlasting conscious misery.²⁶²

²⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 22

²⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:53-57, 63

²⁴⁷ Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 2:12-13

²⁴⁸ Hebrews 12:22-23

²⁴⁹ Luke 23:43

²⁵⁰ Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Revelation 6:9-11.

²⁵¹ Titus 2:13

²⁵² Acts 1:9-11

²⁵³ Mark 14:61-62

²⁵⁴ Philippians 3:20-21; Luke 24:39-43

²⁵⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

²⁵⁶ Luke 21:27

²⁵⁷ Matthew 24:31

²⁵⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

²⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:22-24; 2 Timothy 4:1; Luke 22:28-30

²⁶⁰ Psalm 16:11; Matthew 25:23, 46, 19:29; John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Jude 24-25

²⁶¹ Romans 1:18

²⁶² Daniel 12:2; Matthew 3:12, 18:8, 10:28, 12:32, 25:41, 46, 26:24; Mark 3:29, 9:43-48; Luke 16:26; Jude 12-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:11, 19:3, 20:10