

Statement of Faith

Grace Bible Fellowship of Silicon Valley

Preface. The Statement of Faith represents the doctrinal position of Grace Bible Fellowship (GBF) as adopted and taught by the Elders of GBF. The Bible mandates that, as overseers and shepherds of Christ's Church, the Elders protect the doctrinal purity and integrity of the Church (Acts 20:28-31; Jude 3; 2 Timothy 4:1-5). They are also charged to preserve unity regarding the truth (Romans 12:9-18; 3 John 8-12).

This Statement of Faith is a distilled overview of the basic topics of what we believe to be the "whole council of God" (Acts 20:27) regarding the fundamentals that a discerning Church and growing Christians should be aspiring toward. We acknowledge that every Christian is ever-growing and ever-learning in the Christian life (Philippians 3:12); and we acknowledge that in this life we all "see through a glass dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). We are all in progress and growing in knowledge (2 Peter 1:5-8).

As such, we recognize the reality that every believer has a learning curve and is on the continuum of Biblical understanding based on maturity, experience, upbringing, and many other variables. The purpose of the Statement of Faith is not to exclude and isolate true believers, but rather to provide a common ground of truth which serves as the basis of common worship, fellowship and service to Christ as one spiritual Body and family in the local church (3 John 3-4).

Section 1. The Bible: We teach the Bible is Holy Scripture and includes the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible alone is the Word of God, verbally inspired by God, without error in the original manuscripts, and the complete, sufficient, and only infallible rule of faith, life, and practice for every believer (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:19-21; John 10:35; Revelation 22:18-19).

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary is either expressly stated in Scripture or may be deduced from them; and nothing at any time is to be added by man, by new revelations, or from the traditions of men. At the same time, we affirm that the inward illumination by the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word of God. The Bible is wholly self-consistent and is to be read and understood in a normal, literal, face-value manner. Whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation (John 6:45; 7:17; 16:12-15; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 John 2:20).

The books commonly called the Apocrypha, not being divinely inspired, are not part of the Canon of Scripture, and hold no authority. Rather, they are to be viewed as being on the same level as other books of merely human origin.

Section 2. The Trinity: We teach that there is only one living and true God, Who is unchanging, self-existent, infinite, holy, an all-knowing Spirit, perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing as three distinct Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each equally deserving worship and obedience (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 46:9-10; John 4:24; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Section 3. God the Father: We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace; He is the Creator of all

things. As the absolute and omnipotent Ruler of the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption. His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men, but He is spiritual Father only to believers. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass, knowing infinitely all things, from beginning to end. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin, nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures. He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own; 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 (Genesis 1; Psalm 103:19; 136:1; 145:8-9; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Habakkuk 1:13; Isaiah 6; John 1:12; 8:38-47; Romans 8:14-15; 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:4-11; 3:9; 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Peter 1:17; Hebrews 12:5-9; 1 John 4:7-8).

Section 4. God the Son: We teach that Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine attributes, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father—He is God and is worthy of worship. Through Him all things were created and are presently sustained. We teach that God became a man in the Person of Jesus Christ (the Incarnation). As the Father's only-begotten Son, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was miraculously born of a virgin named Mary, lived a sinless life, and performed miracles. Jesus took on a human nature while maintaining His complete deity in an indivisible union. The purpose of this Incarnation was to reveal God, redeem humanity, and rule over God's kingdom. As the God-Man, Jesus voluntarily died on the cross, in fulfillment of Scripture, as the only perfect and final substitute for sinful men. In His sacrificial, substitutionary death, Christ absorbed the full wrath of God on behalf of sinful humanity. He rose bodily from the grave on the third day, ascended into heaven to the right hand of the Father where He makes intercession for His people as their Advocate and High Priest; He is the only mediator between God the Father and humanity. He will return again physically to reward His saints ('saints' are people who have been born again through faith in the gospel; i.e., "all believers"), to judge His enemies, and to reign as King of Kings. (Psalm 2:7-9; Matthew 2:11; John 1:1-18, 5:23, 10:30, 14:9, 28; Luke 1:26-35; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-17, 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5; Revelation 19).

Section 5: God the Holy Spirit: We teach the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. He is eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity. As a spirit, He possesses no body. Although distinct from the Father and the Son as a person and in function, He is coequal and consubstantial with Them in divine attributes. We recognize His sovereign activity in the 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). Under the Old Covenant economy, He did not permanently indwell people, but came upon certain saints for unique times and purposes. We teach a unique 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; Acts 1-2) to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ. His ministry includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5, 2:4); baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12); giving spiritual gifts to Christians as He wills (1 Corinthians 12); indwelling believers at the moment of salvation, and sealing them until the day of redemption, while leading, sanctifying, instructing, comforting and empowering them for service (Romans 8:9-11, 29; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13)

Section 6. Creation: We teach that all things were created by God out of nothing (Genesis 1). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were all present and active at the time of creation. Angels were created as ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14), though some, under the leadership of Satan, who is a real personal being and is incorrigible, fell from their sinless state to become agents of evil (Revelation 12:7-9). The universe was created in six literal days, and was very good, and is continuously sustained by God; thus it both reflects His glory and reveals His truth (Exodus 20:11; Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-20). Human beings were directly created, not evolved, in the very image of God (Genesis 1-2).

Section 7. Man: We teach 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 teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). We teach that Adam was a real man, and through his sin of disobedience to the revealed 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 teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all people of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All people are thus sinners by nature (from conception), by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

Section 8. Salvation: We teach that salvation is wholly of God, a free gift by His grace, on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, by the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:4-7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19). We teach that a person can be saved the moment that individual believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which entails repenting of sin toward God, acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Savior, trusting in His sacrificial death on the cross which appeased God's wrath, and believing that He rose bodily from the grave according to the Scriptures (Matthew 4:17; Acts 16:31; 20:21; Romans 1:16; 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This work of salvation is accomplished by the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, in an instantaneous moment of time (it is not a process), whereby that person is declared judicially righteous before God (hence, justified); is totally forgiven of all sin; receives eternal life (John 3:16) is adopted into the family of God; becomes a co-heir with Christ (Revelation 3:21); is given a new mind (1 Corinthians 2:16), nature (2 Peter 1:4), and lifestyle (2 Corinthians 5:17); and is endowed with the literal residing presence of God's Holy Spirit until the mortal body is redeemed (Romans 2:4; 8:9-11, 23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Titus 3:5).

Section 9. Sanctification: We teach that at salvation the believer is considered holy and perfect in his status and position before God, but practically the Christian still has to contend with indwelling sin and the flesh, which is our fallen humanity (Romans 7:14-25). We teach that through the work of the Holy Spirit there is a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the likeness of Christ 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, made manifest by godly words, works and behavior (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4; 5:23; James 2; 1 John 3). Eradication of sin in the life of a believer is not possible in this life, but is reserved at the future redemption of our mortal bodies; until then the Holy Spirit does provide real victory over the power and penalty of sin (Romans 8:23; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 John 1:8-10).

Section 10. Security: We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secured in Christ forever; believers who are truly regenerate cannot lose their salvation, or become unregenerate (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; Ephesians 4:30; Jude 24). We teach 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 excuse for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 16, 17, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

Section 11. The Church: We teach that the Church is the Body of Christ and began on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus' death (Acts 2:1 ff.), and consists of a living spiritual body of believers who will be made complete at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture. The Church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in the present age. The church is distinct from Israel, being a mystery not revealed until this age. (1 Corinthians 10:32; 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Ephesians 2:11-3:6; 5:32). Christ is the Head and Lord of the Church (Ephesians 4:15; 5:30).

The Church of Christ exists as both a world-wide fellowship of the family of God as well as in specific local congregations (1 Corinthians 11:16), consisting of a community of believers in Jesus Christ who are committed to obedience to Him. The visible Church is subject to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated so as to become difficult to recognize as a Church. Nevertheless, there will always be a true Church on earth to worship God according to His will (Matthew 13:18-23; 36-43; 47-50; 16:18; Revelation 3:1-3; 14-19).

Believers in a local church are called by God to gather together to devote themselves to worship, prayer, the teaching of the Word of God, discipleship, observance of baptism and communion as ordinances established by Jesus Christ, and to fellowship and to minister to one another in love and unity through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts (Acts 2:42-27; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-13; Galatians 6:10). God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, beginning in their own communities and reaching to the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:16-20).

Section 12. The Ordinances: We teach that there are only two ordinances or sacraments instituted by Christ during His ministry, baptism and the Lord's Supper (or communion). They are to be regularly celebrated by the Church until Jesus returns and are to be administered by those who are called and qualified, according to the commission of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 11:23)

Baptism is a sign to the party baptized of his or her fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection; of being grafted into Him; of remission of sins; and of purposing before God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life. It does not save, but is an outward sign of an inward cleansing. Those who can comprehend the gospel—who actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this

ordinance. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Immersion is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27; Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16; Matthew 3:13-16; 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-39, 41; 8:12, 36-39; 18:8; John 3:23).

The Lord's Supper is for the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and death, the confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits of His death, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, and their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe to Him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other. In this ordinance, Christ is not offered up to His Father again, nor is any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin of the living or dead; nor is Christ present in, with and under the elements in any physical way. Rather, the bread and the drink of the vine symbolize the body and blood of Christ, and give a visible sign to believers that Christ was truly sacrificed once for all, and is truly present spiritually in the midst of and in the hearts of His people. All those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and who are living lives of obedience worthy of Christ, whether members of our local fellowship or not, may partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 21; 11:23-26; Matthew 18:20; John 14:17, 23; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 9:24-26; 10:11-14).

Unbelievers cannot experience real communion with Christ, and are therefore unworthy of the Lord's Supper, and cannot, without great sin against Him, partake of these elements while they remain in a state of unbelief and/or disobedience to Christ. Whoever shall receive the elements in an unworthy manner, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgment on themselves (1 Corinthians 11:27, 29-30).

Section 13. Death and Eternity: We teach that it is appointed for every person to die physically as a consequence of sin (Hebrews 9:27; Romans 6:23), and upon death incur God's appropriate judgment. Physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), yet there is a separation of soul and body (James 2:26); the soul of the believer passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8); and the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15). There is no soul sleep or purgatory. We teach the bodily resurrection of all people, the saved to eternal life with Christ in glory (John 6:39; Romans 8:19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Philippians 3:20-21); and the resurrection of the unsaved to eternal judgment and everlasting physical, conscious, deserved punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:10) in eternal hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Section 14. The Future Reign of Christ: We teach the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, which is the imminent, personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ for His Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; John 14:23) to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). We also believe that Christ will return to the earth at the Second Coming with His angels and the Church, immediately after the Great Tribulation, in power and great glory, to rule on David's throne from Jerusalem (Matthew 24; Zechariah 14; Colossians 3:4). He will reign on earth with His saints, in righteousness, as King of Kings for 1,000 years over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Revelation 19-20; Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22). After the Millennium, Jesus will condemn Satan, demons and all unbelievers to the eternal lake of fire; He will eliminate sin and death; and He will deliver up the kingdom of His saints to God the Father in a new heaven and new earth, so that in all spheres the triune God may reign in glory forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Revelation 20-22).