

Article 4 - Statement of Faith

Philadelphia Baptist Church Statement of Faith

The Philadelphia Baptist Church Statement of Faith reflects what we believe to be both timeless and essential truths of the Christian faith. While the Bible is always the final authority for doctrine, life, and practice this document reflects what we as a church believe to be the essentials of the Christian faith. This statement reflects the influence of many historic Baptist documents. These documents include, but are not limited to: *The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000*, *The Abstract of Principles of 1858*, *The New Hampshire Confession of 1833*, and *The Second London Confession of 1689*.

I. Scripture

We believe the Holy Bible is God's inspired, inerrant, plenary, and infallible Word to man. It is comprised of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. The Scriptures are the authoritative rule and guide for Christian living. The central theme of the Bible is God's activity in history to present Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.

II God

There is one God. He exists eternally as three distinct persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit exist in perfect unity and without division of their essence, nature, or being. All three persons make up the Triune God Who is infinitely wise, powerful, loving, just, and holy.

God the Father

God the Father, through His Son, is the creator of all things. He brought all of creation into being through His powerful Word. He rules over all of creation, and no plan of His can be halted or interrupted. He enjoys a perfect and eternal relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. In redemption, the Scriptures identify the Father as the One Who chooses and draws individuals to salvation in the Son.

God the Son

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He has existed from all eternity past with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Conceived of the Holy Spirit and born to the virgin Mary, He is fully God and fully man. He lived a sinless, perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, was raised from the dead on the third day, and has ascended to the right hand of the Father where He awaits the time of His return to earth to gather all of the redeemed from all of the ages to Himself. He is the Head of His Body, the Church. He lives in the heart of every believer through faith. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, partaking of the nature of God and of man, and in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return

in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He is presently our advocate before the Father. There is no hope of salvation outside of the work and message of Jesus Christ.

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the fully divine spirit of God. He exists eternally with the Father and the Son. He was active with the Father and the Son in creation. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. The Spirit applies salvation to the human heart, beginning with regeneration and continuing by indwelling the believer. The Spirit is the comforter, teacher, and guide Who was promised by Jesus. Every believer is baptized with the Spirit when he is born again and is empowered by Him to live a godly life. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. The Spirit gives gifts to every believer to be used in service to God.

III. Human Beings

Human beings were created in the image of God. The first humans were Adam and Eve. Human beings are the crown of God's creation. God created them male and female. God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The entire human race is descended from these first parents. Adam and Eve were created innocent and morally upright. In their original state, they were without sin. When tempted by Satan, they chose to disobey God's Word. It is through this act that sin and death entered the world. Every human being suffers the consequence of the rebellion of Adam and Eve. Every human is considered as having sinned in Adam. Every person is born with a natural inclination to sin (sin nature). Because of the profound consequence of Adam's sin (the Fall), no person can fulfill the righteous requirement of God; and therefore every person is born as an object of God's wrath. Every person is born in need of God's mercy to deliver him from the just penalty for his sin.

Human Freedom

Every human being is accountable to God for the way in which he lives his life. Every human being freely and willfully makes moral choices. A person is considered free, when he acts according to his own nature. Because these things are true, every human being freely acts according to his own sinful nature. Because of his own sinfulness, no human being will come to Christ apart from the enabling grace (drawing) of the Father.

IV. Salvation

Salvation is a right relationship to God. It is the free gift of God to all who trust in Jesus Christ. No person is ever saved apart from hearing the Gospel of Jesus' saving work. All three persons of the Godhead are active in salvation. The Father has in eternity past ordained salvation's plan and elected individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1). The Son fulfilled the desires of the Father and His righteous demands, and died as a perfect sacrifice for sin. The Holy Spirit applies salvation to the human heart and lives and ministers in the life of the believer. Salvation is given by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Where saving faith is present, there is

always repentance. Those who are saved will persevere to the end and will never lose or forfeit their salvation.

Election

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

Regeneration

Regeneration is the work of the Spirit that produces the new birth. The person who is dead in trespasses and sin will not and cannot repent and believe until God exercises His power in the unbeliever's life and brings about the new birth. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through regeneration, a person becomes a new creation in Christ.

Faith, Belief

Faith (or belief) is trust in Christ's work on our behalf for our salvation. Faith involves:

- knowledge of the Gospel
- belief that the Gospel is true
- affectionate reliance upon Christ's work alone for eternal salvation.

All three elements of faith must be present in saving faith.

Repentance

Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is the turning from sin and self to Christ in godly sorrow. It is the renouncing of the old way of life and allegiances, and yielding to Christ's Lordship.

Justification

Justification is an act of God by which He declares believers just in His sight. Because of the atoning work of Christ, God reckons the believer no longer guilty of his sin. In justification, the believer is not only pronounced "not guilty;" he is also credited with perfect righteousness based on the performance of Christ. The believer is justified through faith alone.

Sanctification

Sanctification is the process by which God's people are conformed to Christ. It is both instant and progressive. It is instant in that when a person is converted he is set apart or made holy through the blood of Christ. Sanctification is also progressive, because the

believer grows in his experience and appreciation of his salvation as he matures in Christ.

Sanctification (in the progressive sense) involves two related aspects:

the believer growing in likeness or conformity to the character of Jesus Christ
the destruction of sin and its strongholds in the life of the believer.

Christian living is the experience of this two-fold sanctifying work in the life of the believer.

Glorification

Glorification is the completion of God's work of salvation in the life of the believer. Glorification is completed at the resurrection of the believer's body upon the return of Christ.

Perseverance

Perseverance is God preserving believers in faithful obedience. All who are genuinely saved persevere in their faith until the end. Salvation cannot be lost, but a believer, through his own neglect and/or willful rebellion, can bring serious harm to himself, to his church, and to others, and can grieve the Holy Spirit. All who are genuinely converted can live with the certainty of their being resurrected to spend eternity with Jesus Christ.

The Work of Christ

The Work of Christ has secured salvation for those who believe in Him. He became a man and lived in perfect obedience to God's Law. It is through Christ's obedience as the perfect man that the believer is credited with righteousness. Because Christ was perfect in performance and essence, He could die as the final and perfect sacrifice for sins. Jesus took upon Himself the penalty for the sins of the world. He suffered the punishment every human being deserves. He satisfied the demands of God's holy Law. Through the shedding of His blood, the believer is cleansed from sin. Jesus' life and work was vindicated by conquering sin and death through His resurrection from the dead. Because of His victory over death, the believer lives with the knowledge that death will not win the final victory. Jesus now makes intercession for the believer before the Father.

Good Works

Good Works are evidences of saving grace. The clear teaching of Scripture is that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Good works do not contribute in any way to the believer's justification. However, good works are the fruit of sanctification. It is consistent with the nature of salvation for the believer to bear "fruits of righteousness." These fruits include a lifestyle of obedience to Christ, faithful service to His church, and love for fellow believers.