



The Elders' Doctrinal Statement

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,¹ and without error² in the original manuscripts.

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 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.³ 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

¹ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21). There are some things in [Paul's epistles] hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). We also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words (1 Corinthians 2:13). He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put Your enemies beneath your feet'?" (Matthew 22:43-44). But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:26). When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-14).

² Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him (Proverbs 30:5). God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it? (Numbers 23:19). The words of the LORD are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times (Psalm 12:6). . . . so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us (Hebrews 6:18). Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Matthew 24:35). . . . in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised ages ago . . . (Titus 1:2). Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth (John 17:17). But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29).

³ The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory (1 Peter 1:10-11). He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation (John 11:51).

to infer a meaning from a Biblical text that is not demonstrably carried by the words which God inspired.⁴

1.4 Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible (which is its fullest meaning) is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate. Limited abilities, traditional biases, personal sin, and cultural assumptions often obscure Biblical texts. Therefore the work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible,⁵ and prayer for His assistance belongs to a proper effort to understand and apply God's Word.⁶

2. The Trinity, One God as Three Persons

2.1 We believe in one⁷ living,⁸ sovereign,⁹ and all-glorious¹⁰ God, eternally existing in three¹¹ infinitely excellent and admirable Persons: God the Father,¹² fountain of all being;¹³

⁴ There are some things in [Paul's epistles] hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). [Satan said to Jesus] "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (Matthew 4:6-7).

⁵ Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:12-16).

⁶ Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law (Psalm 119:18). Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes (Psalm 119:12). I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might (Ephesians 1:18).

⁷ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD (Deuteronomy 6:4).

⁸ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16; see also 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 3:12; Revelation 7:2).

⁹ I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted (Job 42:2). Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases (Psalm 115:3). The Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will (Daniel 4:25). His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" (Daniel 4:34-35). In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will . . . (Ephesians 1:11). Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that" (James 4:15). See notes 29, 31-36, 45, 46.

¹⁰ They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD (Psalm 138:5).

God the Son,¹⁴ eternally begotten,¹⁵ not made, without beginning,¹⁶ being of one essence¹⁷ with the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, proceeding in the full, divine essence,¹⁸ as a

¹¹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

¹² No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known (John 1:18). This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:18). Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father (John 6:46). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear (Acts 2:33). To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:7). Together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:6). Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3). Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Philemon 1:3).

¹³ There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist (1 Corinthians 8:6).

¹⁴ These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31). In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made (John 1:1-3). This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:18). Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father (John 6:46). Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us) (Matthew 1:23). All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Matthew 11:27). I and the Father are one (John 10:30). Believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father (John 10:38). And he who sees me sees him who sent me (John 12:45). If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him (John 14:7). [To Israel belong] the fathers, and from [them] is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen (Romans 9:5). For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form (Colossians 2:9). [We are] looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13). And He is the radiance of His [God's] glory and the exact representation of His [God's] nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). But of the Son he says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8). Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ . . . (2 Peter 1:1). I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13).

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of [= over] all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities -- all things have been created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:15-16). For to which of the angels did He ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to me"? And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:5-6). And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him (John 1:14, 18).

¹⁶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

Person,¹⁹ eternally from the Father and the Son. Thus each Person in the Godhead is fully and completely God.

2.2 We believe that God is supremely joyful²⁰ in the fellowship of the Trinity, each Person beholding and expressing His eternal and unsurpassed delight in the all-satisfying perfections of the triune God.

3. God's Eternal Purpose and Election

3.1 We believe that God, from all eternity,²¹ in order to display the full extent of His glory²² for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment²³ of Himself and all who love Him,²⁴ did, by

¹⁷ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

¹⁸ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit . . . You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4). Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you (1 Corinthians 3:16). For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:27).

¹⁹ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:26). When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me (John 15:26). But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you (John 16:13-14). But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11). And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

²⁰ [Sound teaching accords] with the glorious gospel of the blessed [= happy] God with which I have been entrusted (1 Timothy 1:11). His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23). These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15:11). I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:26). Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well-pleased [delights]. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles (Matthew 12:18). When he established the heavens, I [Wisdom, the Word, the Son] was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always (Proverbs 8:27-30).

²¹ [He] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity (2 Timothy 1:9). This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:11). He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you (1 Peter 1:20). All who dwell on the earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain (Revelation 13:8).

the most wise and holy counsel of His will,²⁵ freely and unchangeably²⁶ ordain²⁷ and foreknow²⁸ whatever comes to pass.

3.2 We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies²⁹ to subatomic particles,³⁰ from the forces of nature³¹ to the movements of nations,³² and from the public

²² For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:36; see also Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). Then all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified (Isaiah 60:21; see also 43:7). “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again” (John 12:27-28). Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You” (John 17:1). I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do (John 17:4). [God highly exalted Christ] that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).

²³ Delight yourself in the LORD (Psalm 37:4). Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4). His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:23). He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

²⁴ But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose (Romans 8:28).

²⁵ We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11).

²⁶ God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Numbers 23:19). Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind (1Samuel 15:29).

²⁷ Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, “My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9-10). The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD (Proverbs 16:33). Many plans are in a man’s heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand (Proverbs 19:21).

²⁸ “Present your case,” the LORD says. “Bring forward your strong arguments,” the King of Jacob says. Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; as for the former events, declare what they were, that we may consider them and know their outcome. Or announce to us what is coming; declare the things that are going to come afterward, that we may know that you are gods; indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together (Isaiah 41:21-23). I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you (Isaiah 42:8-9; see also 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).

²⁹ [God] commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars (Job 9:7). Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing. (Isaiah 40:26).

plans of politicians³³ to the secret acts of solitary persons³⁴ – all in accord with His eternal, all-wise³⁵ purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins,³⁶ nor ever condemns a person unjustly;³⁷ but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability³⁸ of all persons created in His image.

³⁰ Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered (Matthew 10:29-30). For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:16-17).

³¹ For to the snow He says, “Fall on the earth,” and to the downpour and the rain, “Be strong.” He seals the hand of every man, that all men may know His work. Then the beast goes into its lair and remains in its den. Out of the south comes the storm, And out of the north the cold. From the breath of God ice is made, and the expanse of the waters is frozen. Also with moisture He loads the thick cloud; He disperses the cloud of His lightning. It changes direction, turning around by His guidance, That it may do whatever He commands it on the face of the inhabited earth. Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen (Job 37:6-13). He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes. He casts forth His ice as fragments; who can stand before His cold? He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow (Psalm 147:15-18). And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?” They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mark 4:39-41).

³² The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation (Psalm 33:10-11). If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it? (Amos 3:6). Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth? (Lamentations 3:37-38). As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive (Genesis 50:20).

³³ And the ten horns [= kings] which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled (Revelation 17:16-17). The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes (Proverbs 21:1). The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD (Proverbs 16:33).

³⁴ Man’s steps are ordained by the LORD, how then can man understand his way? (Proverbs 20:24). The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps (Proverbs 16:9).

³⁵ O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all (Psalm 104:24). To the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen (Romans 16:27). For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).

³⁶ The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he (Deuteronomy 32:4). This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone (James 1:13). Let God be true though every man be false (Romans 3:4).

³⁷ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20). For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and

3.3 We believe that God's election is an unconditional³⁹ act of free grace⁴⁰ which was given through His Son Christ Jesus before the world began.⁴¹ By this act God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin⁴² and brought to repentance⁴³ and saving faith⁴⁴ in His Son Christ Jesus.

all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law (Romans 2:11-12). All his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to abase (Daniel 4:37).

³⁸ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God (Romans 3:19).

³⁹ Though [Jacob and Esau] were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills (Romans 9:11-18). Consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:25-29). I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word (John 17:6). All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day (John 6:37-39). And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Romans 8:28-30).

⁴⁰ At the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day" (Romans 11:5-8).

⁴¹ [God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity (2 Timothy 1:9). He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4).

⁴² But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed (Romans 6:17). The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 8:2).

⁴³ The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to

4. God's Creation of the Universe and Man

4.1 We believe that God created the universe,⁴⁵ and everything in it,⁴⁶ out of nothing,⁴⁷ by the Word of His power. Having no deficiency in Himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in His joyful self-sufficiency,⁴⁸ God was pleased in creation to display His glory⁴⁹ for the everlasting joy⁵⁰ of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.⁵¹

the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-25). When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44). For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father (John 6:65). For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29). For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Matthew 11:27). And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14).

⁴⁵ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

⁴⁶ The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein; for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers (Psalm 24:1-2).

⁴⁷ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible (Hebrews 11:3). In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world (Hebrews 1:2). In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made (John 1:1-3).

⁴⁸ See note 22. Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14). I will accept no bull from your house, nor he-goat from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me (Psalm 50:9-15). [God is not] served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything (Acts 17:25).

⁴⁹ . . . everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made (Isaiah 43:7).

⁵⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10). His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23).

⁵¹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation"

4.2 We believe that God directly created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side. We believe that Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race;⁵² that they were created male and female equally in the image of God,⁵³ without sin;⁵⁴ that they were created to glorify⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶

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,⁵⁷ and chose to take what was

(Revelation 5:9). After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9-10).

⁵² Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7). God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:27). So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22). For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22). Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45). Death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come (Romans 5:14).

⁵³ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:27). Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man (Genesis 9:6). With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God (James 3:9).

⁵⁴ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (Genesis 1:31).

⁵⁵ See note 51.

⁵⁶ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Ephesians 5:22-33) Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

forbidden,⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹

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.⁶⁰ All persons are thus corrupt by nature,⁶¹ enslaved to sin,⁶² and morally unable⁶³ to delight in God and overcome their own proud preference for the fleeting pleasures of self-rule.

⁵⁷ Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1). Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Genesis 3:13). But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

⁵⁸ From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die (Genesis 2:17). When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:6).

⁵⁹ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:7-8). Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12). For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:21).

⁶⁰ Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned – for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:12-19).

⁶¹ In [sin]you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:2-3).

⁶² Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? . . . For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness (Romans 6:16, 20).

5.3 We believe God has subjected the creation to futility,⁶⁴ and the entire human family is made justly liable to untold miseries of sickness,⁶⁵ decay,⁶⁶ calamity,⁶⁷ and loss.⁶⁸ Thus all the adversity and suffering in the world is an echo and 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.⁶⁹

6. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God

6.1 We believe that in the fullness of time⁷⁰ God sent forth His eternal Son as Jesus the Messiah,⁷¹ conceived by the Holy Spirit,⁷² born of the virgin Mary.⁷³ We believe that, when

⁶³ A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (1 Corinthians 2:14). The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8). Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear (Deuteronomy 29:4).

⁶⁴ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope (Romans 8:20).

⁶⁵ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23).

⁶⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

⁶⁷ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long, we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered" (Romans 8:35-36).

⁶⁸ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

⁶⁹ Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:4).

⁷⁰ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law (Galatians 4:4).

⁷¹ For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him (John 3:16-17). Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

⁷² Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:34-35).

⁷³ Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us) (Matthew 1:23; see also Luke 1:34-35).

the eternal Son became flesh,⁷⁴ He took on a fully human nature,⁷⁵ 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 God⁷⁶ and truly man,⁷⁷ yet one Christ and the only Mediator between God and man.⁷⁸

6.2 We believe that Jesus Christ lived without sin, though He endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life.⁷⁹ He preached and taught with truth and authority unparalleled in human history.⁸⁰ He worked miracles, demonstrating His divine right and power over all creation: dispatching demons,⁸¹ healing the sick,⁸² raising the dead,⁸³ stilling the storm,⁸⁴ walking on water,⁸⁵ multiplying loaves,⁸⁶ and foreknowing what would befall

⁷⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

⁷⁵ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14). Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:17).

⁷⁶ See note 16.

⁷⁷ Although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8; see notes 74 and 75).

⁷⁸ There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

⁷⁹ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

⁸⁰ The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!" (John 7:46). And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him" (Mark 1:27). And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men" (Matthew 22:16).

⁸¹ With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him" (Mark 1:27).

⁸² Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people (Matthew 4:23).

⁸³ And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at me" (Matthew 11:4-6).

⁸⁴ And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm (Mark 4:39).

⁸⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea (Matthew 14:25).

⁸⁶ Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them

Him and His disciples,⁸⁷ including the betrayal of Judas⁸⁸ and the denial, restoration, and eventual martyrdom of Peter.⁸⁹

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,⁹⁰ such as the Seed of the woman,⁹¹ the Prophet like Moses,⁹² the Priest after the order of Melchizedek,⁹³ the Son of David,⁹⁴ and the Suffering Servant.⁹⁵

to the crowds, and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets (Matthew 14:19-20).

⁸⁷ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He (John 13:19).

⁸⁸ "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him (John 6:64). Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me (John 13:21). "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas (John 13:26). You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion (Matthew 26:2) [When he had given the morsel to Judas] Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly" (John 13:27).

⁸⁹ "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me" (Luke 22:31-34). "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!" (John 21:18-19).

⁹⁰ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26).

⁹¹ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel (Genesis 3:15). The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you (Romans 16:20).

⁹² I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him (Deuteronomy 18:18). [He has sent] the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people" (Acts 3:20-23).

⁹³ The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but [God] said to Him, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You," just as He says also in another passage, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:5-6).

⁹⁴ There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:7). The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1). "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David" (Matthew 22:42).

6.4 We believe that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily⁹⁶ in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan,⁹⁷ that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate,⁹⁸ that He died,⁹⁹ was buried¹⁰⁰ and on the third day rose from the dead¹⁰¹ to vindicate the saving work of His life and death¹⁰² and to take His place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory.¹⁰³ During forty days after His resurrection, He gave many compelling evidences of His bodily resurrection¹⁰⁴ and then ascended bodily into heaven,¹⁰⁵ where He is seated at the right hand of the Father,¹⁰⁶

⁹⁵ Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. . . He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 52:13, 53:3-6). For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

⁹⁶ No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father" (John 10:18).

⁹⁷ This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death (Acts 2:23).

⁹⁸ For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur (Acts 4:27-28).

⁹⁹ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (John 19:30). For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3).

¹⁰⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid (John 19:40-41). He was buried (1 Corinthians 15:4).

¹⁰¹ He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4). He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying (Matthew 28:6).

¹⁰² He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification . . . (Romans 4:25).

¹⁰³ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11). [God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

¹⁰⁴ To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

¹⁰⁵ And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

interceding for His people¹⁰⁷ on the basis of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet.¹⁰⁸

7. The Saving Work of Christ

7.1 We believe that by His perfect obedience to God¹⁰⁹ and by His suffering and death¹¹⁰ as the immaculate Lamb of God,¹¹¹ Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins¹¹² and the gift of perfect righteousness¹¹³ for all who trusted in God prior to the cross¹¹⁴ and all who would

¹⁰⁶ But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God (Luke 22:69). Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear (Acts 2:33). He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31). Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1).

¹⁰⁷ Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us (Romans 8:34). Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession (Hebrews 4:14). My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1).

¹⁰⁸ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:25). But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet"? (Hebrews 1:13).

¹⁰⁹ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19).

¹¹⁰ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3). And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed (1 Peter 2:24). For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit (1 Peter 3:18). They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins (Romans 3:24-25). For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died (2 Corinthians 5:14). For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died (Romans 8:34). For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (Romans 14:9). I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Galatians 2:21).

¹¹¹ The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

¹¹² In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (Ephesians 1:7). In [him] we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14). Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you (Acts 13:38).

trust in Christ thereafter.¹¹⁵ Through living a perfect life and dying in our place, the just for the unjust, Christ absorbed our punishment,¹¹⁶ appeased the wrath of God against us,¹¹⁷ vindicated the righteousness of God in our justification,¹¹⁸ and removed the condemnation of the law against us.¹¹⁹

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.”¹²⁰

¹¹³ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). [May I] be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Philippians 3:9). But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction (Romans 3:21-22).

¹¹⁴ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3). . . .whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26).

¹¹⁵ He justifies him who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26). For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Romans 3:28). [We] know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified (Galatians 2:16).

¹¹⁶ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. . . . For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:1, 3). Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, “Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

¹¹⁷ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:3-6). [We] wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him (Romans 5:9). For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

¹¹⁸ . . . whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26).

¹¹⁹ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:13-14). Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, “Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

¹²⁰ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19).

Whosoever will may come¹²¹ for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out.¹²²

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 obtained the omnipotent New Covenant¹²³ mercy of repentance¹²⁴ and faith¹²⁵ for God's elect. In His death, Christ expressed a special covenant love to His friends,¹²⁶ His sheep,¹²⁷ His bride.¹²⁸ For them He obtained the infallible and effectual working of the Spirit to triumph over their resistance and bring them to saving faith.¹²⁹

[Christ will present you blameless to God if] you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister (Colossians 1:23). You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

¹²¹ And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17, KJV). Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst (John 4:14).

¹²² Him who comes to me I will not cast out (John 6:37).

¹²³ [He took] the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). In the same way [he took] also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25). But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises (Hebrews 8:6). For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15; see also 12:24). Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Hebrews 13:20-21).

¹²⁴ See note 43.

¹²⁵ See note 44.

¹²⁶ Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

¹²⁷ I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:14-15).

¹²⁸ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25).

¹²⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). [Jesus prays] "I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me . . . I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours . . . For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:6, 9, 19). [Caiaphas] being high priest that year prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (John 11:51-52). He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

8. The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit

8.1 We believe that the Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation,¹³⁰ awakening faith in the remnant of God's people,¹³¹ performing signs and wonders,¹³² giving triumphs in battle,¹³³ empowering the preaching of prophets¹³⁴ and inspiring the writing of Scripture.¹³⁵ 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.¹³⁶

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.¹³⁷ This He does by giving the disciples of Jesus greater power to preach the gospel of the glory of Christ,¹³⁸ by opening the hearts of hearers

¹³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the ground (Psalm 104:30). The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters (Gen. 1:2).

¹³¹ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Romans 8:7-9).

¹³² The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion asunder as one tears a kid; and he had nothing in his hand (Judges 14:6).

¹³³ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel; he went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushanrishathaim (Judges 3:10).

¹³⁴ Then the spirit of the LORD will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man (1 Samuel 10:6).

¹³⁵ No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21). He said to them, "How is it then that David, by the Spirit, calls him Lord . . .?" (Matthew 22:43, referring to Psalm 110:1). See note 1.

¹³⁶ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49). Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear (Acts 2:33).

¹³⁷ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you (John 16:13-14). But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39).

that they might see Christ and believe,¹³⁹ by revealing the beauty of Christ in His Word and transforming His people from glory to glory,¹⁴⁰ by manifesting Himself in spiritual gifts (being sovereignly free to dispense, as he wills, all the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10) for the upbuilding of the body of Christ¹⁴¹ and the confirmation of His Word,¹⁴² by calling all the nations into the sway of the gospel of Christ,¹⁴³ and, in all this, thus fulfilling the New Covenant promise to create and preserve a purified people¹⁴⁴ for the everlasting habitation of God.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

¹³⁹ For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:18-19). A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14). The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8).

¹⁴⁰ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

¹⁴¹ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:7-10). God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Hebrews 2:4).

¹⁴² After [our great salvation] was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (Hebrews 2:3-4).

¹⁴³ You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8). Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will run and be glorified, just as it did also with you (2 Thessalonians 3:1). For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:18-19). While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

¹⁴⁴ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:33-34). “I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me” (Jeremiah 32:40).

8.3 We believe that, apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one would come to faith,¹⁴⁶ because all are dead in trespasses and sins;¹⁴⁷ that they are hostile to God, and morally unable to submit to God or please Him,¹⁴⁸ because the pleasures of sin appear greater than the pleasures of God.¹⁴⁹ Thus, for God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance,¹⁵⁰ wakens the dead,¹⁵¹ removes blindness,¹⁵² and manifests Christ in such a compellingly beautiful way through the Gospel that He becomes irresistibly attractive to the regenerate heart.

8.4 We believe the Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.¹⁵³ 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

¹⁴⁵ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16). [In Christ] the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:21).

¹⁴⁶ See notes 43 and 44.

¹⁴⁷ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-6).

¹⁴⁸ The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8).

¹⁴⁹ The cares of the world, and the delight in riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful (Mark 4:19).

¹⁵⁰ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed (Romans 6:17). For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Romans 8:7-9).

¹⁵¹ See note 147.

¹⁵² The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4-6).

¹⁵³ A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14). But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. . . . The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. . . . God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4, 6)

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.¹⁵⁴ 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.¹⁵⁵

9. The Offer of the Gospel and the Responsibility of Man

9.1 We believe that human beings are genuinely responsible for their decisions, actions, and motives.¹⁵⁶ God's providence mysteriously involves human wills and real choices in such a way that neither God's sovereignty nor human will is violated or sacrificed for the reality of the other. This mysterious harmony is sometimes called "compatibilism" or "concurrence," indicating that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are compatible and run concurrently through every decision and event. Often times in the Scriptures, complete divine sovereignty and genuine human responsibility are unblushingly affirmed in the same passage.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ [The Holy Spirit] will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:14).

¹⁵⁵ And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction (Romans 3:19-22). The Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Ephesians 3:6). Through [Christ] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His [= Christ's] name's sake (Romans 1:5). Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31). "Every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!" (Romans 10:13-15).

¹⁵⁶ If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15).

¹⁵⁷ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out (John 6:37). This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death (Acts 2:23). ...to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18). Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

9.2 We believe that genuine human choices, though simultaneously and intimately involving God's active providence, are made according to ability and desire. Sin's effects have devastated our spiritual abilities and desires, so that it may be rightly said that "no man seeks after God." Our spiritual waywardness, then, is the free, conscious, and repeated choice of those born into sin and under condemnation.¹⁵⁸

9.3 We believe that the gospel should and must be proclaimed in all the world and among all men. The legitimate gospel offer and genuine call to "believe and repent" is an offer to all, and a reality for those (and only those) who consciously and passionately confess, repent, believe, receive, and seek Christ—all synonyms for faith.¹⁵⁹ God's gospel call, in the Bible and through His people, is a genuine call to come, and those who do not come to Christ do not come precisely because they do not want to, choosing according to their wayward desires.¹⁶⁰

9.4 We believe that belief unto salvation is one of innumerable instances in the Scriptures where "concurrence" is essential to a proper and biblical understanding of divine sovereignty and human responsibility—neither negated, overruled, or dismissed by the other.

10. The Justifying Act of God

10.1 We believe that in a free act of righteous grace God justifies the wicked by faith alone apart from works,¹⁶¹ pardoning their sins,¹⁶² and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable

¹⁵⁸ As it is written, "there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one" (Romans 3:10-12).

¹⁵⁹ Repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15). But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name (John 1:12). Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household (Acts 16:31). If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (Romans 10:9-10).

¹⁶⁰ "...because they have not listened to My words," declares the LORD, "which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets; but you did not listen," declares the LORD (Jeremiah 29:19).

¹⁶¹ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7). We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law (Romans 3:28). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23-24). Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (Romans 4:4-5). Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified (Galatians 2:16). Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4). [I count all things] rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in

in His presence.¹⁶³ God's free gift of faith¹⁶⁴ is thus the sole instrument¹⁶⁵ 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.¹⁶⁶ This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the first instant of justification.¹⁶⁷ Thus the righteousness by which we come into right standing with God is not anything worked in us by God, neither imparted to us at baptism nor over time, but rather is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us.

10.2 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,¹⁶⁸ the fruit of love¹⁶⁹ and leads necessarily to sanctification.¹⁷⁰ This necessary relation between justifying

Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Philippians 3:8-9).

¹⁶² So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin" (Romans 4:6-8).

¹⁶³ See note 113.

¹⁶⁴ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

¹⁶⁵ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Romans 3:28). Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (Romans 4:4-5). See note 157.

¹⁶⁶ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19). He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). . . . and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Philippians 3:9). "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness'" (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

¹⁶⁷ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

¹⁶⁸ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

¹⁶⁹ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love (Galatians 5:6). The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5). We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel (Colossians 1:4-5). We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death (1 John 3:14). He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. . . . If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:8, 20). We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1 John 4:16).

faith and the fruit of good works gives rise to some Biblical expressions which seem to make works the ground or means of justification,¹⁷¹ 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.¹⁷²

11. God's Work in Sanctification

11.1 We believe that *positional* sanctification happens immediately and completely on the sole basis of Christ's life, death, and resurrection through faith.¹⁷³ However, *progressive*

¹⁷⁰ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13). [I send you] to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me (Acts 26:18). To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power (2 Thessalonians 1:11; see also 1 Thessalonians 1:3). So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead (James 2:17). For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead (James 2:26). He made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith (Acts 15:9). By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3-4). Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him (1 John 5:1).

¹⁷¹ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Romans 8:13-14). Envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21). For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:8-9). Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (John 5:28-29). Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart (Matthew 18:34-35). Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? (James 2:21-25)

¹⁷² Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? . . . For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead (James 2:17-20,26).

¹⁷³ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

sanctification, which comes by the Spirit through faith,¹⁷⁴ is imperfect and incomplete in this life.¹⁷⁵ Although slavery to sin is broken,¹⁷⁶ and sinful desires are progressively¹⁷⁷ weakened by the power of a superior satisfaction in the glory of Christ, there are remnants of corruption in every heart that give rise to an irreconcilable war¹⁷⁸ which calls for sober vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith.¹⁷⁹ Believers, then, find within themselves contrary urgings.¹⁸⁰ Their

¹⁷⁴ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

¹⁷⁵ Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12). If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10). My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1). Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors (Matthew 6:11-12). Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:11-13). But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law (Galatians 5:16-18).

¹⁷⁶ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:14). But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed (Romans 6:17).

¹⁷⁷ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen (2 Peter 3:18).

¹⁷⁸ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law (Galatians 5:16-18). Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul (1 Peter 2:11).

¹⁷⁹ Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13). Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12). I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

¹⁸⁰ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do (Galatians 5:17).

sinful, Adamic, and fleshly natures, though dethroned, are not yet fully destroyed and constantly distract them from doing God's will, keeping their righteous acts from perfectly meeting the glory of God¹⁸¹ and their motives from being completely pure.¹⁸² However, regeneration's effects and the indwelling Holy Spirit produce sincere passions for God's glory, will, and, hence, Christian obedience.¹⁸³ This Spirit-flesh tension is a significant reality, and this battle will be the Christian's lot this side of heaven.¹⁸⁴

11.2 We believe that all who are justified will ultimately win this fight.¹⁸⁵ They will persevere in faith and never surrender to the enemy of their souls.¹⁸⁶ This perseverance is the sure promise of the New Covenant,¹⁸⁷ obtained by the blood of Christ,¹⁸⁸ and worked in us by

¹⁸¹ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

¹⁸² I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes [motives] of the heart (1 Corinthians 4:4-5).

¹⁸³ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24).

¹⁸⁴ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members (Romans 7:18-23).

¹⁸⁵ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24-25). And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

¹⁸⁶ False Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect (Mark 13:22). Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers (Luke 22:31-32). My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (John 10:27-30). These whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Romans 8:30). For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end (Hebrews 3:14). They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us (1 John 2:19). [He] will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:8-9). For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me (2 Timothy 1:12). [You] by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5).

¹⁸⁷ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me (Jeremiah 32:40).

God Himself,¹⁸⁹ yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance;¹⁹⁰ so that we may say in the end, I have fought the good fight,¹⁹¹ but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me.¹⁹²

11.3 We believe that all successes in this fight against the sinful flesh can be credited only to God and His gracious sanctifying, transforming, sin-purging work.¹⁹³ Christians indeed experience many particular deliverances and victories in their unending battle with sin, and are never exposed to temptations that are impossible to resist.¹⁹⁴ God's prescription for our sanctification is neither self-reliant activity, nor passivity, nor apathy, but Spirit-dependent discipline to deny the desires of the flesh and put to death its deeds.¹⁹⁵ It is an ongoing and vigilant process in which the regenerate, alive to God and free from sin's tyranny, are commanded and expected to exert themselves in a conscious pursuit of the fruit of the Spirit, not the deeds of the flesh.¹⁹⁶

12. Living God's Word by Meditation and Prayer

¹⁸⁸ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

¹⁸⁹ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Hebrews 13:20-21).

¹⁹⁰ Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

¹⁹¹ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

¹⁹² But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me (1 Corinthians 15:10).

¹⁹³ For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (1 Corinthians 4:7).

¹⁹⁴ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

¹⁹⁵ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).

¹⁹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

12.1 We believe that faith is awakened and sustained by God's Spirit¹⁹⁷ through His Word¹⁹⁸ and prayer.¹⁹⁹ The good fight of faith is fought mainly by meditating on the Scriptures²⁰⁰ and praying²⁰¹ that God would apply them to our souls.

12.2 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.²⁰² Therefore, reading,²⁰³ understanding,²⁰⁴ pondering,²⁰⁵ memorizing,²⁰⁶ and savoring²⁰⁷ the promises of all that God will be for us in

¹⁹⁷ See notes 43 and 44.

¹⁹⁸ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

¹⁹⁹ Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers (Luke 22:31-32). I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might (Ephesians 1:18-19). Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you (2 Thessalonians 3:1). To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

²⁰⁰ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints (Ephesians 6:17-18). For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers (Psalm 1:1-3).

²⁰¹ Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to dishonest gain! (Psalm 119:36). Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law (Psalm 119:18). Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name (Psalm 86:11).

²⁰² His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4). For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one (Hebrews 10:34). By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward (Hebrews 11:24-26). Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come (Hebrews 13:13-14).

²⁰³ By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4).

²⁰⁴ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:17). See notes 223 and 225.

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.²⁰⁸

12.3 We believe that God has ordained to bless²⁰⁹ and use²¹⁰ His people for His glory through the means of prayer, offered in Jesus'²¹¹ name by faith.²¹² 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.²¹³ God's sovereignty over all things is not a hindrance to prayer, but a reason for hope that our prayers will succeed.²¹⁴

12.4 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,²¹⁵ and for the spiritual ability to

²⁰⁵ Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything (2 Timothy 2:7).

²⁰⁶ Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You (Psalm 119:11).

²⁰⁷ Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4). O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! (Psalm 34:8).

²⁰⁸ But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:2).

²⁰⁹ Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7). Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:7-11).

²¹⁰ I appeal to you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints (Romans 15:30-31). Pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19). Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Matthew 9:38).

²¹¹ "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13; see also 15:16; 16:23-24, 26).

²¹² But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways (James 1:5-8).

²¹³ Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:9-10).

²¹⁴ Thus says the Lord GOD: This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them [literally: this too I will be sought for by the house of Israel]: to increase their men like a flock. Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD (Ezekiel 36:37-38).

²¹⁵ Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to dishonest gain! (Psalm 119:36).

see the glory of God in His testimonies,²¹⁶ and for a soul-satisfying sight of the love of God,²¹⁷ and for strength in the inner man to do the will of God.²¹⁸ By prayer God sanctifies His people,²¹⁹ sends gospel laborers into the world,²²⁰ and causes the Word of God to spread and triumph over Satan and unbelief.²²¹

13. Christ's Church and Her Ordinances

13.1 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 all-supplying, all-sustaining, all-supreme, and all-authoritative Head.²²²

²¹⁶ Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law (Psalm 119:18). I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18).

²¹⁷ O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days (Psalm 90:14).

²¹⁸ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:14-16). And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy (Colossians 1:9-11).

²¹⁹ And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13).

²²⁰ Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Matthew 9:38).

²²¹ Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will run and be glorified, just as it did also with you (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

²²² He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent (Colossians 1:18). And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22). The Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Ephesians 3:6). Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love (Ephesians 4:15-16). For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God²²³ in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship.²²⁴

13.2 We believe it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches²²⁵ in which believers agree to assemble together²²⁶ to hear the Word of God proclaimed,²²⁷ to engage in corporate worship and prayer,²²⁸ to practice the ordinances of baptism²²⁹ and the Lord's Supper,²³⁰ to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love,²³¹ to

²²³ Through the church the manifold wisdom of God [is to] be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10). You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

²²⁴ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Revelation 5:9-12).

²²⁵ And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19).

²²⁶ And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Hebrews 10:24-25).

²²⁷ And He gave . . . pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12). I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

²²⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father (Ephesians 5:18-20). Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Colossians 3:15-16).

²²⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

²³⁰ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

²³¹ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). What is the outcome then, brethren?

hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical discipline,²³² and to engage in local and world evangelization.²³³ The Church is a body in which each member should find a suitable ministry for Christ's gifts to His people;²³⁴ it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells;²³⁵ it is the pillar and foundation of God's truth in a truth-denying world;²³⁶ and it is a city set on a hill so that men may see the light of its good deeds – especially to the poor²³⁷ – and give glory to the Father in heaven.²³⁸

When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification (1 Corinthians 14:26). Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness (Romans 12:6-8).

²³² Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted (Galatians 6:1). My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20). Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. . . . But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber – not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Drive out the wicked person from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:7, 11-13). If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

²³³ Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person (Colossians 4:5-6). Whenever I go to Spain – for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while (Romans 15:24). For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth (3 John 7-8). And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Matthew 28:18-20).

²³⁴ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose (1 Corinthians 12:13-18).

²³⁵ [We have] been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22).

²³⁶ In case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

²³⁷ They only asked us to remember the poor – the very thing I also was eager to do (Galatians 2:10). For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26). But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will

13.3 We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have repented and come to faith²³⁹ publically express their union with Christ²⁴⁰ in His death and resurrection,²⁴¹ by being immersed in water²⁴² in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁴³ It is a sign of belonging to the new people of God, the true Israel,²⁴⁴ and an symbol of burial²⁴⁵ and cleansing,²⁴⁶ signifying death to the old life of unbelief, and purification from the pollution of sin.

be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:13-14).

²³⁸ You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

²³⁹ [You have] been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:12). Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21). For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized (Acts 18:8). They were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins (Matthew 3:6).

²⁴⁰ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

²⁴¹ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).

²⁴² As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” . . . And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:36-39). John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there (John 3:23). We have been buried with Him through baptism into death (Romans 6:4).

²⁴³ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

²⁴⁴ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God (Romans 2:28-29). For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Romans 4:16). Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:7). John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins (Mark 1:4-5).

²⁴⁵ See note 259.

13.4 We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord²⁴⁷ in which gathered believers²⁴⁸ eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for His people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood.²⁴⁹ 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.²⁵⁰

13.5 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.²⁵¹

14. 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.²⁵² This task is to proclaim the Gospel to every

²⁴⁶ Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).

²⁴⁷ See note 248.

²⁴⁸ But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. . . . Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper . . . Or do you despise the church of God? (1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 22).

²⁴⁹ See note 248.

²⁵⁰ Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. . . . It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life (John 6:53-57, 63).

²⁵¹ And He gave . . . pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12). The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17). When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed (Acts 14:23). For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you (Titus 1:5). But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve (1 Timothy 2:12).

tribe and tongue and people and nation,²⁵³ baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord,²⁵⁴ and gathering them into churches²⁵⁵ 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.²⁵⁶ 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.

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

15.1 We believe that when Christians die they are made perfect in holiness,²⁵⁷ are received into heaven,²⁵⁸ and are taken consciously into the presence of Christ, which is more glorious and more satisfying than any experience on earth.²⁵⁹

15.2 We believe in the blessed hope²⁶⁰ that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally,²⁶¹ visibly,²⁶² physically,²⁶³ and suddenly²⁶⁴ in power and great glory;²⁶⁵

²⁵² And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

²⁵³ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).

²⁵⁴ See note 270.

²⁵⁵ When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed (Acts 14:23).

²⁵⁶ We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake (Romans 1:5). But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers (John 4:23). For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise thee among the Gentiles, and sing to thy name"; and again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people"; and again, "Praise the Lord, all Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him" (Romans 15:8-11).

²⁵⁷ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect (Hebrews 12:22-23).

²⁵⁸ And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

²⁵⁹ But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better (Philippians 1:23; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Revelation 6:9-11. On the issue of whether Paul conceives of the body and soul as separable, see 2 Corinthians 12:2-3).

and that He will gather His elect,²⁶⁶ raise the dead,²⁶⁷ judge the nations, and bring in the fulness of His kingdom.²⁶⁸ We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master,²⁶⁹ and those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness²⁷⁰ will be consigned to everlasting conscious misery.²⁷¹

²⁶⁰ [We are] looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13).

²⁶¹ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

²⁶² But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:61-62).

²⁶³ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21). "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them (Luke 24:39-42). See note 278.

²⁶⁴ For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3).

²⁶⁵ And then they will see the Son of Man COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory (Luke 21:27).

²⁶⁶ He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:31).

²⁶⁷ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

²⁶⁸ For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power (1 Corinthians 15:22-24). I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom (2 Timothy 4:1). You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-30).

²⁶⁹ You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever (Psalm 16:11). His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23). These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:46). And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29). For God so loved the world, that He gave His only

15.3 We believe that the end of all things in this age will be the beginning of a never-ending, ever-increasing happiness in the hearts of the redeemed, as God displays more and more of His infinite and inexhaustible greatness and glory for the enjoyment of His people.²⁷²

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

16.1 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.

16.2 Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach “the whole counsel of God.”²⁷³ Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth,²⁷⁴ and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes

begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy . . . be glory . . . for ever. Amen (Jude 24-25).

²⁷⁰ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

²⁷¹ Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2). His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12; see also 18:8; 10:28; 12:32; 25:41, 46; 26:24; Mark 3:29; 9:43-48; Luke 16:26; Jude 12-13). They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might (2 Thessalonians 1:9). And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name (Revelation 14:11; see also 19:3; 20:10).

²⁷² [God] raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6-7). You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever (Psalm 16:11). For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12). But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him . . .” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

²⁷³ For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God (Acts 20:27).

²⁷⁴ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness (Titus 1:1); If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain (1 Timothy 6:3-5); Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, (1 Timothy 4:1).

saints in the winds of confusion²⁷⁵ 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.²⁷⁶ And we believe that our mission of spreading God's glory broader and deeper is sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and His wonderful works.²⁷⁷

16.3 We believe that the cause of unity in the church²⁷⁸ 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 other²⁷⁹ 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.

16.4 We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture.²⁸⁰ 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.²⁸¹ 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.

²⁷⁵ [We minister for the upbuilding of the church] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and for and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles (Ephesians 4:13-14).

²⁷⁶ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5).

²⁷⁷ And those who know Your name will put their trust in You (Psalm 9:10).

²⁷⁸ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

²⁷⁹ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35).

²⁸⁰ For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood (1 Corinthians 13:12). But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen (2 Peter 3:18).

²⁸¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so (Acts 17:11).

17. Marriage and Sexuality

17.1 We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary sexes together reflect the image and nature of God.²⁸² Rejection of one's God determined biological sex from conception is a sinful rejection of the image of God within that person.

17.2 We believe the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture.²⁸³ We believe that marriage between one man and one woman, for life, uniquely reflects Christ's relationship with His Church.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth." So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

²⁸³ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." And out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "At last this is bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called 'woman,' Because she was taken out of man." For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, but they were not ashamed (Genesis 2:18-25).

²⁸⁴ and subject yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are parts of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, as for you individually, each husband is to love his own wife the same as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband (Ephesians 5:21-33).

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other, and that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage.²⁸⁵

17.3 We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.²⁸⁶

17.4 We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity.²⁸⁷ Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Christ Church.

²⁸⁵ Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). But because of sexual immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise the wife also to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise the husband also does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers (Hebrews 13:4). Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another...Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error (Romans 1:24, 26-27). But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and those things defile the person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, acts of adultery, other immoral sexual acts, thefts, false testimonies, and slanderous statements. These are the things that defile the person; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the person” (Matthew 15:18-20). Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

²⁸⁶ Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouths of His holy prophets from ancient times (Acts 3:19-21) that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (Romans 10:9-10). Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

²⁸⁷ One of the scribes came up and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:28-31). Treat people the same way you want them to treat you (Luke 6:31).

18. Sanctity of Human Life

18.1 We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life.²⁸⁸

19. Church Discipline

19.1 We believe that the threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church,²⁸⁹ to edify believers by deterring sin and promoting purity,²⁹⁰ and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct.²⁹¹

19.2 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for flagrant sin or serious doctrinal error, with the goal of the repentance and restoration of the offender.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them (Psalm 139:13-16). You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews (Job 10:11). Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding to learn Your commandments (Psalm 119:73). Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who by Myself spread out the earth (Isaiah 44:24). "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you..." (Jeremiah 1:5a)

²⁸⁹ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? (1 Corinthians 5:6).

²⁹⁰ Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning (1 Timothy 5:20).

²⁹¹ Brothers and sisters, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well (Galatians 6:1).

²⁹² "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:15-20). It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you (1 Corinthians 5.1-2). So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him (2 Corinthians 2:7-8).

19.3 We believe that managing this discipline process is entrusted to the Eldership and is to follow the biblical pattern as set forth in Matthew 18:15-20, with the final authority to remove the unrepentant member from membership falling to the congregation as led by its Elders.²⁹³ We also believe that the person who is removed ought to then be treated, by the church and its members, as an unbeliever (Gentile and a tax collector) with dignity, gentleness, respect, and evangelistic hope that they might repent, believe, be baptized, and join this or any gospel preaching church.²⁹⁴

19.4 We believe that any member of this church who, in the judgement of the Elders of Christ Church, practices or affirms a doctrine or conduct that is opposed to the teaching of the Word of God, or is threatening to the testimony of this church, or is divisive to the body, shall be subject to church discipline.²⁹⁵

19.5 We believe that discipline will follow the said biblical pattern and is an effort to bring the individual to repentance and protect the church from unrepentant sin.²⁹⁶

19.6 We believe that discipline may involve exclusion from participation in ministry and communion, as well as dismissal from the fellowship of this church. An individual may be disciplined by the Eldership short of dismissal from the fellowship, as they deem appropriate for the specific circumstance (for example, an individual may remain in certain circumstances a member of this church but be denied the privilege of serving in a particular ministry).²⁹⁷

19.7 We believe that the Eldership as is required by Scripture, may report to the congregation the names of those who are in danger of losing membership by reason of church discipline, and the reason for that discipline, as described in Matthew 18:15-20.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted (Galatians 6:1). Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us (2 Thessalonians 3:6). As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned (Titus 3:10-11). For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works (2 John 7-1).

²⁹⁴ “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20). but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (1 Peter 3:15). After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. (Luke 5:27–28). But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ (Luke 18:13). And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:8-10).

²⁹⁵ See note 292

²⁹⁶ See note 293

²⁹⁷ See note 292

²⁹⁸ See note 292

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