

Personal Statement of Faith

The Bible teaches us all that is necessary for life and godliness. The following is a summary of what I understand Scripture to teach; though it says more than this, I do not believe that it says less.

- 1. About the Scriptures:** The Bible is God's Word to us, composed of 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books. It was written by human authors, led by the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit in such a way that the authors wrote exactly what God intended them to say (2 Pet. 1:19-21). Because it is inspired by God, the Bible is truth without any mixture of error. It is God's gift to us, given to teach us all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Although other writings, which are of human origin, may be useful to the believer, only the Scriptures are necessary, and they are absolutely sufficient for living lives that please God (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
- 2. About God:** God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are equally God and are one God.
 - A. About God the Father:** He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-wise (Isa. 40:10-17; Rom. 11:33-36). He is maker of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 42:5). He reigns with providential care over the universe, and the flow of human history goes according to His purposes and plan (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14).
 - B. About God the Son:** Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is equal in nature with the Father (John 1:1; Col. 1:15, 2:9). Jesus has eternally existed as God (John 1:1-18, 8:54-58; Col. 1:15-16). He was born of a virgin, Mary, becoming truly a man, while remaining truly God (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of His people by dying on a cross (Heb. 4:14-16, 10:11-18; 1 John 2:2). He physically arose from the dead on the third day to demonstrate His power over sin and death (Matt. 28:1-20; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:1-28, 54-57). He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-11) and will one day return to earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Dan. 7:14; 1 Tim. 6:14-16; Rev. 19:11-16).
 - C. About God the Holy Spirit:** He is the third person of the Trinity. He is equal in nature with the Father and the Son. He guides men into all truth; exalts Christ; convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:7-14); cultivates Christian character (Gal. 5:22-26); comforts and prays for believers (Rom. 8:26); bestows spiritual gifts by which believers serve God and one another (1 Cor. 12:4-11); and seals believers for the day of final redemption (Eph. 1:13-14). His presence in the lives of Christians is the assurance of God that we are children of God and that He will complete His work in us (Rom. 8:16; Phil. 1:6).
- 3. About Humans and Sin:** All people are descended from one historical couple, Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20, Acts 17:26). Men and women are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27, James 3:9), and have been given responsibility to care for and rule over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:28, Ps. 8). All of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience and ingratitude toward God called sin, both by inherited nature and by our own choices (Gen. 3:1-21; Ps. 14:1-3, 51:5; Rom. 5:16-21). Sin separates people from God and causes many problems in life (Rom. 5:12-14, 6:23).
- 4. About Angels and Demons:** Angels are beings created by God to worship Him, to proclaim His holiness, and to minister to His people (Rev. 5:11-12; Isa. 6:2-3; Acts 27:23-24; Heb. 1:6-7, 13-14). They are not to be worshiped, but they are our fellow servants and co-worshippers of God (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10, 22:8-9). Demons are unholy angels who rebelled from service to

their Creator; led by Satan, they seek to corrupt, accuse, and destroy the people of God (Job 1:6-8; Luke 22:31; Acts 5:3; Jude 6; Rev. 12:7-9). We must be aware of their intentions (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 4:27; 1 Pet. 5:8), yet we do not fear, knowing that “He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Instead, we are called to resist Satan by humbling ourselves and obeying God (James 4:7-10, 1 Pet. 5:5-9). The demons' defeat is accomplished in the cross of Christ (Col. 2:15), and they will ultimately be punished forever in the lake of fire (Matt. 8:29, 2 Pet. 2:4, Rev. 20:10).

- 5. About Salvation:** Salvation is God's free gift to us through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (Rom. 3:21-26, 5:6-21), but we must accept it by trusting Jesus as our only way of salvation (John 14:6), repenting (turning) from sin and false worship to the living God through Christ (Luke 24:47; Acts 20:21, 26:20; 1 Thess. 1:9-10), and recognizing Him as Master over our lives (Rom. 10:9). The ability and desire to do this is not from our own goodness—we have none (Isa. 64:6)—but is a free gift of grace from God (Acts 5:31, 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). At the same time, every person is commanded to repent and believe, and only willful blindness and love of sin prevent people from doing so (Acts 17: 30-31; John 3:18-21; Rom. 1:18-32).

We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works (Eph. 2:8-9). When we come, empty-handed, to Jesus in faith, He takes on the penalty for our sin and gives us His righteousness, fulfilling all of God's law on our behalf (Isa. 53:4-6, 11; Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:21-26, 8:2-4; 2 Cor. 5:21). As participants in Christ's righteousness, we have eternal life in Him (John 3:16, Rom. 6:23).

- 6. About Sanctification and Good Works:** Though we can never be saved by doing good things, we are in fact created to glorify God by doing good works (Eph. 2:8-10), and true salvation will be evidenced by our deeds (Matt. 7:16-27; James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:3-6, 3:10-17, 5:3). Because we are no longer under the control of sin, we are called to daily turn away from sin and instead conform our lives to the way of righteousness (Rom. 6:1-14). God's ultimate goal for the life of every believer is that we should be faithful replicas of Christ in our character and concerns (Rom. 8:29-30, Phil. 2:5, 2 Pet. 1:4, 1 John 3:2). This goal is pursued by the Christian putting off sin and putting on godliness, knowing that the power and will to do so comes from God working within him (Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:1-14).
- 7. About the Perseverance of True Believers:** Because it is God who gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, those who truly belong to Christ will not finally fall away, but will remain true to the faith to the end (John 10:25-30, Phil. 1:6, Jude 24-25), kept by the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). Knowing this to be true is not an excuse for complacency for the true Christian, but a spur to remain faithful and examine our lives, lest we prove unworthy (Matt. 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 9:27; Col. 1:23; Heb. 6:4-12, 10:26-39). The lives of true believers, as opposed to those who profess faith but deny Christ in their practice, will be marked by a pattern of obedience and love (Matt. 7:15-27; John 10:25-27; 1 John 1:6-7, 2:3-6, 3:3-19, 5:1-5), though they may temporarily fall into sin and become subject to God's Fatherly discipline until they repent (Heb. 12:3-16, 1 John 1:9).
- 8. About the Church:** The New Testament church is a local body of baptized believers who meet together on the basis of their common faith and fellowship with Jesus Christ (Acts 2:42-47, 1 Cor. 1:2, Gal. 1:2, 1 Thess. 1:1, Phlm. 2, Heb. 10:19-25). While it is good and proper for churches to cooperate with one another to achieve certain goals related to the kingdom of Christ (Acts 11:29, Rom. 15:24, 1 Cor. 16:1-3), the authority, responsibilities, and offices of the church

are given to local congregations, and not to groups of churches. It is everywhere assumed in Scripture that Christians will take part in the life of the church (Acts 2:42-47, Heb. 10:19-25). The churches have been given pastors (often called in Scripture elders or overseers) to equip every believer for ministry and to protect against false teachers (Eph. 4:11-16; Titus 1:5-16; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5), and deacons to serve the congregation faithfully (Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim. 3:8-13). While these two offices are limited to godly, qualified men (1 Tim. 2:12-3:13), the Holy Spirit has given every man and woman in the church gifts and abilities to strengthen and serve one another (Rom. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:1-14:19).

9. **About Baptism:** Baptism is the immersion of a believer into water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and is commanded for every Christian (Matt. 28:19-20). We practice immersion because of the example of Jesus (Matt. 4:16), the practice of the New Testament church (e.g., Acts 8:39), the meaning of the Greek *baptizo* (“to dip, to immerse”), and the significance of baptism as a sign of the burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4, Col. 2:12). The New Testament assumes that believers have been baptized as part of identifying with Christ (Acts 2:38, Rom. 6:3-4, 1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:27), though rare and extreme circumstances may prevent this from taking place (Luke 23:42-43). Though baptism is a response to salvation, rather than itself saving a person, it is profitable to both the church and the individual as (1) a sign of the believer's new identity as one who is crucified and risen with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4), (2) a reminder of the call to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:5-14, Col. 3:1), (3) an expression of our cleansed conscience before God through the judgment carried out on Christ (1 Pet. 3:20-21), a sign that we are unified with the people of God (1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 4:4-6; cf. 1 Cor. 10:2), and (4) an expression of our hope of sharing in the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:5).
10. **About the Lord's Supper:** The Lord's Supper fulfills and explains the Passover celebration, retelling the story of how God has delivered His people, and is a central event in the life of the church. Together, believers actively, joyfully remember the death of our Lord on our behalf and the new covenant He instituted (Luke 22:15-20), celebrate fellowship in one body with other believers (1 Cor. 10:17, 11:17-22), and joyfully anticipate our Lord's return and the wedding feast we will share with Him in His kingdom (Luke 22:16, Matt. 26:29, Rev. 19:7). The bread represents the body of Christ, broken on our behalf, and the fruit of the vine represents His blood, poured out to purchase His people (Mark 14:22-24).
11. **About Stewardship:** Because God is the Creator of heaven and earth, all things belong to Him by right (1 Chr. 29:10-15), and He is in need of nothing (Ps. 50:7-13). Nevertheless, it pleases God when we cheerfully and gratefully give to Him from what He has given us (Exod. 35:5, 2 Cor. 9:5-8). We should do so regularly, systematically (1 Cor. 16:2), proportionally (2 Cor. 8:13-15, 9:8-9), and generously (2 Cor. 8:1-7, 9:10-11), working together to supply what is needed to minister to others (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37; 2 Cor. 8:13-15, 9:12-15). We ought to do so out of gratitude, and not by compulsion, seeing how “the Lord Jesus Christ, ...though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes became poor, that [we] through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). Further, every possession and position we are given ought to be used in a way that honors the name of our King, knowing we must give account (Col. 3:17).
12. **About Evangelism:** Every follower of Jesus Christ is commissioned to make disciples, teaching others to observe what the Lord Jesus has commanded, speaking of repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 28:18-20, Luke 24:47).

13. About the Family: God has ordained the family as the basic foundation of human society; it is composed of those related by birth, by marriage, or by adoption. Marriage creates a new bond between one man and one woman that is designed to last as long as both are alive (Gen. 2:23-25, Matt. 19:3-9, 1 Cor. 7:39). This institution glorifies God by providing a picture of Christ and His church. Husbands are to love their wives self-sacrificially, seeking their good in every possible way, living in an understanding manner with them, just as Christ has done for His church (Eph. 5:25-33, 1 Pet. 3:7). Wives are to wisely, respectfully place themselves under the leadership of their husbands, as the church does to Christ, with the understanding that this does not require her to sin (Eph. 5:21-24, 30-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-6). Like Eve before the Fall, she is to be a strong, intentional helper to her husband in work, home, and ministry (Gen. 2:18).

Children, from the time of conception, are a blessing from the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5).

Children are to honor and obey their parents, and parents are to lovingly raise their children through discipline and teaching to know the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). Adoption is to be celebrated as a picture of God's adoption of us into His family (Gal. 4:4-7).

14. About Christian Unity: Believers are to do all that is possible to live peacefully with all men (Rom. 12:18), and particularly with other Christians (Eph. 4:2-3, Phil. 4:2, 2 Tim. 2:24, James 3:17). It is the command of God to each believer to bring all gossip and malicious talk to an end (Eph. 4:25-32).

15. About Death, Resurrection, and the World to Come: At death our eternal status has been determined (Heb. 9:27). Those who die as followers of Christ find themselves in the presence of God (2 Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:23), though we will only experience the fullness of resurrection, life in a glorified, physical body, when the Lord returns (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Those who die apart from faith in Christ will experience the firstfruits of eternal punishment, though the fullness of judgment in the lake of fire awaits final judgment at Christ's return (Luke 16:22-23, Rev. 20:11-15). At the Last Day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised. Every man and woman will stand before Jesus Christ, the perfect Judge, and either be condemned by their sinful works or be saved by Christ's righteousness applied by faith (Rom. 3:21-26, Rev. 20:11-15). We will exist eternally, either separated from God in hell or in union and fellowship with Him in a new creation (Mark 9:43-48, John 14:1-6, Rev. 21:1-22:5). The current heaven and earth will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10), and a new heaven and earth will be brought about, where we will enjoy the presence of God forever (Rev. 21:1-4). Although Christians may and do disagree about the order of events in Jesus' return, I lean toward the historic premillennial position, understanding Christ to come once visibly to gather His church, defeat His enemies, and institute His kingdom on earth at the end of a time of great persecution.

Grace and peace,



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