

# GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

## — Lorton —

### Confession of Faith

As a community, we share some key truths that bind us together. We call these our Confession of Faith.

#### I. The Scriptures & Revelation

All that now needs to be known of God, Man, and Salvation has been revealed in God's Word, the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Bible. These documents have come to us preserved by the Spirit as fully faithful representations of the original manuscripts, which were God-breathed, and although penned by human authors, are without error in all areas they address.

These Scriptures are self-authenticating, and not dependent upon men or tradition for their authority. Rather, they are authored by God, who is Himself Truth, and are to be received because they are His Word. They are known as Truth by those who know God, by the testimony of the Spirit of Truth, who indwells all believers, and who leads them into all Truth.

2 Peter 1:3, 4, 19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 5:18; Psalm 138:2; John 16:12-15; Romans 3:4; Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:9; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.

#### II. God

God is a Spirit, who, existing from all eternity, is one God. He is unchangeable, everywhere-present at all times, is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise. He is just, holy, and is love itself. He is the creator, sustainer, and sovereign of all things, and is due the worship of all persons.

John 4:24; Deuteronomy 5:6-10; 6:1; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 139:7-10; Malachi 3:6; Job 34:12; 37:23; 40:8; 41:34; 42:2; 1 John 4:8; Genesis 1:1ff; Romans 11:33; Jeremiah 23:23.

God is one Being in essence, but exists in three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are equal in their essential Godhood, but, in perfect love and harmony, fulfill different roles in their relationships with each other, man, and the creation.

Luke 3:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Acts 13:2; Colossians 1:15-20; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-14; 20:28.

God loves man in such a way that He commissioned the Son to give Himself as a substitute for sinners, bearing God's wrath against sin. The Son did so willingly, by taking upon Himself full and true humanity (including a human body, but free of sin) through birth to a virgin, suffering an unjust death, and rising again bodily on the third day. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for His people. The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration (through the Word of God), and makes the work of the Son real in the believer's experience. He is the Person in the Godhead who convicts of sin, leads believers in the daily practice of godliness, and also intercedes for them.

John 3:3-8, 16; 16:7, 8; Romans 3:21-25; 8:4-17, 26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; Hebrews 1:1-3; 7:23-25; 1 Timothy 4:10; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; James 1:18.

### **III. Man**

All men and women are one with the first man, Adam, who was created in innocence, but who sinned as mankind's head. Each human is a sinner from birth, by nature and by choice. Therefore, apart from the sovereign grace of God, each person stands under His wrath. Man is still in the image of God, but that likeness has been tainted, damaged, and ruined by sin and disobedience, which bring weakness, sickness, pain, suffering, and death. Unconverted man is spiritually dead in his sin, with no hope for a right relationship with God, and is unwilling to receive either His natural revelation in creation, or His mercy as revealed through the Gospel.

Genesis 3:1-7; 6:5; Romans 3:9-21; 5:12, 16-19; John 3:18-20, 36; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; John 6:44.

### **IV. Salvation**

Man's only way to be reconciled to God is by becoming one with the new Head, Christ. Union with Christ occurs when one believes the Gospel by repenting from his sins and in faith trusting God's promise that the perfect life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is sufficient payment for sin and therefore God forgives all of the past, present, and future sins of the believer. At the moment of faith in Christ, the Christian partakes of God's very nature, being born of His Spirit. He has Christ's righteousness placed to his account, Christ's Spirit given to him as a pledge of full and final redemption, is made a new creation, and is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church. He is given eternal spiritual life with assurance of physical resurrection in a glorified body. God is sovereign in salvation: All whom God has chosen to salvation are drawn by the Father to the Son and will be kept by the power of God until death or Christ's return.

Romans 5:15-21; 8:9, 14, 23, 35-39; John 3:6; 6:37, 44; Acts 13:48; 15:1-10; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:3-7, 13, 14; 2:8-10; Colossians 1:22, 23; Titus 3:5,6; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 6:9-12; Philippians 1:6; Revelation 5:9.

### **V. Faith & Good Works**

Nothing in man naturally will bring him to do any "good work" that delights God and accomplishes salvation. Saving faith, however, once alive in the heart of the believer, produces works appropriate to that faith. Believers are said to be justified by faith alone. However, the faith that justifies the sinner is never alone, accompanied as it is by works of love. This love, far from being opposed to God's moral law, fulfills it. The very grace of God that teaches us the Gospel message also teaches and guides us into godly living. And the very Spirit of liberty that sets believers free from the curse of the Law, indwells believers to the end that the righteous requirement of the Law may be fulfilled in them.

Galatians 5:4-6, 19-24; Romans 8:1-4; 12:1, 2; 13:8-10; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 12:14; James 2:14-25; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Titus 2:11-14; 3:8; 1 John 2:3-6; 4:19-21; 5:2, 3.

### **VI. The Church**

All of the redeemed since Pentecost constitute the Church, the Body of Christ, which is the present expression of God's Kingdom program, and is to be distinguished from the nation of Israel. This church is reflected in local assemblies of believers, who voluntarily have banded together for the purposes of baptizing, observing the Lord's Supper, edification, evangelism, worship, fellowship, prayer, and equipping for service to one another. These churches are led by qualified men called pastor/elders, who have been gifted by Christ. These men are to be recognized by and accountable

to fellow members of their local church, and will ultimately give an account to Jesus, the head of the church for how they led and shepherded the flock of God in their local church. All members—both men and women—are called to be subject to the loving sacrificial leadership of their elders.

Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:5; 2:42; 11:16; 20:28; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Romans 12:3-12.

Only two ordinances for the church were established by Jesus Christ, and followed by the Apostles and the early church: baptism of believers (by immersion in water) and the Lord's Supper. Both are to be practiced today.

Matthew 26:26-29; 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 1:13; 11:17-34.

## **VII. Gender, Marriage, & Family**

God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, equal in value and dignity, but distinct in roles. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Therefore, rejection of one's biological sex or adopting a transgender self-conception is a rejection of God's design.

God's design from creation is that marriage be a covenant between one man and one woman, as a sacred reflection of Christ's faithful union with His Church. Therefore, "gay marriage" and polygamy are not biblical marriage. God commands that sexual intimacy occur only within marriage. Therefore, all sex outside of the covenant of marriage are sins against God, including lust, fornication, pornography, adultery, homosexual or bisexual behavior, polyamory, and incest. The grace of God in Jesus is sufficient to forgive all sins, including sexual sins, and to give power for holiness to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity.

Furthermore, because God loves marriage, He hates divorce, permitting it only where there has been sexual immorality, or desertion by an unbeliever (actual or functional abandonment of the marital covenant). A believer who was faithful through a divorce that had biblical grounds is also free to marry again.

While some men and women are called to a life of singleness which enables undivided service to God and His church, God's command from creation to mankind is to be fruitful and multiply through marriage and family. In the family, the wife is to respectfully subject herself to the leadership of her husband, as unto Christ. The husband is the head of his wife, and is commanded to sacrificially love her, as Christ loved the church. Children are a gift from God and are fully human from conception. Parents are to train their children by modeling a godly life, teaching them the Scriptures, disciplining them in love, and providing them a resource of wisdom and counsel. Children are to obey their parents with respect and honor.

We believe that abuse (such as the physical, emotional, or sexual harm, or exploitation of another person) is sin and is destructive, evil, and in direct opposition to the purposes of God. Abuse must not be tolerated in the Christian community, and we believe God calls us to protect, help, and love people who have been abused.

Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-24; Malachi 2:14-16; 1 Timothy 2:12, 3:2; Matthew 5:32, 19:9, 4-6; 1 Corinthians 7 (1 Corinthians 7:12-15, 32-35); Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 21:1-4.

## VIII. Spiritual Gifts

Because Christ's Church is a body, its various parts minister to each other through the power, graces, and gifts given by the Spirit of God, each believer gifted for ministry to others.

Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Hebrews 2:3, 4; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.

### WE AFFIRM SIX THINGS

1. Further revelation, whether through prophecy, tongues, or interpretation, is unnecessary in the church today, and such claims to revelation tend not only to undermine the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, but lead many into instability, heresy, and division, often elevating experience over the Word of God. Jeremiah 23:16-32; 2 Timothy 3:5-17; Matthew 5:18.
2. Today's "speaking in tongues" (ecstatic utterance) is not to be identified with the first century gift of the supernatural ability to suddenly speak foreign languages, either in essence, practice, purpose, or effects. Acts 2:1-13.
3. While God can and does heal, such healings must be judged on their own merit, and much of what passes for healing today bears little resemblance to the healings recorded in the gospels and the book of Acts, which also included raising the dead. Matthew 9:18-34; John 11:43, 44; Acts 3:6-9; James 5:14-16.
4. The Holy Spirit, the giver of gifts, has given warnings of charismatic excess, proper guidelines for the use of the gifts, and clear statements of the priority of the proclaimed Word as the key means of instruction, in 1 Corinthians 1, 2, 12, 13, and 14.
5. Sickness and poverty both were present in the lives of the apostles, their associates, and the early church, and should not be judged abnormal, or as signs of unbelief. John 9:3; Philippians 2:26, 27; 2 Corinthians 8:2; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20.
6. Since miracles of all sorts can be performed by Satan, and will be signs of the end-times and of the Antichrist, the believer must be most cautious in endorsing a given manifestation as from God. Matthew 24:11, 23-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 13:13-15.

## IX. Last Things

When we come to the end of what the Bible calls "the last days," Jesus will return to receive His people, and to establish His kingdom upon the earth. The dead in Christ will rise first, and living believers will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. He will judge all men, both the living and the dead, according to their deeds.

All of those who have opposed God will be cast, with Satan (the tempter and deceiver who, as a fallen angel, is the chief enemy of his creator-God) and his demons, into the lake of fire to be tormented forever apart from God. This is "the second death." Believers, in contrast, will be raised to eternal life, and will enjoy the unbroken fellowship of God forever, in the new heavens and new earth. They will be conformed spiritually and bodily to the image of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and will remain forever in His likeness, and in fellowship with Him, the Father, and the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:1-12; 2 Peter 3:8-13; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 5:1ff; 20:1-22:21; Romans 8:21-30; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57.

## **X. Sanctification**

Knowledge of all the above gives the believer encouragement and reason to be faithful to his Lord, for whose return he looks, and whose will he has the heart to obey, even in the face of opposition. In this life, the believer must be ever watchful in prayer, and active in resisting Satan, fleeing temptations, and "putting to death" the deeds of the flesh.

Ample provisions of grace and wisdom are granted the believer for the purpose of living skillfully and successfully in this present age—including the promises and precepts of Scripture, the power of the Spirit, and the fellowship of the church. Although perfection is not possible in this life, the power of sin over the believer has been broken by the death of Christ, so that it no longer "reigns over" him. This fact allows the believer to find freedom from habitual sin and addictive behaviors. The normal Christian life is one of obedience, peace, and joy.

2 Peter 1:3-11; 3:11-13; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:2, 3; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Romans 6:1-23; 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 15:58; Acts 14:22; Matthew 13:19-23; Philippians 2:12, 13; 4:4-8; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 John 2:14-17; 2 Timothy 3:16.