

## **BASIS OF FAITH**

### **God**

There is only one God, who exists as three distinct and equal persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is the living God who is almighty, eternal, unchanging and knows all things past, present and future. He is just and holy, gracious and merciful. He is sovereign Creator and Ruler of all things and exercises his sovereignty in Creation, Providence and Redemption. As the Maker and Ruler of all things he is deserving of all praise and glory forever.

### **The Bible**

God's greatness and holiness are such that, without his aid, man can neither understand him nor find the way to a right relationship with him. In his mercy however, God has made himself known. He has revealed himself through creation, but human sinfulness blinds us to the glory of God, and because of this such revelation is inadequate to bring anyone to salvation. God has therefore revealed himself definitively for our salvation through the Old and New Testaments of the Bible as they witness to Christ. We therefore accept all that is written in the Bible, as originally given, as not merely containing, but being, the inspired and infallible Word of God, which is without error and the final and sufficient authority in all matter of Christian faith and life.

### **Humanity**

God created human beings perfect and in his image, but after being tempted by the devil, they, by their own free choice, disobeyed God and became sinners. Humanity is now corrupted in every part, by sin, and so fellowship with God is broken and all humanity is deserving of eternal punishment.

### **Salvation**

God alone can deal with human sin and bring about reconciliation to himself. To achieve this, God the Son became man in Christ Jesus. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless, human life and taught entirely without error. He suffered and died in the place of sinners, experiencing on their behalf the just punishment of God for their sins. God, in his grace, forgives and reconciles to himself all who turn to him in true repentance and who trust in Christ's atoning death. God imputes to them the righteousness of Christ and adopts them as his own children. He thus sets all believers free from the domination of the devil and the corruption of their own sinful nature, and removes from them forever sin's eternal consequences. Salvation can only be found through faith in Christ.

### **The Gospel**

The gospel is given to us entirely through God's free and sovereign grace. It is the church's calling and privilege to proclaim the gospel to all people and to defend it against error. All who hear the gospel and respond in obedient faith receive the full salvation promised to us in Jesus Christ. To reject the gospel is to reject God and his grace and so leaves the one who does so without hope.

### **The Risen Lord**

The Lord Jesus Christ was shown to be the Son of God by his sinless life, teaching, miracles and his bodily resurrection from the dead, in fulfilment of the Scriptures. He has ascended in power and glory to the presence of God, where he now reigns and intercedes on behalf of those who call upon him in truth.

### **The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit must work in us before we can enter into salvation. Through the gospel he leads us into an awareness of our sinfulness, and brings us to repentance and trust in Christ. He causes us to be born again, and by his continuing work enables us to understand and respond to God speaking through the Bible and so develops in us the fruits of love and holiness along with the spiritual gifts necessary to build the church.

### **The Second Coming**

God is bringing all human history to a climax which will be marked by the visible return to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory at the Father's appointed time.

### **Jesus the Judge**

God has appointed Jesus as Judge and there will be a final judgement. Those who believe in Christ will be raised in a glorified body and enjoy eternally and to the full the presence of their Lord in the new heavens and new earth. Those who do not believe in Christ will be banished from God's presence forever into eternal punishment in hell.

### **The One Church**

All who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and upon whom God has bestowed his righteousness as a free gift, belong to Christ. They alone may rightly be called Christians. They alone are members of the one universal and eternal Church of Christ. The unity they enjoy in Christ is to be reflected in their love for one another and in seeking to serve one another in love.

### **The Gathered Church**

Each local church is a fellowship of believers gathered by Christ and committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of baptism and the Lord's Supper, pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The church has no need of, nor should acknowledge any other authority over it than his. Through him, the church has direct access to God and enjoys fellowship with other assemblies of his people in a unity which transcends all barriers.

### **Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

These have been commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ as an obligation to the churches until his return. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice which was offered once for all, and involves no change in the bread or wine. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper of themselves convey grace to the receiver, but rightly received by faith are a means of grace.

### **Church Polity**

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church Universal, which is his Body, and of each local church.

We believe that each local church is in itself a complete church, therefore autonomous, possessing all the rights and responsibilities of the Church by the Holy Spirit as set forth in the Scriptures.

We believe that Jesus Christ exercises his authority in each local church by the Holy Spirit and through the Scriptures.

We believe that each local church, through its Church Meeting, is answerable only to Jesus Christ, and not to any association, conference, council, synod, or any other ecclesiastical body.

We believe it is proper and beneficial for each local church to seek fellowship and counsel of other churches that are like-minded in the Lord.

We believe that local churches have a responsibility to love and respect one another in the Lord and to show concern for one another's welfare.

We believe that the membership of a local church should be open to any who have made a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are living godly and obedient lives and who are willing to submit themselves to the discipline of the local church, irrespective of their beliefs about matters such as baptism and ecclesiology, which are not essential to being evangelical Christians.