

DOCTRINAL AFFIRMATIONS, Pastor Chris Surber

I affirm the Bible alone as foundational for theological understanding, faith, knowledge of God, and practice in the Christian life. In order to be instructed by the wisdom of the greater Body of Christ through the ages and in order to maintain consistency with the historic Christian faith, I affirm the Savoy Declaration of 1658 (<http://www.creeds.net/congregational/savoy>).

Scripture (Bibliology): I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is the final authority in matters of faith and practice. It is perfect and complete. It is divinely inspired and perfect in the original manuscripts, inerrant in all matters to which it speaks. (I Timothy 4:13; II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20)

God (Theology Proper): I believe in the one true and living God, the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, and Ruler of all things. He is infinite in power, eternal in nature, and has revealed Himself to us as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Mathew 28:19; Luke 22:70; Acts 1:8)

Humanity (Anthropology): Man is dead in trespasses and sin. He is unable to change his state through good works or by any other means which are available to him. Mankind has been created in God's image, for His own purposes, according to His divine and sovereign will. (Genesis 1:26) It is only by acceptance through faith of the grace of God that man is able to be saved. (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13; Romans 5:2)

Salvation (Soteriology): Salvation is the gift of God's grace. It is freely bestowed upon all who place their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ in response to His grace. (John 1:12; Acts 16:30-33; Romans 10:9-10) Jesus offers Himself to the world (John 3:16-17). The death of Christ is *sufficient* for all humanity and it is *efficient* for those who place their trust in Christ, those who were foreknown in the mind of God before the foundations of the earth. (Mathew 24:22-24; Mark 13:27; John 17:9; Romans 8:29-30, 11:5-8; Ephesians 1:3-12, 2:4-5, 8-9; II Timothy 2:10) Salvation comes through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, in His atoning blood, according to God's grace. Christians everywhere are commanded to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and make disciples. (Mathew 28: 19-20)

Jesus (Christology): I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died to make atonement for the sins of humanity corporately and each person individually. All who identify with Him are redeemed by His shed blood. I believe that Jesus was physically raised from the dead and lives eternally. (John 1:1-3; 14; 3:1-7, 16; Hebrews 10:4-14; 1 John 2:2)

Holy Spirit (Pneumatology): I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells and gives life to believers, enables them to understand the Scriptures, empowers them for godly living, and equips them for Christian service.

Last Things (Eschatology): I believe in the bodily return of Jesus Christ. Until His return to establish His Kingdom on earth, it is the Christian's responsibility to be ambassadors of redemption and reconciliation in this world. (Matthew 25:31-46; 28:18-20)

Satan (Demonology): I believe that Satan is a fallen angelic being. He is the author of sin and the tempter of humanity. He is destined for eternal punishment in the lake of fire. (Matthew 4:13; Acts 5:3; Revelation 20:10)

Sacraments (Ordinances): I believe that water baptism and communion are the Sacraments or Ordinances of the Church. They are symbols of the grace and mercy expressed by God in Jesus Christ. (Mathew 3:11; Mathew 26:26-29)

The Church (Ecclesiology): I believe that the Church Universal is composed of all persons who have been born again through saving faith in Jesus Christ. The local church is the visible expression of the Body of Christ with Christ alone being its head. (Mathew 16:18)

I. The Doctrine of Christ

Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18) He is not the first creation of God – as some have supposed – Jesus is coexistent with the Father and Holy Spirit. He is God. (John 1:1) Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:35) Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. He had not earthly biological father, though he had an adoptive earthly father in Joseph. The virgin birth preserved the purity and distinctiveness of Christ.

Jesus was accused and brought before Roman authorities by the Jewish religious

establishment. (Luke 23:1) This accomplished the very practical matter of fulfilling scriptural prophecy as well as serving to demonstrate the corruption of the humanity and its need for a savior. (Isaiah 53) Jesus suffered, was crucified, and died. He did this on behalf of humanity to make salvation available through his atoning work. Jesus took the sin of the world upon himself in order to provide a sacrifice for all sin. (Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2)

On the third day, Jesus rose from dead and reigns as the King of Kings, victorious over sin and death, Lord of all creation. (Mathew 28:6; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:24; 1 Timothy 6:15; Hebrews 7:1) Jesus Christ will one day return to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42; I Peter 4:5; Mathew 16:27) He will destroy the evil currently found in the earth and establish an eternal reign in peace where there will be no more suffering. (Revelation 2:7; 19:7; 21:4)

II. The Doctrine of Salvation

After a long journey, I have come to embrace the Doctrines of Grace. I hold to Reformed Doctrines of salvation because they are consistent with the teaching of Scripture. While I am compelled to believe that Jesus Christ died to make salvation available to all humanity, (I Timothy 2:4), and while God does not wish that any should perish, (John 3:17) I affirm an Infralapsarianism view of election. Which is simply to say: God did not create some for the purpose of salvation and others for the purpose of damnation. God's love for His creation is such that He desires all to be saved. However, were it not for the direct intervention of the divine providence, none would be saved. God in His sovereignty has chosen to work within the confines of human free will. His foreknowledge speaks of his eternality in understanding and specific action in election. (Romans 8) He saves the elect according to His divine will, for His sovereign purpose. Salvation is the complete and free gift of God's grace. The only and right response to so great a salvation as this is to respond with reckless abandon in worship and obedience to His will for our lives.

God is eternal and unchanging and He, in His sovereignty, has created a universe which is temporal and full of change. (Deuteronomy 33:27; Romans 16:26) God has chosen to exercise divine authority within the context of a temporal reality. Humanity has received the gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ alone. I believe that the atonement of Christ is the only means of salvation as believers are grafted into the body of Christ according the enormity of the grace of God alone, by of faith alone. (John 1:14; Romans 5:15)

III. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. (Ephesians 4:30) He convicts the world of sin and draws sinners to repentance. (John 16:8-11) The Holy Spirit regenerates sinners. (John 3:5) He seals the salvation of believers and testifies to them regarding God's goodness. (II Corinthians 1:22) A primary role of the Holy Spirit is to bring glory to Jesus Christ. (John 16:14) The Holy Spirit empowers believers with spiritual gifts for spiritual service through his indwelling presence.

In regard to the often controversial question of the "sign gifts" in the modern context, I long ago adopted the view of Christian & Missionary Alliance founder A.B. Simpson, "Seek not, forbid not." I find no evidence to support the view that the sign gifts ceased with the death of the apostles. Nor do I find any evidence to suggest that sign gifts, particularly speaking in tongues, is a necessary sign of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or of a second spiritual blessing. The body of Christ is made up of believers having differing spiritual gifts. (I Corinthians 12:7-13)

IV. The Doctrine of the Church

The body of Christ (The Church) is made up of all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:10, I Corinthians 10:16, 12:12, 18; Ephesians 3:6; Colossians 1:24) Christ has instituted two ordinances within the church, the Lord's Supper and Baptism. (Luke 22:19-20; I Corinthians 11:24-25) Jesus prayed for the unity of His Church. (Luke 17:11) The unity and love shared between believers is a concrete expression of the love of God manifested through Christ in the world. (John 13:35)

In an age of growing apostasy, however, it is crucial that biblical believers everywhere take matters of the purpose, function, and meaning of the Church as the body of Christ, very seriously. We must practice the truth in love, but we must practice and teach the truth. "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." (Romans 12:9 NIV) The Church is God's primary instrument in evangelism and the expression of His glory to humanity.

V. The Doctrine of Eschatology

The Church looks forward to the time of the return of Jesus Christ. It is the hope of the church. (Galatians 5:5) Jesus declared that he would literally return. (John 14:3) This is not a spiritualized return, but a literal return of the King of Kings. (Revelation 19:6) Christ will judge

believers and to bestow rewards pertaining to faithfulness and stewardship of gifts. (Mathew 25:15-46) Near the time of His coming there will be a great turmoil (tribulation) upon the earth. It is my contention that the Church will endure the tribulation. I reject a pre-tribulation rapture. (Mathew 24:40, for example, speaks of impending judgment, not rapture)

After a time of great tribulation Jesus will return to defeat and bind Satan, defeat the anti-Christ, and establish his earthly millennial kingdom. (Luke 19:12; Daniel 7:13) Jerusalem will be the capital of Christ's earthly kingdom for one thousand years, after which time we will live and reign with him eternally in glory. (Isaiah 2:2-4; II Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6) Jesus will ultimately judge all who have ever lived. Those who are found in Christ will receive eternal life and those who have rejected God's mercy will be cast into the lake of fire for eternity. (Revelation 20: 10, 14-15)

Heaven is a place of eternal beauty and satisfaction, as children of God find their full contentment in the worship and praise of the Father. It is filled with the presence of God. It is home for those who have been called according to the prevenient grace of God, having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, awakened to the treasure which is Christ, and thus having been roused to its present reality; have accepted the mercy of God in Christ. Hell is a place which was created for the father of rebellion and his minions. Hell, on the other hand, is a place reserved for those who have rejected the grace and mercy of Christ along with Satan and his demons. God is fully just in allowing fallen and degenerate man to continue along their path of rejection of His goodness and worth. He has made known His presence in creation, in Scripture, and most notably in Christ. (Romans 1:18-20, I Corinthians 2:14). It is a state of eternal distress in a vacuum of God's presence. I hold what is commonly referred to as historic Premillennialism.