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Doctrinal Statement
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Doctrinal Statement of Faith

Bibliology:

Bibliology is the study of the Bible, the Word of God. I believe that the Bible was God breathed (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This means that the Bible was written by man through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Since the Bible is ultimately written by God, then it can be said that the Scriptures are inerrant and infallible. With it being inspired by God, we cannot add to what is written (Rev. 22:18).

I believe that the entirety of the Scriptures consists of 66 books, which is split into two sections: The Old Testament and The New Testament. The Old Testament makes up the bulk of the Bible with 39 books and The New Testament makes up the latter 27 books. These 66 books are the authorized word of God.

Some people tend to believe that the KJV (King James Version) translation is the one and only translation to use. This could not be further from the truth. It is difficult to find one Bible translation that is perfect and free of human variant. The Scriptures are originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, which make it almost impossible for the exact meaning of a passage to be translated perfectly. It is difficult to do this because the English language tends to have many different words with more than one meaning. For this reason, it is most beneficial to use different translations to better understand the meaning of a passage and to get a better grasp of what is meant.

There are two types of ways that God reveals himself. One is general revelation, which is God being revealing Himself through all of creation. The main example of this is the creation of the world (Rom. 1:20). The other is special revelation, which is God revealing Himself through supernatural means. Some of the ways that God reveals Himself in this way is through the Scriptures, dreams and visions, but Jesus, God in human form, is the most important form of

special revelation that has been given to us. Without Jesus, the Word became flesh (John 1:14), we would not be able to have an eternal life with God. In regards to the other ways, dreams and visions, I do not believe that He uses these means anymore in the modern world. They were used primarily in the times before the Holy Spirit indwelt believers permanently. I believe this is the case because even though Scripture does not clearly state this, we do not see dreams and visions being given as frequently in the New Testament because the Holy Spirit is in all believers helping them to understand God and the Scriptures more clearly.

Theology Proper

Theology Proper is the study of God. God has many attributes. I believe that there are some attributes that can only pertain to God, which are incommunicable attributes. These attributes are: justice (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:30), omnipotent, meaning He is all-powerful (Psalm 135:6; Revelation 19:6; Jeremiah 32:17,27), omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere (Psalm 139:7-13; Jeremiah 23:23), and omniscient, which means that He knows everything in any time, past, present, and future, at any time (Psalm 139:1-5; Proverbs 5:21). The other many attributes that God shares with us are called communicable attributes. Some examples of these types of attributes are: love (1 John 4:8), peace (1 Corinthians 14:33), joy (John 15:10-11), patience (Colossians 3:12-13), and mercy (Psalm 103:8).

I believe that God is Triune. This means that He is three persons within His one being. These persons are known as God- The Father, God- The Son, and God- The Holy Spirit. Each person of God has their own roles. The Holy Spirit functions as the Helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26). Jesus (God-The Son) functions as our sacrifice in order for us to be able to have a relationship with God. God-The Father is viewed as the chief of co-equals within the Trinity. Similarly to the head of the household, John 5:19 shows that Jesus can do nothing of His own accord and can only do as the Father does.

The sovereignty of God and free will of man are meant to work together. As difficult as it is to fully understand the concept of God choosing us and us choosing Him, it is ultimately best to continue to seek Him. Throughout the New Testament, believers are described as “elect” (Matthew 24:31) and “chosen” (1 Thessalonians 1:4). This basically means that God has chosen us for salvation. Roman 10:9-10 shows that we have the choice to believe in Jesus Christ, in order to receive salvation. God chooses us so that we are able to receive His gift of salvation. We receive salvation through believing that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again on the third

day. Through this belief in Christ we must continually live a repentant lifestyle that is constantly growing closer to God.

I believe that God has always existed. He has always been and will always be. God created everything and is the only one that can create from nothing. From the beginning He was, and in the end He will be. Revelation 22:3 states, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Anthropology and Hamartiology

Anthropology is the study of humanity. The Biblical perspective of this is focused on the nature of humanity. Hamartiology is the study of sin. Anthropology and Hamartiology are often closely related in the sense that they both deal with roughly the same thoughts. That is why they are typically mentioned together or, if just one is mentioned, then the other is assumed with it.

I believe that we were created by God and in the likeness of Him. Adam, who is the first human ever created, was created on the sixth day. Genesis 2:7 states, “then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” This verse solidifies that we are made from dirt, and when we die, that is where our bodies will go again. After Adam came Eve, who was created as a helper to Adam (Gen. 2:18). Eve was then created out of the ground and out of Adam’s ribs (Gen. 2:22). The Latin phrase “*imago dei*” means being made in the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). In other words, this means that we are made to resemble God. Humans are the only creation of God to have a physical body and a spirit/soul.

When it comes to sin, humans were initially created without sin and walked with God in the Garden of Eden. After the fall of man (Eve eating the fruit from the forbidden tree—Gen. 3:12), humans were then born with the curse of a sin nature. The eating of this fruit is not the root cause of sin entering the world, it came from the disobeying of God’s command. Having a sin nature means that our hearts are in a constant state of rejecting God. We received this curse through Adam and Eve’s first sin, which then resulted in them being cast out from the garden forever (Gen. 3:22-23). A term that is commonly used to define this is called total depravity. Total depravity is an acknowledgement of the Bible’s teachings that every part of man has been corrupted by sin. This includes each human’s will, thoughts, emotions and things of the world. Romans 3:9-18 gives a good explanation/summary of this idea. It can be a tough concept to grasp for some depending on their religious backgrounds/beliefs. Some people find it difficult to believe that there are NO “good people” anywhere in the world. Romans 5:12-21 covers the sin of Adam very well.

There have only been three people in all of creation that have been born without sin: Adam, Eve, and Jesus. Genesis 3:6 shows the moment that Adam and Eve sinned, so we can

assume that before this moment they were sinless. Luke 1:35 shows that Jesus was born of the Spirit through a virgin, which means that He was born without a sin nature. And of these three people, there has only been one that has lived a sinless life. Jesus is that person. He is the reason in which we are able to live an eternal life with God. Jesus has taken the punishment of our sins by dying on a cross and rising from the grave three days later.

Christology

Christology is the study of Jesus. It studies Jesus as a person and the work that He has done. He is the reason that we are able to spend eternity with God, The Father. Learning about His life can help us grasp a deeper depth of the Gospel as well as gain a better appreciation for the cross. Studying Jesus can also help us answer some common questions that people may ask.

I believe that Jesus is the Son part of the Trinity— The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. This means that we see him in the beginning of Genesis, when it mentions that man is made in THEIR image (Genesis 1:27). This would be a reference to Jesus's divinity. He is not just a man. He may not have been just a man but He still had to live the life of a man. Luke 2:52 shows that He grew in stature and in wisdom.

This type of relationship within Jesus is known as the hypostatic union. Jesus is fully man and fully God. This is an important fact for two reasons: 1. If He was just a man, then His death on the cross wouldn't have saved us. He would have been born a man, thus having a sin nature from birth. His sacrifice would not have done anything for us because He would not have been perfect. 2. If He was only divine, then His sacrifice still wouldn't have done anything for us because He would not have been born into the sin world. He also had to be divine so that He could take on the sins of the world. The only person that could be acceptable to take the punishment of the world is God. That is why Jesus is the perfect combination of 100% man and 100% God and the only one worthy enough to take our punishment (Philippians 2:5-8).

It is pretty easy to believe that Jesus was a man because He is recognized as a historical figure. His deity is what could be argued. There are a couple places in Scripture that emphasize that He is also God. These passages would be John 8:38 and John 10:30.

One of the things that helps solidify the hypostatic union is the virgin birth. If Jesus had been born through natural means, He would have been born with a sin nature like all of mankind. Because of the virgin birth Jesus was born sinless. Mary gave birth to Jesus as a virgin through the work of the Holy Spirit. This was also a completed prophecy that solidified the virgin birth. The prophecy is proclaimed in Isaiah 7:14 and fulfilled in the New Testament with Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-25.

Jesus is the reason for our salvation. I believe He lived a perfect, spotless life as a man and as God. We can use His life as an example or a model to pursue for our lives. He has shown

us how to pray and interact with fellow Christians and non-believers. He lived among men and grew as a man so that later in His life He could save all of man. It has always been God's plan for Jesus to be a sacrifice for all of humanity. This plan has been echoed through all of Scripture. (1 Peter 2:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5; John 8:29).

Soteriology

Soteriology is the study of salvation, which covers justification, sanctification, regeneration, etc. It also helps us to understand why salvation is by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), through faith alone, in Christ alone.

The topic of salvation is so important because it covers our potential eternity with God. Being "born again" is being regenerated (John 3:3, Titus 3:5). When we truly become born again, our old life is gone and we have a new life in Christ that brings glory to God. A common question that arises in regards to salvation is: "Once we are saved, are we always going to be saved?" There are a couple of verses in Scripture that would back the claim that we will always be saved. This idea would be contingent upon a true and authentic conversion. This conversion would result in a regeneration and a consistent repentant heart. It would result in a life that shows biblical fruit and a life that glorifies God. The way to be saved is through faith alone in Christ alone and is not dependent upon the works that we do. God has predestined those who have been saved.

Having a genuine, faith-based repentance results in a changed mind and a gradual turning away from sin. I believe that repentance is a necessary action for receiving salvation because you cannot receive salvation without repentance. People sometimes believe that you must also be baptized along with repenting. I believe that baptism is an outward showing of your commitment to Christ and is not required for salvation.

A widely argued topic is free will. Are our decisions truly ours or are they orchestrated by God? Personally, I believe that we choose the opportunities that God has given to us, and ultimately God knows what we will do. In regards to salvation, it is shown in Scripture that God has chosen people whom He will save and bring to himself. Not everyone will be saved and spend eternity with God.

Another topic that is discussed within salvation is atonement. Primarily whether or not Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sins covers all people forever. This is known as unlimited atonement. I would personally agree with limited atonement. This is the idea that God has selected people to receive the free gift of salvation. Limited atonement is more supported in Scripture than unlimited atonement (John 10:11; John 17:9; Ephesians 5:25). Even though God has chosen who will be saved, we are still commissioned by Jesus to make disciples and spread

the gospel. We do not know who has been predestined to salvation, so we should still spread the message to all who will hear. (Matthew 1:21; 28:16-20, John 10:15, Ephesians 1:4, John 6:37-40).

Pneumatology and Angelology

Pneumatology is the study of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. I believe that the Holy Spirit is an equal person of the Trinity. John 16:8-11 is a great verse that describes the Holy Spirit and the role that He plays within the Trinity and what He does for us. He is our helper and He helps to illuminate more of an understanding of God.

The Holy Spirit is considered a person because He has a mind, will and emotions. He intercedes for us (Romans 8:26-27). He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). 1 Corinthians 2:10 shows us that the Holy Spirit searches the depths of God in order to reveal a better understanding of God. This usually takes place when we are studying God's word. As we read and familiarize ourselves with Scripture, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal more truths of the Word to us. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will join us on earth as our Comforter and Counselor (John 14:16, 26, 15:26). If you are a believer, then the Holy Spirit resides in you (Romans 8:9).

Ephesians 1:13-14 shows us that, as true Christians, the Holy Spirit is indwelt within us and shows that we can only receive the Spirit at salvation. It also tells us that being sealed with The Holy Spirit is our guarantee of our inheritance, which is eternal life with God. That truth is also echoed in Ephesians 4:30. Romans 8:9 tells us that the opposite is true; if we do not have the Spirit, then we do not belong to the family of Christ. It's good to know that at the time of our salvation, we also receive the Holy Spirit. For clarity, there are two forms of being filled with the Spirit. The first is being permanently indwelt in the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). The second is that the Spirit can fill us and be quenched (Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Holy Spirit has operated similarly when we compare the Old Testament vs the New Testament. The main difference is that in the Old Testament, He "came upon" people, and after Jesus' ascension in the New Testament, He stays with us permanently (1 Samuel 10:10; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). 1 Samuel 16:14 shows that the Spirit would often leave someone. That is not the case today. Once you believe in Christ and repent of your sins you are indwelt with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is who was sent to earth once Christ was seated at the right hand of God for the purpose of being our Helper, Comforter, and Counselor (John 15:26).

Angelology is the study of angels. There are both good and evil angels (demons). They possess emotions, intelligence, and a will (1 Peter 1:12; Luke 2:13; James 2:19; Hebrews 1:14; 2 Timothy 2:26; Jude 6). Now, angels are typically described as masculine. The most common example of this would be the use of the names: Michael and Gabriel. Angels may have wills, but

they are ultimately subject to the will of God. They are sent to help believers and to carry out tasks that God has assigned to them. Ultimately they are God's messengers.

In the Old Testament, when "the" is used in front of "angel of the Lord" it is often believed to be referencing the pre-incarnate Jesus. Typically, "the angel of the Lord" identifies himself with God sometimes, and is seen to have some of the same authority as God the Father (Genesis 16:7-12; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Samuel 24:16; Zechariah 1:12; 3:1; 12:8). The angel of the Lord is always referring to a physical appearance of God (theophany) and could mean the pre-incarnate of Jesus Christ (Christophany).

Satan is actually a fallen angel. Isaiah 14:12-14 is a good passage that describes the devil. Now, some religions, primarily Mormons, believe that Satan and Jesus are brothers, but that is just not true. Satan and Jesus cannot be brothers because Jesus is God and was present during creation, and Satan was a created angel (John 1:1-5; John 10:30; Colossians 2:9).

Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is the study of the church. It helps us understand the purpose of believers in our world. I believe that the church is not the building in which believers gather, but it is the believers themselves. Professing Christians are the church. "Ekklesia" is the Greek word from which we get the word "church". It is defined as "an assembly." Romans 16:5 is a good verse that shows that Paul is not speaking of the church as a building but as a body of believers.

The universal church and the local church are two ways in which the Bible speaks of the church. The universal church refers to all followers of Christ everywhere in the world (1 Corinthians 12:13). The local church refers to a body of believers in a location close to where you would typically live (Galatians 1:1-2). I believe that any Christian (universal church) needs to be a part of a local church in his or her immediate area. Being a part of a local church is important because that is where we go every Sunday, in order to be edified with other believers like we see in 1 Corinthians 12. Now, it does not have to be on Sunday, but it needs to be a regular time or times during the week in which Christians commune with one another to encourage and edify each other.

I believe that Acts 2:42 contains a great statement for what the purpose of the church is and what it should do. The church's purpose should be to teach God's word, encourage and fellowship with other believers, observe the Lord's Supper, and pray. In addition to these, we as a church have been commissioned to proclaim the gospel and to train each other to do this. We are also supposed to help those in need within our communities. Basically, the church is to be the body of Christ and to do the things that Christ would have done while still on this earth (Ephesians 4:14, 32; Romans 12:10, 15:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 John 3:11; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 12:12-27; Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15; James 1:27).

Baptism is an ordinance, which is a ceremonial act, that Jesus gave to the church before His ascension into heaven (Matthew 28:19-20). When we receive salvation, we are baptized by the Spirit into the universal church (1 Corinthians 12:13). Water baptism is a kind of reenactment of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. I believe that water baptism is not a requirement in order to receive salvation, but it is done in order to show an outward commitment to God after having an inward change of receiving salvation (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4).

Communion/Lord's Supper is another ordinance that Jesus gave to the church. The first accounts of this are recorded in each of the Gospels (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:7-22; and John 13:21-30). It helps to remind us of the sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf, and it is something that we must do until the day of Christ's return (1 Corinthians 11:26). I believe that the frequency in which Communion is implemented is up to each local church. There is no commandment for the frequency in the sense of monthly or weekly. When a church decides to partake of the Lord's Supper, only believers should do this, and it must be taken seriously. We need to examine our hearts before we partake of the Communion. Paul states that we must take Communion in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). This means that we must repent of any known sins before partaking, and we must not let it become a mindless ritual.

Elders/Deacons are the spiritual leaders who help govern the church body. They must meet specific requirements in order to be in consideration for the role of elder or deacon (1 Timothy 3:2,8). Deacons assist the church in whatever it needs (Acts 6). Elders are the main decision-makers within the church and can also be the lead pastor or preacher of the church (1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 15:22; 1 Peter 5:1-4). I believe that it is important for a local church to be governed by more than one man. It must be governed by multiple elders (Acts 14:23, 15:2, 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14).

Eschatology

Eschatology is the study of the end times. Eschatology is derived from the Greek word "eschaton", which means "last things" or "end times". Revelation is commonly known as the "scary" book of the Bible that primarily hits on the end times. It is not the only book of the Bible that speaks of the end times but it is the most recognizable. It is written by the Apostle John and is a widely debated book of the Bible because of its depiction of the future in regard to the end times. Eschatology is a very complex subject and it has many differing interpretations and understandings.

In regards to the end times, I believe in a physical thousand year reign of Christ. The idea of Christ coming and reigning on earth for a thousand years is primarily seen in Revelation 20:1-6. I believe in pre-millennialism, which means that Christ will return before the one thousand year reign. During this time believers will reign with Christ on earth. This is supposed to happen after the Great Tribulation (Revelation 20:4-6; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:23-25).

In addition to pre-millennialism, I would align with the post-tribulation stance. This position means that the rapture will occur after everyone on earth goes through the Great Tribulation. The main reason that I believe in the post-tribulation rapture is because I believe that, as followers of Christ, we are meant to persevere through suffering for God, it seems more consistent with the many biblical references and has also been the belief throughout history. Only recently have the other tribulation views been mentioned or adopted. (Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Revelation 20:4-6).

Another framework that is associated with the end times is dispensationalism. Dispensationalism is not just for the end times but also is a way that help people interpret all of Scripture. This framework believes that there is a clear separation between Israel and the New Testament Church (Romans 11:25-27). I do not believe in dispensationalism. I believe that the New Testament Church has been grafted into the nation of Israel. We see this in the Bible. There are multiple references that talk about the joining between the Gentiles (uncircumcised) and the Jewish nation (circumcised) (Epesians 2:11-22; Galatians 3:16-29; Romans 2:28-29,11:17-27).

I think that it is important for anything involving the frameworks of eschatology to not cause division or strife between fellow believers. There is not a definitive answer for or against specific frameworks within eschatology. This means that we still need to show love to one another regardless of our eschatological views. The only important thing in regards to eschatology, is that Christ is returning to earth and we will finally rule with Christ and see God (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 21:1-4).

Other

My Testimony

I have been born into a christian lifestyle. I've been in church my entire life. I have never really been able to pinpoint a specific date in which I gave my life to Christ. I can think of a few times in which I could have moved away from God and at least two times that I have felt renewed in my walk with God.

When I was younger, around ten or twelve, I believe that I had some sort of encounter with God (this was my first experience). My church at the time was having a "revival week". As a pastor's kid, I typically stayed in the farthest back of the sanctuary to play card games with my brother and other kids that were there, while service was going on. Near the end of the night, the lead pastor had a type of altar call, in which people would come and He would pray in tongues over them and they would be "slain in the spirit". This would mean that the people getting prayed over would fall to the ground and would seem like they were sleeping or passed out. As kids watching this we were curious. And I had heard that when this happens you can't really open your eyes fully because they feel shut. I wanted to experience this and see if it was true for

myself. So me, my brother and a friend went up to the front of the sanctuary to be prayed over. As I was getting prayed over, I felt a slight push to my forehead, which was where the pastor had placed His hand while praying, and I gave in to that push and fell down. I don't really believe that the Spirit "slays you" as an adult today, but it doesn't diminish how I felt in the moment. As I was laying there, I had a weighty sensation on my body and literally felt like I couldn't open my eyes. So I believe in that moment, I began talking to God and telling him that I believed in Jesus and His saving grace. I became repentant of my sins during the time that I was on the ground.

Now, I know that it is not a hardcore conversion and the method may be questionable, but that is the time that keeps sticking in my mind when I think of a turning point in my life.

Another "encounter" that I had was while I was going to a charismatic church about four years ago. I went to a GROW conference at the Church of the Highlands in Alabama. It was me and a few other people along with three or four staff of the church that I attended. During one of the night main sessions on the last full day, I had an immense experience with God. I can only describe it like an immense and heavy weight was placed on me. I had trouble standing, I was ugly crying, and I was shaking a little. But I believe that in that moment, God had placed something on my heart and I think that that had to do with ministry. During the experience, there were some people that I was with who were praying over me. I remember that a couple of them had mentioned that they felt led to say that God had called me to be a leader and that I would reach many people for the kingdom.

Ever since then, I feel as though I have had a slight pull towards ministry.

My Philosophies

In regards to the many facets of ministry and church, my philosophies on these are as follows:

Pastoral ministry is for the purpose to build and equip believers so that they can go out into the world and be lights in a dark place, as well as evangelize the gospel to people that they know and meet. When it comes to preaching, I believe preaching should be in an expository style. This type of preaching is typically done by letting the text speak for itself and trying to convey what the original meaning of the text was. We need to let the Bible speak for itself how it was meant to be interpreted. There needs to be an understanding of what was originally intended when the Bible was written. When that is done, then we should be able to apply it practically for the current time. When we talk about teaching, I believe that it is important to make disciples and rely on the Bible for all wisdom.

When it comes to the church, I strongly believe that we need to meet in person weekly. The reason for this is because we need to be in a community of fellow believers and we need to

worship God together and become edified through the teaching. Our ultimate goal for a Sunday morning worship, or really any time we gather, is to worship and glorify God together (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16).