

ARTICLE 2. STATEMENT OF FAITH *(as taken from the S&E Bylaws – effective May 2024)*

We believe that:

2.1 Bible

The Bible, made of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is God's complete written Word to mankind. Each original word is fully inspired and God breathed, and each of the original writings are unable to have any error or contradiction. The Bible, as the Word of God, alone is authoritative and speaks sufficiently to all areas of faith and godliness when understood as God intended. It alone is the perfect standard by which everything must be tested (Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1-14; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Proverbs 30:2-6; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Psalm 119:105-106, 160).

2.2 God

There is One Living and True God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:6-10). God is the uncreated (Psalm 90:2), perfect and holy (Isaiah 6:1-4), all-powerful (Psalm 62:11; Jeremiah 32:17), all-knowing (Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:13-14), unchanging (Numbers 23:19), infinite Spirit (John 4:24) who eternally and truly exists in three Divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

Each Person is the true nature of God and there is nothing in any of the Persons that is not in accord with who God is, making each Person truly God, while remaining Three distinct Persons. The Three Persons of God eternally exist in fellowship in the Divine relationship expressed by the doctrine of the Trinity and cannot be separated. Each Person is equally defined by the character of God and is therefore equally worthy of glory and worship (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-18; John 10:25-38; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; Hebrews 9:14). God chooses to reveal Himself to mankind and is who He has revealed Himself to be (Exodus 3:14-15).

2.2.1 The Person of the Father

The First Person of the Trinity, the Father, is the Sovereign King and Just Judge over all (Psalm 103:19; Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Psalm 75:2-8). He is the Creator of all (Genesis 1:1), through Christ (Colossians 1:15-16), and all things exist for His glory (Romans 11:36).

2.2.2 The Person of the Son

The Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, eternally exists in the presence of the Father and is the means through whom the Father created all (John 1:1-5). The Son, at the proper time, humbled Himself, took on flesh, and was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18-25; Philippians 2:5-11; Isaiah 7:14). Maintaining the true nature of God and adopting the true nature of man, Christ became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). In a real body, Jesus Christ lived a perfect life (1 John 3:5), taught with authority (Matthew 7:28-29), performed many miracles (John 20:30-31), and was put to death on a cross (John 19:16-30). On the third day, He rose from the dead leaving His tomb empty (Matthew 28:1-10) and is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 1:3). He will return in His glorified body to earth to reign as Judge over all (Acts 1:9-11).

2.2.3 The Person of the Holy Spirit

The Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is coequal with the other Persons of the Trinity. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, ministering to proclaim Christ and give instruction in the Word of God and is the means through which God works in the hearts of mankind and believers to accomplish His purposes (John 16:5-15).

2.3 Man

2.3.1 Position Before the Fall

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and everything they contain, as recorded in the first chapters of Genesis (Genesis 1:1-2:3). He created man and woman perfect and in His image as rulers over creation (Genesis 1:26-29). He made them distinctly male and female; two sexes with distinct roles yet equal in value in His sight (Genesis 2:18-22). God ordained the covenant of marriage between one biological man and one biological woman, the two becoming one flesh, for His glory (Genesis 2:23-25; Ephesians 5:22-33). Being made in the image of God, all human life, from when the soul is created at conception onward, regardless of any physical characteristic, is precious in His sight and responsible to fulfill His will (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 139:13-16).

2.3.2 The Fall

In the garden, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God (Genesis 3:1-8) after being tempted by Satan, who is a created but fallen angel (Ezekiel 28:12-19), the introducer of sin, and the self-declared enemy of God (1 John 3:7-8). Satan only has as much power as God grants him (Job 1:6-12).

2.3.3 Condemnation and the Holy God

This act of disobedience forever placed all mankind in sin, subject to the power of sin (John 8:34; Romans 5:12-14), and broke the communion and fellowship shared between God and mankind, as Holy God cannot have sin in His presence (Habakkuk 1:13). For their disobedience, all mankind deserves the full wrath of God (Romans 6:23) which will be poured out on all found guilty at the judgment of Christ (Revelation 20:12-13). The guilty will be punished for all eternity in the place of judgment; hell, with Satan and his followers in a state of conscious, unutterable, endless, unrepentant torment and anguish (Revelation 20:14-15). There is nothing anyone can do on their own to satisfy the wrath of God (Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:8-9).

2.3.4 Justification and the Work of Christ

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23). God demonstrates His love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). In grace, God sent His only Son to redeem all who come to Him in repentance and faith (John 3:16). Jesus Christ lived the life man could never live, and, in His death, accepted the wrath of God towards His people (2 Corinthians 5:21), breaking the power of sin and death in His bodily resurrection (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:14-17). By His death on the cross, Jesus made perfect atonement for sin, by which the wrath of God against repentant sinners is satisfied, providing the way for God to deal with sinners in mercy (Romans 5:8-11; 1 Peter 2:24). Christ now intercedes for believers at the right hand of the Father (Romans 8:34).

People can have new life in Christ, by humbly accepting, in faith, the sinless life of Christ, His death in their place, and their personal resurrection to new life in Christ, as evidenced by the process of sanctification, which is turning from their sin to God (John 3:14-15; Acts 16:31; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). People are justified (made right before God) on the simple and single ground of the death of Christ and the simple and single condition of faith in Him who died (Ephesians 1:7; Galatians 2:16). People are born again when the Spirit of God creates life-giving faith in them, applying the righteousness merited by Christ to them, and bringing them to Christ in accord with the Father's will (John 1:12-13; John 3:1-21; John 6:35-40; Ephesians 2:1-10).

The Holy Spirit preserves believers eternally and is the seal of God's faithfulness, indwelling them from when they are justified onward (Ephesians 1:13-14). It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in this assurance of their salvation (Hebrews 10:21-25).

2.3.5 Sanctification and the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the sole means through which the believer is sanctified to Christ in godliness through the Word of God, revealing and teaching what is spiritually discerned, and guiding the believer to all truth (2 Corinthians 3:18; John 17:17; 1 John 2:27). The Spirit's indwelling presence is the evidence that the believer is no longer under the Law, but has instead been united to Christ in His death and resurrection, being raised with Him to new life, and can therefore love and serve God as a united body with free access to Him (Romans 7:6; Ephesians 4:3-6; Romans 8:26-27).

The Christian is responsible to respond to this in submission and in faith, with transformed desires and lives producing the fruit of the Spirit (James 4:1-10; Galatians 5:22-25). Christ is to be Lord and Master of the believer's life as they seek to glorify Him in all things (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). It is to be their dutiful joy to submit to Christ through the enabling of the Spirit, putting to death present yet defeated sin (Romans 6:1-18). The presence of sin is not completely overcome until the uniting of the believer with Christ (Romans 7:15-25).

The Christian is adopted into the love shared by the Godhead (John 17:22-26) and is to show the same love to other believers (John 13:34). The believer is to love all men resulting in the bold and unashamed proclamation of the true gospel as revealed in Scripture (Matthew 22:35-40; Luke 24:46-47) - that God is Holy, mankind is sinful, judgment is deserved, Christ's sacrifice is the only means through which judgment is satisfied, and that it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, that anyone can be reconciled to God and made new through the resurrection of Christ, being clothed in His righteousness (1 Corinthians 15:2-19).

Though opposition to this gospel continues, God's faithfulness to His people will never falter or fail (Romans 8:16-39; Hebrews 13:5-14), and all mankind will be justly judged according to their deeds (Romans 2:1-11). God's people will be delivered with the approaching return of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 3:10).

2.3.6 Glorification

The true Church, made of every person who turns to Christ in repentance and faith (Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 5:25-27), will be delivered from the wrath of God and eternally united with Christ, delighting in His fellowship and praising Him in worship (Revelation 21:3-8). This great glory is entirely of the grace of God and can in no way be credited to the worthiness of the man (Ephesians 2:10).