



FAITH

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

Explanation of the Doctrinal Statement of FCBC

Doctrinal statements by their very definition cut both directions. They serve the church in defining what we believe the Scriptures clearly teach, and they serve the church by protecting her from error. Knowing exactly where to draw the lines is *the* challenge of a document like this. On the one hand, we don't want to draw our circles so narrow that we become arrogant in our interpretation or think that other positions are not within the realm of orthodoxy; but on the other hand, we don't want to draw our circles so broadly that we include things that would dishonor Christ.

Thus, the scope of the document and its intended use at FCBC is to provide a general guideline for what we do not want to teach against. The footnotes and appendices are intended to serve the reader in explaining how these issues were studied.

Practically speaking, it is entirely possible and expected that members of FCBC will disagree with portions of this document not dealing with core theological issues. We ask, however, that if you are in a teaching capacity you adhere to this doctrinal statement. Our Statement of Faith, on the other hand, is a document that all who call FCBC home must affirm. We hope this document will serve our church in theologically accomplishing our mission:

We exist to glorify God by pointing the affections of all peoples to the all satisfying person of Jesus Christ

FCBC Doctrinal Statement

The Scriptures

The Bible, which consists of the 66 books of the Old and New Testament, is the complete written Word of God.¹ The Scriptures are the supreme authority for Christian life, practice, and doctrine comprising the record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. The Scriptures are both fully² and verbally³ inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches leading us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures⁴ in humility asking the Holy Spirit to remove spiritual blindness so that they can diligently apply God's truth to their lives. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Scripture. The truth of Scripture stands in judgment over men; never do men stand in judgment over the Scripture.⁵ **Key Texts: Ps 19:7-9; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12.**

God is Three Persons in One

There is one God who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁶ In the unity of the Godhead each person is co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal. God is infinite, almighty, sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and perfect in holiness. **Key Texts: Deut 6:4 ; Isa 44:6-7.**

1. God the Father

God the Father has always been and is the Creator of all things. He orders and disposes all things for His glory according to His own purpose and grace. He is the only absolute omnipotent ruler in the universe and is completely sovereign over all. He has freely decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass, and His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He continually upholds, directs and governs all.⁷

¹ In making this statement we are denying any biblical authority contained in non-canonical books or extra-biblical apocryphal documents or any other religious books such as the *Koran* or *Book of Mormon*. The 66 books of the Bible alone contain the authoritative words of God.

² This is the same concept as *plenary*. The word *plenary* means "full" or "complete."

³ The term "verbally inspired" does not mean that God verbally spoke every word to the writers of Scripture. Rather, the word *verbal* affirms the idea that inspiration extends to the very words the writers chose.

⁴ The truth of God's Word is couched in a fixed historical reality and is communicated using normal rules of grammar; therefore, a grammatical-historical hermeneutic is used to determine textual meaning.

⁵ When we say that the words of Scripture are ultimately self-attesting this is an acknowledgment of God's unabashed claim to preeminence. The Bible is not validated as God's words by appealing to a higher form of authority like human intellect or human understanding of science because then the Bible is no longer the absolute authority. The thing to which we appeal becomes more reliable than the Word of God. All ultimate forms of authority must by definition appeal to themselves.

⁶ The Bible speaks of the Father as God (Phil 1:2), Jesus as God (Titus 2:13), and the Holy Spirit as God (Acts 5:3-4). The Trinity is not a belief in three gods, nor a belief that God is one person who took three consecutive roles. Instead it is one God, who exists as three Persons. Each Person is not just a part of God, but each is fully God and equally God. Within God's one undivided being is the expression of three Persons. The distinctions within the Godhead are not distinctions of His essence, nor are they additions to His essence, but they are the unfolding of God's one, undivided being into three real Persons.

⁷ The belief in God's sovereignty means that nothing escapes God's notice, not a molecule spins without His permission and not a grasshopper dies apart from His decree. Every interpersonal interaction, every private thought, every

Key Texts: Gen 1:1-31; 1 Chr 29:11-12; Dan 4:34-35; Jer 32:17.

2. **God the Son**

Jesus Christ was always with God, is God, and existed before all things. All things came into being through Him and are held together by the word of His power. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, and in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The man Jesus was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, fully God, and fully man. He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father and lived a sinless life. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world having shed His blood and died a substitutionary death on a cross thereby reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, He rose bodily from the grave, was victorious over death, and ascended into heaven where He intercedes for us. He is the head of the church and rules as Lord over all.

Key Texts: Mt 1:23; Phil 2:5-8; Col 1:15-17.

3. **God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit was always with God, is God, and existed before all things. He was sovereignly active in creation, the incarnation, the written revelation, and is active in the illumination, the work of salvation, the process of sanctification,⁸ and the gifting of believers. Bringing about the new birth of sinners in faith, He forms, unites, and completes⁹ the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit awakens, transforms, empowers and equips believers to glorify God.

While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts His supernatural gifts for the edification of the body and for various works of ministry in the world. It is important to affirm that one of the purposes of the miraculous sign gifts associated with the first century church was to authenticate the apostolic message in establishing the church; however, Scripture does not preclude God from working in individuals today through any gift of His choosing. The Scriptures encourage all believers to submissively seek gifts. **Key Texts: Gen 1:2; John 3:5-8; Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 2:10-16; 2 Pet 1:19-21.**

Man

conversation, every "accident," every argument, every sin, every "natural" disaster, every physical injury, every disease, every hurting heart is not only known to Him but orchestrated by Him for His sovereign good purposes. The implications are massive and humbling!

⁸ The fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 is evidence of divine assistance in overcoming the sin nature.

⁹ The ministry of the Spirit in both the Old and New Testament is multifaceted. Other ministries of the Spirit include sealing for the day of redemption (Eph 1:13), assurance (Rom 8:16; Eph 1:14), etc.

God created men and women in His own image¹⁰ as the crown of all creation.¹¹ Even though men and women were designed to glorify God and to have fellowship with Him, mankind rebelled against God.¹² Being estranged from his Maker, yet responsible to Him, he fell under divine wrath.¹³ Man became inwardly depraved and utterly incapable of returning to God apart from a special work of grace. This depravity is radical and pervasive, extending to his mind, will and affections.¹⁴ Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan, at enmity with God, hostile toward God, and hateful of God. All people, whatever their character or attainments, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ.
Key Texts: Jer 17:9; Jn 6:44; Rom 1:18-32; 3:9-20; Eph 2:1-3.

The Gospel

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ died a substitutionary and propitiatory¹⁵ death as the once for all sacrifice to God for our sins and overcame death by rising again to life. This sacrifice satisfies the demands of God's holy justice, appeases His holy wrath, demonstrates His mysterious love, and reveals His amazing grace. This free gift of salvation is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone.

Man's response to the gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and unconditional election of God for His own pleasure and glory.¹⁶ It is also true that the message of the gospel is only effectual to those who genuinely repent of their sins, and by God's grace, put saving faith in Christ.¹⁷

¹⁰ "In His image" implies without sin according to Gen 1:26-28.

¹¹ "Crown of all Creation" refers to the fact that God created man unique and different than the rest of creation. Man was created with attributes that plants and animals do not possess, namely, will, reason and morality. These "crowning" features enable man to worship his Creator.

¹² The fall as recorded in Genesis 3 documents the entrance of evil into the world; however, its origin is a question that is difficult to answer. Adam and Eve were certainly culpable since they were justly punished for their rebellion; but, they did not act without Satan's condemning and deceiving influence. God who cannot be condemned or accused of evil was aware that His creation was capable of evil and did not intervene.

¹³ This sentence of judgment extends from Adam to all mankind according to Rom 5:12.

¹⁴ The doctrine of total depravity does imply that we are evil to the highest degree, yet it is true that man does not always live up to his full capacity of sin. This doctrine states that we are totally affected by sin including our intellects, emotions, desires, hearts, goals, motives, and even our physical bodies. The most serious implication of this total depravity is that we are unable to seek God (Ps 14:1; Rom 3:10-12, etc.).

¹⁵ The word **expiation**, beginning with the prefix "ex" means "out of" or "from." It means to remove something. In biblical theology it has to do with taking away or removing guilt by means of paying a ransom, and/or offering an atonement, thus paying the penalty for something. Consequently, the act of expiation removes the problem by paying for it in order to satisfy a demand. **Propitiation** deals with the object of the expiation. The prefix "pro," means "for." Therefore, propitiation is what brings about a change in God's attitude toward us, restoring our fellowship and favor with Him. In a sense, propitiation points to God's appeasement and demonstrates his love and lack of anger for us. In summary, propitiation is the result of expiation, and expiation is the act that results in God changing His attitude toward us because of what Christ accomplished on the cross. It is the difference between the ransom that is paid and the attitude of the One receiving the ransom.

¹⁶ God has had a special love relationship with the elect from all eternity, and on the basis of that love relationship, chose them for salvation (Eph 1). The ultimate question of why God chose some for salvation and not others is one that we, with our finite knowledge, cannot answer. We know that God's attributes are in perfect harmony, so that God's sovereignty will likewise be in perfect harmony with His other attributes of goodness, love, wisdom, and justice.

¹⁷ Repentance is evidenced by an obedient, changed life. However, neither repentance nor works save; a person must be willing to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Christ, or he cannot become His disciple.

Anyone trusting in Christ receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God.¹⁸ Through the gospel a repentant sinner is justified, fully accepted by God, reconciled to God, adopted as His child, forgiven the debt of his sin, and liberated from the law of sin and death.¹⁹ **Key Texts: Rom 1:16; 3:21-26; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Heb 10:1-18; 1 Pet 1:3-5.**

Sanctification

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification seeking to produce His fruit in us as our minds are renewed and our beings are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, we grow in the knowledge of the Lord as we are led by the Spirit. The grace He provides freely enables us to keep His commandments and endeavor to live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. Believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith knowing they will give an account to God for their every thought, word and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship, and confession, are a vital means of grace²⁰ in this regard. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve His people until the end which is most certain. **Key Texts: Rom 8; Eph 5:27; Heb 12:14.**

The Church

There is one universal Church, composed of all who in every time and place are chosen in Christ and united to Him through faith by the Spirit in one Body with Christ Himself as the all-sustaining and all-authoritative Head. We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God forever.

It is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches in which believers gather to hear the Word of God proclaimed, to engage in corporate worship, to baptize new believers, and partake in Lord's Supper. Each member of the body is called to exercise his/her spiritual gifts in building one another's faith by encouraging, loving, exhorting, disciplining one another, and engaging in evangelism of the lost. **Key Texts: Acts 1:8; 2:42; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 2:19-22; Col 1:18; 3:16-17; Heb 10:23-25.**

Church Practices

The two church practices given by Jesus include water baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper, neither of which impart merit or saving grace.

Water baptism, intended for true believers who have been saved by the work of Christ, is an act of obedience and a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that the power of sin is broken, vividly depicting a believers newness of life. **Key Texts: Mt 28:19-20; Acts 2:41; 8:34-39; Rom 6:3-11.**

¹⁸ This means that the righteousness of Christ was imputed to the elect while the sin of the elect was imputed to Christ.

¹⁹ According to Romans 8, freedom from the law of sin and death is functionally equivalent to walking in the Spirit.

²⁰ The phrase "means of grace" refers to the tools God gives us to know Him better and fellowship with Him. Because closer fellowship with God always results in God's grace being poured out upon believers, we call these practices "means of grace."

The Lord's Supper is a regular reminder of Jesus' sacrifice intended for those who have become followers of Christ symbolizing Christ's sacrifice in the giving of His body²¹ and the shedding of His blood on our behalf. As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ until He comes. **Key Texts: Mt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-34.**

End of the Age

The souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation will either pass immediately into His presence upon death²² or will meet the Lord in the air upon His bodily return to earth.²³ **Key Texts: Lk 16:19-26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; 1 Thes 4:13-18; 2 Thes 1:7-9; Rev 20:1-15.**

The church age will be followed by a seven year period of great tribulation culminated by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth with power and great glory to introduce the millennial age, to bind Satan and place him in the abyss, to lift the curse which now rests upon the whole creation, to restore Israel to her own land and to give her the realization of God's covenant promises, and to bring the whole world to the knowledge of God. **Key Texts: Ezek 37:21-28; Mt 25:31-46; Rom 11:25-27; Rev 19:11-20:3.**

At the conclusion of the millennial age, Satan will be released for a short time, deceive the nations, and lead a battle against the saints. God will defeat Satan and the false prophet casting them into the lake of fire along with the fallen angels. Then, Christ will resurrect and judge unbelieving souls at the Great White Throne judgment. Unbelievers will be separated from Christ's presence in hell forever while believing saints will spend eternity with Christ in heaven having received their glorified bodies. **Key Texts: Rev 20:1-15.**

²¹ The Bible uses the word "crush" to describe the agony Jesus, the Messiah, absorbed from the hand of the Father (Is 53:1-12). But this metaphorical language is not to be confused with the clear statements in prophecy and the historical record that no bones in Jesus' body were broken (Jn 19:36).

²² Believers who die today remain in spirit form until the resurrection of their glorified bodies.

²³ We recognize there are several biblically defensible positions regarding the timing of the rapture. With that in mind, this document is not designed to address the complexities of this issue.