

Foundation Studies Summary

(Doctrinal Statement)

1) The Bible

The Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is breathed by God, verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit, and without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible is authoritative, understandable, complete, necessary and sufficient in teaching us all we need to know about God. Scripture is meant to be believed and applied; it is given to us for “teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” All of Scripture ultimately purposes to point to Jesus Christ, in whom and only in whom can be found life. (John 5:39; Acts 18:28; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Revelation 22:18)

2) God

God is one, and he eternally exists in three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the forever perfect and unchanging sovereign creator of all that exists. God is spirit and is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is also personal, loving and knowable, inviting the people he created into a relationship with Him. (Genesis 21:33; Psalm 99:9; Psalm 103:19; Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 12:29; John 1:14; John 4:24; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; James 1:17; Revelation 4:11)

3) The Trinity

God is one, and he eternally exists in three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity cannot be fully comprehended, as He is infinite and the human mind is finite (Isaiah 58:8-9). The word ‘Trinity’ is nowhere found in Scripture, but Scripture clearly teaches that:

1. **There is one God.** (Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 4:6, James 2:19).
2. **The Father is God.** (1 Peter 1:2, Romans 15:6, 1 Corinthians 8:6)
3. **The Son (Jesus) is God.** (Titus 2:13, John 1:1, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:3)
4. **The Holy Spirit is God.** (Acts 5:3-4)

4) Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is eternally preexistent as fully God and fully man in one person. He is the co-creator of everything that exists. He was born of the virgin Mary and lived a perfect, sinless, compassionate and loving life. He died on the cross for our sins, as our substitute. He was buried, and on the third day he rose from the grave. He ascended to heaven where he intercedes for us, and he will come again. He is the only mediator between God and man. He is our example, our priest and our king. (Matthew 1:18; John 14:6; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 23, 49; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 2:18; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6)

5) The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is fully God and is the third eternal person of the Godhead. He saves us and makes us holy by convicting us, converting us, baptizing us (placing us in the body of Christ), indwelling us, securing us, gifting us, filling us, guiding us, assuring us, encouraging us, illuminating to us God's Word, praying for us, and producing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as we yield to him.

6) Angels (Fallen and Unfallen)

Angels are eternal, non-marrying, powerful, majestic spiritual beings created by God; some are good (angels) and some are bad (Satan and his followers, demons). Angels are messengers of God, sent to speak his words and carry out his will. Angels are higher in nature than humans, but lower than Christ. They reside in heaven worshipping God and awaiting his command. Some angels have names and titles. Satan was of the highest rank of angels; but he sinned through pride, and a great company of angels followed him. Satan is the originator of sin; with the permission of God he led Adam and Eve into transgression and thereby brought sin to all mankind. Satan works in opposition to God, working to oppose the Church and to blind men to the truth of the Gospel, keeping them from repentance and faith. (Genesis 3:1-19; Ezekiel 28:14-17; Matthew 22:30; Romans 5:12-14; 8:38; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:7,14; 2 Peter 2:11; Revelation 5:11-12)

Satan and his demons work under the authority and providence of God, and they are destined for everlasting punishment. Christ triumphed over Satan through the Cross, and at the second coming of Christ he will be judged: "tied up for a thousand years..." and then "thrown into the abyss and locked and sealed so that he could not deceive the nations until the one thousand years were finished." Finally, he will be "thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they will be tormented there day and night forever and ever." (Job 1:12; Romans 16:20; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 20:1-3, 10)

7) Man, Created and Fallen

Each human being is a unique creation of God, intentionally created by God to enjoy fellowship with Himself. God created man in his image, with the a heart (the ability to love), a soul (designed to live forever) and a mind (a conscience, imagination, and the ability and responsibility to choose God). Adam sinned, and the sinful nature is therefore passed on to every human being at the point of conception (Jesus Christ being the only exception). Unregenerate man is therefore in total depravity; he belongs to the Devil, is dead in sins, and is deserving of judgment and death. Salvation is offered to all through Christ. Man can know God and has an eternal destiny, either of intimacy with God or separation from him. Man is accountable to God and responsible for choosing to turn to God in repentance and trust in Christ. (Genesis 1:26, 27, 2:17; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 4:7, 14:1-3, 51:5; John 3:18, 5:28-29; Romans 1:19-20, 2:5, 3:10-19, 3:23, 5:12, 18; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 3:8)

8) Salvation

Mankind has only one hope of salvation: Jesus Christ; and God desires all men to turn to Christ in repentance and faith. Nobody can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again. Salvation is offered by grace through faith alone. It is not by works, though one who is saved will bear the fruit of new life in Christ. Salvation is available to anyone who calls on the name of the Lord, and it includes freedom from the power of sin and rescue from the wrath of God. Salvation is a broad term used to describe the following truths:

Predestination: Before the creation of the world, God chose some to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Regeneration: The Holy Spirit regenerates a person, giving him a new nature.

Calling: God effectually beckons those who are his to come to Himself.

Repentance and faith: When a person turns away from sin and to God, trusting in the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ.

Justification: A person is declared righteous, not because of anything he has done, but solely because of what Jesus has done; Jesus lived a righteous life in his place and died on the cross in his place.

Sanctification: A person is made holy and perfect.

- In standing before God: this is accomplished at the point of repentance and faith.
- In the experience of life: this is a process that continues throughout earthly life (but is not completed in this life) whereby a believer grows in grace by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- In the future: This is the promise that those who trust in Christ will be completely freed from sin upon leaving the earthly body.

Glorification: receiving resurrection bodies.

Eternal Security, Assurance, and the Perseverance of the Saints

Those who believe are eternally secure. They have crossed over from death to life, and no one will snatch them from Jesus' hand. It is also clear through Scripture that those who are saved will persevere in their faith. Believers are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, guaranteeing their inheritance of eternal life. Believers can hold on to the promise that God will complete the work he has begun in their lives, and believers can have assurance of their salvation, knowing that their names stand written in heaven and that they have eternal life. (John 3:3, 5:24, 10:28, 14:6, 17:17; Acts 4:2; Romans 1:16, 3:28, 5:9, 6:6, 8:30, 10:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:17; Ephesians 1:4, 13-14, 2:8-9; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 10:10, 14; 1 John 5:13)

9) The Church

The Church universal began at Pentecost and consists of all those who are united to the risen Lord by putting their faith in him. The Church is built on the testimony of faith in Christ. Those who have faith in Christ are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church, of which Christ is the head. Believers are called to use their spiritual gift(s) to build up the body of Christ and to live out this unity by keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The Church exists to bring glory to God, displaying his

sovereign wisdom. The purpose of the Church is to minister to God in worship, minister to believers by nurturing them in the faith, and minister to the world through evangelism and mercy. The purpose of the Church can also be summed up in the Great Commandment (love God and love people) and the Great Commission (go into all the world and make disciples). The church ordinances are baptism and communion. Baptism is an outward expression of the inward identification with Christ in his death and resurrection and belief in the promises of forgiven, fulfilling and forever life. Communion is a memorial commanded by our Lord to remember his sacrificial and beneficial death and resurrection. (Matthew 16:13-18; 22:37-40; 28:16-20; Romans 6:5-11; 1 Corinthians 11:26,12:12-27; Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:19-21; 3:10, 21; 4:3-10; 5:25-33; Colossians 1:24; 1:28; 4:15; 1 John 2:19)

Church Leadership

Elders are the leaders of a local church; they are also called overseers/bishops. (Elder refers to the office; overseer/bishop refers to function of the office.) The scriptural norm is for a local church to have a plurality of elders who oversee and rule, preach and teach, shepherd, and guard from false teachings. The qualifications for elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:7-9. Deacons serve the church under the authority of the elders, freeing them up to concentrate on the ministry of the Word and prayer. The qualifications for deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12,13, and Titus 1. (Acts 6:1-4, 28:20; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:5, 5:17, 18; Titus 1:9)

10) Future Events

The current church age fits in between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) and is in the last hour (1 John 2:18) of the last days (2 Timothy 3:1) characterized by increasing evil and deliberate forgetting of God. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:3-7)

The glorious appearing:

The next major prophetic event to occur will be the glorious appearing of Jesus in the air to receive to Himself and take to heaven those who belong to him, both dead and alive. It will be soon, and it will be instant. (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Revelation 1:1)

The Bema:

The next event for believers will be the Bema, or judgement of believers. This is not a judgment of sin, for the penalty of sin was paid for by Jesus on the cross. This is an evaluation of the life of believers; some will receive crowns. (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:16, 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10, 3:11)

The Tribulation

Concurrent with the body of Christ being in heaven will be a time of tribulation on earth; this is the 70th week of Daniel 9:27. It is a time of great trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) and tribulation (Matthew 24:15-21). This period is described in Revelation 4-19 and consists of escalating judgements (seals, trumpets and bowls). During this time, God still purposes to call people to himself (Revelation 14:7).

The Second Coming of Christ

Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory to end the Tribulation in the battle of Armageddon, bringing in the Millennium. At the close of the Millennium is the Great White Throne of Judgment.

- Armageddon: The next great event of prophesy is the battle of armageddon. This event ends the Tribulation and brings in the Millennium. (Revelation 16:16, 19:11-21)
- The Millennium: The literal thousand period just following the battle of Armageddon during which Christ reigns on earth as King. It is a time characterized by peace and prosperity and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. (Genesis 15:18; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Revelation 20:1-3)
- The Great White Throne of Judgment: At the close of the Millennium is this eternal judgment for all unredeemed souls. (Revelation 20:11-15)

The Eternal State

After the Great White Throne of Judgment, the redeemed enter into the eternal state. It is characterized by “a new heaven and a new earth,” including the new Jerusalem, and the dwelling place of God is with men. There is no longer any curse; the fallenness of the first creation is no more. (Revelation 21; 22:1-9)

In Conclusion: Theological Humility

In conclusion, it is important to note that though this doctrinal statement is a result of much careful study, it is most certainly neither complete nor perfect. The only perfect theology ever written, of course, is Scripture itself. In light of this truth, it is worth mentioning that though there are many doctrines above that are absolutely essential to the Christian faith (for example: the divine inspiration of Scripture; the depravity of man; justification by grace alone through faith alone; and the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ), a number of these doctrines are less essential. Brilliant theologians who are committed to Jesus and love him dearly have a variety of differing perspectives on a number of these doctrines; so I feel that I am in good company by holding to them a bit more lightly and with graciousness toward other views (for example: some of the details of church government; the relationship between the Church and Israel; and some of the details of future events). May the study of theology continue to draw us deeper into worship, and may it increase our humility before God and one another.