

**CONSTITUTION**  
*of the*  
**PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
CLINTON, MS  
AS AMENDED ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2018

**I. Church Name:**

This name of this church shall be Providence Baptist Church.

**II. Vision and Purpose:**

As a fellowship of believers, we exist to spread a hunger for God's glory through proclaiming the supremacy of Christ in our lives, our families, His church and ultimately to all people groups for their everlasting joy in God (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:7-8; Colossians 1:15-20; Acts 2:42-47; Isa 43:6-7; 1 Cor. 10:31; John 10:10; 15:11).

**III. Doctrine:**

We, at Providence Baptist Church believe the Word of God to be the only complete and infallible revelation of God to His children. Our **Elder's Statement of Faith** (see attached) is a summary of what we believe the Bible teaches and is adapted from several historic biblical confessions such as the Abstract of Principles (1859), the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1853), The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000, and others. It articulates what our church teaches as the official position of this body both publicly and privately. Our aim in this statement of faith is to be as broad and welcoming as possible while remaining true to our distinctives of being Orthodox, Reformed, Evangelical and Baptist. The elders at PBC fully affirm the doctrines summarized in this statement of faith.

Our **Member's Statement of Faith** (see attached) is a shorter version of our Elder's Statement of Faith and all our members are required to fully affirm it. For the sake of church unity and doctrinal clarity we also ask all members not to actively promote views that are inconsistent with our Elder's Statement of Faith. Our desire is that through searching the Scriptures together we will "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3) (see also Elder's Statement of Faith Section 24).

**IV. Common Values**

**Inerrancy of Scripture**

We believe that the Scripture is God's very words and that Scripture is complete and without any error. (Numbers 23:19; Psalms 12:6; 119:89, 96; Proverbs 30:5; Matthew 24:35; John 17:17)

**Sufficiency of Scripture**

We believe that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. Therefore, we make every effort to structure our lives, our families and church according to the biblical mandate. Thus, we are constantly reforming according to God's

word. (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:19).

### **Systematic Exposition**

We practice, with few exceptions, expository preaching. We preach verse-by-verse through sections of the Bible in order to faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of God to His people.

### **Regenerate Church Membership**

Membership in Christ's church is a serious matter. Because of this we are very deliberate in our membership process. Every member is carefully examined to determine whether or not they truly understand and have experienced biblical conversion. Our goal is not to make a judgment of one's heart but to avoid false assurance to those who are not truly regenerated.

### **Biblical View of Conversion**

We desire to see true conversion. Biblical conversion begins with the Holy Spirit's call, that leads to regeneration and true repentance, which should then be demonstrated by the public act of "Believer's Baptism." Through preaching and teaching we constantly proclaim and explain the gospel. We take our time with people struggling to understand what it means to follow Christ and are especially careful with children, never manipulating or rushing any child. (Romans 3:23; 5:8; 10:9-14; Ephesians 2:1-10; Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2)

### **Believers Baptism by Immersion**

While we respect Christians from other orthodox traditions, we will only receive members who have experienced "Believer's Baptism" by immersion. Moreover, we consider baptism necessary to church membership and its privileges.

### **Congregational Church Government with Elder Leadership**

Congregational Church Government means that there is no governing body above that of the local church. (This does not mean we are a democratic or populous-led fellowship.) Within our local congregation, we have a plurality of elders who are responsible for leading and feeding the flock.

### **Age Integration**

We believe that the biblical model of a church is a group of all ages worshipping together. We do however, provide opportunities for discipleship in a context that allows for the disciple to be instructed based on his/her present age, aptitude, and maturity.

### **Christ Exalting Worship**

The New Testament has surprisingly little to say about worship styles; however, one thing is sure, we are to engage in Christ exalting worship through prayer, ordinances, preaching, Scripture reading, singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, giving, honoring and obeying God. Private and public worship must be offered by faith in accordance with the teaching of God's Word if it is to be acceptable and pleasing to God. (John 4:23-24; Romans 12:12; I Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18-20; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 3:16; Romans 14:23b; Hebrews 11:6; 12:28).

### **Biblical Worldview**

Christianity is not merely a religion, it is also a lifestyle, a philosophy; a worldview. We are to think biblically about every aspect of our lives. (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 10:5-6; Col. 2:8; 1 Peter 1:14-16)

### **Biblical Community**

The local church is a community of believers. As such, we are to live in fellowship with Christ's Church and in covenant with all members of the local church. This covenant includes not only worship and fellowship but accountability and support. (Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 12:3-18; Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; 6:1-7; Hebrews 13:17)

### **Biblical Manhood / Womanhood**

God clearly defined the roles of men and women in the home and in the church. While these roles have come under attack in our culture, God has not changed. We embrace, teach, and celebrate these distinct roles. (1 Corinthians 16:13-14; 1 Kings 2:1-3; Proverbs 31, 12:4; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Timothy 5:14)

### **Biblical Headship**

The head of every man is Christ, and the head of a wife is her husband. The husband is to be the spiritual leader in his home, and men are to be leaders and teachers in Christ's church (this in no way implies that women are less than men in the Kingdom of God). (1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:33-35; Ephesians 4:15; 5:23)

### **The Nobility of Motherhood**

Motherhood is a high and honorable calling. While not every woman is called to be a wife and/or mother, those who are have an incredible responsibility; a noble calling. (Psalm 113:9; Psalm 127:3; Psalm 128:3; Proverbs 31:27-31; Titus 2:3-5)

### **The Blessing of Children**

We believe that children are a blessing from the Lord. We reject our culture's view of children as financial burdens that should be received sparingly. Instead, we rejoice with those who receive children in abundance. (Psalm 127:3-5; 128; Genesis 1:28; Proverbs 17:6; Job 42:12-16)

### **Family Discipleship**

While the church is called to make disciples, it is clear that God has given the family as the primary discipling agent. Children are entrusted to parents for their spiritual nurture. (Genesis 12:8; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:5-8; Psalm 113:3; Ephesians 6:14; 2 Timothy 3:14-15)

### **Christian Education**

We believe every Christian family should give their children a Christian education. (Psalm 1; Proverbs 1:7-9; 2:1-7; 3:1-7; 9:10; Luke 6:40; Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Colossians 2:8-10; Ephesians 6:14; 1 Tim. 6:20-21)

## **V. Church Government:**

Congregational Church Government with Elder Leadership: We will have a church government that is Elder led, Deacon served, and which every member is a willing servant of the Lord. We believe that the Bible teaches that there are two offices: Pastor (elder, overseer) and Deacon. We believe that the bible teaches that there should be a plurality of elders. The congregation still has a voice in all matters pertaining to the congregation. They choose elders who meet the Biblical qualifications and trust them to lead the church. These elders are under the authority of the Chief Shepherd (Christ) and are mutually accountable to each other and the congregation. Deacons model servant hood in the church. Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 1 Timothy 5:17, Acts 6.

## **VI. Church Associations:**

Providence Baptist Church is associated with the following Organizations:

The Southern Baptist Convention <http://www.sbc.net>

The Metro Baptist Association <http://www.metroba.org/>

The Fellowship of Reformed Evangelicals <http://www.firefellowship.org/>

The National Center for Family Integrated Churches <https://ncfic.org/>

9 Marks <https://www.9marks.org/>

**VII. Church Discipline**

Restoring Those Who Fall: Our Statement Regarding Church Discipline (see attached)

## VIII. Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We do purpose, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love and to grow in the fullness of Christ Jesus our Lord; under the authority of the leadership within this body of believers; to make the Holy Scripture the supreme standard for all faith and practice and joy; to promote a godly view of culture and family life, seeking to live our lives apart from this world and repent of the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life knowing that God calls His children to be unlike the world; and to seek to grow towards biblical unity in the truth.

We will joyfully commit to regularly assemble together for worship of our Lord and edification of one another in Christ; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; and to be slow to take offense and eager to reconcile.

We will shun gossip and divisive words, knowing that they are destructive to Christian fellowship. Furthermore, we will accept and fellowship with all members, regardless of race (ethnicity), gender, background, social status, or level of education, since all are of equal value in Christ.

We will submit to the church's discipline upon ourselves and lovingly assume our responsibility to participate in the discipline of other members, as taught in Scripture. If we are offended in connection with a disciplinary matter, we will seek resolution within the church. We will never initiate or pursue civil legal action against the church or any other Christian.

We hold a biblical view of manhood and womanhood where God has called the husband to serve and lay down his life for his wife as Christ has done for the church, and it is his responsibility to pray for, educate, and nurture his own wife's spiritual life in Christ; and it is also where God has called the wife to submit to her own, and not another's, husband as the church is to do for Christ; that children are to honor their mothers and fathers; furthermore, we agree that we will maintain family and personal devotions and to religiously educate our children in a manner so as to preserve the Christian faith,

knowing that while the responsibility is with all of the church, it is the father who will be held accountable for this education.

We affirm the Common Values and Member's Statement of Faith as articulated in the church's constitution and bylaws. We also endeavor to welcome and test biblically, instruction from the Scriptures by the elders of the church which accords with the Elder's Statement of Faith, seeking to grow toward Biblical unity in the truth.

We moreover agree that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word. We, having undertaken for the glory of God, the advancement of the Christian faith, and understanding and agreeing with the above statements, as believers in Christ Jesus, join ourselves as covenanted members with Providence Baptist Church.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**IX. Christian Education**

Parents are directly commanded by Scripture to train up their children, to educate them, and to teach them the commands of God (Proverbs 22:6, Deuteronomy 6, Deuteronomy 11, Psalm 127 etc.). Therefore, we affirm the duty of parents to invest their lives in training up their own children in the fear and discipline of our Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Based upon these convictions, we believe it is the right and responsibility of parents to prayerfully and carefully choose the best and most biblical method of education for their children whether it be home education, private Christian education, or some other form. We respectfully appeal to these convictions in order to maintain this jurisdiction over the hearts, minds, and lives of our children without interference from the state or federal governments or any other authority. These religious beliefs are deeply and sincerely held.

**X. Women in Military Service**

Christ set an example for all Christians by laying down His life for His bride. Based on this and numerous other Scriptural patterns, principles, and precepts, God has revealed to us his design for men to protect women and children to the point of death, and not vice versa. Therefore, we are opposed to the compulsory involvement of women in any form of military service, including service in the armed forces in a noncombatant capacity. Furthermore, our reasons for refusing the compulsory involvement of women to participate in a war, the military, or the armed services in any capacity is not based on politics, expediency, or self-interest. Rather, our sincere and deeply-held convictions are based upon our understanding of the Holy Word of God.

**XI. Marriage**

It is our biblical belief and conviction that marriage is a God designed, sacred institution between one man and one woman for the duration of their earthly life. We do not believe that the Bible recognizes any other union such as same-sex “marriage,” domestic partnerships, or civil unions. Since our convictions are deeply and firmly rooted in the Bible, Providence Baptist Church does not recognize these unions either. In our adopted statement of faith, chapter 21, states, “Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.” It is our deeply-held conviction that the Biblical definition of marriage is the only legitimate and accepted sexual relationship.

## **PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH ELDER'S STATEMENT OF FAITH**

Our statement of faith is adapted from several historic biblical confessions such as the Abstract of Principles (1858), the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1853), The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000, and others. It sets forth our core distinctives of being Orthodox, Reformed, Evangelical and Baptist and all PBC elders are required to fully affirm it.

### **I. The Scriptures**

The Holy Bible, consisting of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error (in the original manuscripts), for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

### **II. The Triune God**

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

Acts 17:11; Deut 4:39, Deut 6:4, Mk 12:29; Exod 15:11, Is 6:3, Ps 147:5; Psalm 42:2; Jer 23:23, John 14:23; Ps 18:30; Rev 19:6; Heb 4:13, Ps 147:5, Job 37:16; John 4:24; Ps 90:2; Gen 1:26, 3:22, 11:6-7, Mt 3:16-17, 28:19, Heb 9:14; John 20:17; Titus 2:13, Jn 1:1-3,14; Acts 5:3-4; Lk 3:21-22, Jn 14:16-17, Heb 9:14; Jn17:21-23, Gen 1:26; Gen 1:26, Mt 3:16-17, Heb 9:14, Rev 22:1,3,17; Jn 14:16-17; Rom 8:9-11; Psalm 96:8.

#### **A. God the Father**

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all

knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

## **B. God the Son**

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of His people from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

## **C. God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring

the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

### III. **Providence**

God from eternity, in order to display the full extent of His glory for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love him, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

Hebrews 1:3; Matthew 10:29-31; Ephesians 1:11-12; Proverbs 16:33; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28.

### IV. **Election**

God's election is an unconditional act of free grace which was given through His Son Christ Jesus before the world began. By this act God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin and brought to repentance and saving faith in His Son Christ Jesus. This act was not because of foreseen merit or faith in them, but because of His mercy in Christ alone.

Romans 9:11-18; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; John 10:25-29 John 17:6; John 6:37-39; Romans 8:28-30; Romans 11:5-8; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Acts 11:18; John 6:44, 65; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Matthew 11:27; Matthew 16:17; Acts 16:14

### V. **Creation**

God created the universe, and everything in it, out of nothing, by the Word of His power and all in the span of six literal days. Having no deficiency in Himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in His joyful self-sufficiency, God was pleased in creation to display His glory for the everlasting joy of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

God directly created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side. Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race; they were created male and female equally in the image of God, without sin; they were created to glorify their Maker,

Ruler, Provider, and Friend by trusting His all-sufficient goodness, admiring His infinite beauty, enjoying His personal fellowship, and obeying His all-wise counsel; and in God's love and wisdom, they were appointed differing and complementary roles in marriage as a type of Christ and the church.

Genesis 1:1; Psalm 24:1-2; Hebrews 11:3; Hebrews 1:2; John 1:1-3; Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14; Isaiah 43:7; 60:21; John 12:27-28; John 17:1; John 17:4; Philippians 2:11; Exodus 3:13-14; Psalm 50:9-15; Acts 17:25; Isaiah 43:7; Isaiah 35:10; Matthew 25:23; Revelation 5:9; 7:9-10; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Cor. 15:45; Romans 5:14; Genesis 1:27; Genesis 9:6; James 3:9; Genesis 1:31; Revelation 5:9; 7:9-10; Ephesians 5:22-33; Genesis 2:18.

#### **VI. The Fall of Man**

God originally created Man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.

Genesis 1:27, 3:4-7; Gen. 6:5; Romans 1:18-20; 3:10-18; 5:12-21; Romans 8:6-8; Ephesians 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

#### **VII. The Free offer of the Gospel**

The blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16; Romans 10:9-17; John 3:36; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

#### **VIII. Regeneration**

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's free grace whereby sinners become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this work the Holy Spirit gives life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness.

John 3:1-8; Romans 8:30; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 16:8-11; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3

**IX. Repentance**

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.

Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21; 2 Corinthians 7:9

**X. Faith**

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness.

John 1:12, 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9

**XI. Justification**

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith.

Rom. 3:23-24; Rom. 5:1-2; 18, 19; 2 Cor. 5:21

**XII. Adoption**

For the sake of His only Son, Jesus Christ, God has been pleased to make all justified persons sharers in the grace of adoption, by means of which they are numbered with, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of children of God.

John 1:12; Eph. 1:5; Romans 8:15, 16; 1 John 3:1

**XIII. Sanctification**

Sanctification is the process by which according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; it is a progressive work; it is begun in regeneration; and it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means especially the Word of God, the fellowship of the saints, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

I Thess. 4:3; I Thess. 5:23; II Cor. 7:1; II Cor. 13:10; Phil. 3:12-16; I John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; Eph. 1:4; Pro. 4:18; II Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; II Peter 1:5-8; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph.

1:13-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25; II Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; Luke 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph.6:18; Eph.4:3

#### XIV. **Perseverance of the Saints**

Those whom God has accepted in the Beloved, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Jn. 10:28-29; 1 Jn. 2:19; Rom. 8:30.

#### XV. **The Old and New Covenants**

The Old Covenant, with the Law of Moses as its core, was revealed to the nation of Israel, promising earthly blessings for obedience, and threatening curses for disobedience. The purpose of the Old Covenant was never to offer eternal life, but rather to govern the life and worship of the Old Testament nation of Israel, to reveal the extent of man's depravity, and to foreshadow Christ and the New Covenant. Nevertheless, salvation during this and all times has always and only been by grace through faith, and not of works.

Exodus 20:1-23:33 (cf. Exodus 24:3-4, 7, 12; 34:27-28; Deut. 4:13-14); John 1:17; Acts 15:5 (cf. v. 10); Hebrews 10:28. Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Romans 3:1-2; Galatians 2:14b; Deuteronomy 7:12-24; 11:13-15, 26-29; 28:1-14; Deuteronomy 11:16-17, 26-29; 28:15-68; John 5:39-40; Romans 3:19-22; 8:3; 10:1-4; Galatians 2:16, 21; 3:19-23; Hebrews 7:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:5-6, 14; 6:1-3; 10:12-13; Romans 3:20; 5:20; 7:7-13; Galatians 3:19; Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (cf. Acts 3:14-24; 7:37, 51-53); Luke 24:44; John 5:39; Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 9:6-14, 23-24; 10:1; 13:11-12; Genesis 15:6; Romans 4; Galatians 3.

The New Covenant, established through the person and redemptive work of Christ, provides eternal blessings which are acquired by grace through faith. The Old Covenant was fulfilled in Christ, thus becoming obsolete. God's final words of revelation, given through Christ and His New Testament apostles and prophets, have become the authority concerning Christian conduct, and the interpretive lens through which the Old Testament must be understood and applied.

Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 7:22; 8:6; 9:11-26; 13:20. Romans 4:1-25; 6:14; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7. Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 7:4, 6; 10:4; 2 Corinthians 3:2-11; Galatians 3:24-25; 4:21-31; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 7:11-12, 18-19, 22; 8:1-13; 10:9b. John 1:17-18; 13:34-35; Ephesians 2:19-20; 3:4-5 (cf. John 16:12-14). Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (cf. John 12:49); Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 28:20a; John 13:34-35; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10, 14; Romans 14:5-6; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Colossians 2:16-17

(cf. 2 Chronicles 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3); Colossians 3:15-17; Hebrews 7:12; 10:28-29 (cf. Deuteronomy 18:19; John 12:47-50)

## **XVI. The Church**

### **Universal**

The Lord Jesus is the head of the universal Church, which includes of all of the redeemed of all the ages; believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation. All power for the ordering and governing of the church is invested supremely in Christ.

Col. 1:18; Mt. 16:18; 18:15-18; Rev. 5:9; 7:9;

### **Local**

A visible or local church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word; its only scriptural officers are Elders (Pastors or Overseers) and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are primarily defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-15; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

### **Cooperation**

Though autonomous from external authorities, local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another. Partnerships should be encouraged in a spirit of unity. Partnerships (whether official or unofficial) should be by the mutual will of the churches on a voluntary independent basis.

Eph. 4:3-4; Col. 4:16, Phil. 4:21-22, Acts 15; Romans 16:25-26, Phil. 4:15.

## **XVII. Church Ordinances**

### **Baptism**

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, by which he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to church membership and its privileges.

Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:41; 8:38-39; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 1:13; Col. 2:12; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5



### **The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by His churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church fellowship.

Mt. 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-26

### **XVIII. The Lord's Day**

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16-17; 3:16; Hebrews 10:24-25; Revelation 1:10

### **XIX. Last Things**

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

### **XX. Evangelism & Missions**

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly

commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

## **XXI. The Family**

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32;

1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

## **XXII. The Christian and the Social Order**

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

## **XXIII. Religious Liberty**

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

#### **XXIV. The Spirit of this Statement of Faith and Unity in the Church**

We do not believe that all things in this statement of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this statement of faith must be believed in order for one to be saved.

Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach —the whole counsel of God. Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion and strengthens the church in her mission to meet the great systems of false religion and secularism. We believe that the supreme virtue of love is nourished by the strong meat of God-centered doctrine. And we believe that a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ is sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and His wonderful works.

We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of church or school or mission or ministry, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries. In this way, the importance of truth is served by the existence of doctrinal borders, and unity is served by the way we love others across those borders.

We do not claim infallibility for this statement of faith and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture. Yet we do hold firmly to these truths as we see them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so. As conversation and debate take place, it may be that we will learn from each other, and the boundaries will be adjusted, even possibly folding formerly disagreeing groups into closer fellowship.

Acts 20:27; Titus 1:1; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 4:1; Ephesians 4:13-14; 1 Timothy 1:5; Psalm 9:10; Ephesians 4:4-5; 1 Timothy 1:5; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 Peter 3:18; Acts 17:11

## **PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH MEMBER'S STATEMENT OF FAITH**

The following statement of faith is a shorter version of our Elder's Statement of Faith and all who are covenanted members are required to fully affirm it.

### **I. The Scriptures**

The Holy Bible, consisting of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error (in the original manuscripts), for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

### **II. The Triune God**

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

Acts 17:11; Deut 4:39, Deut 6:4, Mk 12:29; Exod 15:11, Is 6:3, Ps 147:5; Psalm 42:2; Jer 23:23, John 14:23; Ps 18:30; Rev 19:6; Heb 4:13, Ps 147:5, Job 37:16; John 4:24; Ps 90:2; Gen 1:26, 3:22, 11:6-7, Mt 3:16-17, 28:19, Heb 9:14; John 20:17; Titus 2:13, Jn 1:1-3,14; Acts 5:3-4; Lk 3:21-22, Jn 14:16-17, Heb 9:14; Jn17:21-23, Gen 1:26; Gen 1:26, Mt 3:16-17, Heb 9:14, Rev 22:1,3,17; Jn 14:16-17; Rom 8:9-11; Psalm 96:8.

#### **A. God the Father**

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

## **B. God the Son**

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of His people from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

## **C. God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

### **III. The Fall of Man**

God originally created Man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.

Genesis 1:27, 3:4-7; Gen. 6:5; Romans 1:18-20; 3:10-18; 5:12-21; Romans 8:6-8; Ephesians 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

### **IV. Regeneration**

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's free grace whereby sinners become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this work the Holy Spirit gives life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness.

John 3:1-8; Romans 8:30; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 16:8-11; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3

### **V. Repentance**

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.

Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21; 2 Corinthians 7:9

### **VI. Faith**

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness.

John 1:12, 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9

**VII. Justification**

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith alone.

Rom. 3:23-24; Rom. 5:1-2; 18, 19; 2 Cor. 5:21

**VIII. Adoption**

For the sake of His only Son, Jesus Christ, God has been pleased to make all justified persons sharers in the grace of adoption, by means of which they are numbered with, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of children of God.

John 1:12; Eph. 1:5; Romans 8:15, 16; 1 John 3:1

**IX. Sanctification**

Sanctification is the process by which according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means especially the Word of God, the fellowship of the saints, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

I Thess. 4:3; I Thess. 5:23; II Cor. 7:1; II Cor. 13:10; Phil. 3:12-16; I John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; Eph. 1:4; Pro. 4:18; II Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; II Peter 1:5-8; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25; II Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; Luke 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph.6:18; Eph.4:3

**X. The Church**

**Universal**

The Lord Jesus is the head of the universal Church, which includes of all of the redeemed of all the ages; believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation. All power for the ordering and governing of the church is invested supremely in Christ.

Col. 1:18; Mt. 16:18; 18:15-18; Rev. 5:9; 7:9;

**Local**



A visible or local church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word; that its only scriptural officers are Elders (Overseers or Pastors) and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are primarily defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-15; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

### **Cooperation**

Though autonomous from external authorities, local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another. Partnerships should be encouraged in a spirit of unity. Partnerships (whether official or unofficial) should be by the mutual will of the churches on a voluntary independent basis.

Eph. 4:3-4; Col. 4:16, Phil. 4:21-22, Acts 15; Romans 16:25-26, Phil. 4:15.

## **XI. Church Ordinances**

### **Baptism**

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to church membership and its privileges.

Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:41; 8:38-39; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 1:13; Col. 2:12; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5

### **The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by His churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church fellowship.

Mt. 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-26

## **XII. Last Things**

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end.

According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

### **XIII. Evangelism & Missions**

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

### **XIV. Religious Liberty**

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. The Civil Government is of Divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; government authorities are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

## **RESTORING THOSE WHO FALL: OUR STATEMENT ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

Church discipline is one of the primary means God uses to correct and restore His children when they fall into sin. It is also one way in which He maintains the unity, purity, integrity, and reputation of the church. Through private or public instruction, warning, counsel, or rebuke, and even social avoidance or expulsion from membership, God corrects his disobedient children or removes those who are not truly His. Christ Himself declared the church to be heaven's instrument in carrying out this difficult but necessary function (Matthew 18:15-20).

The purpose of this statement is to define, in general terms, five classes of sinful behavior for which church discipline may be necessary, and to explain how the Bible tells us to respond to each. We must not assume, however, that every situation will fall neatly into a single category. Disciplinary matters are often confusing combinations or variations of these general classes, making the proper course of action difficult to determine. For this reason, the church must carry out discipline with prayer, diligent application of Scripture, and reliance upon the Spirit of God.

### **1. Minor Faults**

Minor faults are attitudes and actions such as rudeness, impatience, grumbling, complaining, negativity, pettiness, boasting, irritability, speaking too much or when inappropriate, lack of trust, worry, timidity, and selfishness. We are permitted, and actually encouraged, to overlook most minor faults rather than resorting to discipline (Proverbs 10:12; 19:11; 1 Peter 4:8).

If a minor fault seems serious enough to require private counsel, we should be particularly careful to apply Christ's words about removing the "speck" from our brother's eye while a "plank" is in our own (Matthew 7:1-5). Only if a minor fault is repeated so consistently or in such a disruptive manner that it causes harm to the church will any measure(s) be taken beyond private instruction, warning, and/or rebuke.

### **2. Unverifiable Sins**

Whether minor or serious, unverifiable sins are offenses that are known to only one church member in addition to the offender(s). Additionally, no concrete evidence could be brought forth as proof. Unverifiable sins might include insulting words spoken in private, physical assault or theft where no physical or circumstantial evidence exists, breach of a private verbal contract, and private awareness of another member's illicit behavior. In such cases, it may be necessary for the offended person or lone witness to rebuke the offender privately. If private rebuke is unsuccessful and the offender is not willing to admit his sin to others, normally no further action may be taken. The matter must be left with God; it should not be revealed to anyone else (Deuteronomy 19:15; Proverbs 25:8-10). It must also be recognized that the one being accused of an unverifiable sin may, in fact, be innocent or misunderstood. Exceptions to this rule

concerning silence include the reporting of criminal offenses to the proper authorities when necessary or required by law. Also, if the unverifiable sinful action is of such a nature that it likely would affect a person's involvement in the church, or poses a danger to others, the member should speak to an elder about it. The elder may have received other information about this individual that would verify the action(s) in question (such as a past history known only to the elder, or a similar report from another church member). If this is the case, additional action will be necessary. In all situations involving unverifiable sins, the individual in question is innocent until proven guilty.

### **3. Personal Offenses**

Personal offenses are those that occur between two Christians—more specifically, two members of the same church. Personal offenses could be defined as any sinful behavior by one member that causes harm to another. A representative list of these sins would include insults, slander, breach of personal trust or contract, physical or sexual abuse, adultery, physical assault, theft, and vandalism.

In these situations, the offended person must closely follow Matthew 18:15-17. He must first meet with the offender in private, explain his offense to him, and seek his repentance (Matthew 18:15). If the offender remains unrepentant, the offended person must be cautious before taking additional measures. If the offense is unverifiable (as defined above) or not serious enough to warrant bringing to the attention of other church members, it should not be pursued further. If the offense is significant and verifiable, a meeting will be arranged, during which the offended person may present his case to the offender in the presence of one or two other members (Matthew 18:16). These should either be witnesses to the offense or mature, discerning members who are able to evaluate evidence and testimony, question both parties effectively, determine guilt or responsibility, and offer appropriate biblical counsel.

If the offender remains unrepentant even after his guilt has been proven before witnesses, the matter will be told to the general membership of the church at another meeting (Matthew 18:17). If the offender is present, the elder(s) will rebuke him publicly and implore him to confess and repent. If he is absent, the matter will still be revealed to the church (in appropriately limited detail). In either case, the members of the church will be encouraged to make personal efforts to persuade him to repent. A date will be set for a final meeting where the matter will be brought to conclusion. The offender will be notified regarding this meeting (in a verifiable way, such as certified mail) and encouraged to attend in the hope that he will make a public confession. Because the offender's guilt has already been established, no opportunity will be given at these subsequent meetings for him to debate the matter or defend himself publicly.

At the final meeting, the offender (if present) will be offered another opportunity to repent and be restored. If he remains unrepentant or is not present, he will be considered an unbeliever and expelled from membership (Matthew 18:17). Even if the offender repents, restitution and/or

other remedial actions may be necessary as determined by the elders (e.g., mandated accountability, removal from church office, and/or counseling).

#### **4. Public Disobedience**

Public disobedience is sinful behavior that causes harm to the unity, doctrinal integrity, purity, or reputation of the church as a whole. This category would include, for example, false teaching, divisiveness, contentions, gossip, slander of the church or its leaders, insubordination, sexual immorality, drunkenness, covetousness, theft, dishonesty, outbursts of anger or fighting, foul language, willful failure to provide, wrongful divorce or remarriage, and breach of public trust or contract.

Unlike the precise instructions for resolving personal offenses (Matthew 18:15-17), the instructions for dealing with acts of public disobedience are varied. Especially here, we must pause, pray, seek wise counsel, and apply the Scriptures carefully, considering each situation to be unique.

The following are the procedures found in the New Testament for handling public disobedience. Not all measures listed here will be appropriate for each situation. We have listed them in order of severity, from the most gentle or subtle to the most direct, but this should not be construed to mean that they will be applied in this order. It may sometimes be necessary to bypass these measures altogether and proceed directly to expulsion from membership (see section 5, “Insufferable Wickedness”).

- Be watchful (Acts 20:28-31; Hebrews 12:14-16). We should not aggressively hunt for offenses or opportunities to enact discipline (Matthew 13:28-30), but we must be vigilant and ready to address sinful behavior when it becomes known. This is particularly the responsibility of the elders who are the shepherds of the flock. The New Testament warns that there will be some who profess to be Christians who will seek to harm the church (Acts 20:30; 2 Peter 2:1-3). A person who practices and/or promotes sinful behavior, teaches contrary to sound doctrine, is divisive or insubordinate, or exalts himself (i.e., 3 John 9-10) may be a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.”
- Correct through teaching (2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 1:9). The Word of God is powerful and effective. In all cases, especially when more direct or severe measures are not immediately necessary, elders and other teachers will address disobedience by applying the Scriptures humbly, gently, patiently, and convincingly (also see 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2).
- Plead with the offender(s) (1 Corinthians 1:10-11; Philippians 4:2-3). Paul pleaded with the Corinthian church as a group, and with Euodia and Syntyche as individual Christians in Philippi, imploring them to stop being divisive or contentious. In both situations, his pleas, which were in open letters to the churches, also served as gentle public rebukes.

- Warn them of consequences (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; Titus 3:10-11). Unruly or disobedient Christians who have not responded to gentle or subtle disciplinary measures are exposing themselves to public rebuke, social avoidance, or even expulsion from the church. When appropriate, we will warn them of these embarrassing and painful consequences. Most importantly, we will tell them of the day when they will stand before the Lord Jesus to be judged according to their deeds (2 Corinthians 5:9-11).
- Rebuke them (Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; Titus 1:13; 2:15). The prospect of being rebuked, either publicly or privately, should be a powerful deterrent to sinful behavior. Public rebuke also serves the purpose of teaching by identifying and exposing the nature of error (Ephesians 5:8-13). When carried out in the presence of the church, this type of corrective action is a pastoral responsibility. It should never happen without prior planning and agreement among the church's leadership.
- Silence them (Titus 1:9-11). Paul insisted that false teachers and divisive people "must be silenced," and his implication was that the leaders of the church should make every effort to silence them. There might be a variety of levels at which this can be applied. For example, the elders may forbid them to speak at meetings, instruct them not to discuss certain matters with other church members, or remove them from teaching positions.
- Shame them through social avoidance (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). This rare church action becomes appropriate when a church member begins to lead an idle or disorderly life that falls short of gross immorality, but nevertheless disturbs the church. The other members of the church should demonstrate that such behavior is unacceptable in their midst by temporarily (meaning as long as necessary) excluding the unruly brother or sister from all fellowship. Such a person, for example, would not be welcome at church gatherings or in members' homes as a dinner guest until his or her ungodly and/or disorderly behavior ended. In appearance, the church's treatment of such a person would be similar to the exclusion commanded in 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18:17. The difference is that the person would still be considered a Christian and a member of the church. If this shunning action does not produce repentance within a reasonable (relatively brief) period of time, the offense will be considered "insufferable wickedness" (see section 5). (Note: The reference in Romans 16:17 to avoiding certain people almost certainly refers to outsiders, not members of the church.)

## **5. Insufferable Wickedness**

Insufferable wickedness refers to situations where there is only one proper course of action—expulsion from membership. The difference between the same types of sins mentioned under "public disobedience" (section 4) and "insufferable wickedness" (section 5), is, generally speaking, a matter of degree rather than type. A member who begins to form a habit of getting drunk, for example, will most likely be dealt with in one or more of the ways described under

“public disobedience,” while one who has become publicly known as a “drunkard” will be expelled immediately. In some instances, however, the type of sin, even if committed only once, may warrant immediate expulsion. There are three kinds of offenders whose behavior will be considered insufferable and will therefore be expelled:

- **Unrepentant Offenders**  
These are church members who have refused to acknowledge their sin and repent, even after public rebuke and exhortation from the entire church (Matthew 18:17).
- **Gross Offenders**  
These are members who commit even a single sin that is so abhorrent, shameful, or notorious that the reputation of Christ and the church is imperiled if they are not immediately expelled (1 Corinthians 5).
- **Offenders Who Are Known by Their Wickedness**  
These are members who have become known publicly for sins like heresy, apostasy, divisiveness, sexual immorality, drunkenness, or covetousness. Their sinful lifestyle makes them indistinguishable from unbelievers. In other words, they are so characterized by false beliefs, false teaching, destructive motives, worldly affections, or immoral living that they cannot, by definition, be considered Christians (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Titus 1:16; 1 John 1:5-6; 2:3-4; 3:9-10; 2 John 9-11). In these situations, all that is necessary before expulsion is the establishment of the facts.

We must notice that in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul did not instruct the church to first warn the incestuous man or seek his repentance. No command was given to rebuke him, publicly or privately, before expelling him. With the man’s gross immorality well-known to all, Paul told them to immediately expel him from the church (1 Corinthians 5:5, 13). In verse 11 of the same chapter, Paul lists other types of offenders who must be treated in the same way. Even if sorrow and repentance are initially expressed by one who commits insufferable wickedness, expulsion from the church is still necessary in order to maintain the reputation of Christ and His church. Though the offender’s repentance may be genuine, a time of proving is required before this can be known for sure, and before membership privileges can be restored. Persons expelled by church discipline, if truly repentant, may come back into fellowship through the normal procedure for church membership.

#### **Additional Considerations:**

1. The desired result of church discipline is always repentance and the restoration of the offender. Our private and public disciplinary measures should always be undertaken in a spirit of love, gentleness, and humility as we seek to bring about this positive end (Galatians 6:1-2). When restoration does not occur and expulsion becomes necessary, we are glad to see the purity of Christ and the church upheld, but we should be grieved,

individually and corporately, that someone we loved as an apparent brother or sister in Christ is now understood to be an unbeliever.

2. Genuine repentance consists of more than outward sorrow and tears (2 Corinthians 7:9-11). Repentance will be considered genuine when the offender not only leaves his sin, but also confesses it to all who are affected by it (even to the general membership of the church if necessary, as determined by the elders), and makes restitution when appropriate.
3. When a member is expelled or socially excluded, he or she may not attend any gathering of our church unless it is with the permission of the elders and for the purpose of public confession. Members who have any necessary continuing association with an expelled person (e.g., husband/wife, parent/child, siblings, next-door neighbors, coworkers) must not participate with him or her in any shared activity that might be construed as Christian fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Ephesians 5:11). The manner of such association must also never imply approval of the offender's behavior and/or condemnation of the disciplinary action taken by the church (Proverbs 17:15).
4. In the case of a member who was expelled, restoration will be considered with great caution, and then only after the membership process is repeated in its entirety. Depending upon the nature of the offense, a restored member will not be immediately (if ever) qualified for biblical offices within the church (i.e., elder or deacon) due to a tarnished reputation, issues regarding marriage and divorce, and/or an obvious weakness in a particular area (1 Timothy 3:2-13; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:3).
5. Disciplinary matters will be addressed promptly upon discovery of the sin. Unnecessary delay is harmful since it permits the perpetuation of the sin and causes an unhealthy tension within our church by creating the perception of apathy on the part of church leaders regarding sinful behavior.
6. If an offending member leaves the church after initial disciplinary action begins, yet prior to expulsion from membership, the matter will still be brought to conclusion (meaning, formal expulsion will still occur as if the member were present). If it is discovered that a recently expelled member (or one who is fleeing disciplinary action) is seeking membership with another church (or has already become a member), one of our elders will, in most cases, attempt to arrange a private meeting with a pastor of that church (along with the offender, to avoid any appearance of slander), in order to disclose the offense and protect the other church from harm.
7. Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 is not a direct reference to a church discipline situation. However, the types of disputes among members that would necessitate a "church trial," as Paul describes, may often involve sinful behavior that should be dealt with through church discipline.



8. Every member of our church must agree that he or she will never initiate, pursue, or participate in any civil legal action against the church or against any member in connection with a disciplinary matter. In fact, any Christian considering civil legal action against another Christian for any reason should consider Paul's prohibition of behavior (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).
9. Persistent and willful non-attendance is a sin requiring church discipline (Hebrews 10:24-25). Except where persistent non-attendance is the result of unavoidable circumstances (e.g., extended illness or military service), it will be considered a public offense and addressed accordingly. Those who persist in their non-attendance without a legitimate excuse, even after exhortations and warnings from the church, will be expelled from membership. No specific length of time has been established to designate non-attendance as "persistent." Each situation will be treated as unique. Without delay, our elders will be diligent in conducting the most thorough and comprehensive investigation possible in determining the reason(s) for non-attendance. Everyone should assume, until conclusive proof to the contrary exists, that the reason(s) are legitimate. Only when it becomes certain that the offender is willfully and sinfully avoiding our church meetings will he or she be disciplined.
10. A member who leaves our church is accountable to us, and remains under the supervision of our elders, until he joins another true church or is expelled. If the member lives locally and believes it is God's will for him to seek another church, the reasons must be discussed thoroughly with the elders. The member will remain under the counsel of the elders and the accountability of the church during this temporary process. If the member is unsuccessful in finding another church after a reasonable period of time, he must either return to regular attendance or be removed from our membership for nonattendance (see #9). The church will not retain non-attending members except due to illness, military service, or other extenuating circumstances. If a member has moved out of town and we learn that he has not joined another true church within six months (unless a longer period of time is agreed upon with the elders), he will be removed from our membership. Certain exceptions apply, such as members who move to an area where there is no true church, or overseas military deployment. College and graduate students are expected to join a church near their school unless they are close enough to permit continued attendance with us. If a member commits a disciplinable sin after having moved, the elders will do what is necessary to restore him and to help him find a local church where he can be cared for. If he will not repent, he will be removed immediately from our membership according to the normal process. Also, if a member leaves our church and joins a false church, cult, or non-Christian religion, he will be removed from our church.
11. Paul's words in 1 Timothy 5:19 ("Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.") should not be construed to mean that elders are to be protected from proper disciplinary action. Paul knew that elders, being in a position of

authority, could easily become the objects of false or frivolous accusations. His command is simply a warning to watch for such abuses. Elders are church members just as all others, and are subject to discipline according to the same biblical principles as previously stated.

12. The training and discipline of children is the biblical obligation of parents, particularly fathers (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 23:13-14; Ephesians 6:4). Member-parents who refuse or neglect to properly train and discipline a child, resulting in the perpetuation of sinful behavior on the part of the child, are committing a public offense and are subject to church discipline. In the event that an older child has become a member, yet is living under parental authority, the parent(s) remain responsible. If the member-parent(s) of a member-child refuse or neglect to train and/or discipline, resulting in the perpetuation of the child's sinful behavior, both the member-parent(s) and the member-child are subject to the discipline of the church. This is not meant to refer to parents who do properly, diligently, and biblically train and discipline a particularly obstinate child who nevertheless remains rebellious and disobedient. Even in these rare cases, whether the child is a member or not, if his or her behavior is so disruptive, immoral, corrupting, divisive, and/or violent that the meetings of the church cannot proceed in a safe, peaceful, positive, pure, and orderly manner, he or she will be excluded from attendance or expelled from membership.

## **Final Thoughts**

No church has a choice about obeying Christ, therefore our church must practice church discipline. But there is also beauty and value in disciplinary action that we may not immediately see. It is beautiful because it is about love. Our discipline toward a professing Christian in sin may be the most loving act he has ever experienced. However uninviting or difficult discipline might be, and however severely we must act, God has made church discipline valuable because it will either produce a holier life or a holier church, or both, when carried out obediently and harmoniously.

## **Key Passages of Scripture Regarding Church Discipline**

### **Proverbs 27:5**

Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.

### **Matthew 18:15-17**

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

**Romans 16:17**

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

**1 Corinthians 5**

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

**2 Corinthians 7:9-11**

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner . . . For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

**Galatians 6:1-2**

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

**Ephesians 5:11**

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

**1 Thessalonians 5:14**

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly . . .

## **2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15**

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. . . . And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

## **1 Timothy 1:18-20**

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

## **1 Timothy 5:20**

Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

## **Titus 3:10-11**

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

## **Hebrews 12:14-16**

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

## **James 5:19-20**

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

## **2 John 9-11**

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. . . . If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

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