

# **A Statement of Baptist Beliefs**

## **(Based on *The Baptist Faith and Message of 1963*)**

### I. God

There is one and only one living and true God. God 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. To God we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals God's self to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

### II. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by human beings divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of God's self to humankind. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth for its matter. 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. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.

### III. Humankind

Human beings were created by the special act of God, in God's own image, and are the crowning work of God's creation. In the beginning, humans were innocent of sin and were endowed by their Creator with freedom of choice. By their free choice human beings sinned against God and brought sin into the world. Through the temptation of Satan, human beings transgressed the command of God, and fell from their original innocence; whereby their posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin, and as soon as they are capable of moral action become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring human beings into God's fellowship and enable them to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created men and women in God's own image, and in that Christ died for them; therefore, every man and every woman possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

### IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to him as Lord and Savior. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of divine righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor

with God. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him or her. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

#### V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which sinners are regenerated, sanctified, and glorified. It is consistent with the free agency of human beings and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified through the Holy Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

#### VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to Jesus' teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation, members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.

#### VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

#### VIII. Last Things

God, in God's own time and way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to divine promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge everyone 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 with the Lord.