

Ravenna Baptist Church

Statement of Faith

A. The Scriptures

2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching..."

We believe that the 66 books of the Bible were written by men as God directed, thus producing a perfect, inerrant record of His Word. Because it is His Word, it is true and is our highest authority for knowing what we are to believe and how we are to live. We believe that no man, no modern-day prophecy, no pope, no preacher, no modern day "apostle" can speak with the same authority as the Bible. We believe that God has specially protected and preserved His Word so that the Bible we have today communicates the same truth as when it was first given. Because the Bible is His Word it has power like nothing else to transform us. We believe that there is no substitute for the Bible and if we are to become what God wants us to be we must read it and obey its teaching.

Other supporting verses: John 17:17; Matt 5:18; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23, 25; Psalm 119:11, 105.

B. Person of God

We believe that there is only one God. But in God's unity there exists a unique and mysterious blending of 3 separate persons, namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All three deserve our worship, obedience and love. While they are equal in every way, each of them has a distinct role to play in all things.

Other supporting Verses: Mark 12:29, 32; Matt 28:18-20; John 1:1-4; Acts 5:3-4

1. God the Father

We believe that the Father is sovereign and exalted over all. It is He who has decreed all things. When we say the "father" we specifically intend to refer to the Father of Jesus, the Son. The Father (as well as the Son and Spirit) is infinite, eternal, and unchanging in every aspect of His being. In His moral nature He is perfect in His holiness, goodness, faithfulness, love, mercy, truthfulness, and justice. As He relates to His creation He is everywhere present, all-powerful, and all knowing.

Other supporting verses: Isaiah 26:4; Acts 17:28-29; John 3:16; Galatians 3:26; 1 Kings 8:27; Leviticus 19:2; James 1:17; Deuteronomy 7:9; 32:4; Psalm 103:9; 86:15; 90:2; 31:5; 139:1-12; Matthew 19:26; Rev 19:6.

2. God the Son

We believe the Son is the key to knowing God (John 14:7-9). He said to His critics, "If you

knew me, you would know my Father also.” Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.” We believe God’s Son became a man by means of the virgin birth in such a way so that He was fully God and fully man. He lived a sinless life and paid for our sins by dying for them on the cross. His victory over sin was secured by His actual bodily resurrection from the dead 3 days later. We believe He returned to Heaven and now rules over the church. We now wait for the time when He will come again so that we can be with Him forever.

Because Jesus is God it is our duty to obey Him. Because He is the Savior we must trust and appreciate Him. Because He is the Lord of the Church we must serve Him. Because He is our brother we should love Him. Jesus wants to be the reason why we do everything (Col 3:17).

Other supporting verses: Philippians 2:6-7; Colossians 2:9; Luke 1:27, 32, 35; Matthew 11:27; Romans 5:8-10; 6:23; 8:34; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 20-23; Acts 1:9-11; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 John 2:1.

3. God the Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit is a real person. Because He is equal with the Father and Son He possesses all their characteristics to the fullest degree. In the world at large He works to remind all people of the truth and of God’s reality. His specialty, though, is to bring people to Jesus. When this happens He indwells the new believer (1 Corinthians 3:16); incorporates them into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13); and imprints each believer, marking them as belonging to God (Ephesians 1:13-14)

The Spirit’s work in the life of the believer is life-long. He teaches us (1 Corinthians 2:10-11, John 16:12-15); guides us into right living (Romans 8:2,5,9); He witnesses to our inner self that we belong to God (Romans 8:16); and gives each believer a special task with which to build up the church (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11). The Holy Spirit wants to ‘fill us’ (control and empower) so that we can successfully live out God’s will. The evidence of a life that is Spirit–controlled is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Other supporting verses: Romans 8:16, 26-27; Galatians 5:16-17; Ephesians 3:16; 5:18; 1 Corinthians 14:12

C. The Devil

We believe the Devil is a real person. He is also referred to as Satan. Originally he was the highest angel but because of his pride he was removed from his place. He will remain God’s enemy until his defeat when he is thrown into the lake of fire forever. The Devil hates God and all who are dear to Him. He is a liar, a murderer and a great pretender, fashioning himself to be the ‘god of this world’. The Devil is utterly determined to destroy people and oppose God’s Work. In this He is like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). We are warned to be wary of his devices.

God's victory over the Devil can never be in doubt. If God chose, He could bring about His downfall in a moment. When Christians sin they give the Devil a foothold (Eph. 4:27) in their lives. The Devil is very strong and clever but God enables us to overcome Him if we depend on Him.

Other supporting verses: Ezekiel 28:12-17; Ephesians 2:2; 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Genesis 3:15; Matthew 13:24-25, 38-39; Revelation 12:10; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9-11; 20:10.

D. Man/Woman and their Fall

We accept the plain statements of Genesis that God created all things including man. When God created man he put His image upon Him (Genesis 1:27). God created woman out of man and brought her to him to be his helper—supplying what was lacking when he was alone. Because he is made like God in many respects, the life of each person is sacred and precious and of infinite worth (Genesis 9:6). God's design is for a man and woman to come together in permanent union and be one before God.

Mankind was created in a condition of moral perfection but he lost his perfect state by willfully breaking God's command. Because of their guilt, Adam and Eve became alienated from God and eventually died. Worse yet, their sin nature was transmitted to the entire human race, the only exception being Jesus Christ (by virtue of His virgin birth). Consequently all men are sinners and are under the same condemnation as Adam

Other verses: Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12-19; 6:23.

E. Salvation by Grace

We believe that out of love for sinners (Romans 5:8), Jesus Christ submitted to death on the cross in order to pay for the guilt of all men. We assert that no good work or religious deed can pay our sin-debt to God. The Scriptures declare, and we affirm, that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the only act that has satisfied the justice of God and is therefore the only provision God has ever made so that a man can be forgiven and his guilt be covered over. The Scriptures plainly state, and we believe, that salvation is solely dependent upon a personal decision to forsake any hope of salvation by good works and by faith receive the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as the sufficient payment for personal guilt. The Scriptures clearly insist that Jesus is the only way a man can be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Other supporting verses: Ephesians 2:8-10; Jon 3:16-18; Peter 1:5, 18-19; Acts 16:30-31; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 16, 38-39; 1 John 5:11-13.

F. Christian Growth (Sanctification)

We affirm that even though good works can never save us they still are a vital and essential part of the Christian walk. When a person puts his faith in Jesus Christ he is cleansed from his sins and brought into a new relationship with God. The Holy Spirit comes into his life and provides him with a new nature. Growth in the Christian life happens as each individual learns how to imitate the life of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18) and reduce the influence of his old sin nature in his life. This is a life-long process and no one will achieve perfection while in his or her earthly state. We cannot accomplish this goal in our own strength but God's Spirit is there to provide the power to succeed. Some degree of sanctification will exist in the life of every genuine believer.

Other supporting verses: John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 7:1; Ephesians 4:24; 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10, 14; 12:10; 1 John 3:2-3

G. The Church

The church is at the center of what God is doing today. The true church is made up of all who have sincerely turned to Jesus Christ for salvation. It is invisible and not a denomination, or particular local body. In fact, there are many who are a part of these visible organizations who are not born again. Jesus rules over the church as its head. He loves it like a bride; He cares for it like a family; and through it, exists in the world like a body. The church began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and is related to but separate from Israel and the promises given to it in the Old Testament.

The church's mission in the world is to communicate the Gospel message to the lost; build up and encourage believers; pass our faith on to the next generation; and administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe God has given leaders to the church. They are called teaching elders (pastors), ruling elders, and deacons. These men are commissioned by God to lead in the fulfilling of the church's mission and provide for the spiritual well-being of the people in the local church body.

Baptism and the Lord's Table

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion into water of a born-again person. This act pictures the cleansing from sin; the renewal of life, which happens at the moment of salvation; and the entering into full fellowship with the family of God. We strongly affirm that the baptism ceremony is without power to save anyone or remove sin. It is an act of obedience to the command of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20)

The Lord's Table is a ceremony of remembrance focusing on the atoning death of Jesus Christ. We do not believe that the bread or juice undergoes any mystical transformation but are symbolic only. Like baptism, participation in the Lord's Table lacks power to remove sin. Its value lies in the way that it affirms the death of our Savior and allows us to proclaim it as being key to our salvation. As we eat the elements together we proclaim that we are one.

Other supporting verses: Acts 2:42-47; 14:23; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 12:12-27; 16:19; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-8; John 6:39-40; 114; 1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Romans 1:1, 11, 25; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28.

H. End time events

We believe the Bible teaches the imminent, personal return of Jesus Christ in bodily form to the earth; first to gather every believer to Himself, then to rule in perfect peace and righteousness on the earth for one thousand years, and finally to rule forever in the new heavens and the new earth. We believe in the actual bodily resurrection of all men, saved and unsaved alike. The saved will inherit eternal life and live forever in the presence of God; the unsaved will inherit eternal unending judgment, the same judgment prepared for the Devil and his angels.

We believe that when a born-again person dies his soul is taken directly into the presence of Jesus where he waits for the first resurrection when spirit, soul, and body will be reunited. In this glorified state each person will be remade into the likeness of Jesus (1 John 3:2) and live with Him forever.

Other supporting verses: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:2-11; Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:4-15; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Luke 16:19-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Mark 9:43-48