

The Doctrine of Sanctification and the Church

So far we've covered these headings in thinking about our doctrinal statement:

- The Bible
- The Father
- The Holy Spirit
- Man
- God
- Jesus Christ
- Creation
- Salvation

We are more than half way through the statement at this point. The statements we are comparing don't follow exactly the same topics towards the end of the document, depending on the emphases of those writing them originally.

The FBFI contains a statement on Sanctification. Neither our current statement nor the Toronto Baptist Statement has anything comparable. Here is the FBFI clause:

Section 7. Sanctification: We believe sanctification is presented in three senses in Scriptures. (1) every saved person has been sanctified through the death of Christ; (2) is being sanctified by the Holy Spirit; and, (3) will be completely sanctified at his glorification. Every believer has two natures, old and new, and the old cannot be eradicated during this life (Heb 10.10; Jn 17.17; Eph 5.25-27; 1 Thess 4.13-18; Gal 5.17; Rm 7.18-25).

Observations:

1. The idea of sanctification logically follows from salvation.
2. It may not be necessary to include a separate statement on sanctification as our suggested statement on salvation includes these sentences:

“We believe that in salvation the believer is called, regenerated, Spirit baptized into union with Christ, justified, (including the forgiveness of sin and restoration to favor with God through the merit or righteousness of Christ), adopted, sanctified, and glorified. We believe that saving faith manifests itself in godly sorrow and shame for sin and turning away from the life of the flesh to a godly walk.”

Suggestion:

Sanctification: We believe the Scriptures present sanctification in three senses. (1) Through salvation, God sanctifies every believer, setting him apart from the lost in Christ. (2) Throughout a believer's earthly life, the Holy Spirit sanctifies the believer by the process of spiritual growth in holiness. (3) At the end of the earthly life, God completely sanctifies the believer by eradicating his old nature, completing forever the work of salvation. Every believer in this life has two natures, old and new. The Christian growing in grace forms holy character but never completely escapes the struggle with the old nature in this life.

John 17.17; Romans 7.18-25; 1 Corinthians 6.11; Galatians 5.17; Ephesians 5.25-27; Hebrews 10.10; 1 John 3.2

From Sanctification we turn to the doctrine of the Church. The statements have a lot to say in several sections on this topic (ours is brief). We will come back to the secondary parts of the doctrine of the church (The Ordinances and The Great Commission/Missions next week).

Our Statement	<p>The Church</p> <p>We believe the church is the body of Christ. It is comprised of all those who have believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour, regardless of denominational differences. We believe that within the institution of the Church God has instituted local members of His universal body, these being local churches. Every local church is self-governing and self-regulating, answerable only to God. The purpose of the institution is that the members might mutually edify and uplift one another and that the lost might be evangelized.</p> <p>Colossians 1.18, Ephesians 1.22-23, Ephesians 4.11-13, Acts 14.27, 1 Corinthians 1.2, Matthew 28.18-20.</p>
FBFI Statement	<p>Section 9. The Church: We believe in the Church – a living, spiritual body of which Christ is the Head, and of which all regenerated people in this age are a part. We believe the Church is a body peculiar to the age of grace and entirely distinct from national Israel. We believe a local church is a company of believers in Jesus Christ, immersed upon a credible confession of faith and associated for worship, work of the ministry, evangelism, observance of the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's supper), and fellowship. We believe the local church is autonomous, the center of God's program for this age, and that every Christian is bound by Scripture to give his unhindered cooperation to the ministry of his local church (Mt 16.16-18; 1 Cor 12.12-17; Acts 2.42-47; 1</p>

	<p>Tim 3.15-16; Eph 4.11, 12; Mt 28.19, 20; Acts 1.8). We believe that the local church is an autonomous body having the God-ordained right of self-government, free from the interference of any religious hierarchy, solely responsible to preserve its own internal integrity, maintain pure doctrine and practice, elect its own officers, ordain men to the ministry, settle its own internal affairs, and determine the method and extent of its cooperation with other churches (Jude 3; Acts 6.1-6; Acts 13.1-3; 1 Cor 6.1-5; Acts 15). The proper form of church government is congregational (Mt 18.15-17; Acts 6.1-6; 1 Cor 5.4-5). The two scriptural offices of the local church are pastor and deacon (1 Tim 3.1, 8).</p>
<p>Toronto Baptist Seminary statement</p>	<p>IX. Of the Local Church</p> <p>We believe that a church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers (a) associated by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the gospel; (b) observing the ordinances of Christ; (c) governed by His laws; and (d) exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His word; (e) that its officers are male pastors (or elders or bishops), and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures; (f) we believe that the true mission of the church is found in our Lord’s commission: First, to teach, or disciple, all nations, i.e., to preach the gospel in all the world, to make individual disciples, second to baptize, third, to teach and instruct as He has commanded, and thus to build up the church; (we do not believe in the reversal of this order); (g) we hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ, through the Holy Spirit; (h) that it is scriptural for true churches to co-operate with each other in the furtherance of the gospel and in contending for the faith, and that every church is the sole and only judge of the measure and methods of its co-operation; (i) on all matters of membership, of polity, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final.</p>

Observations:

1. Both our statement and the FBFI statement describe the body of Christ, sometimes called the Universal Church. The Scriptures teach this and it is important to avoid limiting the doctrine of the church to only local bodies.
2. The FBFI statement adds the explicit Dispensational statement concerning the distinction between Israel and the Church. This also is important.
3. In the Toronto statement, section (f) in particular would fit with the Great Commission/Missions portion of the statement. We will note that again next week.

Suggestion:

The Church

We believe in the Church – a living, spiritual body of which Christ is the Head, and of which all regenerated people in this age are a part. We believe the Church is a body peculiar to the age of grace and entirely distinct from national Israel. We believe a local church is a congregation of baptized believers, each holding a credible confession of faith; faithfully observing the ordinances of Christ and associated for worship, the work of the ministry, evangelism, observance of the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s supper), and fellowship. We believe that its officers are male pastors and deacons, whose qualifications the Scriptures clearly define. We believe that the local church is an autonomous body having the God-ordained right of self-government through congregational polity, free from the interference of any religious hierarchy or secular government authority, solely responsible to preserve its own internal integrity, maintain pure doctrine and practice, elect its own officers, ordain men to the ministry, settle its own internal affairs, and determine the method and extent of its cooperation with other churches.

Matthew 16.16-18; Matthew 18.15-17; Matthew 28.18-20 Acts 1.8; Acts 2.42-47; Acts 6.1-6; Acts 14.27; 1 Corinthians 1.2; 1 Corinthians 5.4-5; 1 Corinthians 12.12-18; Ephesians 1.22-23; Ephesians 4.11-13; Colossians 1.18; 1 Timothy 3.1-13; 1 Timothy 3.15; Jude 3