

A Calvary Chapel Statement of Faith

This particular Calvary Chapel statement of faith, does not pretend to represent all those Calvary Chapel pastors that worked under the leadership of CCA or CGN or even those CC pastors that worked independent of any association of CC churches. If you are working under the leadership of CCA or CGN you may or may not agree with this CC statement of faith. I will leave it to the reader to decide where he fits among all the several options. However, this particular statement of faith *does* represent (I believe) those CC pastors that worked with Chuck Smith (and were in agreement with him) while he was still on his earthly sojourn. Most of what follows in this particular statement of faith, are the views and practices of these same CC church pastors while still under the leadership of Chuck Smith Sr.

Almost all of what follows was sent by me (i.e., George Bryson) to Chuck Smith so he could review and approve of what I wrote on his behalf. Although I did not write as one with authority, I did write at Chuck's request and with his approval and agreement. Take it for what it is worth to you.

PREAMBLE

The pastors and ministers of the independent and self-governed churches (and related missions and ministries) of the Calvary Chapel movement world-wide, ultimately trace their spiritual and theological roots back to the day of Pentecost. This was when the church of Jesus Christ was born (Acts 2). Generally speaking, this is the view of all those Christian movements and traditions that consider themselves Orthodox and or conservative [bible based] Evangelical churches, from the first century until now and all over the world. The pastors of the Calvary Chapel family and fellowship of churches took seriously the admonition of the Apostle Paul when he said:

...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and

Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:1-6).

The Calvary Chapel movement is just one of many thousands of contemporary manifestations of the church of Jesus Christ. It began as the spiritual fruit (and to a great extent continues as the spiritual fruit) of what God has chosen to do in and through the ministry of Pastor Chuck Smith, the senior pastor of Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa [during Chuck's earthly sojourn]. In the process of (and part and parcel to what God was doing in and through Pastor Chuck (and those pastors under his spiritual leadership) [when he was still among us]. God has also raised up thousands of other servant-leaders to take part in this ministry. Pastor Chuck was only the first pastor of many independent, self-governed but spiritually related churches throughout the world, spiritually and theologically related to him.

As the pastors and spiritual leaders of individual churches and ministries (and collectively as a relatively small church movement) we make no claim to being the only true representatives of the church of Jesus Christ. *We never have.* Individually and collectively, we recognize all believers in

Christ as members as the greater family of God and in the body of Christ. *We always have.* We do not believe we are the only Christians to understand and preach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1: 16, 1 Cor. 15: 1-3). *We never have.*

Nevertheless, we believe it is very important that we understand and preach the true gospel. We do not believe we are the only Christians to embrace and faithfully teach the Bible. *We never have.* We believe that faithfully teaching what is taught in the Bible ought to be a high priority for every Bible teacher inside and outside a Calvary Chapel church, ministry or mission. Much of what we believe, especially on the most important issues covered in Scripture (reflected and represented) in this brief article and *what we agree on*, is/was also believed and taught by countless millions of believers around the world, from the time of the first century till now. Most of these other believers, even in this present day, have never even heard of the Calvary Chapel movement and that is perfectly Ok with us because:

...We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord... (2 Cor. 4:5).

However, just because all Calvary Chapel pastors are supposed to serve and lead independent and self-governed churches, does not mean we cannot corporately as a movement insist on a set of agreed upon doctrines and practices for those who freely choose to be a part of this association of independent and self-governed churches and ministries. *We can and we do.* What follows will identify some of the more important doctrines and practices that we agree on. The doctrines we agree on are included in this broad outline of biblical doctrines:

1. The Biblical Doctrine of the Bible.
2. The Biblical Doctrine of God.
3. The Biblical Doctrine of Salvation.
4. The Biblical Doctrine of the Church.
5. The Biblical Doctrine of Holiness.
6. The Biblical Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
7. The Biblical Doctrine of Last Things.

Without question, this is a time of serious soul-searching as to who all bible believers are and what we should stand for doctrinally,

spiritually, practically and devotionally. Though it may seem otherwise, it is not as complicated as some would like us to believe that it is. Admittedly, there is the division and conflict between the Reformed and Calvinist communities and those who believe that even though God is sovereign, man is responsible relative to who can be saved. On the one side there are Christians who are what I call *theistic fatalists* and those who are *non-Reformed* or *non-Calvinists*. Outside the believing community there is the age old divide between those who are *theologically liberal* and those who are *theologically conservative*. There are those who consider themselves liberal Christian, who are not Christian at all.

Among the theologically conservative are 1. Chuck Smith Sr. (The Word For Today Bible) 2. J. Vernon McGee (Through the Bible) 3. Lewis Sperry Chafer (Lewis Sperry Chapel Systematic Theology) 4. John Walvoord (The Millennial Kingdom) 5. L. Dwight Pentecost (Things To Come) 6. Henry M. Morris (The Bible and Modern Science and the Genesis Flood) 7. Charles C. Ryrie (Survey of Bible Doctrine, Balancing the Christian Life) 8. Zane Clark Hodges (The

Gospel Under Siege, The Hungry Inherit).
Charles Stanley (In Touch ministries)

The men in this list of Pastors and Bible Scholars, following the name of Chuck Smith are some of the men who influenced Chuck Smith. Chuck Smith was probably the most significant pastor or minister to influence most of the CC pastors in the CC movement. Concerning most of what could be considered a CC statement of faith, most of the doctrines (with minor exceptions) can be found in the writings and messages of these other men that influenced Chuck. Even if you do not agree with the all of the doctrines of these men, they would agree that if a doctrine is not compatible with what is taught in Scripture, you should disregard with what they believed and taught, in favor of what Scripture actually teaches and affirms to be true.

Nevertheless, there are forces and factors inside and outside of the Calvary Chapel movement (as well as most other Orthodox and conservative Evangelical churches) that are challenging us to revisit and clarify our long standing doctrinal convictions and commitments, especially for those newer to the Calvary family of churches or conservative branches of the Christian faith.

A few believers (sometimes only nominal believers) inside and outside of Calvary Chapel are asking us to reconsider what it means to be a Calvary Chapel pastor. Sometimes the people that are calling upon us to change our doctrinal convictions are hostile to us. Sometimes they are only trying to be helpful. While most Calvary Chapel pastors are clear and settled about what it means (and has always meant-doctrinally speaking) to be a Calvary Chapel pastor/minister, there are a few that believe that our doctrinal and practical convictions should change.

Some are openly saying on the Internet (and elsewhere) that what we believed and taught in the past is out of date or no longer relevant to the church or culture. They insist that what we believed in the past will not effectively reach a new generation of unbelievers or adequately prepare a new generation of believers for the challenges that are ahead of us. It is tempting to focus a lot of attention on what we believe works or is effective. Nevertheless, our primary concern ought to be on what is scripturally true or right relative to what we believe and teach. How effective it may or may not be is a legitimate matter of interest and discussion

but should not be our primary or guiding concern.

Inside the Calvary Chapel movement, the number of those who want to see a dramatic change in our doctrinal and practical convictions and commitments is probably very small. Some make up for their lack of numbers in their zeal to bring about the kind of change that they believe Calvary Chapel pastors/ministers need to embrace to become relevant to a new generation of believers and unbelievers. What follows is not intended to be a defense of *what we agree on*, though it would not trouble me if it served as a guide for that purpose. Rather, it is simply a restatement and reminder of *what we have always agreed on* under the leadership of Pastor Chuck. What follows is a slight elaboration of the list of previously identified biblical doctrines of the CC movement under the leadership of Chuck Smith Sr.

THE BIBLE.

Concerning our doctrine of the Bible. We believe Scripture is inerrant and infallible in all that it affirms. We do not believe the Bible is true because it says it is but we believe it says it's true because in fact it is true. If an

affirmation of Scripture touches upon history, geography, science, spirituality, ethics, morality etc., we believe those affirmations are historically, geographically, scientifically, spiritually, ethically, morally etc., true and can and should be trusted as true (Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 1:16; 17:2-3; 18:28; 26:22-23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).

GOD.

Concerning our doctrine of God. Like all other Orthodox Evangelicals, we are, without reservation, Trinitarians. As Trinitarians we are also (by definition) strictly monotheists. We reject Unitarianism because Unitarianism is a denial of the three divine persons as revealed to us in Scripture. We deny all forms of Modalism, which is a very unscriptural view of God, wherein the persons of the trinity are confused and confounded. As Trinitarians we also deny (by definition) all forms of polytheism (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 12:29; John 1:14; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:4-6).

MAN.

Concerning our doctrine of man we believe in both the dignity (and worth) of man because He was created in the image of God

and the depravity (and unworthiness) of man because our first parents (Adam and Eve) sinned and through Adam passed that sin onto all of the sons of men, with the exception of Jesus Christ. We believe that all men are born sinners and are sinners by nature and choice (Gen. 1:26; 2:17; 6:5; Ps. 14:1-3; 51:5; Jer. 17:9; John 3:6; 5:40; 6:35; Rom. 3:10-19; 8:6-7; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 John 3:8).

CHRIST.

Concerning our doctrine of Christ we believe Jesus is the only Savior and the eternal uncreated creator and the second person of the Holy Trinity. We also believe that God the Son, in His incarnation, became truly man, while remaining truly God. He is now and forever will be the God-Man. Although we believe that Jesus, was, is, and will always be God, we also believe that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind, rose bodily and gloriously from the dead (to die no more), has ascended bodily to the right hand of God the Father and will return to reign on earth and in the new earth and the new earth with His Heavenly Father throughout for all eternity (John 1:11; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:6, John 1:29; Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:14; Heb. 10:5-14; 1 Pet. 3:18, John 20:20; Phil.3:20-21).

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Concerning our doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity and that He lives within the believer from the moment the believer first believes in Jesus Christ for salvation. Concerning the work and present ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are neither cessationists (i.e. excluding what God has not excluded in His Word) nor sensationalists, whereby emotionalism and superstition is sometimes confused with a truly supernatural and spiritual work of God. While we are convinced (that as believers) we should rely upon the Holy Word of God to guide us throughout our lives in this unholy world, we also believe that we need to depend upon the person and power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to successfully (even if not perfectly) live holy in this unholy world. As important as the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is in the life of the believer, we believe that God not only wants to indwell the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit, which occurs when a person is born again, but He also wants to infill and empower the believer, which is mostly a subsequent to regeneration matter. While we rejoice that at a particular time

subsequent to salvation many believers testify of being filled with the Holy Spirit in a powerful and life changing way, we are even more excited about the continual infilling and empowering of the Holy Spirit that believers can enjoy every day as they walk in the light and in fellowship with the Lord and to help them walk in the light and in fellowship with the Lord. (John 14:16-17; 16:7-15; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; 2 Thess. 2:7, John 3:6; 16:7-11; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:30; 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 John 2:20-27).

SALVATION.

Concerning our doctrine of salvation. We believe in Salvation by Grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. We do not believe in universalism (i.e., that all will be saved) or elitism (i.e. that God decreed that only some could and should be saved). We believe Christ died redemptively for all the sins of all sinners and not just for some sinners (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 64:6; Matt. 26:28; John 3:7-18; Rom. 5:6-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 6:15; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 3:4-9; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:18-19, 23, John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:22, 26; 4:5; 10:4; Gal. 3:2, John 5:24; 17:23; Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 1 John 4:17; 5:11-12).

THE CHURCH.

Concerning our doctrine of the church. We believe that all Christians who truly trust in the true Christ are in Christ and are therefore members of the body of Christ. We recognize that God gave birth to the church universal (on the day of Pentecost) and has ordained local representations, we call local churches. We believe local churches without affiliation or in association with other churches are legitimate manifestations of the church universal, to the degree that its members have trusted Christ to be their Savior. We believe that the members of local churches are faithful witnesses of the true Christ as the leaders and believers of those churches seek to serve our Lord in true holiness. We also believe that local churches may join with other local churches for theological and or practical reasons. The nature of that relationship may manifest itself as a denomination or as non-denominational. We recognize that the government of individual churches or groups of churches can vary a great deal. Some may be governed or led by elders, congregations, or a Senior Pastor, as is the case for all Calvary Chapel churches. We believe this is the business of each church or a group of churches to work out in accordance with how they believe God would guide them in light of what they

believe Scripture teaches. All Calvary Chapel churches are independent and self-governed, and spiritually led, fed, and cared for by a senior pastor along with a ministry team of his choosing (Matt. 16:16-18; Acts 2:42-47; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:20-23; 4:3-10; Col. 3:14- 15).

HOLINESS.

Concerning our doctrine of holiness. We believe that every believer is called to live a life to please, honor and glorify the Lord. We believe that we are called to live a godly or devout life in and for Christ. We are called to avoid what is wrong and displeasing to the Lord and embrace what is right and pleasing to the Lord. We believe that the Christian should be guided by the Holy Word of God and needs to rely upon the Holy Spirit of God as we walk through this very unholy world with all of its unholy influences (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Eph. 4:24; 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; 12:10).

LAST THINGS.

Concerning our doctrine of “last things” or “end-times”. We are pre-millennial and pretribulational. This view is commonly referred to as dispensationalism. This means

that while we believe Jesus can and may come at any time or moment (and only God knows when that will be) we believe that before He comes to set up His thousand year kingdom on earth, there will be a seven-year tribulation period that ends with the bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Sometime prior to the beginning of that seven year tribulation period (perhaps immediately before it begins) Jesus will rapture His church and both the dead and living *in Christ* at that time will be caught up to meet and forever be with the Lord. While we wait with eager expectation for the any moment rapture of the church, we also believe that speculation about exactly when Christ will rapture the church is fruitless because it is unknowable for the church. The goal of the godly and devout believer is to always be ready because He is coming at a time *when we think not!* The proper goal of every believer is to live a devout and godly life in and for Christ, from the day they come to Him in faith until the day He returns for them, in whatever way that happens to be (Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 11:9; Ezek. 37:21-28; Matt. 24:15-25:46; Acts 15:16-17; Rom. 8:19-23; 11:25-27; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rev. 20:1-3, (Luke 16:19-26; 23:42; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15).

During the time I was writing *stay the course* email articles at the request of Chuck Smith, I sent Chuck the above doctrinal statement to make sure we were on the same page. After reading what I wrote about what the Calvary Chapel movement pastors had agreed to, Chuck wrote me this email saying:

Dear George, I believe that you have fairly enunciated the Calvary Chapel positions, and agree that those who do not agree need to be honest and remove themselves from our list of affiliated churches. I would suggest that they not go away mad, but just go away. In Christ, Chuck

TEACHING THE ENTIRE BIBLE

In addition to the doctrines that all Calvary Chapel pastors believe and agree to teach (i.e., as just summarized) to the Calvary Chapel and Calvary related churches entrusted to their spiritual care, oversight and leadership, Calvary Chapel pastors are committed to teaching the entire Bible from beginning to end. This does not mean that they cannot teach topically or thematically. It does not mean that they need to start teaching in the Old Testament or cannot teach books in

the New Testament first. It simply means that they have agreed to take their local church (of which they are the primary pastor-teacher) through the whole Bible, including Genesis to Revelation. We are not passing judgment on those pastors who choose not to incorporate a through the whole Bible teaching plan for their congregations. However, to be a Calvary Chapel pastor all Calvary Chapel pastors agree to this approach. This is often referred to as the verse by verse and chapter by chapter method. Calvary Chapel pastors agree to incorporate the verse by verse and chapter by chapter method into their overall teaching plan for the congregation of which God has privileged them to serve and lead. There is liberty and flexibility as to how exactly they go about doing this.

We all also agree that what the Bible says about who can be saved and why is essential and central to the spiritual health and direction of our individual churches and our church movement as a whole. We also recognize that the greater Evangelical community is clearly divided on why some are saved and others not. Therefore a little more will be said about our doctrine of salvation now.

At the present time, the Evangelical community is sharply divided between those who are Reformed and those who are not Reformed, relative to who can be saved and why. Calvary Chapel is not, never has been and by definition, never can be Reformed. To be Reformed is by definition ***not*** to be a Calvary Chapel pastor. The difference between being Reformed and not being Reformed is both important and easy to see.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINES OF GRACE

For example, all Calvary Chapel pastors believe and teach that:

1. Saving faith in Christ always and immediately results in regeneration and any and all lost sinners can believe in Christ and be born again (Jn. 1: 10-13, 20: 30- 31).

2. God desires all men to be saved and has determined that all can and will be saved on condition they believe in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3: 15-18, 1 Tim. 2: 3-4, Acts 16: 27-31).

3. Christ died savingly, redemptively, or propitiously for all the sins of all sinners (1 Jn. 2:2, 2 Cor. 5: 14-15).

4. God calls all lost sinners to a saving faith in Jesus Christ through a Gospel proclamation and by believing the Gospel all lost sinners can and will be saved (Rom. 1: 16, 1 Cor. 15: 1-3).

5. All those who believe in Jesus Christ and are thus saved (regenerated and justified) are called to live a life to please, honor, and glorify the Lord and that such a life (although possible for and expected of the believer) is not automatic or inevitable for the believer (Rom. 12: 1-2, Eph. 4: 1-3, 2 Pet. 1: 1-10).

THE REFORMED DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

All Calvinists or Reformed pastors believe and teach a dramatically different doctrine relative to who can be saved and why.

For example, they believe and teach that:

1. Regeneration precedes and produces saving faith in Christ. Only those unconditionally elected for salvation can and will be born again. All of the elect will be regenerated.

2. God unconditionally elected to save some and not all lost sinners. Only the elect will, or even can be saved. All of the elect will be saved. None of the non-elect can be saved.

3. Christ did not die for all the sins of all sinners and in fact He did not die for any of the sins of many sinners. For the elect and only the elect Christ died for their sins. That is, Christ only died savingly, redemptively or propitiously for the elect.

4. Only the elect are inwardly, effectively, efficaciously, or irresistibly called to saving faith in Christ. To the non-elect, a Gospel proclamation is necessarily “waters on a duck's back” or totally ineffective.

5. All of the elect will persevere in faith and righteousness unto the end, and no one can be absolutely certain they are one of the elect until they have persevered in faith and holiness to the end. And only after the final judgment is it possible to know if the faith and righteousness someone is preserving in, is in fact a true faith and a true righteousness.