

Munich Christian Fellowship - Statement of Faith

MCF's statement of faith is an ad-verbatim copy of the German Evangelical Alliance's statement of faith.

The German Evangelical Alliance believes in the revelation of God in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

In particular, **we believe in the following biblical principles, which form the basic tenet of our Christian faith**

and are intended to promote mutual love, sacrificial service and diligence in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We believe in...

1. The grace and sovereignty of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - in creation, revelation, redemption, final judgement and consummation.
2. The divine inspiration of the Scriptures, their entire trustworthiness (inerrancy) and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct (all-sufficiency).
3. The universal sinfulness and guilt of fallen man, making him subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
4. The substitutionary sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God as the sole all-sufficient ground of redemption from the guilt and power of sin, and from its eternal consequences.
5. The justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.
6. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance and unites us with Christ through new birth; and His indwelling and sanctifying work in all believers.
7. The priesthood of all believers, who form the universal Church, the Body, of which Christ is the Head, and which is committed by His command to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world.
8. The continued existence of the personality of man, which is a gift from God. The personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory, who will raise all people to judgement and bring eternal life to the redeemed in glory.

Statement of faith of the German Evangelical Alliance of September 2, 1846, revised 1972.

MCF's Statement of Faith – Part 2: The Essential Principles τ.

Leg, MCF 04.06.2016 (Time constraint: additional Gideon presentation – 10 mins.)

Last time, we looked at the introduction to our Statement of Faith:

(With) the German Evangelical Alliance we believe in the revelation of God in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. In particular, we believe in the following biblical principles, which form the basic tenet of our Christian faith and are intended to promote mutual love, sacrificial service and diligence in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I explained why we believe our Statement of Faith to be a sound Christian document and a good basis for Christian living. I argued that the church must ever be re-formed, and that our Statement of Faith can help us to keep it under the Word of God. If people ask what we believe, we can point them to it in good conscience, but more importantly, we should allow them to watch our lives, so they can judge us by our love for God, one another and a world that is lost without Jesus. Why? Because this is the test that Jesus laid down for his followers. We saw that faith, hope and love are the characteristics that define us as Christians in life and in death. We said that good theology always leads to doxology. Sound doctrine always leads to worship and sacrificial, godly living. It can save us and our hearers, false doctrine ruins lives. I am glad that the introduction to our Statement of Faith emphasises these practical aspects of why we believe what we believe.

I now want us to look at WHAT we believe: these essential, biblical principles, which form the basic tenet of our Christian faith.

As Evangelical Christians we define ourselves by the evangel, the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, his person and his work of salvation. It is therefore important for us to see that the Gospel is central to our Statement of Faith. Our emphasis in looking at these statements will be on how the individual statements relate to each other as a belief system; and how, together, they form the great biblical doctrine of salvation (soteriology = study of salvation). My hope and prayer is that we will be able to see **the economy of God in salvation**; how each person in the Trinity has a different role to play in our salvation. If we can see what a manifold and mighty work salvation is, we are bound to rejoice in it, and the joy of salvation will be our strength. I like the word **economy**. It speaks of achieving the best possible results with the best possible use of resources available. In the context of salvation, it speaks of the beautiful balance in the distribution of roles which each person in the Godhead plays in our salvation – all three persons of the Godhead working together in the unity of love, because God is tri-une, he is three in one, he is love. That's the balance, the economy and the love we really yearn for as Christian believers: in ourselves, in our homes, our workplaces and in our churches. So let's start with Slide 1, let's see why we find it so hard to find this balance in life. We find the answer in SoF #3:

The Gospel reflected in our Statement of Faith (see Slides)

Read SoF – Explain Slide in your own words (**Arrow Points = Actions!!!**) – Scriptural proof – Important words!

Slide 1: Our dilemma

SOF #3: „We believe in the universal sinfulness and guilt of fallen man, making him subject to God's wrath and condemnation.“

In Slide 1, we see the state of man after the original Fall (Genesis 3) The relationship between God and man is broken. Man, originally created by God, rebelled against God's commands, fell from his state of happiness in paradise, and is now alienated from his creator and sustainer. He is under God's just wrath and condemnation. The first Adam, and with him – all his offspring, were banned from God's presence, the presence of a holy

God who cannot look upon sin, who cannot allow sinners into his presence without denying himself or killing them. As a morally just God, he must punish sin, he must punish our rebellion, our breaking of his holy law, our rebellion. Ever since the Fall, man has been roaming the earth without hope and without God in the world. We are constantly frustrated in our never-ending search for happiness; we are earning our ways by the sweat of our brows. There is no real peace to be found anywhere. By nature, we are all under the curse which the first Adam brought upon mankind (see Genesis 3, the Fall). Our problem is not so much that we commit individual sins. Our problem is our sin nature, which causes us to sin.

(Rom 3:23) ... (we) all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
(Rom 6:23) For the wages of sin is death (spiritual and physical), ...

Sin and Satan. Left to our own devices, we are doomed. If we are to be saved, God himself must save us. But God, too, faces a dilemma:

Slide 2: God's Dilemma: How can I allow sinners to enter into my holy presence – without denying myself, or without killing them?

God's solution to this problem is recorded for us in the OT and NT Scriptures. The grace and the sovereignty of the triune God in salvation are key to that solution:

SoF #2: The divine inspiration of the Scriptures, their entire trustworthiness (inerrancy) and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct (all-sufficiency).

SOF #1: The grace and sovereignty of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - in creation, revelation, redemption, final judgement and consummation.

The first indications that God would allow sinners back into his holy presence are given in the story of the original Fall in Genesis 3. Amidst all the curses, in Genesis 3:15, Adam and Eve are given the promise that one day the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head. Theologians call this the „protoevangelium“, the first messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. And in Gen. 3:21, God graciously makes a covering (i.e. atonement) for their nakedness (Gen. 3:21), a garment of skin the involved the killing of an animal. The first sacrifice accepted by God. God graciously instituted the OT system of sacrifices so the Israelites could worship him again but those sacrifices under the Old Covenant were imperfect and of limited value. They cleansed OT believers on the outside and for a while, they could not cleanse guilty consciences, they could not bring lasting inward change to their sinful natures. God never intended them to do that, they were only meant to be part of his progressive revelation of himself in Jesus Christ, they typified a better sacrifice, they foreshadowed God's perfect offering of himself in Jesus on the Cross, and were superseded by it.

1Pe 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

This is the heart of the Gospel, the answer to God's own dilemma. God himself opened up a new and living way for us into his very presence by the blood of Jesus. He offers salvation to us by faith in Jesus Christ, his perfect sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God.

Slide 3: The Salvation Triangle (by James Montgomery Boice)

SOF #4: We believe in „The substitutionary *sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God as the sole all-sufficient ground of redemption from the guilt and power of sin, and from its eternal consequences.*”

Jesus is be God's perfect sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world. But unless I can believe that he is **my penal substitutionary sacrifice**, his death will remain totally meaningless to me! It will have no effect. It is only by faith, only when I begin to believe that Jesus had to die for me personally, in my place, as my scapegoat bearing God's wrath and just punishment for my sins, that things will begin to change.

Corrie Ten Boom answers the question whether I still need to fear God's wrath once I come to believe that Jesus has borne the punishment for my sins, past, present and future: "In a forest fire, there is always one place, where the fire does not reach. It is the place where the fire has already consumed everything. Golgotha, the Cross of Calvary, is the place where the fire of God's wrath and judgment against our sin has been once and forever extinguished."

How do things change when begin to believe the Gospel, when I begin to believe the testimony of the Bible concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, God's Messiah.

Subjectively:

Heb 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

What this means objectively is shown in Slides 4 to 6

Slide 4: The Salvation Triangle

SOF #5: We believe in „The justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.“

Note the arrow pointing from fallen, sinful, guilty man to Jesus Christ. **Faith alone** in Jesus Christ crucified and risen is **the ONLY THING which God the Father requires from us** before forgiving us our sins and accepting us back into fellowship. We are saved by faith alone, through grace. Through grace means that our salvation does not depend on anything we do, it solely rests on the merit of Jesus, it is a free, unmerited gift from God. It is free for us, but it cost God the life of his one and only Son. Grace is never cheap.

Many wonderful things happen at the moment of our salvation, when we first believe, and many more things are still to happen.

Rom 8:28-30 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. **(29)** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **(30)** And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

We may not be aware of what has happened to us at first, but the Scriptures tell us and we can grow in our awareness. This is what the Bible means by growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and this is what sound doctrine helps us with. In Slides 5 and 6, we see which roles each person of the Godhead plays in our salvation.

Slide 5: The Salvation Triangle

SOF (5): We believe in „The justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.“

Note the terms Redemption and Justification. Both arrows originate with a person of the Godhead and are directed at the person who puts his faith in Jesus' work on the cross. Both are used as synonyms for salvation, although they describe different aspects of salvation.

Arrow: God the Son -> Man: Redemption

Mar 10:45 ... even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus is my redeemer. His blood is the ransom money (Lösegeld), the price God paid to deliver me and you from our bondage to sin so that we can be useful in God's kingdom. How much am I worth to God? How much is the life of his Son worth to him, if we consider that the life of a man is in his blood?

Arrow: God the Father -> Man: Justification –

God the Father is my Justifier. The doctrine of „Justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ is central to the Gospel of Jesus. It gives the answer to God's dilemma: How can sinful man be justified in God's sight, how can he be might right with God so that God can let him enter his holy presence?

A picture helps us to understand this term: Imagine a man who is proven guilty in court. God the judge has just passed the death sentence. But suddenly, something surprising happens. The judge takes off his robe, stoops down to the man and hands him the ransom money, by which he can buy back his life. He then put on his robe again, goes back to his place, accepts the payment and declares the man righteous.

Justification means that God declares us just not on the merit of our own works but solely on the merit of the life and death of Jesus Christ. We enter into a right standing with God when we first believe in Jesus Christ. God justifies us, he declares us righteous. He credits or imputes Jesus' righteousness to our account, and from now on God sees us in Christ.

If we grasp this doctrine, we understand much of what it means to live the Christian life. Luther said that it is very difficult to understand justification by faith and to maintain a thorough grasp on it throughout the ups and downs of life. Not because it is a difficult doctrine to understand but because it is the very bone and marrow of the gospel and hence the doctrine that Satan is most likely to attack.

James Montgomery Boice calls it the „hinge of salvation“ and RC Sproul calls it the „central affirmation of historic evangelicalism“. During the Reformation, Martin Luther said that this is „the article with and by which the church stands, and without which it falls“. If we go wrong on this doctrine, we are likely to go wrong somewhere else. If we read Romans 3:9-28, we will see why this is so. Romans 3:9-28 summarizes much of what we have been saying up to this point.

Slide 6: The Salvation Triangle „complete“ (6)

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. What is his role in our salvation? He is the one who applies Christ's work of salvation to us, who unites us to him in life and death, who makes us glory in Christ and who helps us live the Christian life. See:

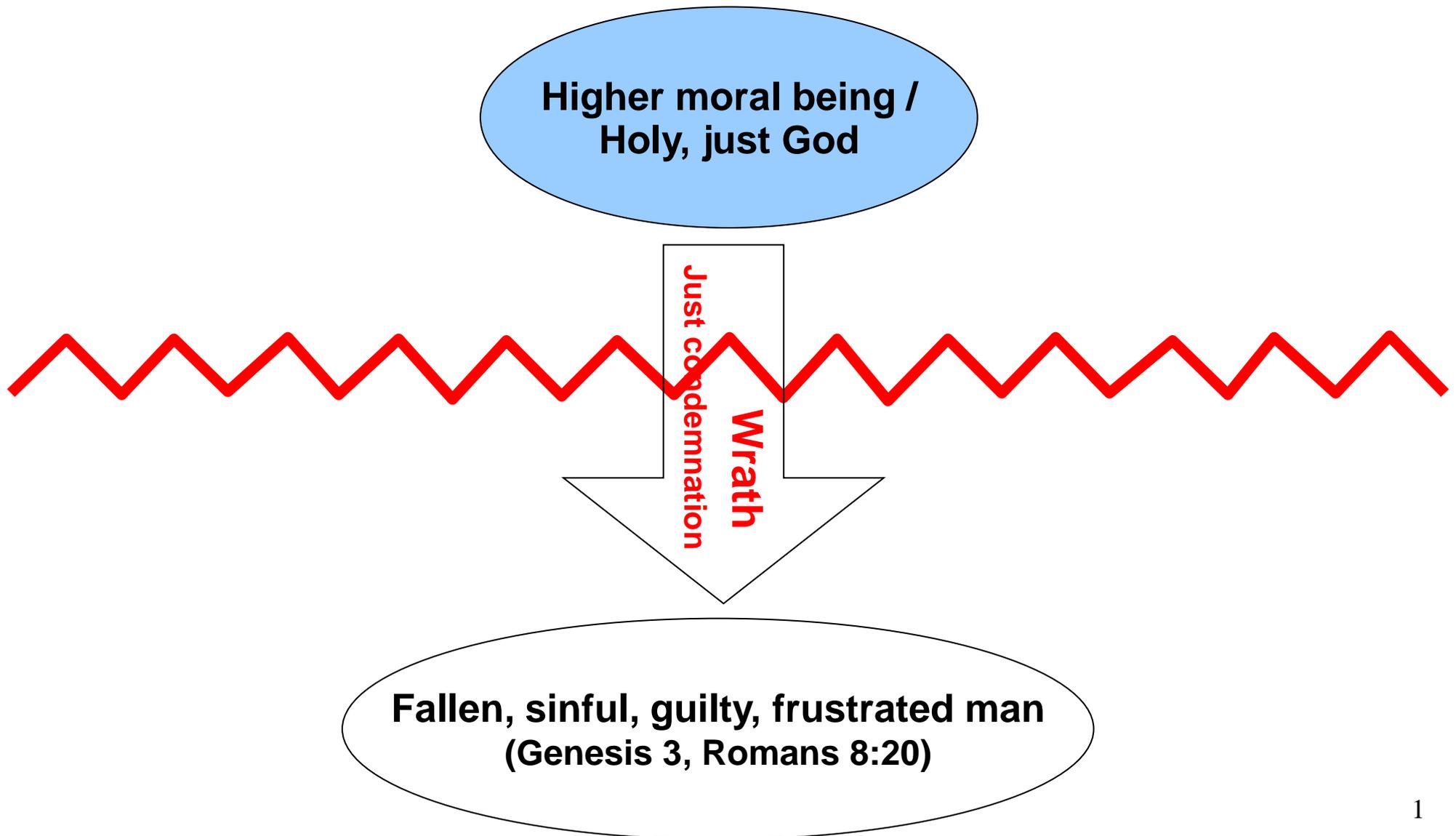
SoF #5: We believe in „The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance and unites us with Christ through new birth; and His indwelling and sanctifying work in all believers“ (cf. Four bullets at the top of Slide 6)

Only if enough time: quickly go through slides 7, 8 and 9!

Pray!

Our Dilemma

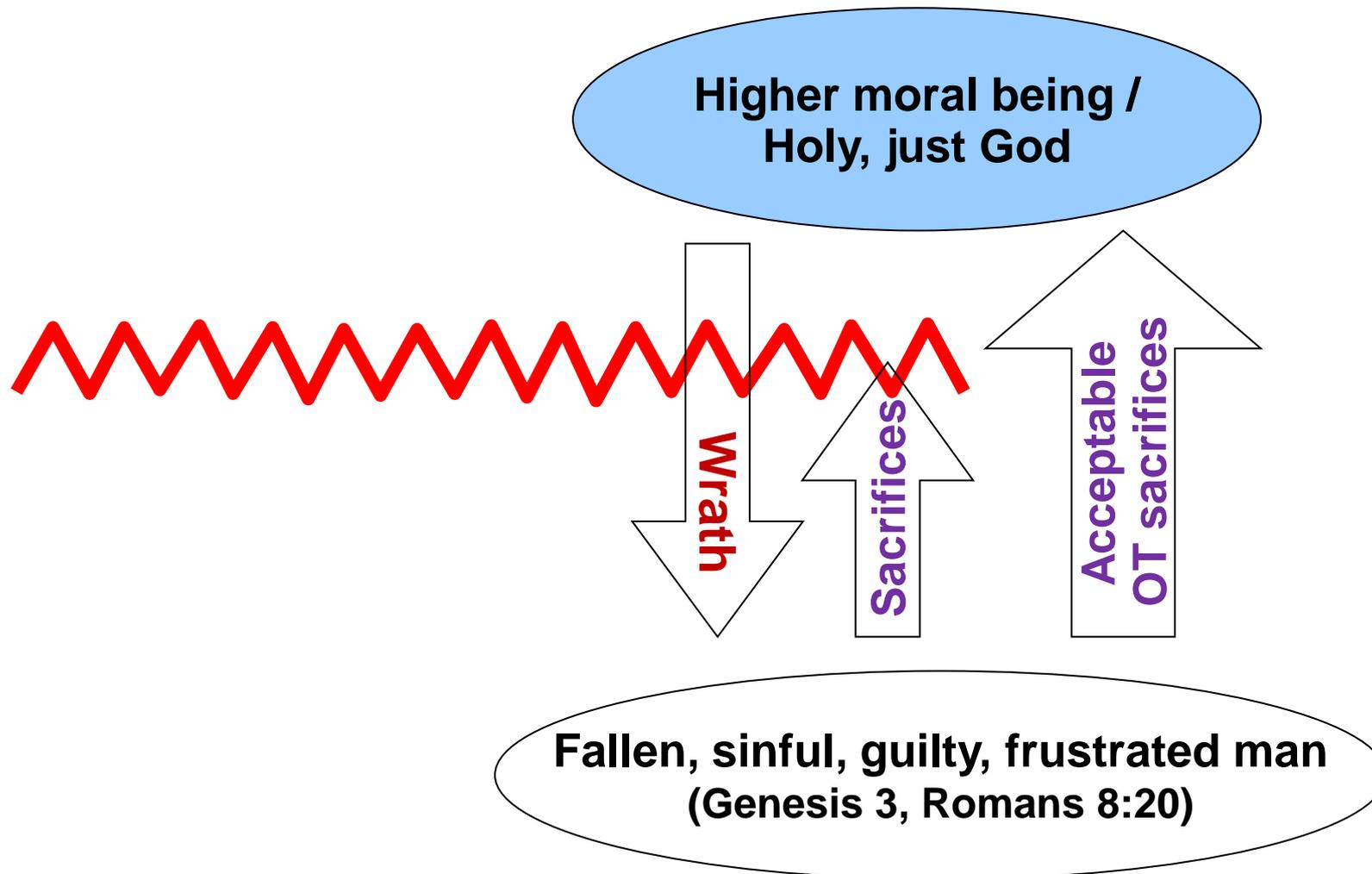
SoF #3: We believe in ... The universal sinfulness and guilt of fallen man, making him subject to God's wrath and condemnation.



God's Dilemma: How can I allow sinners to enter my holy presence?

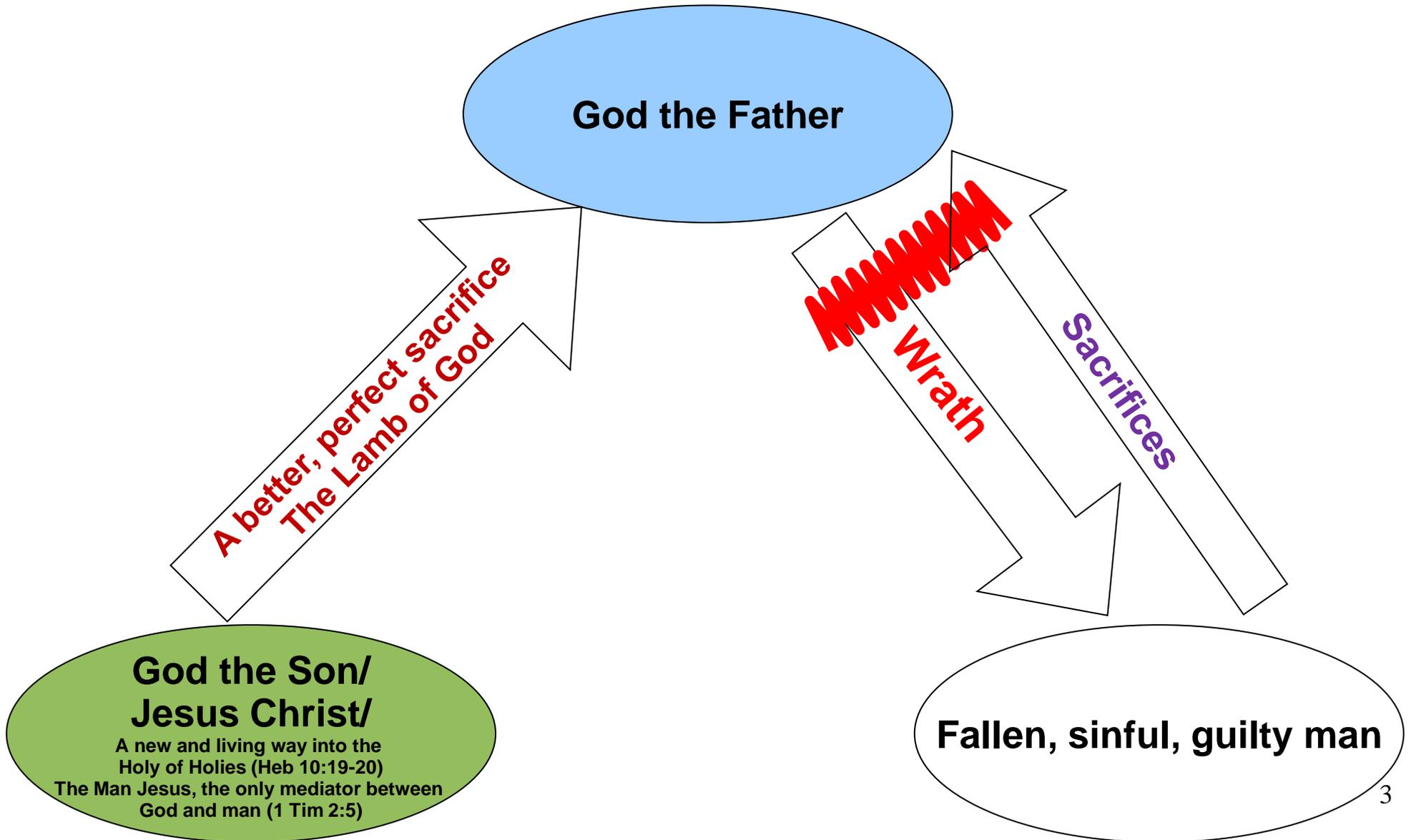
SoF #2: The divine inspiration of the Scriptures, their entire trustworthiness (inerrancy) and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct (all-sufficiency).

SoF #1: The grace and sovereignty of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - in creation, revelation, redemption, final judgement and consummation.



The Salvation Triangle

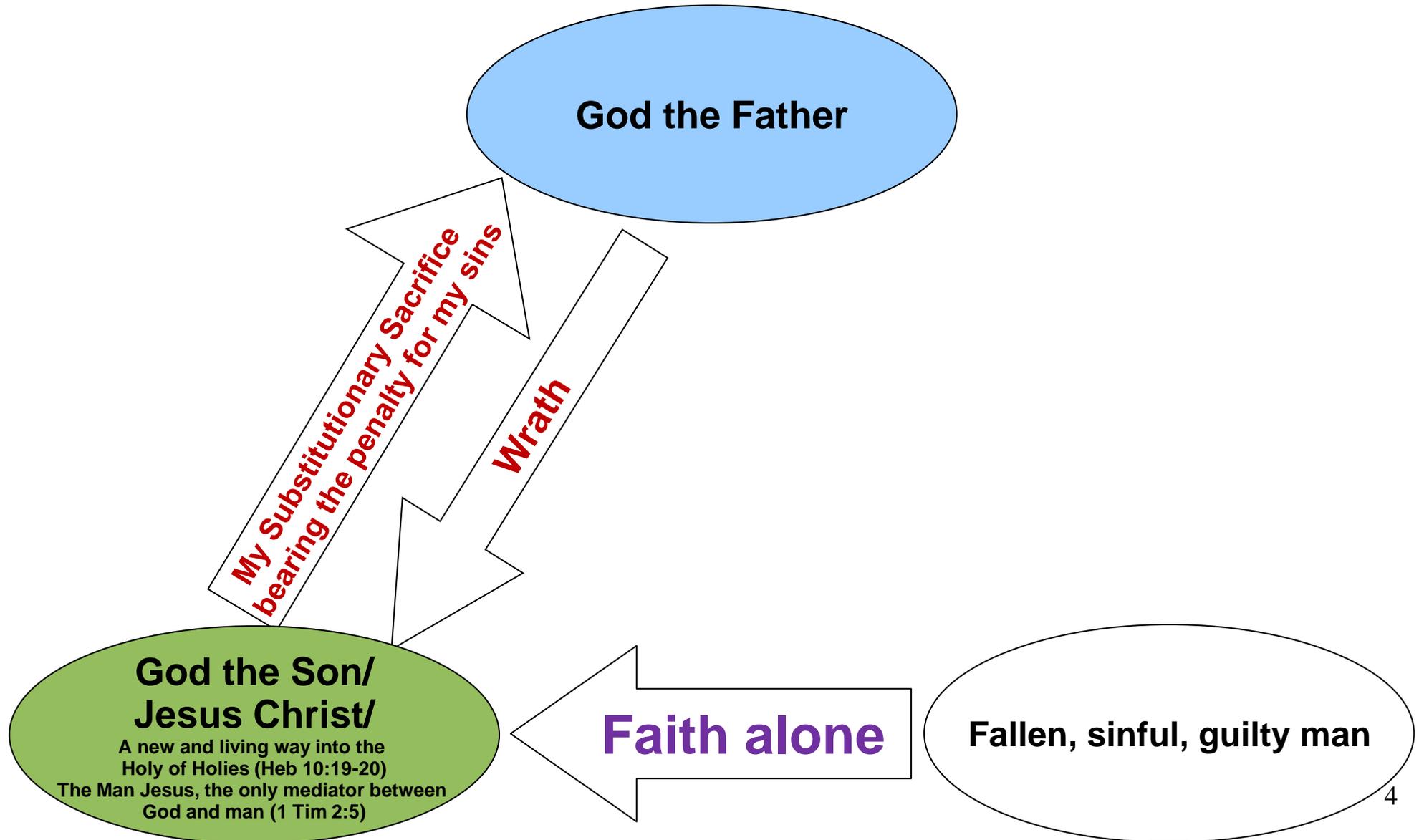
SoF #4: The substitutionary **sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God** as the sole all-sufficient ground of redemption from the guilt and power of sin, and from its eternal consequences.



The Salvation Triangle

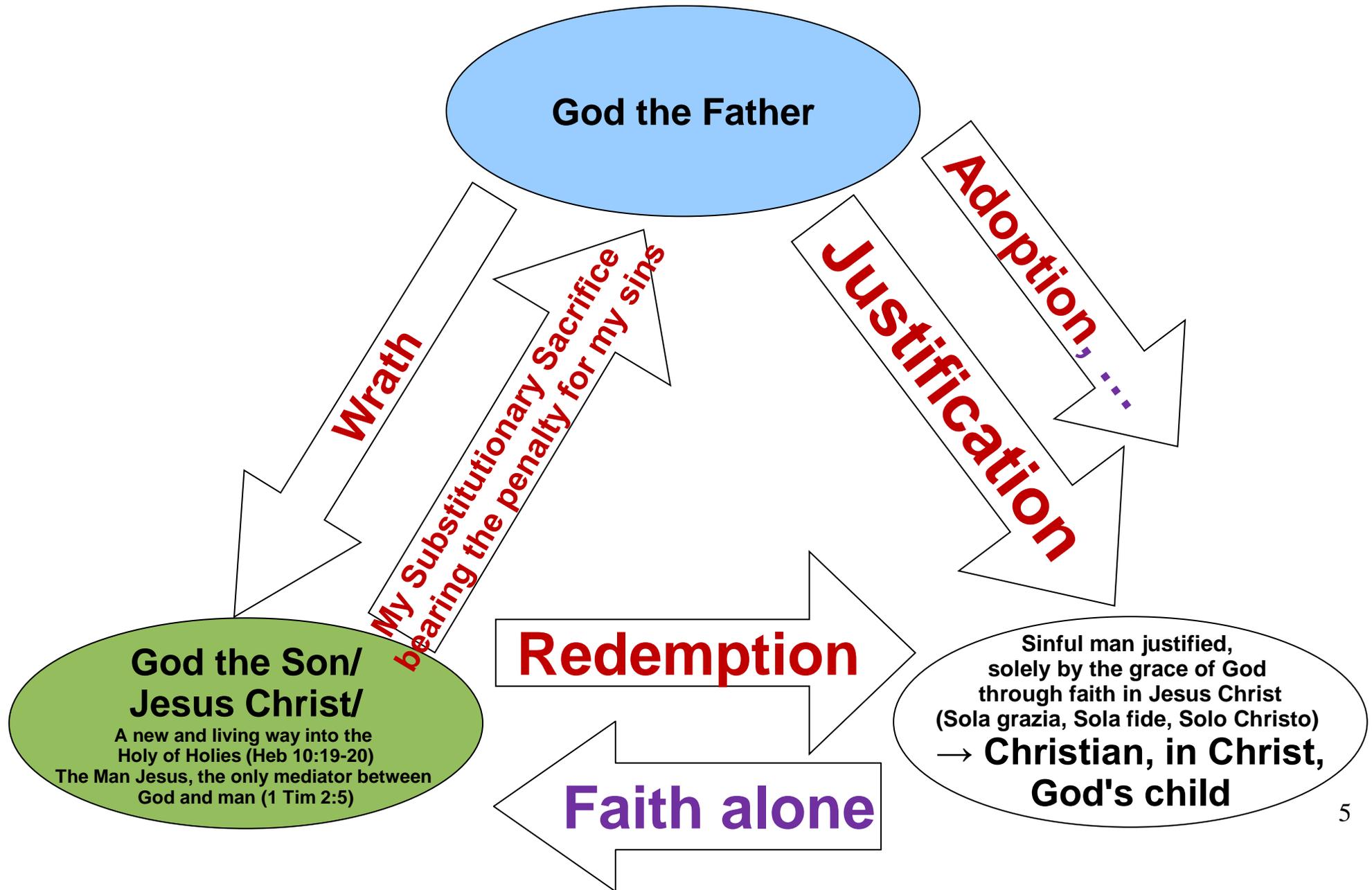
SoF #4: The **substitutionary sacrifice** of the incarnate Son of God ...

SoF #5: The justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God **through faith in Jesus Christ** crucified and risen from the dead.

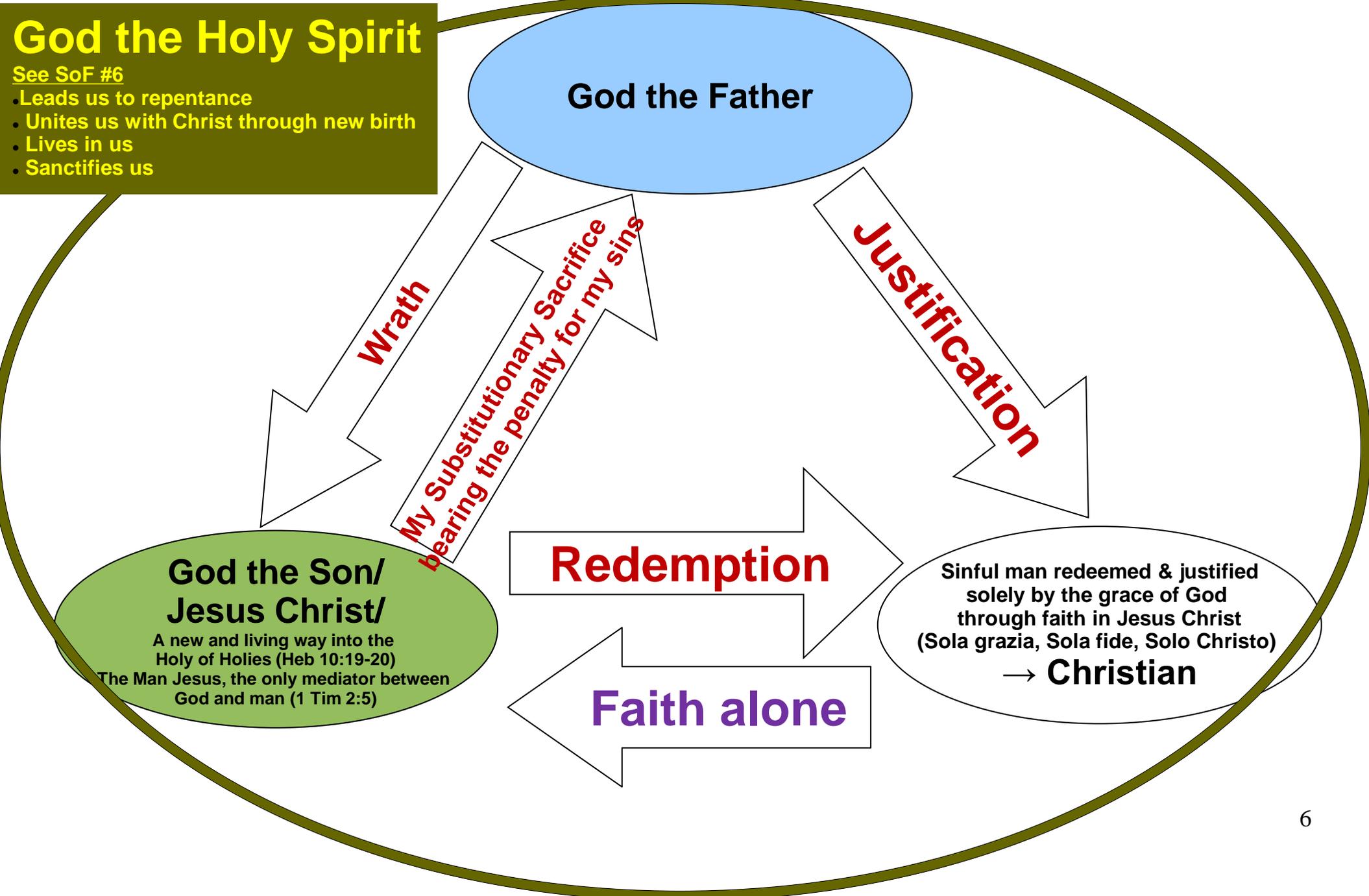


The Salvation Triangle

SoF #5: The **justification of the sinner** solely by the grace of God through faith in **Jesus Christ** crucified and risen from the dead. (see Romans 3:9-28)



Salvation Triangle „complete“ (SoF #6)



The Christian Life 1 (SoF #6, #8)

Three aspects of Salvation

The Christian life is a life that has been redeemed, is being redeemed and patiently waits in hope for its final redemption when Christ comes again in glory. In the here and now, we live in this tension, in dependence on and helped by the Holy Spirit of God, who lives in us. Christ in you, the hope of glory!

- **Justification (Imputed righteousness)**
Salvation from the punishment of sin
- **Sanctification (Imparted righteousness)**
Salvation from the power of sin
- **Glorification**
Salvation from the presence of sin

The Christian Life 2 (SoF #1, #5)

Solely by grace through faith in Jesus Christ

The Christian life, from beginning to end, is a life lived „solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead“.

It is a life that is from faith to faith and from grace to grace, grace being a foretaste of heavenly glory.

(Titus 2:11) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

(Titus 2:12) It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

(Titus 2:13) while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

(Titus 2:14) who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

(Titus 2:15) These, then, are the things you should teach.

The Christian Life 3 (SoF #7)

The Church

SoF #7: „We believe in the priesthood of all believers, who form the universal Church, the Body, of which Christ is the Head, and which is committed by His command to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world.“

- **The Body of Christ Universal**

Spanning all true believers in Jesus Christ throughout history, living or dead

(Eph 3:10) His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, **(Eph 3:11)** according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **Local expressions of the Body of Christ**

At salvation, God calls us out of the world into the church (the ecclesia = the called out ones). Local churches are local bodies of believers, which are local expressions of Christ's body. Every local body is given all it needs for life and godliness, by Christ himself, who is the Head of the Body through obedience to his Word.

- **Priesthood of all believers**