

ARTICLE 3 CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Scriptures

We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the old and new testaments, as originally written; that the whole of Scripture was inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16–17) and is without error in the original manuscripts, and that God, through the Holy Spirit, spoke through men to communicate His very words to humanity (2 Pet. 1:19–21).

We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian unity and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed, and opinions shall be tried (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).

The True God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God (Exod. 20:2–3; Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:6), an infinite Spirit, the Maker and supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1). He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love (Rev. 4:11). We believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16–17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14), equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (John 14–16).

Jesus

We believe that Jesus is the promised messiah (Gen. 3:15; 12:7; 17:19; Gal. 3:16), born of the virgin Mary in a miraculous manner through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that He is both the Son of God and God the Son (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:35; John 1:14). We believe that He lived a perfect life without sin and died in our place so that we may have life (Heb. 2:17; 4:14–15). We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and in His ascension into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest interceding for us (Matt. 28:6–7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2–6, 39, 51; John 20:27; Acts 1:9–11; 1 Cor. 15:4; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 5:9–10; 7:25; 8:6; 12:2; 1 John 2:1; Rev. 3:21).

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son, and of the same nature (Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 14:16, 26; Heb. 9:14). He was active in the creation of the world (Gen. 1:1–3). He restrains the evil one until God sees fit to remove this ministry, ushering in the time of tribulation (2 Thess. 2:6–8). He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8–11). He bears witness to the truth of the gospel in preaching and testimony through the ministry of illumination (Acts 5:30–32; 1 Cor. 2:10–14). He is the agent in the new birth (Mark 1:8; John 1:33; 3:5–6), who seals (Eph. 1:13–14), gifts (1 Cor. 12:1–7), guides/teaches (John 14:26), testifies to salvation in (Rom. 8:16), sanctifies (Titus 3:5), and helps (Rom. 8:26–27) the believer. We believe that the gifts often referred to as signs and wonders are not normative today for the church in America, and these gifts do not give new revelation to the universal church.

The Devil or Satan

We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, the Devil, and that he was created by God as an angel but through pride and rebellion became the enemy of his creator (Isa. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:12–18); that he became the unholy god of this age and the ruler of all the powers of darkness (Matt. 4:1–11; 2 Cor. 4:4); and that he is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

Creation

We believe the biblical account of the creation of the physical universe, angels, and man; that this account is neither allegory nor myth but a literal, historical account of the direct, immediate creative acts of the Triune God; that man was created by a direct work of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all men are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race (Gen. 1–2; Col. 1:16–17; John 1:3).

The Fall of Man

We believe that the first man and woman were created in innocence (in the image and likeness of God) under the law of their Maker (Gen. 1:26–31), but by voluntary transgression Adam fell from his sinless state (Gen. 3:1–6), and all humanity is affected by his disobedience (Rom. 5:12, 19). As a result, every human being is deeply damaged by the fall (Rom. 3:10–19), is a partaker of Adam's fallen nature, and is a sinner by nature and by conduct, and therefore under God's just condemnation without defense or excuse (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and completely by grace through an individual's faith in Jesus (Eph. 2:8–9; Acts 15:11), who is the mediator of the New Covenant that believers have with God (Heb. 9:15). Jesus, by the appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature (Heb. 2:14–18), yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21), and honored the divine law by his personal obedience (Isa. 53:4–7), thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior (Phil. 2:7–8). We believe that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin (1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 4:10); His sacrifice was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place (Rom. 3:22–26). He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior (1 Cor. 15:3).

We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith (John 3:16; Rom. 10:9; 1 John 1:9; Eph. 2:8–9).

Grace and the New Birth

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again (John 3:3). When sinners put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior (Rom. 10:9), they immediately become a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). Although every believer was dead in trespasses and in sins (Eph. 2:1), he or she was made alive in his or her new nature and received eternal life, the free gift of God (Eph. 2:5; Rom. 6:23). This new creation is brought about by the sovereign God in a manner above human comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth. Though we believe salvation is by God's grace through faith, and not by works (Eph. 2:8–9), works are a natural evidence of a grace-filled life and what we are called to do (Eph. 2:10; John 14:15).

Justification

We believe that justification is the judicial act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous (1 John 4:10; Rom. 3:24). We believe that justification is a free gift, not in consideration of any work of righteousness that an individual has done but solely through faith in the Redeemer's shed blood (Rom. 3:24; 4:5; 5:1, 9; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9).

Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the divine “setting-apart” of the believer to God accomplished in a threefold manner:

1. A believer *has been sanctified* (Heb. 10:10–14; 1 Cor. 1:30; Jude 24–25). When an believers put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation they are sanctified eternally based on the redemption in Christ, establishing him or her in a position of holiness before God.
2. The believer *is being sanctified* (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 4:3). This is a continual process within believers as the Holy Spirit reveals the Word of God to the them and they apply it to life (Phil. 2:12–13).
3. The believer *will be sanctified*. The final accomplishment of this process will happen at the Lord’s return (1 Thess. 5:23).

The Security of the Saints

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Phil. 1:6; John 10:28–29; Rom. 8:35–39; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; Jude 24–25).

The Church

We believe that when the Scriptures talk about the church, they are referring to either the universal or local church. The universal church is composed of all New Testament believers who make up the body of Christ. It is composed of local congregations throughout the world (1 Cor. 12:12–27; Acts 15; Eph. 3:1–6).

The local church is a visible expression of the universal church. It is an organized congregation of believers, associated by a covenant of faith and the fellowship of the gospel. The local church observes the ordinances of Christ (Acts 2:41–42), is ruled by Christ its head, and exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges entrusted to it by His Word (Rom. 12:3–6; 1 Cor. 12). We believe that the local church’s officers are elders and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). We believe the true mission of the church is to make disciples of all people groups. This includes the faithful witnessing of Christ to all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey Christ (Matt. 28:19–20). We hold that the local church has the responsibility of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5), and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22–23; 5:21–32). We believe that the church is to contend for the faith (Jude 3) and protect it against false doctrine (Titus 2:1; Rev. 2–3; 2 Tim. 1:13–14).

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that there are two ordinances that are to be practiced in the church today: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is God's ordained (Matt. 28:18–20) means for a believer to publically signify (Col. 2:11–12) the New Covenant relationship through the symbolic dramatization of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1–11). This dramatization is best captured by immersion into water (Acts 8:36–38) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Because of this, we believe baptism post-salvation is a prerequisite for membership into the local church.

The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes (Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26) and should always be preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Cor. 11:27–32). We believe that the bread and cup are symbols of Jesus' body and blood that were shed on the cross and are important to celebrate together (1 Cor. 11:23–26; Acts 2:42). We do not believe that the elements transform into the actual body or blood of Christ, nor do we believe that there is a spiritual presence contained within the elements, but that they serve as a reminder of Christ and provide anticipation for His return.

Civil Government

We believe that the civil government is divinely appointed for the interest and good order of human society (Rom. 13:1–2). We believe that Christians are to pray for those leaders (1 Tim. 2:1–4; Jer. 29:7) and conscientiously honor and obey them (Rom. 13:3–7; Matt. 22:21; Acts 23:5), except in laws that oppose the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming King of Kings (Acts 4:19–20; 5:29; Dan. 3:17–18). We also believe that opposition toward laws that violate God's will should be carried out with respect toward those in authority (1 Pet. 2:17–18).

Israel

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God's eternal covenant people. Israel is now dispersed because of its disobedience and rejection of Christ, but it will be regathered in the Holy Land during the tribulation and will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ (Gen. 13:14–17; Rom. 11:1–32; Ezek. 37).

Rapture and Subsequent Events

We believe in the premillennial return of Christ, and that at that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Cor. 15:42–44, 51–54; Phil. 3:20–21; Rev. 3:10).

We believe that the tribulation will be culminated by the revelation of Christ in power and great glory to sit upon the throne of David and to establish the millennial kingdom (Dan. 9:25–27; Matt. 24:29–31; Luke 1:30–33; Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–9; Acts 2:29–30; Rev. 20:1–4, 6).

The Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked (Prov. 14:32; Mal. 3:18; Gen. 18:23). We believe only those who are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in His esteem (Rom. 6:17–18). We believe that all who continue in unrepentance and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse. We believe that this distinction holds among human beings both in and after death, in the everlasting blessing of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in the Lake of Fire (Matt. 25:31–46; Luke 16:19–31; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11–15).

Marriage and Sexuality

Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for sexual behavior: monogamous marital relations between one man and one woman (Gen. 1:27–28; 2:18, 21–24; Matt. 19:4–6; Mark. 10:5–8; Heb. 13:4) or sexual celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7; Matt. 19:12). Both are gifts from God, given as He wills for His glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in His gift to them.

We believe that marriage is a sacred union between one man and one woman, established by God from the very beginning (Gen. 2:22–24). This union serves as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church, which is referred to as His bride (Eph. 5:25–32). Marriage is more than a contractual relationship recognized by the state; it is a covenant that one man and one woman make with each other before God to live as one in this life (Mal. 2:14–15). This sacred covenant between one man and one woman is a lifetime commitment and should never be entered into lightly.

God created human beings as male and female (Gen. 1:27). The complementary, relational nature of the human race as “male and female” reflects the created order given by God when He created human beings “in His image” (Gen. 1:26–27; 5:1, 3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23–24; Col. 3:10). In our limited understanding, we are called to receive the gift of being created male or female. All of human existence, including our sexuality,

has been deeply damaged by the fall into sin (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23; 5:12). We all are sinners, broken in some measure by this fall.

Everything, from our environment to our bodily genetic code, has been ravaged by sin and the fall. Whether the homosexual attractions people experience are the product of their environment, their genetics, or another source, they are not what God intends and so do not render homosexual behavior legitimate. Temptation, including sexual attractions, is not sin. Sin is yielding to temptation. Jesus himself was tempted, yet without sin (Matt. 4:1–11; Heb. 4:15).