



ARTICLES OF FAITH

1. THE WORD OF GOD

The Bible is the fully and uniquely inspired Word of God written (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). It is in its entirety the Word of God, given by men inspired by God. The divine initiative, activity, and superintendence in the process of inspiration imparts inerrancy to the original documents (Matt. 5:18). By God's supernatural providence the 66 books of the Old and New Testament canon were preserved with such integrity that for all intents and purposes our translations today are based upon an adequate equivalent to the autographs of Scripture. It constitutes for us today the revealed will of God in written form (Ps. 119:11; Matt. 4:4) and the words of Scripture are for us the Word of God (Heb. 3:7).

The Bible is our sufficient and final authority for faith and practice (Is. 8:20; Matt. 24:35; Jn. 12:48). Through it the Holy Spirit, who inspired its writing, continues to illumine (Ps. 119:18; 105; 130), instruct (2 Tim. 3:16-17), convict (Heb. 4:12-13), regenerate (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), and sanctify (Jn. 17:17 Ep. 5:26). Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Scriptures cannot be made an article of faith essential to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

2. THE TRIUNE GOD

The one true and living God (1 Kings. 8:60; Is. 43:10-11; Mark 12:29, 32; 1 Thess. 1:9) is the eternal, personal Spirit. He is infinite and unchangeable in power, wisdom, holiness, and love (Is 6:3; James 1:17). He is the Creator, Sovereign Ruler, and Preserver of all things whether visible or invisible (1 Pet. 4:19; Ps. 103:19; Heb. 1:3). In the divine unity of His Godhead, there eternally exist three Persons of one essence, perfection, and power: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Co. 13:14).

3. JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the eternally begotten Son, the second person of the Triune Godhead. He was eternally one with the Father (Jn. 1:1; 10:30) and by the conception of the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary (Lu. 1:27, 35; Matt. 1:20). Thus, two whole and perfect natures were forever united in one perfect personality in Jesus Christ. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, and the Son of Man (Jn. 1:14; Jn. 3:16; Matt. 16:13). He is the God-man, truly and fully God and truly and fully man. He was sinless in life (1 Jn. 3:5). He, and He alone, was qualified to be our substitute, our Savior (1 Tim. 2:5; Jude 25).

He arose bodily from the dead (1 Cor. 15:17, 20, 23; Phil. 3:21). He ascended into heaven to the right hand of the Father, the Majesty on high (Acts 1:9, 11; Heb. 1:3; 8:1),

where He is now enthroned. He will return from heaven in a second personal advent prior to His millennial kingdom (Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 20:6). He will be the judge of all men (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1). He will reign in righteousness and will consummate His redemptive mission (Rev. 11:15; 22:12-13). This blessed hope of the Christian inspires us to holy living, to missionary witness, and to sacrificial service (Tit. 2:13; Luke 19:13; Matt. 16:27).

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune Godhead. He is of one substance with the Father and the Son, from whom He has proceeded (Jn. 15:26) and is coequal with them in eternity, grace, and power. It is His ministry to glorify Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:14), and He is ever present and active in the Church of Christ (Jn. 14:16-17). He convicts the world of sin (Jn. 16:7-8), regenerates those who repent and believe (Jn. 3:7-8), and sanctifies and empowers the believers for godly living and service (Rom. 15:16; Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit sovereignly bestows and distributes His gifts within His Church (1 Cor. 12:11, 18). No one gift of the Spirit is distributed to all believers (1 Cor. 12:29-30). Individual members of the Church receive a gift of the Spirit for the purpose of ministry and the building of the Church (Eph. 4:12). Sample lists of some of the gifts are listed in Rom. 12:6-8 and 1 Cor. 12:8-10. The Holy Spirit places priority on grace and the fruit of the Spirit above the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 12), and among the gifts He places priority on the gifts of prophecy and teaching (1 Cor. 12:28; 14:1-5). Men of God thus gifted by the Spirit (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are named) become God's gift to His Church (Eph. 4:11). The Holy Spirit gives detailed restrictions for the use of only one gift--speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12-14).

5. MAN, FREE-WILL, AND SIN

Man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and was innocent and pure (Rom. 5:12). Godlikeness included his ability to choose between right and wrong, and he was thus morally responsible (Gen. 3:3; Det. 30:19; Ro. 2:15). By his sinful free choice Adam rebelled against God, fell from his original innocence and purity, and received a fallen and sinful nature (Rom. 5:12). Each human being today is born with this sinful nature (Ps. 51:5; Gal. 3:22), and by his own sinful deeds has become guilty before God (Rom. 3:11-23). Apart from the regenerating work of God, man today is lost in sin, is dead in his trespasses and sins, and is without God and without hope (2 Cor. 4:3; Eph. 2:1-3, 12).

The grace of God through Jesus Christ is freely bestowed upon all men, enabling all who will to turn from sin to righteousness and through believing on Christ receive pardon and cleansing from sin (Jn. 1:4, 9; Rom. 5:17-18; 1 Jn. 1:9). We therefore have a gospel for all the world so that whoever will, may come (Rev. 22:17), whoever is thirsty may come (Jn. 7:37), and whoever will, can believe and have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16).

The believer is securely kept by the power of God as he abides in vital fellowship with Christ. However, since he continues to be morally responsible to God after his conversion and continues to have free will, it is possible for a Christian to fall away and

rebel against God. If he does not return or seek restoration through repentance but persists in his sin and dies in this rebellious state, he will be eternally lost (Eze. 33:12, 13, 18; 18:24; 3:20; Rom. 11:22; Heb. 3:6, 14).

6. ATONEMENT

Jesus Christ made a full atonement for the sins of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2) by shedding His own blood upon the cross as a perfect and sufficient sacrifice (Heb. 9:13, 14, 26). His sacrifice need never be repeated or anything added to it, for He accomplished salvation once and for all (Heb. 10:10, 14, 15; Jn. 19:30). His vicarious death is the only ground for our salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 3:11; 15:3). It is a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world (1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10). This atonement is efficacious for the salvation of little children in their innocence and for those irresponsible (Rom. 2:15; 5:13; Matt. 19:13-15). It is efficacious for those who have reached the age of accountability only when they repent and believe the Gospel (Acts 3:19).

7. THE NEW BIRTH

Repentance is that godly sorrow for sin which results from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7-11; 2 Cor. 7:9). It involves a sensing of personal guilt before God (Ps. 51:4), a voluntary turning away from sin (Acts 26:20; Is. 55:7), and the confessing of sin and making restitution where possible (Pro. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:9; Eze. 33:15; Luke 19:8). It is the essential preparation (Mark. 1:15; Matt. 3:8; Acts 3:19; 20:21; 26:20) for saving faith--the simple trust in Christ for salvation (Jn. 20:31; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 2:8).

In the moment of the new birth the person is justified (Rom. 5:1), regenerated (Tit. 3:5), adopted into the family of God (Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:6-7), and baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). From that moment the believer has the Holy Spirit as his helper and witness (Jn. 14:26; Rom. 8:9, 15, 16).

Justification is the gracious judicial act of God fully acquitting the repenting and believing sinner (Rom. 3:24-26; 5:1). God grants full pardon of all guilt, release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, not on the basis of the merits or efforts of the sinner, but upon the basis of the atonement by Jesus Christ and the faith of the sinner (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Tit. 3:7).

Regeneration or the new birth is the gracious work of God changing the moral nature of the repentant believer from darkness to light from nature to grace, from death to life, from bondage of sin to liberty in Christ (Acts 26:18; Rom. 6:22; Eph. 2:1; Tit. 3:5). The believer becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, is born of the Spirit, and enters into a life of peace with God, obedience to the will of God, and love for all (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 5:1; 6:13, 18, 19).

Adoption is the gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a son of God with the privilege of access to the Father, membership in the family of God, and inheritance with Christ (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:15, 17). Justification, regeneration and adoption are simultaneous in the heart of the repentant believer.

The Holy Spirit is the witness to salvation by the inner assurance He imparts to the child of God (Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 3:24, 4:13; 5:6, 10; Rom. 8:9), and by the fruit of His life within the soul: peace with God (Rom. 5:1; 8:1), love for the children of God (1 Jn. 3:14, 4:12), joy in Christ (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:22; 1 Thes. 1:6), the guidance of the Spirit (Rom. 8:14), and righteous conduct (1 Jn. 2:3-5; 3:9-10). Good works are the visible fruit of a life lived in Christ; they are not the condition of salvation but the result of salvation (Eph. 2:8; Jn. 15:8, 16).

8. THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

The fullness of the Spirit is one of several terms used in the Bible to describe that work of grace in the heart of the believer subsequent to the new birth by which he is cleansed from sin and empowered for holy life and service (Acts 2:4; 15:9; 1:8). It has been termed entire sanctification because there is an initial cleansing of the defilement of committed sins in the new birth (Tit. 3:5), because of the wholeness of the commitment necessary for one who would be Spirit-filled (Rom. 12:1-2; 6:13), and because of the wholeness of the cleansing from the defilement of the inner nature which results (1 Thes. 5:23-24). The Spirit-filled person is enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit to love God with his whole being (Matt. 22:37-38; Rom. 5:5), and his neighbor as himself (Matt. 22:37-38; Rom. 5:5), and is enabled to live in true holiness of life (Luke 1:75; Eph. 5:25-27; Matt. 5:8; Tit. 2:12).

The infilling of the Spirit (entire sanctification, heart purity, the provision of the Spirit, and other terms have also been used) is a definite experience of cleansing and empowering subsequent to the new birth. In responding to God's grace the believer experiences thirst for God's fullness (Jn. 7:37-39), humbles himself (Is. 6:3-7; Rom. 7:24-25), and makes a total consecration (Rom. 6:13, 16, 19). In this moment of total commitment (Rom. 12:1-2 and faith (Acts 26:18), the Holy Spirit cleanses the inner nature of the believer (Acts 15:9), and clothes him with His power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Christ thus baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:4-5), fulfilling the great "promise of the Father" which is available to every Christian (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:39).

The progressive aspect of sanctification is that process of growth in Christian maturity, Christ likeness, and practical godliness which results from walking obediently in the light (1 Jn. 1:7), from spiritual nurture and discipline (Rom. 12:2; 2 Co. 3:17-18), and from repeated infillings of the Holy Spirit and His continuing ministry in the cleansed and yielded believer (Acts 4:31; Eph. 3:19; 5:18; Rom. 8:26).

The Holy Spirit is His own witness in the soul (Rom. 8:16; Heb. 10:14-15). He evidences His holy presence primarily by imparting His holiness to the life of the believer (Eze. 36:26-27; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 1:4 with Rom. 5:5) and producing within the believer the abundant fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25). The evidence of the Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered life is not the presence of any one gift or manifestation (1 Cor. 12:4, 5, 11).

9. DIVINE HEALING

It is the privilege of the believer to ask God to heal those who are sick (James 5:15), for the Lord is interested in our body (1 Cor. 6:13). It may not always be God's will to heal (Gal. 6:11; 2 Cor. 12:7-9).

10. **RESURRECTION, HEAVEN, AND HELL**

There will be a resurrection of the body for both the saved and unsaved dead (1 Cor. 15:16-17, 42-44; Jn. 5:29). There will be eternal life and blessedness in heaven for the saved (Jn. 14:2-3; Jn. 3:16) where they will be in the immediate presence of God (Rev. 22:3-4) and will share His eternal reign (Rev. 22:5). There will be eternal death and punishment for the unsaved in hell, the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15), where they shall consciously share the company of the damned (Rev. 21:8) in eternal separation from God (2 Thes. 1:9), under the punishing wrath of God (Jn. 3:36), which will be as eternal for the unsaved as life will be for the saved (Matt. 25-46).

11. **THE CHURCH AND ITS UNITY**

The Church is the universal body of Christ composed of all true believers in Christ, with Christ as its head (Col. 1:18), all who are born again are baptized into this one Church by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13). Christ builds His own Church (Matt. 16:18). This Church does not become fractured by the fact that there is more than one denomination, nor does it become one through church union, for there never can be more than one true body of Christ (Eph. 4:4) and its membership record is in heaven, not on earth (Heb. 12:23). All true Christians are members of one another (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:25). It is the responsibility of this Church and of each of its members to obey Christ's Great Commission to it and reach the whole world with the gospel of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-49; Jn. 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).