



ESSENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

1. GOD

There is one living and true God, the creator of the universe (Exod. 15:11; Isa. 45:11; Jer. 27:5). He is revealed in the unity of the Godhead as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who are equal in every divine perfection (Exod. 15:11; Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14).

A. God the Father is the supreme ruler of the universe. He providentially directs the affairs of history according to the purposes of His grace (Gen. 1; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 104; Heb. 1:1-3).

B. God the Son is the Savior of the world. Born of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:26-35), He declared His deity among men (John 1:14, 18; Matt. 9:6), died on the cross as the only sacrifice for sin (Phil. 2:6-11), arose bodily from the grave (Luke 24:6, 7, 24-26; I Cor. 15:3-6), and ascended back to the Father (Acts 1:9-11; Mark 16:19). He is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for believers (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) until He returns to take them to their eternal home (Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:16-18, John 14:1-3).

C. God the Holy Spirit is the manifest presence of deity. He convicts of sin (John 16:8-11), teaches spiritual truths according to the written Word (John 16:12-15), permanently indwells believers (Acts 5:32; John 14:16, 17, 20, 23), and confers on every believer at conversion the ability to render effective spiritual service (I Peter 4:10-11).

2. THE SCRIPTURES

A. We believe that God divinely inspired the original manuscripts of Scripture (complete in the Old and New Testament) in a verbal, plenary manner; as such, we believe that those original manuscripts were completely inerrant (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21). We believe God has divinely preserved and protected His Word through the manuscripts and translations of Scripture that we have today in such a way that they are completely trustworthy. God wrote these words through the hands of men as they wrote not in words of human wisdom but in words taught by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:13).

B. The Scriptures provide the standard for the believer's faith and practice (II Tim. 3:16, 17), reveal the principles by which God will judge all (Heb. 4:12; John 12:48), and express the true basis of Christian fellowship (Gal. 1:8, 9; II John 9-11).

3. CREATION

A. The World—God created all things for His own pleasure and glory, as revealed in the biblical account of creation (Gen. 1; Rev. 4:11; John 1:2, 3; Col. 1:16).

B. The Angels—God created an innumerable host of spirit beings called angels. Holy angels worship God and execute His will; while fallen angels serve Satan, seeking to hinder God's purposes (Col. 1:16; Luke 20:35, 36; Matt. 22:29, 30; Ps. 103:20; Jude 6).

C. Man—As the crowning work of His creation, God created humankind (male and female) in His own image (Psa. 8; Gen. 1:27; 2:7). Consequently, every person from conception is of inherent dignity and worth and merits the respect of all other persons (Psa. 51:5; Psa. 139:13-16; Gen. 9:6; Matt. 10:28-31; James 3:9).

D. Marriage—God created marriage (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:23-24). Jesus Christ declared the creator's intention for marriage to be the inseparable and exclusive union between a man and a woman (natural man and natural woman) (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). Marriage testifies of the union between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32; Rom. 1:25-27).

4. SATAN

Satan is a actual being rather than a personification of evil (John 8:44), and he with his demons opposes all that is true and godly by blinding the world to the gospel (II Cor. 4:3, 4), tempting saints to do evil (Eph. 6:11; I Peter 5:8), and warring against the Son of God (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 20:1-10).

5. SINFULNESS OF MAN

Although man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 2:17), he fell through his decision to sin and that image was marred (Rom. 5:12; James 3:9). In his unregenerate state, he is void of spiritual life, is under the influence of the devil, and lacks any power to save himself (Eph. 2:1-3; John 1:13). The sin nature has been transmitted to every member of the human race, the man Jesus Christ alone being excepted (Rom. 3:23; I Peter 2:22). Because of the sin nature, man possesses no divine life and is essentially and unchangeably depraved apart from divine grace (Rom. 3:10-19; Jer. 17:9).

6. SALVATION

A. The Meaning of Salvation—Salvation is the gracious work of God whereby He delivers undeserving sinners from sin and its results (Matt. 1:21; Eph. 2:8, 9). In justification He declares righteous all who put faith in Christ as Savior (Rom. 3:20-22),

giving them freedom from condemnation, peace with God, and full assurance of future glorification (Rom. 3:24-26).

B. The Way of Salvation—Salvation is based wholly on the grace of God apart from doing any good deeds (Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:9). Anyone who will exercise repentance, turning towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved (Acts 16:30-32; Luke 24:47; Rom. 10:17).

C. The Provision of Salvation—Christ died for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29; 3:16; I John 2:1, 2). Through His blood, atonement is made without respect of persons (I Tim. 2:4-6). All sinners can be saved by this gracious provision (Heb. 2:9; John 3:18).

7. DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN FREEDOM

God's sovereignty and man's freedom are two inseparable factors in the salvation experience (Eph. 2:4-10). The two Bible truths are in no way contradictory, but they are amazingly complementary in the great salvation so freely provided. God, in His sovereignty purposed, planned and executed salvation in eternity while man's freedom enables him to make a personal choice in time, either to receive this salvation and be saved, or to reject it and be damned (Eph. 1:9-12; 1:13, 14; John 1:12, 13).

8. SANCTIFICATION

All believers are set apart unto God (Heb. 10:12-14) at the time of their regeneration (I Cor. 6:11). They should grow in grace (II Peter 1:5-8) by allowing the Holy Spirit to apply God's Word to their lives (I Peter 2:2), conforming them to the principles of divine righteousness (Rom. 12:1, 2; I Thess. 4:3-7) and making them partakers of the holiness of God (II Cor. 7:1; I Peter 1:15, 16).

9. SECURITY

All believers are eternally secure in Jesus Christ (John 10:24-30; Rom. 8:35-39). They are born again (John 3:3-5; I John 5:1; I Peter 1:23), made new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17; II Peter 1:4), and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; I John 4:4), enabling their perseverance in good works (Eph. 2:10). A special providence watches over them (Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 10:13), and they are kept by the power of God (Phil. 1:6; 2:12, 13; I Peter 1:3-5; Heb. 13:5).

10. LAST THINGS

A. Return—Our risen Lord will return personally in bodily form to receive His redeemed unto Himself. His return is imminent (I Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 22:20).

B. Resurrections—After Jesus returns, all of the dead will be raised bodily, each in his own order: the righteous dead in "the resurrection of life" and the wicked dead in "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:24-29; I Cor. 15:20-28).

C. Judgments—Prior to the eternal state, God will judge everyone to confer rewards or to consign to punishment (Matt. 25:31-46; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15).

D. Eternal States—Heaven is the eternal home of the redeemed (John 14:1-3) who, in their glorified bodies (I Cor. 15:51-58), will live in the presence of God forever (I Thess. 4:17) in ultimate blessing (Rev. 21, 22).

Hell is the place of eternal punishment and suffering (Luke 16:19-31) for the devil, his angels (Matt. 25:41), and the unredeemed (Rev. 20:10-15).



DISTINCTIVES OF OUR CHURCH

1. NATURE OF THE CHURCH

We believe that a church is a local group of people (Acts 16:5; I Cor. 4:17) that are baptized followers of Jesus (Acts 2:41) and are committed to living life together as a local representation of God's bigger, worldwide family. These believers are bound together by a core set of beliefs and a consistent connection to one another (Acts 2:41, 42).

Each church has Jesus as her only Head (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18), the Holy Bible as her only rule of faith and practice (Isa. 8:20; II Tim. 3:16, 17), and governs herself by biblical principles (Acts 6:1-6; I Cor. 5:1-5) under the oversight of her pastors (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24). The church was started during Jesus' earthly ministry (Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:13-19; John 1:35-51) and will continue until Jesus returns (Matt. 16:18; 28:20).

Our church recognizes Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the two ordinances of the church. Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer as a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:4) and is prerequisite to church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41, 42). The Lord's Supper is the sacred sharing of the bread of communion and the cup of blessing by the local church (Acts 20:7) as a memorial to the crucified body and shed blood of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:19, 20; I Cor. 11:23-26). Both ordinances must be administered by the authority of a New Testament church (Matt. 28:18-20; I Cor. 11:23-26).

Every local church has two permanent officers, Pastors and deacons as modeled in the New Testament churches (Phil. 1:1). Each church may select men of her choice to fill those offices under the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:1-6; 20:17, 18) according to the divinely given qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9).

A church's mission is to share the gospel (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:45-47), baptizing those who believe (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 35-38), and maturing them by instruction (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42) and discipline (Matt. 18:17, 18; I Cor. 5:1-5).

2. BAPTISM

We believe the Bible teaches that Baptism is something someone does AFTER they have decided to follow Jesus and have placed their faith in Him. We believe that baptism is a picture of the salvation Jesus provides. We immerse people under the water showing they have died to their life lead and directed by sin, and then we bring them back up out of the water symbolizing the new life they now commit to live under Jesus' leadership and direction. Baptism is not something we do to be saved, it is a public statement of the personal decision someone has made to trust and follow Jesus.

3. ASSOCIATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Our church freely associates with other churches in furthering the faith (II Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:10, 15, 16) through our relationship with the Baptist Missionary Association of America. We associate with other churches occasionally as well to further the Gospel, being mindful to keep ourself from those who hold doctrines or practices contrary to Holy Scripture (Gal. 1:8, 9; I John 2:19). In association with other churches, each church is equal and is the sole judge of the measure and method of her cooperation (Matt. 20:25-28). In all matters of polity and practice, the will of each church is final (Matt. 18:18).

4. WOMEN SERVING AS PASTORS

We believe that the Bible teaches that men and women are equally created in the image of God and share full dignity, value, and worth before Him (Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:28). Both are gifted by the Holy Spirit for service and ministry within the body of Christ (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

We believe that men and women are designed by God to complement one another in their roles and responsibilities. Women are encouraged to serve in various areas of ministry consistent with their God-given gifts. God uniquely set aside the office of pastor/elder for qualified men to reflect His own relationship with His people (1 Timothy 2:12-14; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The relationship between a pastor/elder and the church family he leads should be a reflection of the relationship Jesus has with His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:22-25).