

# Understanding Our Confession of Faith

## The Triune God

In the name of God, we declare and confess before men that we believe in the only true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that these three are one--the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, and the Holy Ghost equal in essence or being with both; that this triune God created the heavens and the earth and all that in them is, visible as well as invisible, and furthermore sustains, governs, protects, and supports the same.

## Who is God?

1. God is Spirit – The Bible teaches us that God has a spiritual body. Therefore we can't see Him with our eyes, but we can feel His presence and experience fellowship with Him in our spiritual nature.
2. God is a Person – Throughout the Bible, personal nouns and pronouns are used to refer to God. All three elements of personality exist in God. God can think, feel and determine.

## What is God Like?

1. God is Limitless - God has no limitations. Therefore, we refer to the infinity of God. "Omni" is a Latin prefix meaning "all." Three words using that prefix help us understand God. He is Omnipotent, which means God is all-powerful. (Job 37:23, 24). He is Omniscient, which means He is all-knowing. This combines the words "all" and "science." (John 3:20). He is Omnipresent, which means He is present everywhere at the same time. (Psalm 139:7-12).
2. God is Unchangeable - God never changes. He is always the same. We can depend on Him to always be the same as the Bible describes Him. God is love (John 3:16). He is the same in His relationship to man. God is holy (Psalm 99:9). He is the same in His relationship to His Word. God is just (Titus 1:1-3). He is the same in His relationship to His will.
3. God is Triune - Although the word "trinity" doesn't appear in the Bible, the idea of three-in-one is taught in the Scripture's and is a very important doctrine. The word "Trinity" expresses four thoughts: There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). The Father is God (Matthew 6:9). The Son is God (Matthew 3:17). The Holy Spirit is God (John 14:26). Therefore, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one and the same...but they are also three.

## How Can We Know God?

1. Nature - We can know God through nature (Psalm 19:1).
2. Revelation - We can know God through revelation: His written Word, the Bible (Psalm 119:105), and His Living Word, His Son (John 14:7-9).
3. Experience - We can know God through experience (Acts 9:10).

### Before Time Began—God Was

The Triune God has always been and always will be. God's realm is the ageless eternity. Before the creation of man, worshipping angels were with God in eternity. The Bible teaches that Lucifer (or Satan) was one of these angels.

### How Then Did Satan Become Evil?

Read Isaiah 14:12-19 and Ezekiel 28:12-29. Therefore, God prepared hell, a place for Satan and his followers.

### In the Beginning—God

Within the realm of eternity, God created our universe. This creation began our "time and place" world. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). God's creation was perfect. "For this is what the Lord says—He who created the heavens, he is God; He who fashioned and made the earth he founded it; he did not create it to be empty but formed it to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18)

### Who is Man?

Man is a creation of God. "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Man's whole person is God's image. Like God, man has:

1. Intellect - a mind with which to think or make rational judgments; a being that is both active and responsible
2. Sensibility - emotions whereby we are conscious of our own self and others; a spiritual or inner self by which we talk with God
3. Will - a freedom to choose to be a responsible being

Man was created in original righteousness. As the crown of creation, man was to rule the earth within the limitations of God's will. He was to eat of the fruit of the earth—even the tree of life—but not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God made man a responsible being to live in love, dependence, and obedience. This is the man God saw when He declared all of His creation to be good. Yet, man today is sinful. Why?

### The Tempter Came

Satan, still rebelling against God, now as the enemy of man, comes into the perfect garden God has made for Adam and Eve to test their obedience to God. The story of humanity's sin is that of choosing to rebel against God—of choosing not to live in trust and obedience, but rather by his own wits and ideas. .

In disobeying God, man gave himself to the control of Satan. Sin is the set of our whole personality against God, the use of one's will and being in rebellion against the Lord. Thus, Adam's disobedience is called the "fall of man."

Because Adam sinned, all people are born with the inside desire to disobey God. "Depravity" is the word we use to stand for the sinful nature with which we are born. In this depravity, individuals are born without trust in God. Their thoughts and desires are for themselves. This is our sin, the original sin in which everybody participates, the sin of self in which we become the center of our world.

Man is in a predicament because of Adam. We are all sinners – born into a world of sin—yet God made us to have fellowship with Him. But God cannot look upon sin. No sin can be in God's presence. God longs for our fellowship, and people need God's forgiveness. Who can help?

## **Jesus Christ, the Son**

We believe in Jesus Christ; that He is very God and man; that He became incarnate by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Virgin Mary and was born of her; that He is the Savior and Mediator of the whole human race, if they with full faith in Him accept the grace proffered in Jesus; that this Jesus suffered and died on the cross for us, was buried, arose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God to intercede for us; and that He shall come again at the last day to judge the quick and the dead.

### Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity

Along with the Father, Jesus enjoyed the beautiful creation they had made. Along with the Father, Jesus was sad because man chose to disobey God. Along with the Father, Jesus loved sinful man and wanted to bring him back into fellowship with God.

So, to complete God's plan to save man from his sin, God sent Jesus, perfect as Himself, from heaven to this earth as His only Son. He was born as a baby. He had a body like ours. He felt pain, hunger, happiness, and sadness just as we do. But Jesus never sinned. Nobody else can make that claim. Jesus obeyed God when He died for us. So God raised Him from the dead and took Him back to heaven.

Now, Jesus is in heaven, waiting for God's time when He will come again to earth. We await this second coming. And this time, He won't come to die, but to receive all who have trusted in His blood, cast into punishment those who have refused to trust Him, and rule as King and Lord.

### Frequently Asked Questions About Jesus:

Q: Who is Jesus Christ?

A: Our Lord Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity who came into the world as a newborn baby.

Q: Is Jesus God's Son?

A: Yes, Jesus Christ is God's eternal and only begotten Son (Matthew 3:17; John 3:16).

Q: Was Jesus a man with all the physical needs of a man?

A: Yes, Jesus as a man needed food, shelter, and rest (John 19:28; Mark 4:38).

Q: How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A: Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and emotions, being conceived by the power of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and was born of her (Luke 1:30, 31, 36).

Q: Did Jesus have earthly brothers and sisters?

A: Yes. After the birth of Jesus, Mary gave birth to sons and daughters whose father was Joseph, her husband (Matthew 13:55-57).

Q: Did Jesus ever commit sin?

A: No. He did no sin, neither was guile (deceit) found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:22)

Q: What do we know about His earthly life?

A: Until age 30, Jesus lived with his parents in Nazareth. He grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). He spent the last three and one half years of His life preaching and doing good to teach men about God (Luke 3:21-23; Acts 10:38).

Q: How did Jesus die?

A: He was willing to be nailed to a cross for our sin (Acts 2:22, 23).

Q: When did Jesus rise from the dead and ascend into heaven?

A: Jesus arose from the dead the third day after His burial, and after forty days, He ascended into heaven (Luke 24:46; Acts 1:3, 9).

Q: What is the most important proof of the deity of Jesus?

A: After His crucifixion, He rose from the dead (Romans 1:4).

Q: What promise did Jesus make before He ascended into heaven?

A: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2, 3 KJV)

Q: What is Jesus doing in heaven now?

A: He is before His Father, God, interceding for Christians. He talks to God for us (Romans 8:34). That is why we pray in Jesus' name.

Q: When will Jesus come again?

A: Neither man nor angels know the exact time. Only God knows (Matthew 24:36; Luke 12:35-40).

## **The Holy Spirit, Comforter and Guide**

We believe in the Holy Ghost; that He is equal in being with the Father and the Son, and that He comforts the faithful, and guides them into all truth.

### What Does the Bible Say About the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a living Person, not an impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is not separate from God. He is God. The Holy Spirit is the spiritual revelation of God; whereas Christ was the physical revelation of God. The Holy Spirit took part in the creation of the world: "...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:2). The Holy Spirit took part in the birth of Jesus. The angel told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus for service at His baptism: "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him" (Matthew 3:16). The Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 1:4).

### Why the Holy Spirit Came

Like God, the Holy Spirit has always existed. Like Christ, His coming to this world was marked by a distinct historical event. That day of His coming is called the Day of Pentecost. Here is how it happened.

Before Jesus died on the cross and rose again, He tried to prepare His disciples for the time when He would ascend into heaven and be gone from them.

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:15-17).

So Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after His resurrection. Then, 10 days later on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were together in one place along with a great assembly of people who were observing the Old Testament feast day, the Holy Spirit came. His coming was evidenced by the sound of a rushing wind and what appeared to be flames of fire, and the people praised God in many tongues so that they all heard praises in their own language. It is interesting to remember that the wind and fire were symbols of God's presence even in the Old Testament.

The Holy Spirit comforted the disciples, who were sad because Jesus was gone from them. He also gave them power to live for Christ and to do the work He had given them of telling others about His salvation (Acts 2:1-4).

The Spirit in the Person of the Trinity who is present with us in this age, the age of the church.

### What the Holy Spirit Does as God

The Holy Spirit is the One who is called to walk along beside to encourage us, to enable us, to empower us, and to exalt Jesus Christ in us. Quite often he is represented as a Friend who speaks on our behalf. The Holy Spirit:

1. Speaks to Us for God. Jesus Christ is our Mediator in heaven (1 Timothy 2:5,6). On earth, the Holy Spirit is Jesus' advocate in us. He speaks to us for God. He keeps before us the desires of Jesus.
2. Encourages Us. The Holy Spirit cheers us in the face of danger. Like a military leader, He rallies us for the fight (Galatians 4:6).
3. Enables Us. The Holy Spirit makes us able to cope with life. He helps us stand up to the opposing forces of Satan in temptation and even to win. If left to ourselves, we would fall. It is the Holy Spirit that helps us encounter a breaking point and not break (Matthew 28:20).
4. Empowers Us. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to Christians so they can perform the work to which God calls them. Every believer receives one or more of these gifts to help in the work of the Church (Ephesians 4:7, 8).
5. Exalts Christ. The Holy Spirit safeguards the interests of Jesus in this world, the church, and in each believer. His work is to represent and exalt Christ. He deals with people in respect to Christ, and convicts individuals of sin against Christ (John 15:26).

### The Holy Spirit Purifies Us and Produces Fruit in our Lives

When we come Christians, we are "born" of the Spirit. In this "new birth" experience, the Holy Spirit enters our lives and dwells in our hearts. Now, even as Christians, we are often tempted to disobey Him. The Holy Spirit helps us deal with any temptations or sin that would enter our new life. The method by which the Holy Spirit helps us keep our lives free of sin is called sanctification. This sanctification means that your life is set apart for God and made pure to be used for His purpose.

This sanctifying work begins when a person becomes a Christian. But we can only realize the full benefits of His sanctifying work when we allow the sinful nature to be cleansed from our hearts and allow the Holy Spirit to come into our lives in fullness. This sanctification by the Spirit takes place to the measure that we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit within us. He then will fill us with more and more of God's love and power. The Spirit, with our consent, must continually fill us so that we become more and more like Jesus Christ.

## **The Church**

We believe in a holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

### What is the Church?

The Church is people who are God's children because they have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Anyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ is not only a member of the Church, but is the Church. This is what is meant when the Apostles' Creed refers to the holy catholic (universal) Church.

The purpose of the Church is to proclaim God's message of salvation throughout the world from generation to generation. There was a time when the Christian Church did not exist. But the reality behind the eternal Church originated in the will of God.

### God Wills the Church

The Old Testament is a story of God's "chosen" people, the Jews. They were given three purposes: guard God's Word, be a channel to introduce the Messiah to the world, and witness to the world.

According to the Old Testament, Israel failed in the third purpose. However, while they failed as a nation, a few faithful people kept God's purpose alive.

Jesus did not destroy Israel. He did not come to destroy the Old Testament church. He came to make it complete. As a result, the early Christians broke with the traditional Jewish religion of that day and took the Gospel everywhere.

### Christ Loves the Church

Believers in Christ, members of His church, are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus. By dying in our place, Jesus revealed God's will and disclosed the wonderful program of His church. Jesus promised the Church: the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:15-18).

### The Holy Spirit Creates the Church

The Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world within men. The prophets spoke the word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. But at Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to work in the Church in a special way. The Church was born and became the place where the saving power in Christ became real among men. Pentecost was an astonishing historical event! It marked the birth of a new community—the Church!

### Three Terms to Know...

1. Apostles – "Apostle" comes from the Latin word appello, which means "called out". This term was generally used in referring to the 12 disciples. Others, such as the Apostle Paul, are also given this title.
2. Disciples – "Disciple" comes from the Latin word disco, meaning "to teach". We use it to refer to a person who learns the teachings of another. The word is used when we refer to the 12 personal followers of Christ. It is also used to refer to any follower of Him.
3. Christian – "Christian" was a term first given the followers of Christ in Antioch in the New Testament. It was spoken in disgust to make fun of these followers of Christ. It has come to be the beloved title of those who have believed upon Him as their Savior, who are part of His family, and who bear His name.

## **The Holy Bible and Salvation**

We believe that the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God; that it contains the only true way to our salvation; that every true Christian is bound to acknowledge and receive it with the influence of the Spirit of God as the only rule and guide; and that without faith in Jesus Christ, true repentance, forgiveness of sins, and following after Christ, no one can be a true Christian.

### The Authority of the Bible

The Bible is God's Word. The Bible has authority or power because God is its Author. To understand how God could "write" such a Book, we must look at three words: revelation, inspiration, and illumination.

1. Revelation means that something hidden is made plain. It is revealed. In the Bible, God stated plain truths about His purpose in creation, His plan for mankind, and man's need of redemption through Jesus Christ. "...but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10).
2. Inspiration is the mysterious process by which He worked in the lives of human prophets to produce a true book. That process included the person of the prophet, the product of his pen, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).
3. Illumination is the gift of understanding God's revelation. It involves God working through the Holy Spirit to help people understand what is written in the Bible. "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 1:13-14).

### How the Bible Came to Us

Faithful scholars have labored through the centuries to preserve accurately the Old and New Testaments. The first manuscripts of the Bible were not in English. Hebrew was the language of the Old Testament, and Greek was the language of the New Testament. We are grateful for the scholars who constantly compare existing English versions with the ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts to help create modern translations for us to read.

## **The Salvation Message**

We also believe that what is contained in the Holy Scriptures, to wit: the fall in Adam and redemption through Jesus Christ, shall be preached throughout the world.

### The Salvation Message: God Provides a Lamb

The blood of a perfect lamb was needed for a sin offering in the Old Testament. But then God sent Jesus to be the perfect sinless Lamb of God (John 1:29). Through His blood we can be made pure.

## Why the Blood?

1. God is Satisfied - Life is in blood. So God required blood to be given for man's sin. When the Jews were slaves in Egypt, God saved the first-born children from the death plague by telling their families to kill a lamb and put its blood on their doorpost. If you will obey, He said, then "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." And He did. Exodus 12 tells the story. The blood is for God to see. When we trust Jesus as our Savior from sin, God then sees the blood of Christ instead of our sinful heart.
2. Man is Cleansed - The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. This cleansing makes us pure - without sin - before God. We call this "justification." We are "just as if we have never sinned." A clear conscience is never based upon our attainment; it can only be based on the work of Jesus in shedding His blood.

## ABC's of Salvation

**A**dmit You Have Sinned - Romans 3:23

**B**elieve Jesus Saves - John 3:16

**C**onfess Your Sin and Your Need of a Savior - 1 John 1:9

**D**o the Will of God - John 7:17

## As a New Creation in Christ, You Will Begin to Understand Grace and Faith

**Grace** - Grace is when God shows kindness and forgiveness to undeserving, helpless people for the sake of Jesus. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11)

**Faith** - Faith is a belief and trust in God that He will do everything that He has promised to do, both in this world and the world to come. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1) "And without faith it is impossible to please God: because anyone who comes to him (God) must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

## You Can Know for Certain that You're Going to Heaven

As a Christian, you base your relationship to Christ on what the Bible says. The Bible says that Christ died in our place for our sins. This is fact. When we, through faith, accept this to be true, we are freed from our sin. As a result, we experience feelings of peace because we are released from the guilt and burden of sin.



## **The Christian Ordinances**

We believe that the ordinances, viz. baptism and the remembrance of the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, are to be in use and practiced by all Christian societies; and that it is incumbent on all the children of God particularly to practice them; but the manner in which ought always to be left to the judgment and understanding of every individual. Also, the example of washing feet is left to the judgment of every one to practice or not; but it is not becoming of any of our preachers or members to traduce any of their brethren whose judgment and understanding in these respects is different from their own, either in public or in private. Whosoever shall make himself guilty in this respect shall be considered a traducer of his brethren, and shall be answerable for the same.

### A Sacrament or an Ordinance?

The New Testament teaches two ordinances for the Church—baptism and the Lord’s Supper (commonly called Holy Communion). Christians are baptized only one time, but they participate in the Lord’s Supper many times.

Many churches use the term “sacrament” instead of the term “ordinance” when they refer to baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and other practices and ceremonies. The word “sacrament” suggests that the ceremony itself brings some soul-saving merit to the believer. Ordinance, on the other hand, suggests that the ceremony is a “symbol,” a reminder, of what Christ did for us. Since we believe that salvation comes by grace through faith, not by anything we do, we use the term “ordinance”. They are acts of obedience to honor Jesus.

### What is Baptism?

Baptism is the way people give public testimony to their faith in Christ. It is an outward sign of an inward work.

### Why Baptism?

1. Old Testament Background - Ceremonial washings were a part of Jewish tradition and worship.
2. Jesus’ Example - Read Matthew 3:13-17
3. Jesus commanded His disciples to do three things: Go, teach, and baptize.

### Ways to Baptize Believers

1. Sprinkling - Water is sprinkled upon the head of the believer.
2. Pouring - Water is poured over the head of the believer.
3. Immersion - The believer is submerged in a pool of water.

### The Lord’s Supper (aka Communion)

The Passover Feast is described in Exodus 12. The firstborn in every Jewish home was spared by the sprinkling of blood on the doorposts. Jesus redefined the Passover meal on the night before his crucifixion. Jesus commanded His disciples: “This do in remembrance of Me.” Now this meal points to the saving work Christ has done on our behalf. It is to be practiced by anyone who has sincerely repented of sin, is living in right relationships and is striving to follow Christ.

### The Elements and Method

Although we may use different methods of serving the elements at any given time, we always choose to use grape juice for communion.